

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2020- 6:00 PM
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM
LIVE STREAM

<https://youtu.be/OYKX3nCHRHE>

Spanish:

<https://youtu.be/Plxq5mqYp3U>

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chairperson, G. Cooper, called the meeting to order at 6:09 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.

ROLL CALL

Present: Joseph Britton, Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Joseph DaSilva, Richard Jannelli, Albert Russo, Amy Spallino, Kathryn Hodgdon, Kathleen Molinaro, Loren Daly

Absent: n/a

Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Courtney Leborious, Kelly Truchsess, Kim Thompson, Kevin Walston, Kara Casimiro

RECOGNITIONS

EXHIBIT

- Schools of Distinction 20-62 (pg.4)
- For the second consecutive year, seven elementary schools have been named “Schools of Distinction” by the Connecticut Department of Education. The schools were all noted for their performance and/or growth in student success. This recognition is given to schools in the top 10 percent of the state for performance and/or growth. The schools were among more than 100 recognized statewide from more than 1,000 Connecticut public schools. Danbury had one of the highest number of recognized schools. Great Plain was named as a high performance and high growth school for all students. Ellshowerth, Hayeston, South Street and AIS were also recognized for high growth in all students.
- Dr. Cronin, from Mill Ridge Primary, stated she was very proud of her staff and students and it was a great retirement gift to go out on a year of being a School of Distinction.
 - Hayestown Avenue School
 - Mill Ridge Primary School
 - South Street School
 - Great Plain School
 - Ellsworth Avenue School
 - Stadley Rough School
 - Western CT Academy of International Studies Elementary Magnet School

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Diana Chappuis. Parent of 2 school children in the Danbury Public School system.
 - I have a few suggestions I would like to present per an email sent to us by our school. I write this as a stay at home mom, so I understand working parents may or may not be able to accommodate my suggestions. Because the Danbury school district is so large, I suggest a survey on people with a list of school options for

their students' future education platforms. My suggestion is distance-learning with the option the child goes into school about 1-2 times a week to check-in in person with smaller groups in their class, but do the majority of their work virtually. What I envision is almost like a "homeschool/co-op" where the students would follow Danbury public schools curriculum. I understand that this will not work for all students. Those students that have a stay at home parent(s), grandparent(s) or babysitter and excel in distance-learning could lower the numbers of people in our school buildings at one given time instead of having to triple the number of teachers or other resources to make classes smaller. I also have a suggestion for the DPS school drop off and pick up system. Those who are interested in dropping off/picking up their children from school instead of taking the bus would reduce the number of students on buses. This may take some restructuring of the drop off/pick-up/bus time but would reduce interaction. For our particular school you have to park and physically walk into the school which is even harder when you have other younger children. However, if there was a pick up drop off line the students would be directed right to their car - this also eliminates people in the buildings.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION: K. Conetta moved, seconded by R. Chaleski that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibit 20- through Exhibit 20-, as recommended:

MINUTES

5/27/20 Special Board Meeting	20-63 (pg.5)
5/27/20 Regular Board Meeting	20-64 (pg.6)
5/28/20 Finance Committee	20-65 (pg.16)

Motion passed at 6:22 pm

ACTION ITEMS

A. 2020-2021 Board of Education Meeting Dates

MOTION: K. Conetta moved, seconded by J. DaSilva that the Board of Education approve the 2020-2021 Board of Education Meeting dates, in accordance with 20- 66 (pg.17)

Motion passed at 6:25 pm

B. 2020-2021 Budget

AMENDED: Dr. Pascarella respectfully requested that the 2020-2021 School District's Budget in the amount of \$135,686,000 (.92%), in accordance with 20- 67 (pg.18) be removed from the agenda. It is comprehensive. Needs to be discussed at the workshop to address questions.

C. 2019-2020 Superintendent's Evaluation

MOTION: K. Molinaro moved, seconded by A. Spallino that the Board of Education approve the 2019-2020 Superintendent's Evaluation, as recommended by the Superintendent Evaluation Committee.

Motion passed at 6:28 pm

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- 2020-21 Registration Enrollment Update
 - Dr. Pascarella stated that the district is monitoring enrollment.
 - Online registration is helping to have a better sense of enrollment numbers. It is a solid collection process.
 - K. Walston stated that Danbury is still a popular place to live. Monitoring grades 1-12 enrollment. Kindergarten enrollment is right on target with last year at this time with 720 registrations.
 - In previous years, we have gotten a rush of registrations from other countries in July/August and then another in the winter.
 - R. Jannelli asked with the current Covid situation and restriction on traveling, wouldn't we see less? K. Walston also thought the same but it has not shown to be that. Anticipating another wave in August and it appears that kindergarten numbers are staying steady.
 - J. DaSilva asked if kindergarten numbers are like June last year or September last year. K. Walston stated the numbers are right on pace with June of last year.
 - Dr. Pascarella stated that a big challenge will be testing of students with Covid restraints.
 - R. Jannelli asked where the testing is going to be done now? K. Walston stated that in the past testing has been done at Osborne but the district is exploring other locations. Ellsworth is being considered as there is more space to spread people out and the safest option.
- Summer School Update
 - K. Walston stated that they are beginning to wrap up summer numbers.
 - Information is coming in regarding the request for K-5 and with 6-8. Two people are leading those efforts and trying to finalize summer school numbers. 9-12 will be finalized after grading has taken place.
 - At the middle school level, there is a team working on staffing and associating that staffing with the request for summer school as we revisit and look at report cards.
 - Summer school letters have gone out to families from K-8.
 - Summer school starts on 7/16/2020.
 - In years past, the high school has had an acceleration program where they require an additional week so they will be starting a week prior.
 - K. Truchsess stated that SPED summer school will also be done virtually this year. Typically have about 330 students. Registration is still open and ongoing. So far, 220 that have responded. Only about 10% have opted to not participate this summer.
 - Working on a modified schedule because it will be done virtually and how to best support all of the students, particularly the neediest students. Small group, one on

one related services. Scheduling blocks of time individualized to each student. Families will be communicated with that information. Starts on 7/6/2020 for five weeks and will end 8/6/2020.

- R. Chaleski asked if K-5 will be in person. K. Walston stated summer school will be virtual.
- R. Chaleski asked if we are giving preference to high need students. K. Casimiro stated that at the K-5 level, they determined which students were substantially deficient. They have invited over 1,800 students who met those qualifications. A little over 900 have accepted registration so far for the summer. District is hiring teachers accordingly. Virtual and focusing on phonetics, comprehension, and building fluency on the literacy side. Students are invited based on their literacy scores which is a state guideline. This year, the district is adding in mathematics as well. Will be supplementing and doing a little bit more this year. The district was able to save a little on transportation costs so extending the summer opportunity to more students.
- K. Thompson stated that staffing is different when we operate in this environment. We don't need nurses, safety advocates and as many paras. Finding that the budget is flexible which is allowing the district to open this to more students. 100 teachers at elementary level and a significant chunk is being finalized at the middle school level.
- Superintendent's Message of June 3rd
 - Dr. Pascarella sent a message to families regarding the George Floyd murder. This has been a trying time. K. Truchsess has worked with support staff for families that needed some support and for those who were impacted.
 - Black Lives Matter chapter at the high school has been a very respectful group who spoke about the culture on how others are mistreated and how we, as a community in Danbury, can be better accepting of our differences. Dr. Pascarella is proud of them and they have been participating in the activities. Looking into literature added into the curriculum. Dr. Pascarella stated that we are here to support everyone during this tough time.

DISCUSSION

- 2020 Re-Entry Plan Update and Student Thought Exchange Survey Feedback
 - Dr. Pascarella stated that he is pretty close to having an open town meeting that will be on a Zoom platform on 6/22/2020 at 6pm. Will be talking about preferences parents may have regarding re-entry next fall. Surveys have gone out and will be looking at those to focus on questions.
 - Dr. Pascarella has asked the Cabinet to stop planning because we just don't know the "what if's" scenarios.
 - Ongoing with budgeting, cleaning and purchasing. But actual plans for next year change daily. As of last Friday, there was good information that it would be blended and then today it changed again.
 - 169 towns, particularly urbans, have unique needs and different accommodations.
 - Looking at two scenarios of what we understand may happen. Elementary having a greater presence in school and with secondary having more of a distance learning format.

- If each classroom is perfectly divided, we can have 13 or 14 at most in a classroom. Two classrooms for every group will be needed. Working through that staffing.
- Bussing is a whole other issue. C. Leborious is working with the transportation company. Expectation is that a staff person will be on the bus with the students. Limited number of students that can ride the bus. Cleaning of the bus. Pickups and dropoffs of students. All of this needs to be worked out.
- K. Walston stated that we are waiting for additional feedback from the governor's office for further guidance on the re-entry plan in the fall. Hoping to hear something official from mid to late June.
- Two recommendations from advisory groups to the commissioner. The first group has been suspended until further information from the governor's office.
- Second advisory group went in with the purpose to develop a framework for a back to school model to serve as a template for schools in our region. Templates include non negotiables including:
 - How to welcome back students
 - Prioritize ELL and SPED
 - How to support social and emotional wellbeing of students and staff
 - Visitors to schools
 - Physical space and set up in the classrooms
 - How to distribute food to students during the school day
- Within all these buckets, each school district will identify strategies that are appropriate for their school district.
- Meetings with a bigger committee of 25-30 people (teachers, administrators, fire chief, chief of police, health department). Have also had several sub committee meetings to identify the appropriate mitigation strategies to make sure everyone is safe.
- Several meetings with the Operations group specifically for the bus and to make sure landed on strategies to keep the staff and students safe. Waiting for further guidance from the state to figure out a plan for pickup and drop off.
- Met with the music department to talk about how to properly clean instruments in a safe manner and if students can even play those instruments.
- Met with the buildings and grounds group to discuss what this means for recess and how to handle common spaces touched by children.
- Continuing to work on a model where secondary students continue to work in the Distance Learning format and younger students will be in school for a number of days. Beginning to look at what that will look like for staffing and what this means for transportation. Once we get the guidance from the governor, we can run with it.
- Have received feedback from students and what they have said during this online Distance Learning format.
- K. Casimiro stated that there is a parallel group that meets to discuss the curriculum instruction piece. One of these most important factors is feedback from teachers, parents, principals and students themselves.
- K. Casimiro shared a site that was used to solicit student feedback (<https://my.thoughtexchange.com/report/a818c335ff71bec0f7c77046de0ab28b>)

- Students from across the state (over 18,000) were asked the question “If learning from home were to be part of school next year, what changes could be made to make it more engaging and effective for students?”
- This is a “thought exchange”. A thought exchange usually asks one question and participants can write down as many thoughts as they have that they felt was important in answering the essential question.
- These same participants get to go back in the same survey and get to rate other students' thoughts that resonated with them or thought was important.
- It ranks all of the top thoughts from all of the participants and categorizes them into emerging themes.
- Top themes:
 - A lot of students wanted to make sure that teachers were using videos to explain steps, problems and directions. Deeper explanations of work. More teacher interaction. Live lessons from classroom teachers. More video content from teachers.
 - How students felt about work load and if they felt it was busy work or if it was important. Types of assignments that worked best or didn't work.
 - Lots of students asking for more interaction from their teachers.
 - This was for grades 5 - 12.
- This put some ideas on the table for regional professional development needs of teachers and how to help continue to make the shift.
- Will be looking at fall units of study and identifying what are the priority standards.
- Double down in areas where students may have gaps as a result of Distance Learning.
- EdAdvance is in the final stages of producing two to three weeks of units of study that focus on social emotional learning in the fall for grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12. These units introduce content and topics that get students talking naturally and organically about their feelings, about what has been going on, what has been happening in their lives and how they have responded. Brings in art, music, english, science and mathematic standards. Gives opportunities for students to have conversation to build connections with classmates and teachers.
- Want to make sure we are leading in the Fall with social emotional learning.
- K. Truchsess stated that the district is focusing heavily on the social emotional piece. Social emotional issues of students and their families have been increased and exacerbated across multiple areas.
- Looking at whole staff training on some of these social emotional issues and how to respond to different students and support families during this time. Building on some of the resiliency that we have done, piggybacking off of the school climate and restorative practices work that has been done in the previous two years, to lay the groundwork to further people's understanding of kids coming from different backgrounds and how to support them through this time. Particular focus on Covid and social justice in related current issues that are impacting kids.
- R. Jannelli asked what the school counselors' roles are. K. Truchsess stated that they are all paramount to this work. During this time, each of them has been supporting students and families on how to access food, access housing, food

stamps and all those different resources. In addition they still have to schedule classes, determine who graduates, send college recommendations and transcripts. Also really did a lot of outreach and counseling sessions with students. With younger students, school counselors spent a lot of time meeting with the parents. Providing a lot of education and direct teaching to families on how to support issues with children in the home.

- Primary focus identifying those children that need the support.
- Looking into getting social emotional screeners which will help further work to identify children and families that may need additional levels of support during this time. That is in its initial stages of investigation.
- 2020-2021 Calendar Discussion
 - K. Truchsess stated that in order to prepare staff for the social emotional issues, we will have to do a lot of training in the fall before students even walk into the buildings. Proposing taking the two Professional Development days in November and May and front loading them both at the beginning of the school year, in front of the three days before students return. That would give five days of work with teachers to receive critical training, review protocols and get curriculum updates.
 - K. Thompson stated that they are trying to anticipate what broader guidelines will look like. Has been looking at the percentage of staff and how many are in vulnerable risk categories. Team has focused a lot on the social emotional needs of staff. There will be a certain level of fear not just for students but also for employees returning to work.
 - EAP is starting to see traction now. Team is going to work with partners at Cigna to make sure that we have sufficient resources for our teams as they come back to work so they have an outlet to deal with personal social emotional issues but also to give them some other tools to deal with the students that are on their student support teams.
 - Rolling out a module of professional development that is online through a product called Master Teacher. Components of how to work with literacy, emotional issues and de-escalating situations. Have been able to spend some time working with non certified staff and to work with other providers like Cigna to leverage what we have to bring a holistic approach on how we are training employees as well. Will give feedback to the Board once it comes.
 - C. Leborious stated that it is important to be nimble and pivot. We are not waiting for state guidance but we are anticipating the guidance and how it will fit Danbury because we are unique. Plan out ahead of time so when the scenario comes, we are ready for it.
 - We have built a budget as prudent as we can with the ability to move around depending on what state guidance is.
 - Met with the transportation company to discuss every possible scenario and costing those things out to see what is relevant and what is not.
 - Working with Sodexo and getting their feedback.
 - Working with R. Jalbert who has moved around desks to see how many students safely fit in a classroom.
 - Worked with security officers for safety measures based on visitors and what we know now.

- Dr. Pascarella stated that the CIAC Athletic Association made decisions to have fall sports season but with limited spectators. Monitoring and will report to the Board when that information arrives.
- C. Leborious stated that there is a priority list of what needs to be purchased.
- K. O'Dowd is thinking through what we many need medically (no touch thermometers for example).
- K. Conetta asked K. Thompson what will be the operating policy for staff who are high risk and not comfortable coming back? K. Thompson stated that they are hoping to get additional guidance. FMLA rules have changed in light of the Covid crisis. One example is for people who have difficulty with childcare due to Covid shutdowns are protected by certain FMLA rules now. Hopeful to get guidance for high risk groups and what that means for them. May look something like the kind of inquiry that is done for disabilities and what kind of reasonable accommodations we can provide. If we are looking at an age group cut off, we are in good shape. Law contemplates dialog with people about what their concerns are or what their medical condition is. Fairly case by case.
- K. Conetta asked K. Truchsess about students with underlying health conditions who can't return? How will that impact the budget? K. Truchsess stated that we have a typical protocol when students need homebound instruction. Anticipates that number will go up slightly. Typically a one on one tutor will go to the home to provide instruction or contract with a hospital if a child is in a hospital facility receiving some type of treatment. May be able to do several students in a group receiving the same type of services. This way they can get some social interaction with peers and teachers. Not too concerned from a budgetary standpoint, we can be creative in the way we provide those adjustments and services.
- J. DaSilva stated that Distance Learning went well for his children. The one thing that both his children wanted was more interaction, more Google Meets. K. Casimiro stated that she has heard a lot of that and it is a key piece. Has had conversations with union, staff and principals and everyone agrees that interaction is key. Kids are craving not just the teacher interaction but peer to peer. We are working on it. Probably expect to see more guidelines around that.
- K. Thompson stated that our new teachers also need that interaction with their new colleagues. Trying to figure out what new teacher orientation will look like and how to get them up to speed because they're coming right out of school.
- K. Thompson stated that the district will send the Welcome to the District letter to new teachers. This will link new staff to resources in a Google Classroom. Will ask them to download or purchase on their own some materials that have been used in the past so they can be prepared for virtual discussion groups. Very robust set of materials. New teachers are really going to be held to task with reading and study materials so they can be ready to engage.
- A. Spallino asked what the teachers think about coming in five days before school starts in regards to the PD. Dr. Pascarella stated that teachers have recognized a tremendous need for this. It will be a blended PD so modules are there and teachers don't necessarily need to be at work to do them. Physical presence isn't as important as the time and skills being asked.

- K. Thompson stated that our teachers are lifelong learners and are interested in acquiring these new tools. Danbury teachers have been enthusiastic learners. They've been running PD sessions to share their tips and help their colleagues. Proud of their willingness to engage in this lifelong learning that they have committed to.

INFORMATION

- 2020-2021 Budget

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

- G. Cooper thanked K. Hodgdon, A. Spallino, A. Russo, Dr. Pascarella and R. Chaleski for Board representation and supporting the class of 2020 on 6/5/2020.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

- R. Chaleski stated that the 2020 Task Force will be meeting on 6/15/2020 at 6:00 pm.
- R. Chaleski stated that WSMSA held several virtual ceremonies. The 6th Grade Orientation was held on 5/21/2020. Awards Ceremony was held on 6/4/2020. Moving Up Ceremony will be held on 6/11/2020. All of these are available on the school website under the Principal's Page.
- L. Daly stated that a surprise parade was held for Dr. Cronin's retirement. They drove her around the MRP and WSMSA parking lots where staff, students (past and present) and her own family were waiting. There was great attendance, decorated cars and Dr. Cronin cried the entire time.
- Dr. Pascarella stated the DHS graduation ceremonies will be held on 6/10/2020, 6/11/2020 and 6/12/2020.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: R. Chaleski moved, seconded by K. Conetta that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters related to Mill Ridge Primary and negotiations of exempt contracts.

Entered executive session at 7:22 pm.

Present: Joseph Britton, Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Richard Jannelli, Albert Russo, Amy Spallino, Kathryn Hodgdon, Joseph DaSilva, Kathleen Molinaro, Loren Daly

Absent: n/a

Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Courtney Leborious, Kelly Truchsess, Kim Thompson, Kevin Walston, Kara Casimiro

Ms. Cooper turned the meeting over to Dr. Pascarella and K. Thompson to update the Board on personnel matters. Discussion ensued.

PUBLIC SESSION

J. DaSilva moved, seconded by J. Britton, that the Board of Education return to Public Session. The motion passed at 7:37 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

J. DaSilva moved, seconded by K. Conetta that the Board of Education adjourn its Meeting of June 9, 2020 and the meeting was adjourned at 7:39 pm.

Kathleen Molinaro, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)