

BOARD

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teachers who will have the resources in their classrooms and an immersive training for two district representatives, third grade teacher Angie Bergner and fifth grade teacher Carmen Morgan, who will attend the coordinator training in Boston in July.

The program will be integrated into Tuscola classrooms in three levels, the first is EiE for kindergarten that introduces the young students to the concepts of asking questions and problem solving using stories and reasoning skills. The next level, Engineering is Elementary, will be pieced into the science curriculums through the grade school levels. Morgan noted that this program will not replace the curriculum that is in place, but, since the program is divided into standards, it will be used as a culminating STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) project at the close of specific units.

Finally, the sixth through eighth grades will have the opportunity to introduce the curriculum in the after school science club in what is called Engineering Everywhere, which is broken into several lessons and experiments that can be completed in the hour the club meets after school.

“What we really want to do is to create a generation of problem solvers right here in Tuscola,” Bennett said.

Morgan and Bergner thanked Bennett for her work on securing the grant. The three-year grant will be rolled out in full force next school year in Tuscola and in the consecutive years, Bennett hopes to reach out to another district within

the county while Tuscola continues work with the curriculum. The work to secure the grant has taken about six months, and the new resources would come to the district at no cost.

The board asked Bennett, Bergner, and Morgan to report back following the training, and they looked forward to seeing the program put into the classrooms.

In other business, with only three meetings of service left, the current Tuscola school board of education, began a discussion to possibly change the way school board members are elected.

School officials have called the upcoming election cycle an oddity. That is because no more than three board members can reside within the same Township and Range, which means under the current Township and Range election process, only two of the five candidates can be elected from the township and range that includes the majority of the city limits of Tuscola. However, that will still leave one seat available that cannot be filled by one of those five candidates because of where they live. An appointment will be made by the incoming board.

Several board members say they are in favor of an at-large scenario that would allow the top popular vote getters to earn a seat at the table.

Supt. Michael Smith noted that there are pros and cons to each process. For example, the township and range arrangement makes it unlikely one neighborhood, family, or section of the district would fill the board. It also requires both city and rural board members have a seat. However, the at-large scenario may have the potential to allow the quality board members a seat rather than a board based on resi-

dency.

The referendum wouldn't be placed before the community for a vote until the April 2020 election. Board members suggested polling the community to gather a general consensus of what they would like to see happen.

Superintendent report

Smith, who joined the meeting following senior night recognition for his daughter's class during the girls' basketball game, gave a positive outlook for the current budget cycle. He said the state has issued a decent CPPRT payment, although the consistent worry with the community is the sales tax levels allocated to the school's building and maintenance fund.

Board Member Toby Ring noted that he's heard from city officials that the new owners of the mall are actively looking for new tenants, which is contrary to much rumor circulating through town and social media.

“City officials have said that the rumors on social media are much worse than reality, and while the new owners have been difficult to contact, they understand that they are looking for new stores,” Ring reported.

The board received positive notes from the state regarding finances and received “recognition” for their efforts. Smith said to improve their standings, the cash on hand would need to improve to a full school year. The board currently has 156 days cash on hand.

Smith also noted that with talk of minimum wage increasing to \$15 under Gov. JB Prizker, bookkeeper Jeri Quinn tallied up the potential cost could be around \$38,000 annually to the district for increased wages. Finally, Smith added that the an ongoing request has been made to rekey the interior doors on

the three school buildings. Smith said the work could be completed for an estimated \$194,000. He said he plans to work on better pricing in the coming weeks and report back with a timeline on when the project would be feasible.

Principal Reports

TCHS Principal Steve Fiscus recognized the list of early TCHS graduates including: Josh Haste (Parkland), Ethan Kamerer (Marines, following surgery), Kenneth Lucas, Emily Mills (Parkland), Jade Nixon (employment), Emily Ray (Lake Land), Brandi Reinhart (military), Cole Robinson, Katie Smith (Lake Land), Bethany Snyder (Parkland), and Summer Wilson (Parkland). The list was approved by the board, and they will be invited back to participate in graduation with their classmates in May.

He also gave the board an update on adjustments to the math curriculum in upcoming school years and noted he would have more details during the February meeting regarding a new state-mandated math class. He also mentioned the work the school is doing to decrease unexcused tardies. The senior class is doing the best to decrease tardies in the spring semester.

Fiscus recognized the boys' and girls' basketball teams post-season tournaments and added that FFA and FCCLA will host teacher appreciation lunches in February.

Finally Fiscus noted that Emily Kemp and Nathan Pollock will be the high school students recognized during the IPA breakfast at iHotel on Feb. 20.

East Prairie Principal Carol Munson congratulated the school wide spelling bee winners: Catie Gibson, Braxton Moody, and Jazmine West and alternate

Mason Veach. Munson also congratulated the boys' basketball teams on successful seasons and noted their post season tournaments are underway. And, finally, according to Munson, the eighth grade class attended a Career Conference at iHotel in Champaign and toured Parkland College on Jan. 24.

North Ward Principal Jason Wallace reported that homework club has been successful this school year, and evaluations are underway. He thanked the board for the opportunity to work on the Multi-Tiered System of Support process during early out days, and he said that if in the future the board considers additional days for teacher collaboration, the time would be used well. If weather wasn't a factor in the coming days, North Ward students were set to celebrate the 100th day of School Friday, Feb. 2. Wallace also mentioned that students are excited about Kindness Week activities, and curriculum work focused on literacy continues.

Finally, board member Tim Mooney also noted that, first, the board plans to host an open house for the school employees and the community to welcome incoming superintendent Gary Alexander. Mooney and board member Toby Ring are working through the details of the event that will take place Sunday, March 3 at Ironhorse Clubhouse. Second, Mooney noted that he and board president Christi Boyer met with Tuscola Educator Association presidents Janice Fogerson and Jeanie Craddock to discuss details of hosting a candidate forum for the six school board candidates. Mooney told the board and candidates to look for an invitation in the coming

weeks. Board members Boyer and Marty Marx were absent.

The board also:

- Accepted donations from anonymous in the amount of \$7,500 for East Prairie Middle School; Brad and Terry Hornaday in the amount of \$100 for Help-A-Child; Ian and Suzanne Rominger in the amount of \$200 for Drama; Douglas County Farm Bureau in the amount of \$300 for FFA Scholarship; and Kiwanis in the amount of \$244 for Help-A-Child. The East Prairie donation was put to good use for the purchase of Chromebooks and various classroom/curriculum supplies for a variety of class levels and departments.

- Approved an activity fund for the TCHS Gay Straight Alliance.

- Approved the IASB December policies.

- Approved the first reading of the annual Risk Management Policy.

- Approved the destruction of closed session recordings from August 2016 to July 2017. (Legally these can be destroyed after 18 months).

- Approved the 2019 seniority list, which has been reviewed by teachers.

- Approved the consent agenda that included the minutes of the Monday, Dec. 17 meeting, bills in the amount of \$929,205.69 (\$133,000 of which is for the North Ward chiller), the approval of treasurer and bookkeeper reports; and the resignation of aide Lauren Moss.

- Entered into closed session to discuss personnel and student conduct.

- Employed Angela Buhrmester as an aide and Jennifer Miller as a maternity substitute for Stephanie Goodwin.

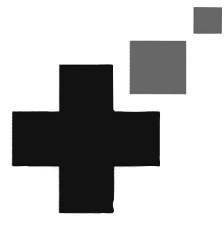
- Adjourned until the Monday, Feb. 25 meeting.

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