

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, November 4, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the library at Reed Intermediate School.

Present:	E. McClure, Chair	J. Robinson
	L. Bittman, Vice Chair	L. Gejda
	K. Fetchick, Secretary	12 Staff
	D. Nanavaty	3 Public
	A. Wiedemann	1 Press
	R. Gaines	
	W. Hart	

Mrs. McClure called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

Item 1 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to approve the consent agenda which included the minutes of October 20 and 27, 2009 and Robert Pattison as volunteer wrestling coach at Newtown High School. Mrs. Bittman seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Mrs. McClure congratulated Richard Gaines, Bill Hart and Debbie Leidlein for being elected to the Board of Education.

Item 2 – Public Participation – none

Item 3 – Reports

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Robinson said that Monday morning there was an oil leak from a boiler in the middle school which was caused by an O-ring that pulled away. It was cleaned up quickly by our staff and the DEP.

Information was given on the school absences due to students out with flu-like symptoms, flu or fever. We are not over 20% except for the high school because the totals included the entire band that was quarantined due to the bus trip they had taken to Pennsylvania.

Central office completed the move to the new municipal center. The sound systems aren't in yet for the meeting room. We will begin to hold our meetings there in January.

Yesterday was a professional development day in the district. A list of the various training was provided.

Dr. Robinson received a proposal from Dr. Chung for an enrollment projection at a cost of \$18,400. She doesn't feel this is a good time to do it given the economic situation and its effect on enrollment.

The CABE conference is November 20 and 21 and she encouraged Board members to attend.

Dr. Robinson said she received a call from the Diocese of Bridgeport that St. Rose School is running over 20% in their absences due to sickness and asked to be notified if we were going to have to close our schools because of this. Also, St. Rose School received status as a Blue Ribbon school and they are having a celebration on November 14. Mr. Hart said he would be attending.

Mrs. Bittman said it would be helpful for parents to identify the symptoms their children have when they call the schools. She asked what we needed from the parent community.

Dr. Robinson said it is important for the parents to give us the symptoms. Dr. Machado, our medical advisor, called Mr. Dumais over the weekend with reported illnesses of the students on the band trip and that some were getting sick on the way back. Her decision was to quarantine students and parents on the trip and allow the students back to school on Wednesday. Dr. Robinson stated that she would do everything she could to not cancel school and we are trying to take preventive measures. The middle school cancelled a trip to Plymouth.

Mrs. Fetchick asked at what point Dr. Robinson would decide to close the schools.

Dr. Robinson said we would have to close if too many adults were out. Closing doesn't stop the sickness because it takes about a 6 to 8 week course. Before we close we would talk to Dr. Machado and Donna Culbert.

Mr. Nanavaty asked if we were modifying our absentee policy because of this.

Dr. Robinson said we were not and just asking teachers to give students additional time to make up work.

Item 5 – New Business

Dr. Gejda introduced George Bachman, teacher at Newtown High School, who teaches the Plant Science in Action course and also operates the Greenery.

Mr. Bachman said he has been the greenhouse manager for 13 years. There has always been a science aspect to the greenery program. The program also has the more advanced students take the newer students under their wing to gain experience. They are required to put time in evenings and weekends also. Kristin Violette has worked with him for 10 years. She is involved in technology and works with students marketing the items grown.

Mrs. Fetchick liked that it combined business, hands-on experience and science to bring everything together. She asked if there was a possibility of bringing these skills into the community such as planting at some of the schools or at the Senior Center.

Mr. Bachman said we have been out in the community by producing a community garden at Taunton Press.

Mr. Nanavaty said it would be helpful to have a legend to identify some of the standards and objectives.

Mr. Gaines suggested a change to make the order of the rubrics consistent.

MOTION: Mrs. Bittman moved to approve the Plant Science in Action curriculum with revisions noted. Mrs. Wiedemann seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Item 3 – Reports (continued)

Newtown Middle School Report and School Improvement Plan:

Diane Sherlock, principal of Newtown Middle School, introduced teachers, Don Ramsey, Wendy Bowen, Andrew SanAngelo, Nancy Maxwell, Maryann Bisson, Bob Rousseau, Jeanne Cavallaro, Cathy Cincogrono, and Beverly Andracchi, secretary Terri Greenfield, and PTA president, Debbie Leidlein.

Wendy Bowen and Beverly Andracchi spoke about the science department goals.

Jeanne Cavallaro reviewed math department individual teacher goals.

Cathy Cincogrono reviewed curriculum maps which are updated each year.

Bob Rousseau spoke about how response to intervention comes into play when a student has trouble learning. Andrew SanAngelo spoke about analyzing CMT data and developing a student success plan. Nancy Maxwell spoke about the unified arts teachers and how they are involved in student intervention.

Mrs. Sherlock spoke about our middle school special education students who did not make enough progress on the Connecticut Mastery Test. The goal for all middle school students to improve these scores to increase reading proficiency by 2% annually, mathematics proficiency by 5% annually, and increase parental and community engagement in the educational process by a minimum of 1% as measured by participation at parent/teacher conferences and PPT participation. The goal for the special education students is to increase reading proficiency by 15% annually and mathematics proficiency by 6% annually.

Mrs. Bittman asked if the size of the class had anything to do with the drop in special education numbers and asked how many special education students were there the year before.

Mrs. Sherlock said the number was about the same.

Mrs. Bittman asked who evaluated the teacher development plans.

Mrs. Sherlock said each teacher writes the plan and she and Mrs. Boettner meet with them. At the end of the year they chart the student results.

Mrs. Fetchick asked what other testing methods were used.

Mrs. Sherlock said there are a number of assessments given including Blue Ribbon testing.

Dr. Robinson told the Board that the State encouraged us to have every eligible student take the MAS. They said that failures would not count on our overall scores, but they did.

Item 4 – Old Business

Newtown High School Expansion Project Update:

Dr. Robinson said that she and Mr. Nanavaty attended the Public Building and Site Committee Meeting where samples of flooring for the gym were presented. There have been changes in the wood industry and the #2 type we chose is too dark and would be difficult for players to see the lines. They want to upgrade to #1 for \$14,000. They also want to change the specifications to be able to have windows that can be locked. The Public Building and Site Commission approved non-opening windows. They told Joe Costa they wanted windows that wouldn't open.

Mrs. McClure said we are on the November 18 Legislative Council agenda for the teachers' contract.

Dr. Robinson said she spoke to Will Rodgers who said he wanted the Legislative Council to take action rather than wait for the 30 days.

Mrs. Bittman asked for a report from Mrs. Raymo on what was discussed at the finance committee meeting including the new financial report form.

Item 6 – Public Participation

Debbie Leidlein, 29 Little Brook Lane, said she was grateful that she was elected and looked forward to joining the Board.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to adjourn. Mr. Nanavaty seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Item 7 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Questions raised: Report of finance committee discussion and new report form.

Respectfully submitted:

Kathryn Fetchick
Secretary