

Pelham School Board Meeting
Pelham Elementary School
December 18, 2024
6:30 p.m.

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

Superintendent: Chip McGee

Assistant Superintendent: Sarah Marandos

Business Administrator: Deb Mahoney

Student Representatives: Alexia Nou

Absent: Mya Belanger

Also in Attendance: Deb Jarvis, PHS English Teacher; Darrin Coleman, PHS Social Studies Teacher; and Adam Barriere, PHS Assistant Principal

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 6:32 p.m.

C. Opening Remarks:

a. Superintendent:

Superintendent McGee noted that the past week-and-a-half of school events celebrated the District's Music Programs. He mentioned that PES had an elementary chorus concert, PMS had a chorus and band concert, and PHS had a chorus and band concert. Dr. McGee expressed appreciation and pride for the talent and dedication of the students and staff. He also highlighted that the week before winter break remained active, with notable events such as the junior American Literature project presentations.

The Board welcomed a surprise visitor, Santa Claus, who appreciated the Board's work and extended holiday cheer. Santa's visit added a unique and festive element to the evening.

b. Student Representatives:

Ms. Nou acknowledged the quiet nature of the holiday season and school events.

II. Presentations:

A. PHS International Field Trip Update

International Field Trip Update

The Board received an update on the planned international field trip to Greece and Rome, which the high school organized. Ms. Jarvis and Mr. Coleman presented the details alongside two students.

Highlights of the trip include:

- a. A **nine-day itinerary** over February break, with visits to historic landmarks in Rome, such as the Colosseum, Vatican City, and Pompeii, followed by travel to Greece, including Athens.
- b. **89 participants**, including **73 students**, chaperones, and some parents.
- c. Comprehensive preparations include anti-theft procedures, packing guidelines, and adherence to District policies for safety and conduct.

Two students shared their excitement about the trip, noting it would be their first international experience. They expressed gratitude for the opportunity and reflected on how the trip was introduced in their classes. One student mentioned that her parents were very excited for her to go on the trip. The other students noted his excitement about the trip since Ms. Jarvis mentioned it during English class.

Mr. Bressette inquired about fundraising efforts for the trip. One student shared her participation in a summer musical bingo event, while the other student noted that scheduling conflicts prevented him from joining fundraising activities.

Mr. Bressette commended the detailed planning and was impressed by the growth in participation since the initial proposal. Ms. Greenwood appreciated the inclusion of contingency plans, such as COVID-19 procedures, to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.

Mr. Abare asked if there were any rules regarding where the staff and students could eat. Mr. Coleman stated that the hotels would provide breakfast, and the dinners are scheduled by Education First (EF). Lunch is the only meal that the students and staff will have to find places to eat, but a tour guide will be present.

Due to the number of students and staff going on the trip, Mr. Coleman mentioned that there will be two buses. He will oversee one bus, and Ms. Jarvis will oversee the other.

Mr. Abare asked how Ms. Jarvis and Mr. Coleman decided on Greece for an international field trip. Ms. Jarvis stated that she teaches the Odyssey, and Mr. Coleman teaches an Archeology class. He also did an archeological excavation in Cyprus.

Ms. Cummings recommended swimming in the water while in Greece.

Mr. Bressette asked if all the adult travelers had been vetted for the trip. Mr. Coleman said that every adult from Pelham has been vetted. Ms. Jarvis and Mr. Coleman are scheduled to attend a training session in Spain over the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend. The training will cover emergency preparedness, including handling situations where a traveler goes missing. The sessions combine classroom learning with practical exercises in tourist areas like Toledo.

Mr. Bressette asked Ms. Mahoney if the COI from EF was on file with the District. Dr. McGee noted that he was positive that they had it, but he would double-check.

The presentation concluded with the Board expressing enthusiasm for the trip's educational and cultural value and gratitude to the organizers and participants for their efforts.

III. Main Issues:

A. PHS Program of Studies:

The meeting shifted to the PHS Program of Studies. PHS Assistant Principal Adam Barriere and PHS Principal Dawn Mead provided a detailed overview with key updates.

Mr. Barriere reviewed the document provided to the Board's packet. He thanked the PHS Counselors who work with the Program of Studies and enforce the program.

Community Service Requirements (page 9):

- a. Juniors must complete 20 hours of community service to be eligible for parking passes.
- b. Seniors must complete their Community Service hours to participate in privileges such as Department passes and Senior Activities.
- c. Pre-approval of community service activities is now required to avoid disputes over eligibility.
- d. Community Service hours cannot be performed during school hours.

Financial Aid Guidance (page 10):

- a. The requirement for seniors to complete the FAFSA has been rescinded. However, the District will continue to provide resources and information on financial aid.

Academic Supports (page 13):

- a. Math and Literacy labs have been consolidated under a broader "Academic Lab" umbrella, making resources more accessible. This helps to codify the importance of these resources for students to gain additional support.

Alternative Learning Credits (page 13):

- a. Students pursuing VLACS and Independent College Credit Requests must complete a pre-approval form. Credit will be awarded and noted on the PHS transcript upon completing the course and submitting an official transcript. Only VLACS grades will be included in a student's GPA calculation.

Ms. Greenwood raised concerns about excluding external coursework from GPA calculations, especially for weighted grading. Historical practices and challenges in standardizing weights for varied courses were cited as reasons for the current policy.

The Board engaged in a detailed discussion regarding updates to the Program of Studies. Topics included GPA calculations, independent study policies, early college credits, and course recovery procedures.

GPA Calculation Inclusion:

Dr. McGee and Dr. Marandos reviewed the policies concerning including grades from college credit programs in school GPAs. It was noted that such inclusion could lead to inconsistencies when comparing students in competitive contexts like valedictorian rankings. The consensus was maintaining the policy of excluding college credit grades from GPA calculations to avoid discrepancies.

Deadlines for Independent Study Requests:

- a. Deadlines for submitting independent study forms were revised. Previously, the deadline was the end of the school year. The updated policy sets the deadlines to:
 - i. 10 days before the end of the school year for the first semester of the upcoming year.
 - ii. End of Quarter 1 for the second semester.

Mr. Barriere stated that Counselors now have sufficient time to review and process these forms to integrate them into student schedules.

Independent Study Guarantees:

- a. Clarifications were made regarding independent studies, ensuring they are scheduled during regular school hours.
- b. The revised policy does not guarantee that approved independent studies will fit into the student's schedule, emphasizing the importance of honoring students' efforts in designing these studies.

Early College Credit Forms:

- a. Students interested in taking independent college credit courses must complete the "Independent College Credit Form."

159 **Course Recovery Updates:**

- 160 a. A previously offered after-school credit recovery block is no longer available. Instead, in-course and end-
161 of-course recovery procedures will align with current practices. Language updates in the policy now
162 reflect this shift.

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164 **Career Pathways and Course Updates (Page 15):**

- 165 a. Career pathways and course offerings have been updated to align with the District's current curriculum.
166 Obsolete courses have been removed, and descriptions of new and existing courses have been revised.
167 The Board confirmed that pathways will be reviewed annually to ensure alignment with course
168 availability.

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170 **Course Selection Process (Page 40):**

- 171 a. Students are required to submit course selection sheets. If they fail to do so, Counselors will select
172 courses on their behalf to ensure schedule completion. A new process allows students to meet with
173 Counselors during the first five days of the quarter to discuss schedule changes, replacing the previous
174 cumbersome request form system.

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176 **Early Graduation Application Deadlines (Page 41):**

- 177 a. Discrepancies in early graduation deadlines were resolved. Students must now submit applications and
178 supporting documents by the end of Quarter 3 of their junior year, ensuring consistency across all
179 documentation.

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181 **Course Description Changes (Pages 42 and 89):**

- 182 a. All course description changes align with the proposed changes at the November meeting.
183 b. Beginning on page 89, Pinkerton Academy updated all the course descriptions for the CTE courses that it
184 offers students.

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186 Mr. Abare asked if the District could set a goal for students in their sophomore year so they are not up against the
187 Community Service decisions during their junior year. Ms. Mead noted challenges such as age restrictions (the
188 minimum age for many opportunities is 16) and transportation dependence. While distributing service hours
189 across all four years was considered, no immediate changes were implemented.

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191 Mr. Bressette asked if PHS carved out the recovery process within the studies program. Ms. Mead noted that the
192 Board had requested a review and revision of language related to both in-course and post-course recovery. This
193 review was necessary to tighten the existing language, as the original program of studies referenced a "fifth block"
194 funded by a grant no longer available.

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196 The updated language aims to ensure clarity and alignment with current practices. Ms. Mead emphasized the
197 importance of engaging teachers in this process, recognizing their role in implementing recovery strategies
198 tailored to individual student needs.

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200 Mr. Bressette expressed appreciation for the effort to identify and address this opportunity for improvement,
201 emphasizing its importance in alignment with District goals. To proceed, Mr. Bressette suggested that the Board
202 agree to approve the program of studies as presented, with the understanding that an addendum and amendment
203 will be introduced following further discussion on the recovery process.

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205 Ms. Greenwood moved to approve the Program of Studies as presented. Mr. Abare seconded the motion, which passed (4-
206 0-0).

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208 Dr. McGee stated that the recovery section was not included in the motion.

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210 The Board thanked Mr. Barriere and Ms. Mead for participating and wished them a joyful holiday season.
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Reconsideration:

The meeting shifted to a discussion on the review of the District's budget. Ms. Mahoney noted that the budget development process started in May and was finalized in August before being presented to the Board. Since the school year had not commenced at the time of presentation, conditions, and needs occasionally evolve as the year progresses. A review of the District's current situation, particularly in Special Education, revealed no recommended changes to the budget at this time. Ms. Mahoney mentioned discussing this with the Special Education Director and confirmed no adjustments were necessary.

Mr. Bressette inquired about transportation adjustments linked to a prior downward adjustment in Special Education for Out-Of-District (OOD) placements. The administration confirmed that this had been reviewed and that there was no room for further reductions. The Board was satisfied with this explanation and moved to the next item.

The second item concerned the boilers at PHS. Ms. Mahoney stated that the Budget Committee had previously removed boiler replacement from the proposed budget, recommending an independent assessment. A professional HVAC company unaffiliated with the District conducted the evaluation, inspecting both boiler rooms. Their report advised eventual replacement but did not indicate an immediate need for action, either this winter or the next.

The Board acknowledged the risks, including boiler redundancy, corrosion, and the obsolescence of certain parts, but agreed that the risks did not necessitate immediate reconsideration of the budget item. Ongoing monitoring and maintenance were recommended.

The independent report highlighted three primary issues:

- a. **Corrosion:** Significant corrosion could lead to leaks and eventual boiler failure, though no immediate risk was identified.
- b. **Flue Damage:** The shared flue for both boilers, which extends 23 feet above the building, shows signs of corrosion due to condensation. While temporary repairs are ongoing, replacement is considered extensive and cost-intensive.
- c. **Obsolete Parts:** Certain sections of the boilers are no longer supported with available parts, raising concerns about potential delays in repair during future breakdowns.

The Board expressed appreciation for the diligence in obtaining an independent assessment and the transparency in addressing potential risks. They requested to be informed of any costs or developments related to the boilers. Mr. Bressette commented on the possible need to secure competitive quotes for boiler replacement and issue an RFP for future budgeting cycles. Mr. Abare suggested that presenting a more economical alternative to the **\$500,000** figure initially quoted might be more palatable to the Budget Committee.

The administration noted that the following steps include presenting a finalized warrant article and incorporating adjustments from the Budget Committee at the January 8, 2025, meeting. The Board thanked the team for navigating these challenges while recruiting a new Facilities Director. Interim Director Karen Churchill and other staff members were commended for stepping up during this transitional period.

B. Policy Review:

The Board reviewed the policies listed below.

a. First Reading:

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|----------|---|
| i. IGE | - Parental Objections to Specific Course Material |
| ii. IHAM | - Health Education and Exemption from Instruction |
| iii. IKF | - High School Graduation Requirements |
| iv. JCA | - Change of School Assignment Best Interest and Manifest Educational Hardship |

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b. Second Reading:

- i. None

Mr. Abare commented that he liked Policy IGE because parents are not surprised by their students' learning.

VI. Other:

- A. None

VII. Board Member Reports:

- A. None

VIII. Consent Agenda:

A. Adoption of Minutes

- a. December 4, 2024 – Draft Public Minutes

B. Vendor and Payroll Manifests:

- a. 563 \$649,861.94
- b. AP121824 \$943,431.96
- d. PAY563P \$328,242.16

C. Correspondence & Information:

- a. None

D. Enrollment Report:

- a. None

E. Staffing Updates:

a. Leaves:

- i. None

b. Resignations:

- i. Leslie Fernandez PES LTS – Grade 1

c. Retirements:

- i. None

d. Nominations:

- i. Deborah Hovey PMS Reading Specialist

Dr. McGee acknowledged PES Principal Jessica VanVranken for her exceptional efforts in managing Long-Term Substitutes. The Board recognized that juggling substitute assignments is challenging, and Jess has handled it beautifully.

Dr. McGee mentioned LTS Leslie Fernandez's resignation due to personnel reasons. A discussion followed regarding a significant recruitment success: the hiring of a Reading Specialist and Special Educator with middle school experience. The candidate was described as a “unicorn” due to her unique qualifications and enthusiasm. Deborah Hovey is expected to start at Pelham Memorial School in 2025, pending the Board’s acceptance. The Board expressed excitement and gratitude for this hiring, referring to it as a "Christmas miracle."

Ms. Greenwood moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Abare seconded the motion, which passed (4-0-0).

IX. Future Agenda Planning:

- None

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312 **X. Future Meetings:**
313 A. 01/08/2025 – 6:30 p.m. School Board Meeting @ PES Library
314 B. 01/22/2025 – 6:30 p.m. School Board Meeting @ PES Library
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317 **XI. Non-Public Session:**

318 (c) Matters that, if discussed in public, would likely adversely affect the reputation of any person other than a
319 public body member unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to any
320 application for assistance, tax abatement, or waiver of a fee, fine, or other levy based on the applicant's inability to
321 pay or poverty.
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323 Mr. Abare moved to enter non-public 91-A:3, II (c)—Reputation 7:24 p.m. Ms. Greenwood seconded the motion, which
324 passed (4-0-0).
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- 326 a. T. Bressette - Aye
327 b. G. Abare - Aye
328 c. R. Cummings - Aye
329 d. D. Greenwood - Aye
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332 **XII. Reconvene:**

333 7:40 p.m.
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336 **XI. Adjournment:**

337 Mr. Bressette moved to adjourn the School Board Meeting at 7:41 p.m. Mr. Abare seconded the motion, which passed (4-0-
338 0).
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342 Respectfully Submitted,
343 Matthew Sullivan
344 School Board Recording Secretary
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