

Please Note: These minutes are pending Board approval.

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, January 10, 2012 at 7:30 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	4 Staff
W. Hart	10 Public
K. Alexander	3 Press
J. Vouros	

Mrs. Leidlein called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.

Item 1 – Consent Agenda

Mrs. Leidlein removed the minutes of December 20 and January 3 from the consent agenda.

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to approve the minutes of December 20, 2011.

Mrs. Roche seconded. Vote: 6 ayes, 1 abstention (Mr. Gaines)

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to approve the donations to the N.I.C.E. Program, Buildings and Grounds and Sandy Hook School, and a teacher resignation.

Mr. Gaines seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to approve the minutes of January 3, 2012. Mr. Gaines seconded. Vote: 5 ayes, 2 abstentions (Mr. McCubbin, Mr. Vouros)

Item 2 – Public Participation - none

Item 3 – Reports

Correspondence:

Mr. McCubbin said the Board received correspondence from Kevin Fitzgerald regarding the cost of possible litigation from parents with children with special education needs. There was also an anonymous letter.

Chair report:

Mrs. Leidlein met with Representatives Hovey and Lyddy regarding updating the new members to their concerns, Pat Llodra regarding budget, attended the first Labor Board hearing, addressed the Board information on the district website and was asked to write an article for Dr. Robinson's newsletter. She and Dr. Robinson discussed doing a mid-year evaluation suggested by CABE and spoke to Board members regarding subcommittee assignments. Mr. Alexander would be on the communications committee with along with her and Mrs. Roche. Mr. Hart would possible be the representative to Education Connection. We also need a representative to each Town board. The correspondence received from Kevin Fitzgerald asked if he could attend meetings between a Board member and the administration. She felt if we allowed someone to attend these meetings it would imply that this was the work of the Board. The Board of Finance passed the CIP on to the Legislative Council. We need address the \$150,000 appropriation.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Robinson stated she and three others from our district attended a conference conducted by Alan November regarding the effective use of technology in teaching and learning.

The Teacher Evaluation Committee has developed a draft Teacher Growth Plan which is currently being piloted in the district. The committee will review feedback regarding the plan.

The budget to date was not complete. To ensure accuracy it would be ready next week. There was a meeting of the chairs of the strategic plan action team. We are moving ahead and need a chair of the communications action team.

Dr. Robinson spoke about being disappointed in the Blum Shapiro study. We asked them to look at it again. They are not showing any cost savings.

Mr. Hart asked Janet to share a copy of the Fairfield study on combining Town and Board of Education departments with the First Selectman. Dr. Robinson said the cost for their study was much less.

Mr. Leidlein said the subcommittee list will be posted on our website.

Item 4 – Old Business**Board of Education Goals 1 & 3:**

Dr. Robinson spoke about the action steps for goals 1 and 3. Goal 1 addresses strengthening the four core subject areas of reading, mathematics, writing and science and addressing continuous improvement in these areas. She also wants to develop a plan to expand the highest quality of professional development. Goal 3 addresses improving communication between the district and the community.

Mr. Vouros had a concern about the science portion. The science CAPT scores are not as high as they should be because not having preparation for the students when they are in the middle school.

Dr. Gejda stated that by 2015 the students will take a new assessment. Our emphasis has been on literacy but we need to work on the informational texts and look at our approach to teaching science.

Mr. Vouros felt the eighth grade second semester could have some sort of science instruction to ease the transition to high school such as earth science.

Dr. Robinson said the work developing this science based curriculum is time consuming. We are on a good track for horizontal coherence but it will be ongoing work.

Mrs. Roche asked if we were making sure the teachers have enough time to do what is required.

Dr. Robinson said we are trying to build more time into the day and will increase the day by 5 minutes next year. We have to look at the schedule to be sure the right things are being done.

Mr. Vouros said his concern was about students who excelled in the elementary schools and taking advanced classes and being ready for the high school.

Dr. Robinson said we have accelerated programs for those students.

Mr. Gaines asked if we were jeopardizing what the state is testing compared to what we are testing.

Dr. Robinson stated we have to make sure the common core will be integrated into the curriculum.

Mrs. Leidlein spoke about Goal 3 which the communication committee would address. Dr. Robinson stated the newsletter would be sent electronically rather than being mailed. We would also post it on the website and have something in the *Bee*.

MOTION: Mr. Hart moved to approve Board of Education Goals 1 and 3 for 2011-2012. Mr. McCubbin seconded. Vote: 7 ayes
Mrs. Leidlein requested that we look at Goals 2, 4 and 5 at the next meeting.

Discussion with Representatives Lyddy and Hovey:

Rep. Hovey gave the Board a timeline of what has occurred in the last months and information on the "Burden of Proof" issue. She stated that from a legislative perspective there may not be the will to move forward on this item. The CAFE publication spoke about removing the Burden of Proof. She would like to see what the dollar amount is for the burden of proof in other states. She said the Board should ask how many times there has been a recommendation for a more intense form of programming for the child that the parents were not interested in delivering and how often the school system pushed that decision for the student.

Rep. Lyddy said there is an opportunity for this Board to address the burden of proof and make decisions on data and facts based on each child, not what is better for the district. The next meeting of the State Advisory Council is January 18. He referred to the timeline and said they took action after the feedback from families who said they couldn't come to a resolution. To the district's credit, we have spoken publicly with the parents and are pleased with the action steps being taken.

Mrs. Leidlein would share the action steps with the Board.

Rep. Hovey spoke about their concerns for students in the 504 Plan and communication issues with parents.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if following the action steps would take care of the issues.

Rep. Lyddy said the community wants the action steps to move forward. We have to address the allegation of hiding students in the 504 plan.

Mrs. Leidlein referred to Board goal 6 which addresses special education and 504 students which were initiated by the previous board.

Dr. Robinson said Dr. Gejda is the 504 person in the district. We had brought in an attorney to educate our staff on the legal issues regarding 504. The road block is not being able to find students under 504 that may need other services.

Mrs. Roche asked how the professional development was being provided to the staff. Dr. Robinson said last week Michelle Laubin attended the high school faculty meeting to address this. We are taking care of each school and want to provide the parents with the right information. We also had to re-write our 504 policy. We went through each one that was health-related.

Mrs. Roche asked if there was a special education link on our website.

Dr. Robinson stated there was and she was working the parent advisory board that provided the information.

Mr. Vouros said we became a community known for our special education department. Money needs to be put in the budget to provide the services. We also need more staff to work with these children.

Mrs. Roche said that part of the goal would be to inform the Board on how we are communicating and updating the process on how we are educating the students.

Dr. Michael Regan and Dr. Eric Colón spoke about special education. Dr. Regan stated that we convened a task force that looks at the PPT process with district staff who address this across preschool through high school and what the possible concerns are regarding communication. They looked at the government survey and advised a plan for the staff to get feedback. There is also a critical incident checklist we follow. We also developed an anonymous PPT exit survey which was revised in December and will be sent to the schools. Sherry Earle chairs the committee. The biggest concern is how they feel about the PPT. Dr. Colón will meet with special education staff this Friday to go over how we review the cases.

Dr. Colón has asked the schools to attend average PPTs. He found that most parents were happy with services provided.

Dr. Regan said we provide handout to parents once a year and usually meet at the beginning of the year with the entire staff. He doesn't want to see anyone unhappy. We encourage parents to contact us for assistance in filing for any type of help. A parent survey was developed. Two issues were around 504 and SRBI. Other actions are that we provide parent training in ABA techniques. He tries to call every parent of any child initially referred to special education. Engaging parents our most critical agenda item.

Mr. Gaines asked the number of PPTs held in a year.

Dr. Regan said we have 1,200 per year.

Mrs. Roche asked that the Board receive the information Dr. Regan provided.

Item 5 – New Business

Greenhouse Management:

George Bachman spoke about the program. Dr. Gejda and he have been working with Naugatuck Valley to obtain greenhouse management credit and also to receive credit at UConn. The Board inquired about staffing and costs involved. Mr. Bachman said he would teach the program. There would be an expense for the textbooks as they would follow along with the Naugatuck curriculum.

Mr. Vouros suggested calling Hollandia Nurseries which would be a valuable resource.

MOTION: Mr. Hart moved to approve the program proposal for Greenhouse Management. Mr. Alexander seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Item 4 – New Business (continued)

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to approve the Safe School Climate Policy 8-506 and the Safe School Climate District Plan. Mr. Hart seconded.

Dr. Salvatore said this policy allows us to streamline our K-12 system for consistency to focus on language that is consistent tying in the strategic plan.

Mrs. Roche asked for a timeline.

Dr. Salvatore said the committee was developing a presentation to cover the training needed in February. We are also going to work with the PTAs.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to amend the motion to correct the typographical errors and on page 4. #9 change the wording to "both sets of parents." Mr. Alexander seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

CIP Re-approval:

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved that the Board of Education re-approve the CIP.

Mr. McCubbin seconded.

Mrs. Leidlein went over each item. Vote: 7 ayes

Mrs. Leidlein spoke about the building and site projects and asked Mr. Faiella what were critical to address.

Mr. Faiella said the \$150,000 was going to reduce the cost for the middle school parking lot paving which will be done as soon as school is out in June.

Mr. Gaines asked if the money would be there until the project was completed.

Mr. Faiella said the money would come out of the 2012-13 budget.

Mr. Bienkowski said the \$150,000 are the unexpected funds from the 2010 fiscal year that the Town was going to set this aside for Board of Education purposes. The projects listed will be in the Superintendent's budget but, if we can have the money, they will be taken out. The projects Mr. Faiella listed are all in the 2012-13 year. We have to bid the middle school parking lot pavement in April for it to be done over the summer.

Mrs. Leidlein wanted clarification as to if the money could be carried over.

Mr. Bienkowski said it has been carried over. They were available June 2010.

Mrs. Leidlein asked Mr. Faiella to prioritize his list with the most critical items.

Item 5 – Old Business (continued)

Revisions to Graduation Policy 7-302:

Dr. Gejda said the revision reflects the addition of the personal financial literacy course. The graduation date was changed from 2017 to 2016.

MOTION: Mr. Hart moved to amend the personal financial literacy course effective for students graduating in 2016. Mr. Alexander seconded. Vote: 7 ayes.

Common Core State Standards:

Dr. Gejda presented an overview of the Common Core State Standards and how they will be implemented. For English/Language Arts there will be a 50/50 balance between literature and information text. There will be more literacy education in content areas and students should be reading appropriately complex text. Reading instruction will be more text-based with students being able to answer questions from what they read. Students should be writing to inform and be able to make an argument using evidence from the text. There will also be more emphasis on academic vocabulary.

Regarding math instruction, the focus will be on fewer topics. There will be more coherence in teaching to be able to make more sense to the students. We expect more fluency in math including the application of math skills.

Mrs. Roche asked how we would let the parents know about this.

Dr. Gejda said the parent resource booklet hasn't been released yet. We will put information on our website, in Dr. Robinson's newsletter and through the PTAs.

Mrs. Leidlein asked for a quarterly update.

Mrs. Roche felt this information should be sent to parents as a separate item or provided in a presentation.

Mrs. Leidlein suggested having the coffee with the Board on February 28 at 7:30 p.m.

Item 6 – Public Participation - none

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to adjourn. Mr. Vouros seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Item 7 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Cody McCubbin
Secretary