

Pelham School Board Meeting
Pelham Elementary School
December 4, 2024
6:30 p.m.

School Board Members: Troy Bressette, Chair; Garrett Abare; Rebecca Cummings; Darlene Greenwood; and David Wilkerson

Superintendent: Chip McGee

Assistant Superintendent: Sarah Marandos

Business Administrator: Deb Mahoney

Absent: Mya Belanger and Alexia Nou

Also in Attendance: PMS Principal Zack Medlock

I. Public Session:

A. Call to Order:

6:30 p.m. - Chair Troy Bressette called the meeting to order, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Public Input at 6:31 p.m.:

No one came forward.

Public Input closed at 6:31 p.m.

David Wilkerson entered the meeting at 6:33 p.m. and Garrett Abare entered at 6:34 p.m.

C. Opening Remarks:

a. Superintendent:

Superintendent McGee informed the Board of the early release scheduled for next Wednesday. Dr. McGee said that the admin team had been working on emergency planning in conjunction with the Police Department. He noted from an operational standpoint the District has received 18 applications for the Facilities Director position.

Dr. Marandos mentioned that she had the pleasure of coming from the Festival of Trees, where the PHS Choir sang and the PMS Choir had a bake sale.

Upcoming concerts include:

- a. **Tuesday, December 10** Winter Concert at PES, 6:00 p.m.
- b. **Thursday, December 12** Winter Concert at PMS, 6:30 p.m.
- c. **Tuesday, December 17** Winter Concert at PHS, 6:30 p.m.

II. Presentations:

A. None

III. Main Issues:

A. PMS Student Connection Presentation:

Dr. McGee reminded the Board that they had asked for information on the Student Connection Goal. He added that Mr. Medlock had informed him that he was prepared to make a presentation to the Board regarding Student Connection and the Yondr pouch.

Principal Medlock began by thanking the Board for the opportunity to discuss ongoing work in PMS more thoroughly than typical memos allow. Mr. Medlock thanked Dr. McGee, Dr. Marandos, and Ms. Northrup, as well as the staff members who contributed to developing and expanding these initiatives.

Mr. Medlock introduced two main topics: the **Student Connection Goal** and the **Yondr Survey Data**. These initiatives stemmed from efforts to enhance data-driven decision-making within the newly formed data team, led by Karena Carten. Acknowledgment was given to the exceptional contributions of 7th-grade teacher Elicia Zecchini and 6th-grade science teacher Cheyenne Rancourt, whose skills in data visualization have significantly advanced the team's work.

Student Connection Goal

Mr. Medlock emphasized the critical importance of fostering connections between students and their school environment. Connections were categorized into three areas: trusted adults, peer relationships, and involvement in clubs or activities. Baseline data revealed that **87%** of students identified a trusted adult in the school, providing a foundation for targeted efforts to support those who did not. While many students reported involvement in activities, there was a **25%** opportunity to increase participation among students not currently engaged.

To address these gaps, the Guidance Department has begun working with students who lack peer connections, and staff have been encouraged to engage students more actively. Mr. Medlock highlighted various efforts, including a new Activities Club initiated by teachers Judy Shanteler and Heidi Beineke to involve younger students in leadership roles.

New Activities

Several new clubs and activities have been introduced this year:

- a. Flag Football, Dance Team, and a Computer Tech Club that focuses on hardware skills.
- b. A highly successful E-Sports Gaming Club, which currently involves 25 students and has the potential to expand.
- c. The revival of community-centered events like a haunted house and the school's participation in the Old Home Day parade.

Mr. Medlock said that student-driven ideas were being supported through a newly formalized process for proposing clubs, enabling them to work with advisors and present their plans to school leadership.

Progress and Feedback

The Board expressed their enthusiasm for the initiatives, commending the school's efforts to foster belonging and student engagement. Specific praise was directed at the focus on student-driven activities and LMS' strategy to use data for improvements.

Dr. Marandos discussed how the District informs the staff members if they were identified as trusted adults by students. This practice has prompted teachers, including those in Unified Arts, to maintain connections with students even when their schedules change.

Future Goals

Mr. Wilkerson asked if PMS was monitoring the trends in student connection across grades to ensure engagement increases over time. Mr. Medlock agreed, acknowledging the need to analyze data by grade to see the progression and refine approaches to transition support for incoming students.

Mr. Wilkerson underscored the significance of making school an enjoyable and connected space for students, laying the groundwork for future success and engagement.

The discussion concluded with a review of the survey process. While some students may not have fully understood the purpose of the survey, efforts will be made to improve communication regarding its goals and the school's broader initiatives.

The Board acknowledged the importance of gathering student input and feedback through surveys. Challenges in engaging middle school students were highlighted, including difficulties in gaining trust and addressing questions that

were off-topic or unexpected. Despite these challenges, the results of the survey were seen as a logical step toward future improvements, such as helping students foster engagement and reinforce the value of contributions.

Ms. Cummings suggested that LMS explore a mentorship program where eighth graders mentor sixth graders, providing a sense of connection and support as younger students transition into middle school. The suggestion was compared to a similar program in high school that left lasting positive impressions on both younger and older students. Mr. Bressette commented that he observed this type of informal mentorship occurring naturally within the athletic programs.

Mr. Bressette thanked Mr. Medlock for his leadership in soliciting student input and advancing initiatives aligned with strategic goals. The Board had expressed unanimous support for emphasizing student involvement during its Strategic Planning session in August, and this progress was appreciated.

Mr. Medlock reported a **75% participation rate** in clubs or athletics, including the three or four new clubs formed recently. These clubs emerged after the survey, with students showing great enthusiasm to start activities promptly. The survey itself had a high response rate, with approximately **260 responses out of 340 students**, which provided a solid data foundation for assessing student connections and interests.

a. The PMS baseline results:

- i. **87%** of students reported a trusted adult by name.
- ii. **98%** of students reported having friends at school.
- iii. **75%** of students reported being involved in a club or sport at PMS.

Mr. Bressette inquired about the cause-and-effect relationship between the survey and the formation of new clubs. Mr. Medlock explained that while some student suggestions likely stemmed from the survey, others might have coincidentally aligned with students' seasonal or emerging interests, such as extending football activities.

The conversation briefly shifted to other extracurricular opportunities, including potential interest in introducing lacrosse. Although implementing lacrosse would require additional planning and resources, the suggestion was noted for future consideration.

The discussion concluded with the Board thanking Mr. Medlock for the progress made so far.

B. Yondr Survey:

The meeting shifted to a presentation regarding the Yondr pouch survey. Mr. Medlock shared his initial observations about the Yondr program, highlighting its impact on student behavior and engagement. While students expressed mixed feelings about not having access to their phones, **65%** indicated that the initiative has positively contributed to a better school environment. This statistic was identified as a key takeaway.

Mr. Medlock noted that the teacher's feedback showed significant improvements, including reduced vandalism, less hallway traffic, and greater classroom engagement. Teachers overwhelmingly supported the program, citing increased focus among students.

A comparison of survey data revealed that sixth graders, who lacked prior experience in the school under different policies, were not asked to answer questions on year-to-year changes. However, even the most reluctant students acknowledged an improved atmosphere, further validating the program's effectiveness.

The Board raised several questions regarding logistical challenges. Mr. Abare inquired about alternatives, such as phone racks, but it was clarified that Yondr's approach ensures uniformity and minimizes classroom disruptions. Locking phones twice daily provides a structure that other methods lack.

Mr. Abare asked what the policy was for when students say that they do not have phones. Mr. Medlock stated that the school maintains a document of such students to avoid unnecessary inquiries. Parents communicate directly with the school in cases of temporary phone absence.

Mr. Abare asked how GMS dealt with situations where practice was canceled, and students needed to get picked up. Mr. Medlock pointed out that the office landline has become a learning tool for students unfamiliar with its use. He noted that it has been a unique process for the students.

Mr. Abare asked Mr. Medlock if there was any feedback that he received that he was unable to handle. Mr. Medlock's indicated that some students occasionally misplace their Yondr pouches, the problem was comparable to losing personal items like sweatshirts. Staff have assisted students in retracing their steps, and the frequency of such incidents has diminished over time.

Mr. Bressette thanked Mr. Medlock for being open to perpetual feedback.

Dr. McGee expressed gratitude for the community's support and flexibility regarding the initiative. They clarified that while the system has been effective at the middle school level, it was not included in the high school budget for the next year. However, the PHS Student Government's efforts to manage phone use independently were recognized, with plans to continue monitoring the situation.

The Board thanked Mr. Medlock for coming to the meeting.

C. Policy Review:

The Board reviewed the policies listed below.

a. First Reading:

- i. None

b. Second Reading:

- i. EH - Public Access to School District Records
- ii. JLCJA - Emergency Plan for Sports-Related Injuries and Additional Protocols for Athletics Participation.

Mr. Abare moved to approve the policies as presented. Mr. Wilkerson seconded the motion, which passed (5-0-0).

VI. Other:

- A. None

VII. Board Member Reports:

- A. Ms. Greenwood mentioned that it was nice to see the high school's little tree. The contribution was from the Art Department. She also provided a brief mention of the Festival of Trees.

VIII. Consent Agenda:

A. Enrollment Report:

- a. Dr. McGee provided an enrollment report from December 1, 2024.

	Pre-K	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
11/1/24	64	99	129	107	135	107	111	123	113	115	103	118	144	146
12/1/24	66	99	128	107	134	107	109	123	112	116	103	116	144	146
Change	2	0	-1	0	-1	0	-2	0	-1	1	0	-2	0	0

- a. PES has 750 students
- b. PMS has 351 students
- c. PHS has 509 students
- d. The District has 1610 students

B. Adoption of Minutes

- a. November 20, 2024 – Draft Public Minutes

C. Vendor and Payroll Manifests:

- | | | |
|----|----------|----------------|
| a. | 562 | \$685,752.56 |
| b. | AP120424 | \$1,033,312.99 |
| c. | BFPMS75 | \$1,364,418.69 |
| d. | PAY562P | \$18,744.16 |

D. Staffing Updates:

a. **Leaves:**

- i. None

b. **Resignations:**

- i. None

c. **Retirements:**

- i. None

d. **Nominations:**

- i. None

Mr. Wilkerson motioned to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion, which passed (5-0-0).

E. Correspondence & Information:

- a. None

IX. Future Agenda Planning:

Dr. McGee acknowledged that tonight's meeting was brief, but the meeting on December 18 would be full.

X. Future Meetings:

- A. 12/18/2024 – 6:30 p.m. School Board Meeting @ PES Library
B. 01/08/2025 – 6:30 p.m. School Board Meeting @ PES Library

XI. Adjournment:

Mr. Wilkerson moved to adjourn the School Board Meeting at 7:13 p.m. Mr. Abare seconded the motion, which passed (5-0-0).

Respectfully Submitted,
Matthew Sullivan
School Board Recording Secretary