

**Board of Education  
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, March 15, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. in the board room at 3 Primrose Street.

W. Hart, Chair	J. Robinson
D. Leidlein, Vice Chair	L. Gejda
A. Buzzi, Secretary	R. Bienkowski
D. Nanavaty	2 Staff
L. Bittman (absent)	3 Public
R. Gaines	2 Press
K. Alexander	

Mr. Hart called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Item 1 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which included the minutes of March 1, 2011, the donation of a vehicle to be used by the Newtown High School automotive repair classes, additional spring coaches for Newtown High School, and the child rearing leaves of absence for Shannon Pierce, teacher at Middle Gate School, Dori Parniawski, teacher at Middle Gate School, Allison Washington, teacher at Sandy Hook School, and Kristen Moore-Compton, teacher at Hawley School. Also accepted were resignations for Marissa Fraser, Morgan Hill, and Lisa Morlock, teachers at Middle Gate School, Rachelle Myllymaki, Stephen Oshana, and Tomas Hernandez Rozas, teachers at Newtown High School. Mr. Buzzi seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 2 – Public Participation - none

Item 3 – Reports

Correspondence:

Mr. Buzzi said the Board received an email from Paul Lundquist of the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee.

Chair Report:

Mr. Hart met with Bob Edwards of the Public Building and Site Commission and Diane Sherlock regarding the middle school roof. The Legislative Council Education Sub Committee meets with us on March 21 and 28. They will give their recommendations to the Legislative Council on April 6. Mrs. Leidlein volunteered to update the list of Board members on sub committees. We need a third Board member for the policies sub committee as additional meetings need to be scheduled. Mr. Bienkowski will bring the financial report to the Board finance sub committee before the Board approves it.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Robinson reported that Connecticut Innovations will conduct the ribbon cutting ceremony at Reed School on March 21 at 1:00 p.m. for the solar energy system on the roof. The movie Race to Nowhere will be shown at Newtown High School at 7:00 p.m. on March 23. It is being sponsored by the Newtown special education parent advisory committee with a panel discussion following the film.

The Newtown Strategic Plan will be revisited in April. Howard Feddema will work with the original group with some replacements to determine if any revisions need to be made to the original plan. Revisions will be brought to the Board for approval.

Beverly Andracchi, a Newtown Middle School teacher, has been chosen as a Siemens STAR to participate in the 2011 Siemens Teachers as Researchers Program which includes a 2-week research experience at Oak Ridge National Laboratory this summer.

Every two years a survey on substance abuse is taken by our students. This will be brought to the Board on April 5. This year there will also be a parent survey.

#### Policy Sub Committee:

Mr. Buzzi reported that he and Mrs. Bittman have not met yet.  
Mr. Hart asked to have the transfer policy for the next meeting.

#### Pupil Personnel Services Report:

Dr. Regan spoke about how SRBI fits into a framework of services that looks at the big picture for students. Special educators work to supply supports for the students. With SRBI we have been able to look at who really are children with disabilities. As of October 1, in DRG B, Newtown is rated high for having the lowest prevalence rate for students in special education. He looks at it as a positive because we are really looking at every single student. Special education is a continuum of services. There is increased collaboration through PLCs with regular education and special education teachers working together. We put in place new instructional models and began a new program designed to target our most resistant students. There has been progress monitoring each student each week. The data is looked at and we meet with staff if the instruction is not working.

The state has a data reporting system where we input our special education data. This is the first year we have met the standard on the CMT and CAPT. We are monitored on timeliness and modifications and the state target on timelines is 100%. We also put a lot of effort into transition services for students to guide them in their career development. We are going to start looking at children in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, bring Naviance down to that grade level and carry it through high school.

Mr. Nanavaty asked what we did to supplement services for students who have difficulty taking a foreign language but do well in other areas.

Dr. Regan said we have always shied away from offering foreign language classes for special education students. Before doing so we need to know the learning profile for the student.

Mrs. Leidein asked who was in charge of monitoring the teachers in meeting the modifications for the students.

Dr. Regan said we have case managers for the students who make sure the IEP for the students are in place. The teachers are the first to ensure these are happening. The second is the building principal. If there are any other issues then he or Dr. Robinson would be involved.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if there was a way to make adjustments for students quickly and put them in place.

Dr. Regan said the PPT team assures they are being done.

Dr. Robinson said you don't change the placement of the student. We would go back in to help with the accommodations.

Mr. Hart asked how we help parents with some of the issues their child is dealing with while we are working with them.

Dr. Regan said the teams are sensitive to the needs of the parents. He also works with parents to explain the information they need to understand. We provide information to the parents to educate them on their child's disability.

Dr. Robinson said there is a tremendous amount of data processing for our students. We decided to change a technology department position to a data position reporting to Dr. Gejda and Dr. Regan.

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved that the Board of Education approve the financial report for the month ending February 28, 2011. Mr. Alexander seconded.

Financial Report for Month Ending February 28, 2011:

Mr. Bienkowski said we budgeted 75% for the excess cost grant but it came in at 80% which was applied to this report. The grant reimbursement we received exceeded \$1.2M. We had three additional special education students join our district for approximately \$75,000 more.

Mr. Nanavaty wanted to be sure the money in anticipated obligations would be able to be accessed.

Mr. Bienkowski said there are places to go to where there is money available. There are also accounts we can put a hold on.

Mr. Gaines suggested that if we have to ask teachers to hold off on spending if it could be indicated in future reports.

Mr. Bienkowski said he could do that but at this time doesn't want to start holding off on expenditures and have a surplus at the end of the year. He would like to wait another month or two before we do this.

Vote: 6 ayes

AIS Report:

Dr. Robinson said we send 40 students per year to the Danbury magnet school and filled our slots for next year. They are looking at expanding to the middle school level in another building. There will be no increase in tuition for next year.

Mr. Hart mentioned the NEASC report to which Dr. Robinson stated that they lifted the warning and the high school also had five commendations. We have full accreditation and will have a full visit in five years.

#### Item 4 – Old Business

High School Update:

Dr. Robinson said punch list items are still being done and the inside work is progressing. We will have an open house in May. The next Public Building and Site meeting is March 22 with the middle school roof and high school completion on the agenda. We have nothing on the greenhouse yet.

Item 5 – New Business

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved that the Board of Education authorize the Superintendent to send written notification to the teachers on the 2011 Non-renewal List. Mr. Nanavaty seconded.

Dr. Robinson said last year we had cuts with a very large non-renewal list. If the budget is defeated we may have to make additional cuts.

Vote: 6 ayes

Review of Current Status of 2011-2012 Budget:  
Mr. Bienkowski said we are now at 2.25%.

Mr. Hart requested that a running list of extra expenses be kept to see where we stand. The Legislative Council will ask what we anticipate.

Item 6 – Public Participation

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved to go into executive session regarding student discipline and invited Dr. Robinson. Mr. Buzzi seconded. Mr. Nanavaty recused himself.

Vote: 5 ayes

Item 7 – Executive Session

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved that the Stipulated Agreement on Expulsion presented by Dr. Robinson be approved by the Board of Education with the following modification: Paragraph 5d shall be modified to delete the date of April 25, 2011 in two places and substitute August 29, 2011. Vote: 6 ayes

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

Item 8 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Andrew Buzzi, Jr.  
Secretary