

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, January 31, 2012, in the board room at 3 Primrose Street.

D. Leidlein, Chair	J. Robinson
L. Roche, Vic Chair	L. Gejda
C. McCubbin, Secretary	R. Bienkowski
R. Gaines	Staff
W. Hart	Public
K. Alexander	Press
J. Vouros	

Mrs. Leidlein called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Item 1 – Public Participation

Marina Leonart Calvo represented the students in the N.I.C.E. Program and read a letter in support of the program.

Donna Culbert, Director of Health, spoke about the value of the health coordinator position. She has worked with Mrs. Blanchard on various committees involving parents, students and teachers. She asked that the position remain.

Charles Hepp, 4 Winter Ridge Road, provided information on the test scores and shared his concerns about the SAT and CAPT scores. He reviewed some of the material and urged the Board to support Dr. Robinson's budget.

Mr. Vouros read a letter from Dr. Epple as a result of things he said regarding the Chinese music rotation schedule at Reed. 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 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.

Item 2 – Discussion and Adoption of 2012-2013 Budget

At this time the elementary principals, Jo-ann Peters, Dawn Hochsprung, Barbara Gasparine and Chris Geissler, gave a presentation regarding full day kindergarten (attached).

Mr. Vouros was concerned that students lose skills in third grade if they attended a full day kindergarten program.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if there were any studies comparing kindergarten sessions.

Mrs. Hochsprung said full day kindergarten students tend to be better learners. The data from Bethel for the first year of a full day program was their assessments were

equal to the results of the May assessments. She doesn't feel we will see that drop in third grade.

Dr. Robinson said that regarding third grade leveling of it could be attributed to dealing with remediation of students at risk so the choice was to not do the acceleration with the others. With our program we don't need to contend with that issue.

Mrs. Roche and Mr. Vouros spoke to some of the kindergarten teachers who said time was the biggest issue for them.

Mrs. Leidlein wanted information on the number of incoming kindergarten students as to if they were coming from full day pre-k programs and how many first grade students are coming from full day kindergarten.

Mrs. Peters said we would have to recognize that children coming in from a full day program would have had a different curriculum.

Mrs. Leidlein questioned the enrollment and staffing.

Dr. Robinson said these are Chung's projections.

Mrs. Leidlein sees places we can reduce teachers. She asked the principals to go back to see any place for staff reductions.

Dr. Robinson said sometimes there are inclusions of special education students in classes where we would keep the class size low. She decided to not reduce these teachers further to keep kindergarten through grade 2 low.

Mrs. Leidlein said in grade 3 we have 16 per class in one school and 23 in another.

Dr. Robinson said people move in over the summer and sometimes we even have had to add a teacher. The special education students integrate with their peers so we try to keep the numbers down.

Mrs. Leidlein wanted to relook at that.

Mr. McCubbin said he sees areas where we aren't gaining much more in class size. We could move a teacher.

Mr. Hart stated we could lose a grade 2 teacher at Sandy Hook and possibly a 3rd or 4th grade teacher. We have the reverse problem at Middle Gate.

The cost for insurance benefits was mentioned. Mr. Bienkowski stated that the Town developed an insurance committee. Every year the deposit will be based on the previous year. The insurance funding increase is 3%. If there is a change in providers we will have to go to each union to review the plan. If unions don't agree we will have to go to arbitration.

Mrs. Roche asked how the pre-k program would be changed if we have full day kindergarten.

Dr. Regan said two classes will stay at Head O'Meadow and one will move to Sandy Hook School along with the staff needed for those students.

Dr. Robinson said this program is not being relocated because of full day kindergarten. We had previous conversations about students being moved to their home schools.

Mrs. Roche asked how the placement would be even in the schools.

Dr. Robinson said we aren't going to create a class if there are no students so we would only move students if necessary.

Dr. Regan stated that this program has been highly itinerant being located in multiple schools. He doesn't want to lose the program for the older students. We were crowded at Reed so we kept two there and moved one to Head O'Meadow.

Mrs. Roche prefers that the program remains in one location.

Dr. Gejda said this year the pre-school teachers have been involved in the PLC with the kindergarten teachers, which has been extremely valuable.

Dr. Regan stated they have worked to develop a pre-school curriculum in alignment with our kindergarten curriculum.

Mr. Vouros said since the pre-k staff would prefer to stay in one building we should make room for them at Head O'Meadow. Dr. Regan said that was correct as they like to work as a team. The space there would become a safety issue.

Mrs. Leidlein asked about transportation costs.

Mr. Vouros mentioned the pre-k transportation meeting where costs for EAs in special education was discussed.

Dr. Robinson said we discussed a number of issues. We had five buses servicing pre-k with some with only one student. The question was the need for an adult when there was only one student on the bus. The parents had been called with the decision to remove the EAs but contacted again when we decided to keep them on the buses.

Mrs. Leidlein questioned the amount in salary adjustments with no expected contract changes.

Mr. Bienkowski said by the end of the year that amount is usually zeroed out. It will be a different amount every year. Teachers take courses to advance them on the salary steps.

Mrs. Leidlein asked for clarification on the iPad purchases.

Dr. Gejda stated the purchases go through grant funds, district funds and book funds.

MOTION: Mr. McCubbin moved that the Board of Education adopt a budget for the 2012-2013 school year including the following increases from the 2011-2012 budget of \$67,971,427:

- contractual increases and salary adjustment for the current staff at \$1,519,066
- an addition of one behavioral therapist at \$56,989
- increase employee benefits for \$269,175
- an increase in tuition out-of-district at \$93,676
- an increase in fuel oil at \$73,089
- an increase in fuel for vehicles and equipment at \$132,448
- an addition of a .50 hearing impaired teacher at \$28,628 and
- an addition of a .40 ELL teacher at \$22,902

and with the following reductions:

- \$154,854 in electricity
- \$23,028 for .57 ESL tutor
- \$20,360 in all other
- \$57,256 in Middle Gate staffing and
- \$432,233 in transportation

and in acceptance of the full day kindergarten initiative:

- \$510,695 for 8.5 kindergarten teachers
- \$122,837 for 7.28 educational assistants
- \$10,641 for technology equipment
- \$10,768 for equipment (furniture)

and an additional reduction of:

- \$198,279 in busing and fuel savings

for a total budget of \$69,936 or a 2.89% increase.

Mr. Vouros seconded.

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to amend the motion by removing the transportation coordinator for a savings of \$42,679. Mr. Gaines seconded. Mr. Alexander said only one position is needed in that department. Vote: 7 ayes

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to amend the current amount by \$16,797 for the STARR adjustment. Mr. Gaines seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

MOTION: Mr. Hart moved to amend the motion to remove \$25,000 for transportation services under special education. Mr. Alexander seconded.

Mr. Hart said we have no choice and need to do this.

Vote: 7 ayes

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to amend the motion to add an increase in district equipment of \$63,504. Mr. Hart seconded.

Mr. Gaines felt we have often neglected increases for musical equipment.

Mrs. Leidlein was not in favor.

MOTION: Mr. Alexander made a friendly amendment to remove the \$40,000 and cut it back to \$23,504 eliminating the truck replacement.

Mr. Gaines asked if it would make it another year. Mr. Faiella said we are in the red in vehicle repairs and have three with over 120,000 miles.

Mr. Gaines and Mr. Hart accepted the amendment.

Vote: 3 ayes, 4 nays (Mrs. Leidlein, Mrs. Roche, Mr. McCubbin, Mr. Vouros)

The motion failed.

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to amend the increase of \$13,321 for the three coaches and study hall supervisor #15, #16 and #18 in section III. Mr. Hart seconded.

Gregg Simon, Athletic Director, said the indoor track program has grown. There are 130 students with 2 coaches. The gymnastics coach is not an employee and also coaches in Oxford.

Vote: 2 ayes, 5 nays (Mrs. Leidlein, Mrs. Roche, Mr. McCubbin, Mr. Gaines, Mr. Vouros)
The motion failed.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to increase the budget by adding #3 the district math/science instructional leader and #5 high school math teacher under section III. For \$141,227. Mr. Hart seconded.

Mr. Gaines stated there were compelling reasons to work on math and science.

Mr. Hart feels it is clear that this is an area we need to focus on.

Mr. Vouros said scores in math and science need to go up. We need Linda Gejda's expertise and get staff to move this initiative forward. Take that money and move it into other areas.

Mr. McCubbin said full day kindergarten is a big expense so we need to find other areas to pay for it.

Mrs. Leidlein said we have other administrative positions with job descriptions that overlap with duties that the instructional leader would have.

Vote: 2 ayes, 5 nays (Mrs. Leidlein, Mrs. Roche, Mr. McCubbin, Mr. Alexander, Mr. Vouros) The motion failed.

Mr. Alexander moved to add \$57,256 for the high school math teacher. Mr. Gaines seconded.

Mr. Alexander feels math is very important at this time.

Mr. McCubbin agreed but he wants to wait to find the money.

Mr. Alexander said there isn't a lot of time to find the money.

Mr. Hart said we need the math teacher now. We have just about the lowest cost per student expenditure in the state. Everything in section III is critical.

Mrs. Roche disagreed with the math position and wants the reading teachers at Reed.

Mr. Vouros was not in favor of the high school math teacher but would support the math and reading teachers at Reed to help improve their test scores. He would also like to have the guidance counselor at the middle school.

Vote: 3 ayes, 4 nays (Mrs. Leidlein, Mrs. Roche, Mr. McCubbin, Mr. Vouros)
The motion failed.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to amend the motion to add the staff and program development work and professional education services for in section IV for \$71,477.

Mr. Hart seconded.

Mr. Vouros asked how the money would be used.

Dr. Gejda stated that there are some big challenges over the next three years preparing for 2015, the NEASC visit, common core, new assessments and staff and program development work. She would also use teachers to provide professional development. Professional services would include teachers attending workshops. Over the last five years we have cut those lines drastically. Our teacher evaluation plan is being revised at the state. There will be substantial professional growth with that.

Vote: 4 ayes, 3 nays (Mrs. Leidlein, Mrs. Roche, Mr. McCubbin) The motion passed.

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to add \$23,369 to equipment technology for the high school wireless coverage in A-wing. Mr. Hart seconded.

Mr. Alexander spoke to a teacher about the importance of this item. The additional access would allow for teachers to bring in their own equipment to use.

Vote: 7 ayes The motion passed.

MOTION: Mr. Hart moved to amend the motion on the table to add a guidance counselor at the middle school for \$59,093. Mr. Vouros seconded.

Mr. Vouros agreed with the importance of this position. What they do is crucial for these children.

Mr. Gaines felt this would assist in students starting to take charge of their education.

Mr. McCubbin could not support it.

Mrs. Leidlein said we will have declining enrollment the next couple of years and it would be better to add it in the future.

Dr. Robinson added that the population at the middle school will go over 900 next year.

Vote: Mr. Vouros – aye

Mrs. Roche - aye

Mr. Alexander – nay

Mr. Gaines - aye

Mr. Hart – aye

Mrs. Leidlein - nay

Mr. McCubbin - nay

The motion passed.

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved to add to the Reed School the PE teacher, two reading teachers and the .3 math teacher. Mrs. Roche seconded.

Mr. Vouros feels having the PE teacher will allow more flexibility in scheduling.

Mrs. Roche said she could not support it.

Mrs. Leidlein stated we added a major program this year which will move this district forward.

Mr. Hart agrees to be fiscally wise. Do we want an education program that starves to death or do we stand up. The number one thing that defines this town is our education system. We don't have a history of overspending.

Mr. McCubbin said property taxes are big and we have to try to find the money.

Mr. Alexander agrees that we are getting to a number that may not be supported.

Vote: Mr. Vouros – aye

Mr. McCubbin - nay

Mr. Alexander – nay

Mrs. Roche - nay

Mr. Hart – aye

Mrs. Leidlein - nay

Mr. Gaines – aye

The motion failed.

Mr. Gaines said we have neglected our schools with fiscal plan and wanted to add funds for building and site improvement projects.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to add \$250,000 for building and site maintenance projects.

Mr. Hart seconded.

Mr. Gaines said we have discussed projects that need to be done to have a safe environment such as paving the middle school parking lot. Mr. Hart agreed.

MOTION: Mr. Alexander made a friendly amendment to change the increase to \$100,000. Mr. Gaines accepted the amendment. Mr. Hart seconded.

Vote: 3 ayes, 4 nays (Mrs. Leidlein, Mrs. Roche, Mr. McCubbin, Mr. Vouros)

The motion failed.

Mr. Gaines said we have technology that is eight years old and should be addressed.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to amend the motion to add \$100,000 to technology equipment to improve our technology systems to support the work that needs to be done. Mr. Hart seconded.

MOTION: Mr. Alexander made a friendly amendment to change the amount to \$63,840 for obsolete desktops.

Mr. Gaines respectfully declined that amendment. We need to do more.

Vote: 2 ayes, 5 nays (Mrs. Leidlein, Mrs. Roche, Mr. McCubbin, Mr. Alexander, Mr. Vouros)

The motion failed.

Mrs. Leidlein stated the final budget amount was \$70,055,794 which is a 3.07% increase.

Mr. Hart doesn't think this is what the town really wants. It is not adequate but he would support it.

Vote on the main motion: Mr. Vouros – aye	Mr. McCubbin – aye
Mr. Alexander – aye	Mrs. Roche – aye
Mr. Hart – aye	Mrs. Leidlein – aye
Mr. Gaines – aye	

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to allow the Director of Business to make technical adjustments to produce the budget with the amount just passed as shown today on the spreadsheet. Mrs. Roche seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

MOTION: Mrs. Roche moved that the Board of Education resolves to move forward with the program of full day kindergarten and is providing requested funding in this budget to do so. However, prior to final implementation, the Board must understand complete and all final cost expenses, implementation schedule, the effect on the pre-k program, staffing, busing, curriculum as well as a full discussion of the pros and cons of the program. This information must be discussed in detail by the Board and understood prior to implementing the full day kindergarten program. The purpose of this is to ensure that a complete understanding is held not only by the Board of Education but also by the public. I would like a second to this motion so that I can speak to my motion.

Mr. Vouros seconded.

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. Mr. Hart also felt it was not necessary.

Mrs. Leidlein said this was a huge undertaking with a lot of concern in the community.

Mr. McCubbin agreed.

Mr. Gaines said that not everything will be in place in time for the referendum. There isn't enough time to have all of the information.

Vote: 4 ayes, 3 nays (Mr. Alexander, Mr. Hart, Mr. Gaines)

Mrs. Leidlein said we don't have enough information to add or remove items in the budget. We need to look at our policies and procedures and keep informing the public to where we are. She welcomed input from the Board of Finance and Legislative Council.

Mr. Gaines hoped that the students who attended our meetings will also attend those of the Board of Finance and Legislative Council.

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

Item 3 - Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Cody McCubbin
Secretary

Full Day Kindergarten

Newtown Public Schools' Proposal for Enhancing the K-12 Instructional Program

January 31, 2012
Barbara Gasparine
Chris Geissler
Dawn Lafferty Hochsprung
Jo-Ann Peters-Edmunson

Why Full-Day Kindergarten?

The expectation for what students must know and be able to do by the end of kindergarten has changed. Our kindergarten day does not have the time required for instruction to meet the demands of:

- **The Common Core State Standards**
- **Connecticut State Department of Education Position Statements on English Language Arts and Mathematics Education**
- **Connecticut State Department of Education Pacing Guides**

The Kindergarten Team's Initial Action Steps

- Developed list of guiding questions for their FDK inquiry
- Researched similar and local districts to find out which offer FDK
- Planned visits and conducted phone interviews to schools with FDK
- Observed FDK programs and collected information
- Kindergarten and Early Intervention Teachers compiled and shared their data in the winter of 2012

What We Are Doing AND What We Need To Do In Kindergarten

CONTENT AREA	DAILY MINUTES IN 2-3/4 HOUR PROGRAM	AVERAGE DAILY MINUTES IN PROGRAMS STUDIED	CONNECTICUT MINIMUM MINUTES
LANGUAGE ARTS	45-60	150	120 As per CSDE Position Statement on English Language Arts Education, 12/3/08
MATHEMATICS	15-20	60	60 As per CSDE Mathematics Specialist
SCIENCE, SOCIAL STUDIES, HEALTH	10-15	30	
MORNING MEETING/CALENDAR	10-15	30	
HANDWRITING	5	15	
COMPUTER LAB	>5	5-10	
UNIFIED ARTS (Music, Art, Physical Education, Library-Media)	20-25	40	
CENTERS	0-15	(included in academics)	
SNACK/LUNCH	10-15	40-50	
RECESS	0-5	25	Daily as per CT P.A. 04-224, S. 1. Sec. 10-221o. Lunch periods. Recess.
NPS AVAILABLE INSTRUCTIONAL TIME (includes transitions not noted above)	169 minutes	387 Minutes*	INSUFFICIENT As per the State of Connecticut

*Some full day program observed/interviewed had longer instructional days than NPS.

21st Century Skill Components to be Included with or Enhanced by Full-Day Kindergarten

- Opportunities to question at a deeper level and to ask follow up questions to check for understanding and probe for deeper thinking
- Increase opportunities for student discourse
- Opportunities to integrate technology skills into daily instruction
- Integrated Units of Study
- Inquiry-based science activities
- More meaningful curriculum-related field trips

Language Arts Components to be Included with or Enhanced by Full-Day Kindergarten

- Independent reading/readers' workshop
- Full read aloud with discussion, retelling, higher order questioning
- More time for guided reading
- More comprehensive writers' workshop
- Increased opportunities for writing across the curriculum
- Increased opportunities for intervention for struggling readers & writers
- Increased enrichment for advanced readers & writers

Mathematics Components to be Included with or Enhanced by Full-Day Kindergarten

- Math every day
- Math lesson with integrated concepts
- Increased opportunities for intervention for learners struggling with numeracy
- Increased enrichment for learners advanced in numeracy

Social Development Components to be Included with or Enhanced by Full-Day Kindergarten

- Developmentally appropriate pace
- Sufficient opportunity to develop stamina in all curricular areas as well as in independent work
- Opportunities for fine motor development embedded in academics and unified arts classes
- More time morning meeting/Responsive Classroom
- Social skill building through academically grounded play
- Time to reinforce and practice self-help skills
- Recess every day
- Participation in school-based assemblies
- Smoother, more consistent transition from kindergarten to first grade

What We Learned

In our current program, our teachers are compelled to make daily decisions about which lessons to teach and which to leave out. This leads to inconsistency of our kindergarten students' academic experience across classrooms and across the district.

What We Learned

Students' period of adjustment to a full day of school occurs in first grade instead of in kindergarten.

Academic expectations for first grade have increased as dramatically as they have for kindergarten; limited instructional time in kindergarten will have a domino effect throughout the grades.

What We Learned

- **In our 2-3/4 hour program, we cannot provide the number of instructional hours needed to teach the Common Core State Standards.**
 - Common Core State Standards requires 155 hours of instructional time in kindergarten mathematics to focus on:
 - Representing, relating, and operating on whole numbers, initially with sets of objects
 - Describing shapes and space
 - Common Core State Standards require 355 hours of instructional time in kindergarten language arts to focus on:
 - Reading: Students comprehend and respond in literal, critical, and evaluative ways to various texts that are read, viewed, and heard.
 - Oral Language: Students will listen and speak to communicate ideas clearly.
 - Writing: Students will express, develop, and substantiate ideas and experiences through their own writing and artistic and technical presentations

www.corestandards.org

A Statement About the Research

In education, as in all areas of research, studies supporting diverse points of view are readily available. As educators, we agree that **“Fundamental and far-reaching changes in American society and in education require that full-day becomes the new standard for kindergarten,”** as stated in The Foundation for Child Development’s June 2010 Policy to Action Brief, *Pre-K – 3rd: Putting Full-day Kindergarten in the Middle*.

The Foundation for Child Development Policy to Action
Brief, *Pre-K – 3rd: Putting Full-day Kindergarten in the
Middle*, June 2010

- *“Increasing evidence shows the efficacy of FDK in boosting children’s cognitive learning and academic achievement. Multiple studies based on data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, as well as research from school district-based studies, show that children who participated in full-day programs made statistically significant gains in early reading skills...”* (Lash, Bae, Barrat, Burr, and Fong, 2008)
- *“Some of these studies also show a relationship between attendance in FDK and higher levels of early math skills.”* (Cannon, Jacknowitz, and Painter, 2006; Walston and West, 2004)
- *“FDK provides more time for children to play and learn experientially, encouraging not only their cognitive development but also their physical and social-emotional development.”* (Guarino, Hamilton, Lockwood, Rathbun and Germino-Hausken, 2006)

WestEd Policy Brief, April 2005

- *“Research comparing half-day and full-day kindergarten shows that children benefit from a developmentally appropriate, full-day program, most notably in terms of early academic achievement – a foundation for school and life success.”* (Villagas, 2005)
- *“Achievement findings for full-day kindergarten students show a trend toward higher achievement. Achievement differences appear to persist over time and when other factors such as student demographics and classroom factors are taken into account.”* (Villagas, 2005)
- *“Even given the expense of expanding the kindergarten day, doing so is a cost-effective option for enhancing early learning...”* (Villagas, 2005)

School Readiness, Full-Day Kindergarten, and Student Achievement: An Empirical Investigation

Rand Education, 2006

- *“Our results also suggest that investments in the development of nonacademic school readiness skills may not only raise overall achievement but may also narrow the achievement gap...”* (Le, Kirby, Barney, Setodji, Gershwin, 2006)
- *“Proponents of full-day kindergarten argue that these extended programs allow for greater individualization and self-directed activities.”* (Clark and Kirk, 2000; Elicker and Mathur, 1997)

Planning for Implementation

- If Newtown supports full-day kindergarten, we will share our comprehensive plan for implementation with the Board of Education, parents, and the community.
- Our current kindergarten students will be the first group to take the new Common Core Smarter Balanced assessment. While our teachers are working to incorporate all of the requisite skills, there is simply not enough time in their day.
- Your support of this initiative is an investment not only in our community, but in the future of our children.