

Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, April 12, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. in the board room at 3 Primrose Street.

W. Hart, Chair	J. Robinson
D. Leidlein, Vice Chair (7:50 p.m.)	L. Gejda
A. Buzzi, Secretary	R. Bienkowski
D. Nanavaty	1 Staff
L. Bittman	2 Public
R. Gaines	2 Press
K. Alexander	

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

MOTION: Mr. Buzzi moved that the Board of Education add to the agenda a possible vote on items discussed in executive session. Mr. Nanavaty seconded. Vote: 6 ayes
Item 1 – Student Recognition

Dr. Robinson introduced Melissa DeStefano who is a Barton Weller Scholarship finalist. She also wrote a novella for her senior project. The title is “Broken Up” and the story is about a girl dating during high school. She worked with a writer on how to structure a novel.

Item 2 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to approve the consent agenda which included the minutes of April 5, 2011 and three donations to Newtown High School that included \$200 from Taunton Press to the Yearbook Program, \$200 from Taunton Press to the Orchestra Program, and 12 golf bags from Mr. and Mrs. Robert Marona for the golf program. Mrs. Bittman seconded. Vote: 6 ayes

Item 3 – Public Participation – none

Item 6 – New Business

Mr. Dumais spoke about CPA/CPB courses for next year. NEASC has modified their requirements for accreditation next year. Our greatest challenge this year is in English and making the change to have students with special needs and nondisabled peers in the same class. We offered our staff professional development in differentiation.

Mrs. Bittman was happy to see the CPB students in with other students and is interested to see how it helps students at the other end of the spectrum.

Mr. Dumais said research shows that leveling high or low is not the best situation for students.

Mr. Nanavaty stated that a number of years ago there were different rubrics for each student level. He asked if that would still be true in combined classes to which Mr. Dumais said it would to some degree.

Mr. Nanavaty asked how the teachers will know which students in the past were CPB or CPA. A lot of parents will be concerned about placement.

Mr. Dumais said a PLC model we are using is about prescribed interventions. Over April vacation we will be making moves in the school. Mr. Ding will move upstairs and his room will become a reading and writing center where students having difficulty will have prescribed interventions.

Mr. Gaines asked how increasing support for students would affect staffing. Mr. Dumais said we are looking at assigning teachers to additional subjects like the math/science center as their "duty." The teachers would go to the center but there would be no additional cost for their time.

Mr. Alexander asked how students will be tracked and measured. He is concerned that some of these classes are not keeping up with the other classes taking the same course. Mr. Dumais said there will be other interventions to track students.

Dr. Robinson said in the PLCs the like-content area teachers are reviewing student outcomes on the assessments. It would become apparent if students were not progressing. We want to catch students lagging behind and put supports in place.

Mrs. Leidlein said there will be a concern about students on the border. Will a teacher work with a student to encourage him or her to go to the honors level the next year? What does a student do to help move forward the next year? Mr. Dumais said that is done now. It doesn't always mean supplemental work.

Dr. Gejda said we are working to make our curriculum rich. The focus is on understanding concepts for the students.

Item 4 – Reports

Correspondence: Mr. Buzzi noted the Board received a letter from Erin Phaneuf and Colleen Phaneuf.

Chair Report: Mr. Hart thanked the Legislative Council for approving both the Board of Education and Town budgets. His concern is that we haven't gotten people involved and need to urge people to come out and vote. He will be putting things up on the blog regularly. He attended the PTA presidents meeting and discussed how to get people out to vote. He asked the Board to try to be available alternate Tuesdays to schedule additional meetings when necessary.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Robinson spoke about a new website for the district which will be a lot easier to access information for parents. The teacher web pages will also have to be redone. It is also possible to have a regional calendar for 2012-2013. We are looking for feedback from other districts. It would help coordinate professional development and possibly impact our transportation costs.

Mr. Nanavaty said it could also lead to regional transportation.

Dr. Robinson said we had reserved three dates with Western Connecticut State University for graduation which is usually established on April 1. The high school will be graduating on June 22.

Mr. Gaines said Danbury is struggling with their middle school population and asked if there was any further conversation about them purchasing our portables.

Dr. Robinson said people from Danbury came over and looked a number of months ago. She contacted them again and was told they would bring it up to their Board. She also put out an alert to 166 school districts regarding the portables.

Mr. Alexander questioned school cancellation if there is a regional calendar. Dr. Robinson said we try to come up with a common agreement. It makes it difficult if we don't have the same weather conditions. Danbury has 185 days but our closing would still be before them. We are hoping all the boards agree.

Mr. Alexander asked if the Town website was integrating with us. Dr. Robinson said they are working on our side of their site.

There was no report from the Facilities Committee or Policy Committee.

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved to approve the financial report and transfers for the month ending March 31, 2011. Mr. Gaines seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Mr. Bienkowski said the two major object codes for transfers are purchased services and the tuition account. We are unable to transfer money to all of the anticipated negative accounts because we don't have the benefit of the excess cost grant. We won't get that money until June. We still have outstanding Morganti bills for \$140,000 for our expenses due to the delay. He suggested that after the budget is settled that we look at the projects for next year and see which ones we can take care of this year such as rebuilding the chimney at Hawley, finishing the visitor bleachers at the high school, the two storage sheds at the high school, and removing the unused swing set and paving at Sandy Hook School. We can't do the middle school paving for \$190,000 because of the roofing project.

Mr. Nanavaty stated that if we don't get the excess cost grant money we will be \$357,000 in the hole to which Mr. Bienkowski agreed.

Mr. Gaines asked if it was prudent to make the Board of Finance aware that there may be a need for a special appropriation if we don't get the money from the excess cost grant. He doesn't want us to be in a position where we need a special appropriation from the Board of Finance. We should discuss this with them.

Mr. Hart would rather watch it closely and wouldn't initiate projects unless we knew. Mr. Bienkowski said we would need the project to be initiated by May or June.

Vote: 7 ayes

Item 5 – Old Business

Transfer Policy:

Mr. Buzzi felt this policy should be sent back to the committee who should sit with Mr. Bienkowski, Dr. Robinson and Dr. Gejda to make the policy consistent. After some discussion the Board agreed to have the committee handle this policy.

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved to go into executive session and invited Dr. Robinson to discuss student discipline and a personnel matter. Mr. Alexander seconded. 7 ayes

Item 7 – Executive Session and Possible Vote on Items Discussed

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved to approve the request of Stephanie Adam under Article 31.2 of the Newtown Teachers Contract from March 24, 2011 to April 25, 2011.

Vote: 7 yes

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to approve the stipulation concerning the expulsion of Student C presented by Dr. Robinson. Vote: 7 ayes

MOTION: Mrs. Bittman moved to adjourn. Mrs. Leidlein seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Item 8 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Andrew Buzzi, Jr.
Secretary