



**READING BOARD OF EDUCATION  
BOARD WORK SESSION MEETING  
OCTOBER 2, 2024**

The Board of Education of the Reading Community City School District met in Regular Work Session at Reading Community City School, 810 East Columbia Avenue on October 2, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was called to order by the President Beth Wernery at 5:30 p.m.

Roll Call: Present Five: Alycia Bemmes, Crystal Menner, Jim Perdue, Amy Thamann, Beth Wernery

**In Attendance:**

Dr. Damon Davis, Ms. Jennifer Burke, Mr. Mark Edwards, Ms. Becky Johnson, Ms. Gina Sansone, Mr. Michael Howton, Ms. Jen McNeil.

**Motion 267-24 Approve Agenda**

It was moved by Jim Perdue, seconded by Amy Thamann to approve the agenda as written.

Roll Call: Ayes Five: Alycia Bemmes, Crystal Menner, Jim Perdue, Amy Thamann, Beth Wernery  
Nays: None  
The President declared the motion carried.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:**

None.

**PRESENTATIONS**

**Blue Devil Hero Award**

The Board meeting began with the recognition of Jen McNeil, Elementary Reading Specialist, receiving the Blue Devil Hero Award for September. The award was introduced by the Dr. Damon Davis who explained the purpose in acknowledging staff members who go above and beyond their regular duties. Ms. McNeil was honored for stepping in when a first-grade teacher was unexpectedly unable to start the school year. Drawing on her experience as a former classroom teacher, she took on the responsibility of establishing a strong classroom community and ensuring a smooth transition for the returning teacher and students. Ms. McNeil was praised for her dedication, attending open house events, setting up the classroom, and taking care of both her colleague and students. Her ability to seamlessly implement curriculum and maintain high standards in her temporary role made her a standout nominee.

**Report Card Data and Building Goals – Reading Elementary**

Ms. Sansone, Principal of Reading Elementary School, presented the Elementary Report Card for the 2023-2024 school year. She proudly shared that the school had improved its overall rating from 3.0 Stars to 3.5 Stars. The report card evaluates four components: achievement, progress, gap closing, and early literacy. Sansone provided a detailed breakdown of each category. For achievement, the school earned two stars, which reflects the performance index of students on state tests. While the index had shown only minor improvements, Ms. Sansone emphasized how close the school was to earning three stars in this area. She also discussed efforts to strengthen reading and math instruction, particularly through teacher training in Orton-Gillingham methods, Amplify tutoring, implementation of the new "MyView" reading curriculum and a math tutor.

In the progress component, the school showed significant improvement, moving from 3 Stars to 4 Stars. Ms. Sansone explained that this rating measures the academic growth of students over the year, indicating that students were making more than a year's worth of progress, which she attributed to targeted intervention strategies. The school also scored well in gap closing, earning four stars, which



demonstrates how well the school is meeting the needs of different student subgroups, including those with disabilities and students from low-income backgrounds. However, in early literacy, the school received only 2 stars. Ms. Sansone outlined several initiatives aimed at addressing this, including amplified tutoring, small group instruction, and data-driven interventions to ensure students were receiving the support they needed.

#### Report Card Data and Building Goals – Reading Junior Senior High

The final presentation was given by Mr. Howton, Principal of Reading Junior Senior High School, who discussed the Junior Senior High School Report Card. Mr. Howton opened by emphasizing the importance of aligning the school's goals with the district's focus on learning, leadership, and service. He explained that the staff is committed to creating opportunities for student leadership and service while improving academic outcomes. The school maintained its 3 Star rating overall, but saw progress in several areas. Like the Elementary school, the Junior High showed gains in the progress component, moving from 3 Stars to Four. This reflects that students were growing academically at a rate that exceeded state expectations.

Mr. Howton addressed areas where the school did not perform as well, such as gap closing and the graduation rate, where the school experienced a decline in its ratings. The school's gap closing score dropped, reflecting challenges in meeting the performance expectations for subgroups such as English language learners and students with disabilities. Mr. Howton also highlighted the school's chronic absenteeism as a major factor affecting these ratings. The graduation rate dipped to two stars, though Howton projected that next year's cohort would show improvement, with a projected graduation rate of over 90%.

Mr. Howton concluded by discussing future initiatives, particularly around college, career, workforce, and military readiness, a category that will be rated in future report cards. He outlined plans to expand credentialing opportunities for students, including partnerships with local colleges and programs that would allow students to earn industry-recognized certifications while still in high school. He stressed the importance of continuing to develop programs that align with student interests and keep them engaged, which he believes will improve both academic outcomes and attendance rates in the future.

#### BOARD COMMITTEE UPDATES

**Building & Grounds** – Next meeting scheduled November 6, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. in the Media Center

**Finance Committee** Next meeting scheduled for November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. in the Media Center.

**Policy** – Next meeting is scheduled for October 30, 2024 @10:30 a.m. in the Board Office.

#### BOARD DISCUSSION

##### District Calendar Proposal

Dr. Davis began by discussing the proposed calendars for the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 school years. The new calendars were presented for their first reading, with a formal vote scheduled for the next board meeting on October 16. Dr. Davis emphasized the importance of providing consistency in start and end dates as well as mid-year days off into the academic schedule to help families and staff plan ahead.

A key focus of the new calendars is maintaining the current structure of completing 1<sup>st</sup> semester final exams before winter break. The proposed calendar start date for both years mirrors this school year with staff returning around August 14 with students grades 7-12 starting on Tuesday, August 19. Grades 1-6



begin the following day, and preschool and kindergarten would start on Thursday. Dr. Davis noted that this staggered start helps students adjust more smoothly.

A change Dr. Davis highlighted was the relocation of two Professional Development (PD) days to align with the Thanksgiving holiday. The goal of this shift is to provide staff with dedicated time for PD while minimizing disruptions to instruction during a traditionally short week. Additionally, Spring Break for the 2025-2026 school year planned for first week of April, aligning with the Easter holiday. He pointed out that the 2026-2027 school year would end before Memorial Day, unlike the SY24/25 year, due to the way Memorial Day falls on the calendar. Dr. Davis also noted that delayed start days for Junior and Senior High students would continue as part of the calendar structure.

#### Graduation Gown Changes

Dr. Davis discussed potential changes to graduation gowns. He reminded the board that this conversation began in June, with students voicing a desire for more unity and less stress around choosing between the traditional blue and white gowns, which had been gender-specific. The goal of the proposed change is to foster a greater sense of togetherness among graduates, aligning with the school's Blue Devil pride.

Dr. Davis presented several options for new gowns, all of which feature the school colors of blue and white. One design included blue gowns with white accents, while another was a simpler all-blue gown. Dr. Davis noted that the intent is to unify students while still reflecting the school's identity, and the new gowns could even be passed down among siblings, saving families money. He emphasized that no final decision had been made and that student input was critical to the process. To that end, the district plans to show samples to students and gather their feedback through surveys. Dr. Davis expressed that the most important aspect of this change is that students feel proud and comfortable on their graduation day, with their voices guiding the decision.

#### DISTRICT REPORT

##### BASA Conference Highlights

Finally, Dr. Davis provided a recap of the BASA Conference he and Mr. Edwards attended in Columbus. He shared insights from the event, particularly those from Stephen Dackin, the Director of the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce. Mr. Dackin spoke about the evolving landscape of education in Ohio, particularly the increasing importance of career and technical education (CTE) and the state's shift toward preparing students for a variety of post-high school pathways, not just traditional four-year college degrees.

Dr. Davis noted that 69% of students nationwide are now choosing not to pursue a two- or four-year college degree, and by 2030, 60% of jobs will require some form of education beyond high school but less than a four-year degree. This reinforces the District's ongoing work to prepare students for multiple pathways, including credentialing opportunities in fields such as manufacturing, welding, and computer science. He highlighted how the district's focus on career readiness is aligned with the state's vision for economic mobility, ensuring that students leave high school with practical skills that can lead to immediate employment or further training.

##### Science of Reading

In closing, Dr. Davis expressed pride in how well Reading's staff is embracing new initiatives, especially the district's efforts to implement the Science of Reading. He noted that the staff is on track to complete training by June 2025, which will be a key milestone in ensuring students have the literacy skills necessary for long-term success. He emphasized that the district is ahead of the curve in many respects, especially in its commitment to preparing students for the future, whether through traditional academic routes or alternative career paths.



Dr. Davis's presentation underscored the district's dedication to thoughtful planning and forward-looking initiatives, ensuring that both students and staff are well-supported in the years ahead.

Preschool Update

Sophie Goodman, PreK teacher, will be resigning effective October 1, 2024. Currently, the classroom is being led by a long-term substitute teacher that holds an Ohio Teaching License. The District is working to hire a replacement and for the students to be as least disruptive as possible.

Treasurer's Recommendations

None

NEW BUSINESS

Motion 268-24 Approve Resignation of Sophie Goodman effective 10/1/2024.

It was moved by Amy Thamann, seconded by Jim Perdue to approve Resignation of Sophie Goodman, PreK Teaching effective October 1, 2024.

Roll Call: Ayes Five: Alycia Bemmes, Crystal Menner, Jim Perdue, Amy Thamann, Beth Wernery

Nays: None

The President declared the motion carried

Motion 269-24 Adjournment

It was moved by Amy Thamann, seconded by Jim Perdue to adjourn at 7:16 p.m.

Roll Call: Ayes Five: Alycia Bemmes, Crystal Menner, Jim Perdue, Amy Thamann, Beth Wernery

Nays: None

The President declared the motion carried.

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President, Reading Board of Education

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Attest: Treasurer, Reading Board of Education