

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, February 7, 2012, at 6:30 p.m. in the board room at 3 Primrose Street.

D. Leidlein, Chair	J. Robinson
L. Roche, Vice Chair	L. Gejda
C. McCubbin, Secretary	R. Bienkowski
R. Gaines	J. Libby
W. Hart (absent)	3 Staff
K. Alexander	15 Public
J. Vouros	3 Press

Mrs. Leidlein called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to enter into executive session regarding a personnel matter and invited Dr. Robinson and Joan Libby. Mrs. Roche seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 1 – Executive Session

The Board discussed the personnel matter.

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to exit executive session. Mrs. Roche seconded.

Executive session ended at 7:17 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 7:42 p.m.

Item 2 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to approve the consent agenda which included the minutes of January 17, 24, 26 and 31, 2012, the child rearing leave of absence for Heather LeBlanc, teacher at Middle Gate School, through the remainder of this school year, the extension of the child rearing leave of absence for Kristina Pierce, teacher at Sandy Hook School, for the 2012-2013 school year, the Newtown High School Color Guard field trips and the Newtown High School Connecticut Innovation Academy field trip. Mr. Gaines seconded. Mrs. Leidlein removed the minutes of January 19, 2012 for a separate vote because Mr. Gaines was absent.

Mr. Alexander had two changes to the January 31 minutes. On page 5, the listed of nay votes in the last line of the first paragraph should replace Mr. Gaines with Mr. Alexander.

The first sentence in the second paragraph from the bottom of page 7 should read:

Mr. Alexander said that it was already the job of the administration to ensure the proper implementation of the full day kindergarten program so there was no need for a resolution.

Mrs. Roche asked to have the following included in the minutes of January 31 on the first page after Mr. Vouros read the letter from Dr. Epple.

Mr. Vouros asked Mrs. Leidlein if the video tapes of board meetings can be edited in any way. Mrs. Leidlein replied no. Mr. Vouros stated he has concerns about a video of a board meeting being edited. Mr. Vouros read a letter written to him, a letter he received from Dr. Epple. The letter is about the comments Mr. Vouros made about the Reed Chinese Music rotation at the budget meeting on January 19, 2012. In the letter read, Dr. Epple asked someone to have that portion of the budget board meeting video be edited. Dr. Epple also asked for Mr. Vouros to redact his comments. Mr. Vouros stated he asked Dr. Epple to have a meeting to discuss the Chinese Music Rotation.

Mrs. Leidlein asked Dr. Robinson to speak to Dr. Epple and to confirm the video will not be edited. Dr. Robinson replied there is no editing of videos.

Vote: 6 ayes

Vote on the January 19 minutes: 5 ayes, Mr. Gaines abstained

Item 3 – Public Participation – none

Item 5 – Old Business

Anne Louise Thompson, Chief of the Bureau of Special Education, spoke about how the State interacts with parents and school districts. They provide administrative support, dispute resolution and program improvement. The State provides entitlement funds for Newtown along with funds through the Education Cost Sharing Grant and Excess Cost Grant. Their monitoring system looks at complaints to the department and due process hearings. We have not found there to be a substantial number in Newtown. Sometimes we do investigations from a parent complaint which has not occurred in Newtown. We help with dispute resolution by conducting investigations when there are complaints from parents. An advisory opinion is when a family presents their case to a group that hears the case and offers an opinion.

She stated that program improvement provides training for employees to handle the issues. The Connecticut Federal Advocacy Center deals with federal special education that provides services to parents and families. We suggested that CPAC would be a resource for Newtown. They also offer guidance documents for parents.

Mrs. Leidlein said there were action steps for our special education subcommittee and asked about parent liaisons.

Ms. Thompson said she was in touch with the advocacy center and they didn't feel Newtown was appropriate to that type of liaison for parent school communication. She understood that we contacted CPAC and it was decided that was not the way to proceed.

Mrs. Leidlein asked about principal training.

Ms. Thompson said the series had begun. Newtown staff didn't participate but they were asked to come in late spring.

Dr. Robinson said one opinion was to bring it here.

Ms. Thompson said CIRC was available to do that.

Mrs. Leidlein asked where we were with the timeline. Dr. Robinson indicated they have been meeting for some time and have been gathering mini surveys after the PPTs.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if they could attend a subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Vouros asked if Ms. Thompson had any contact with Reps. Lyddy and Hovey.

Ms. Thompson said she has not contacted them but they contacted her offices.

Mr. Vouros was concerned if they followed our progress regarding parent complaints.

Ms. Thompson stated they have had communications over the last several months. She spoke to Rep. Lyddy today regarding her presentation tonight.

Mr. Vouros stated that Dr. Regan and Dr. Colon were working to get the parental portion of the special education program in a more user-friendly approach.

Ms. Thompson shared that information with the representatives.

Mrs. Leidlein stated that if we have communications going forward that they should be included in the process.

Item 4 – Reports

Correspondence:

Mr. McCubbin provided the following names of those who sent correspondence:

Choir position: Taylor Varga, Melanie Curtis, Ellen Aho, Luke Shearin, Susan Primavera, Allan Song, Catherine Michaud, Lorine Watkins, Sean Watkins

Full Day Kindergarten: Amy Collins, Meagan Moody, Marabeth Pereira, Cathy Reiss, Tom Bittner, Barb Sibley, Robbin Allen, Fran Maturo, Melinda Reynolds

Budget: D. Keane, Peter Kirilin, Kevin Keller, Karen Banks, Jack Schwartz

Health/Music Director positions: Jan Lee Brookes, Melinda Reynolds

Lack of trust with administration: Laura Main

N.I.C.E Program: Luke Shearin

Ice Hockey Transportation cut: Tim Harrison

Health Director position: Keith and Barb Baron

EAs on special needs buses: Lisa Laplante, Larry Birkmaier

Mr. McCubbin said that Sam Mihailoff asked him to read his letter. Mr. Gaines asked if it was related to topics on the current agenda to which Mr. McCubbin said they were.

Mr. Gaines stated that letters should be read during public participation. Mr. McCubbin read the letter which referred to legal and consultant fees for transportation negotiations, Baldwin Media costs, other account expenditures, and the choir teacher.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Robinson reported that the CPAC parent meeting regarding the PPT process is scheduled for February 29 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Newtown High School lecture hall. The parent advisory board has been bringing these parent education opportunities.

The district team has been working on revising the Teacher Evaluation Plan now called the Teacher Growth Plan. The state released some new requirements regarding Race To The Top and their waiver for No Child Left Behind.

She read a complimentary letter regarding our athletes. The Liaocheng delegation is here visiting the high school, middle school and Reed. The closing ceremony is this Saturday at 2:00 p.m. Both she and Dr. Gejda would be on the visiting team for a science evaluation for the tri-state consortium for the next three days in Edgemont, NY.

Mrs. Roche asked how Dr. Robinson made parents aware of the CPAC parent meeting. Dr. Robinson sent it to parents and staff through our School Messenger system.

Subcommittee Reports:

Curriculum and Testing Subcommittee: Mrs. Leidlein said Mr. Hart was the chair for the curriculum and testing committee. Mr. Vouros stated that he attended two curriculum meetings for social studies and was impressed with what they were accomplishing.

Communications Subcommittee: Mrs. Roche said they met January 25 and nominated Mr. Alexander as secretary. They reviewed the communications section of the strategic plan and focused on questions on the website. They also discussed district emails for the Board which would be a link to be able to send an email to the whole Board. Also discussed were procedures for presentations accompanied by a PDF file to put on the website, consistency between school websites, and procedures for audio and video on the website. Policy guidelines need to be worked out with action steps to be discussed at the next meeting on Monday, February 27 at 4:30 p.m.

CIP/Facilities/Finance Subcommittee: Mr. Gaines said they have not met yet. There will be a meeting next month with a presentation by the Ad Hoc Facilities Committee.

Special Education Subcommittee: meeting dates are to be determined.

Technology Subcommittee: Mr. Alexander said they would be meeting February 23 working on an email policy and a pilot program on bringing in personal devices at the middle school.

Policy Subcommittee: Mrs. Roche said they met January 30 and reviewed the work of the previous committee. The Board will review the 9000 series.

Baldwin Media:

Mrs. Leidlein requested information from CABE regarding the work Baldwin Media did but has not heard back from them.

Dr. Robinson gave the meeting dates with Mrs. Baldwin but there is no record of phone calls or conversations outside of her involvement.

Mrs. Roche questioned the invoice for \$3,800 with the attached letter of understanding being charge to membership.

Mr. Gaines asked if that was because we are members of CABE.

Mr. Bienkowski said in that fiscal year there was an encumbrance made to CABE for policy revisions to which it was charged. We could have charged it to contracted or professional services if we knew beforehand.

Mr. McCubbin said it was for services rendered, not a membership.

Mrs. Roche said it is under the CABE umbrella but is for professional services.

Mr. Bienkowski said we had a CABE encumbrance for June 30 so when the invoice came in August we charged it there and didn't go back to see what it was spent on.

Mr. Alexander asked for copies of the invoices.

Questions were asked about what the charges were for. Dr. Robinson said the \$3,800 was for the June meetings along with other work. There were phone calls and conversations outside of her direct involvement. She worked on a couple of press releases and the special education report was sent to her for feedback and editing. A number of things took place during that time.

Revisions to Requirements for Graduation Policy 7-302:

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved that the Board of Education approve the revisions to the Requirements for Graduation Policy 7-302. Mrs. Roche seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 6 – New Business

Educational Personnel Contract:

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to approve the ratified Educational Personnel Contract for the period July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2015. Mr. Vouros seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Parent Resource Writing Instruction in Newtown:

Dr. Gejda said this is a document for parents which articulates our writing curriculum for grades 3 and 4. Our district standards were revised to combine the common core. The final document will be ready for the March parent conferences and will also be on our website.

Mr. Vouros asked if there is a writing initiative in the schools. Dr. Gejda said it has been the focus of our PLC days and involves all teachers in the district.

Mrs. Roche asked if teachers were being trained, to which Dr. Gejda said it was also part of the PLC days.

2012-2013 School Calendar:

MOTION: Mrs. Roche moved that the Board of Education approve the 2012-2013 school calendar. Mr. McCubbin seconded.

Mrs. Roche commented on not receiving the conference dates earlier. Dr. Robinson stated that they are established by the principals at a later time but we pushed the process to make them available tonight. We have been trying to develop a regional calendar but it's difficult because there are certain days always taken off that don't agree with other districts. We agreed as a region to take Monday and Tuesday, February 18 and 19, as a break. Our traditional spring break is the week of April 15 like the other districts. In the past, the Board suggested to move it to two weeks before the referendum.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if there had been any discussion with the principals to have two full days of conferences instead of half days.

Dr. Robinson said the principals hold to that schedule as an effective format for them. She has cut back on the parent conference time.

Mrs. Leidlein thought it might be better for students and the community to have two full days off.

Dr. Robinson said the night appointments fill up but the days don't. Would we take that day off of the professional development days or instructional days because it becomes a contract issue.

There were comments about voting in the schools. Mr. McCubbin asked the rules behind that.

Mr. Alexander suggested removing the November 2 PLC day. Mr. Vouros thought it could be moved to October 26 instead of losing it.

Dr. Robinson said we don't have one on September 7 so that date is a possibility.

Mrs. Leidlein recommended trying to coordinate the early release days with long holiday weekends by moving the January 4 day to January 18 and the February 1 day to February 15. We average four days to make up in June. She suggested adding those days to the calendar and just subtract what we don't use from the end of the year.

Mr. Gaines thought it would be confusing to do that as parents understand that we add days to the end of the year.

Mrs. Roche said people could plan their vacation from the last built-in day which is better. This year Reed had eight days after grades were handed in and she is concerned about that last week and class work. She asked how dates are determined for final grades to be reported.

Dr. Robinson said each school takes care of that determination but we could also deal with that.

Mrs. Roche said parents complained about movies being shown and she would like that changed.

Dr. Robinson said movies are supposed to be related to areas of curriculum. On occasion teachers may use a movie as a group reward.

Mrs. Roche felt this should be discussed to have certain standards in place.

Mr. Gaines stated it has been our practice to not go into the last week of June. There should be a clear statement to not extend passed June 21 so parents can count on that. Activities in the classrooms should be educational after the grades are turned in.

Mrs. Roche said we need to set the ball higher regarding TV and movies and also have on the calendar when grades are due. Dates for when grades are due should not be on the calendar.

Mrs. Roche requested those date be given to the Board.

Dr. Robinson made the Board aware that our April vacation doesn't coincide with other districts. It would be good to have the same week so we could share professional development and the State wants us to study regional transportation. We have 40 students that go to the magnet school.

Mr. Vouros asked what happens with the out of district students.

Dr. Robinson said we would run buses if we are off and Danbury has school.

Mrs. Roche asked for the cost of transportation if we were closed and Danbury was in session.

MOTION: Mrs. Roche moved to postpone the calendar vote. Mr. McCubbin seconded.

Vote: 6 ayes

Item 7 – Public Participation

Lisa LaPlant, 7 Fern Lane, spoke about how she heard about the removal of the EAs from the special education buses. She received a call at 12:55 p.m. the day before the last Board meeting regarding their removal effective February 6. She thought it was from Dr. Regan and Dr. Gejda. They were told parents would have to fasten seat belts. Later that day she was told the decision was rescinded. Her bus driver thought it was just rescinded until fall. She doesn't agree with removing the EAs because the driver would have to leave their seat in an emergency.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if Dr. Robinson was aware of the calls.

Dr. Robinson said she sent the Board her best understanding of the timeline and it should not be discussed as it was not on the agenda.

Mr. McCubbin asked if he could have the check register in Excel for February and previous months. Mr. Bienkowski said he would look into converting them.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to adjourn. Mr. Alexander seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 8 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Cody McCubbin
Secretary

REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION

In order to graduate from the Newtown Public Schools, a student must earn a minimum of twenty (20) credits in seven (7) areas of the curriculum and demonstrate competency in communication, problem solving, and information literacy. Beginning with the class of 2014 students must earn a minimum of twenty-two (22) credits in seven areas of the curriculum and demonstrate competency in spoken communication, written communication, problem solving, and information literacy. **Beginning with the class of 2016 students must complete a course in Personal Financial Literacy, resulting in 1½ credits in Fine and Applied Arts and 6 credits in electives.**

Credit Distribution Requirement:

~~As of August 28, 2007 yearlong courses earn one credit; semester courses earn one-half credit. (Note: Prior to this date yearlong courses earned two credits and semester courses earned one credit. All previously earned credits for students attending the high school will be converted to the new numbering system.)~~ The following credits must be earned:

- Area 1 English – 4 credits including English I, English II, and a course that includes American literature.
- Area II Social Studies – 3 credits including 1 in American Studies or American History, ½ in American Government, ½ in Economics, ½ in Western Studies, and ½ in an Area Studies course
- Area III Math – 3 credits
- Area IV Science – 3 credits
- Area V Physical Education – 1-½ credits
- Area VI Fine and Applied Arts – 1-½ credits, **including ½ credit in Personal Financial Literacy**
- Area VII Electives – 6 ½ credits

All courses to satisfy local and statutory requirements in Areas I-VII must be earned between the beginning of grade 9 and the end of grade 12.

Students classified as ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade must enroll in a minimum of six courses each semester. Twelfth-grade students must enroll in a minimum of five courses each semester. Only students with a minimum of 13 credits will be designated as seniors. ~~Beginning with the class of 2011, only students with a minimum of 15 credits will be designated as seniors.~~

Students who earn high school credits in the middle school cannot apply them to required units in Areas I-VII.

Students must attend a minimum of six (6) semesters of high school (grades 9-12) to qualify for graduation.

Demonstration of Required Competencies:

(These requirements begin with the class of 2006)

Each student will demonstrate competency of the required standards in written and spoken communication, problem solving, and information literacy. Through classroom performance, students will successfully complete a task in each of the standards. The tasks will be scored against a district approved analytical rubric. Students will be given at least two opportunities each year beginning with the sophomore year to meet each standard through classroom performance until the standards are met. Students can also meet the standards of written performance and/or problem solving through performance on identified portions of the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). All standards in the following areas must be met unless waived through a Planning and Placement Team process to develop an Individual Education Plan or using 504 procedures:

1. Written Communication

- a. Critical thinking – The student takes and supports a position on information and ideas.
- b. Written performance – The student conveys information and ideas in a variety of written formats such as narrative, expository, or descriptive.

Note: The alternate method to meet the written communication requirement is to reach state goal on both the reading and writing portions of the CAPT.

2. Spoken Communication

- a. Spoken performance – The student conveys information and ideas to others in a presentation using spoken language, non-verbal language, and multi-media.

3. Problem Solving

A. The student uses inquiry strategies and applies appropriate procedures to solve and communicate an authentic problem or situation

Note: The alternate method to meet the problem-solving standard is to reach state goal on both the math and science portions of the CAPT.

4. Information Literacy

- a. The student demonstrates strategies to identify, locate, and interpret information.
- b. The student relates and applies new knowledge using a variety of sources including technology.

Notification

1. Students – Students who have not met the standards will be notified in writing as part of the scheduling process at the end of the sophomore and junior years. Seniors who have not met the standards will be notified in person by their guidance counselor in September, January, and April of their senior year.

2. Parents – Parents of students who have not met the standards will be notified in writing at the end of the sophomore and junior years. Parents of seniors who have not met the standards will be notified in September, January, and April of the senior year.
3. Teachers -- At the beginning of the school year teachers will be given a list of the students who need to meet the performance standards showing the particular standards that need to be met.

Exception for Transfer Students

If a student transfers into the Newtown Public Schools after completing at least three years in a high school out of state, he/she may be exempted from Newtown's Competency Standards for graduation. If a student transfers into the Newtown Public Schools after completing at least three years of high school in Connecticut, Newtown will accept the completed standards from the sending district.

Reference: CGS 10-221a, 10-223a

Adopted 6/12/79

Modified 1/11/83, 2/13/85, 3/12/96, 7/9/02, 6/12/07

AUGUST 4(7)

M	T	W	TH	F
			23	24
25	28	29	30	31

23-All Teachers Report
23, 24 & 25 -Staff Development Days
28-Students Report

SEPTEMBER 17(17)

M	T	W	TH	F
--	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
--	18	19	20	21
24	25	--	27	28

3-Labor Day, Schools Closed
17-Rosh Hashanah, Schools Closed
26-Yom Kippur, School Closed

OCTOBER 23(23)

M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	*5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

***-Early Dismissal**

NOVEMBER 19(20)

M	T	W	TH	F
			1	*2
5	--	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	*21	--	--
26	27	28	29	30

6-Election Day-Schools Closed For Students, Staff Development Day
***-Early Dismissal**
***21-Early Dismissal**
22-23-Thanksgiving Recess

DECEMBER 15(15)

M	T	W	TH	F
3	4	5	6	*7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
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***-Early Dismissal**
24-31-Holiday Recess

JANUARY 21(21)

M	T	W	TH	F
	--	2	3	*4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
--	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

1-New Year's Day
21-Martin Luther King Day, Schools Closed

FEBRUARY 15(15)

M	T	W	TH	F
				*1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
--	--	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	

***-Early Dismissal**
18-19-Schools Closed

MARCH 20(20)

M	T	W	TH	F
				*1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	--

***-Early Dismissal**
29-Good Friday, Closed

Student Days - 183
Teacher Days - 187

APRIL 17(17)

M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	*5
--	--	--	--	--
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

***-Early Dismissal**
8-12-Schools Closed

MAY 22(22)

M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	*3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
--	28	29	30	31

***-Early Dismissal**
27-Memorial Day, Schools Closed

JUNE 7(11)

M	T	W	TH	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	♦11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

♦-Projected last day of school without any closing for weather conditions

Eight make-up days are available in June for all snow/emergency closings. If these days are used prior to April 5, any additional snow days will be taken from the end of the spring vacation starting with April 12, 11, etc..

Open House Dates:

Elementary -
 Reed Intermediate -
 Middle School -
 High School -

Conferences (early dismissal):

Elementary -
 Reed Intermediate -
 Middle School -
 High School -

Adopted --/--/--
 Revised --/--/--