

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2019- 7:00 PM
Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Vice Chairperson, R. Chaleski, called the meeting to order at 6:59 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by the Danbury High School ROTC Cadets.

ROLL CALL

Present: Rachel Chaleski, Gladys Cooper, Frederick Karrat, David Metrena, Emanuela Palmares, Ralph Pietrafesa, Farley Santos, Kate Conetta

Absent: Richard Jannelli, Patrick Johnston, Amy Spallino, Kevin Walston, Kara Casimiro

Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Joe Martino, Kelly Truchsess, Kim Thompson

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Curtis Darragh - School Counselor from Westside Middle School Academy spoke about the need for an additional School Counselor at WSMSA. Mr. Darragh has been part of the Danbury Public Schools since August 2015. He has seen a lot of changes at WSMSA, which currently hosts 643 students in both the STEM and Global Studies Academies and plans to enroll a total of 750 students by 2021, due to the expansion the building. As of right now he and the other School Counselor both have caseloads of 320 students each. With the increase of enrollment in the next two years, without additional help, their caseloads will go up to 375 students each. The American School Counseling Association suggests that School Counselors should have 250 students to one School Counselor. School Counselors have the power to teach social/emotional lessons, curriculums of college/career readiness and academic-organizational skills. They can host group-counseling on topics such as grief, anger, divorce, executive functioning, and create that safe space where students have a trusted adult to go to. They create memories with their students and build bonds with family in and outside of the community. The biggest words that is going on in mental health right now is social and emotional learning in the years of 11-14 years of age in the 6th, 7th and 8th grade. Mr. Darragh's worry is that with an increased caseload, his time with students will become limited. From having 250 students to 300 and now to 325, he can already feel the difference. School Counselors shouldn't have to tell a student to hold on, or to be able to get to them three hours later.
- Michael Hennessy - Mr. Hennessy is the parent of a student at Westside Middle School Academy and spoke about the need for an additional School Counselor at WSMSA. Mr. Hennessy is concerned of the increased demands that are likely to be placed on the school counselors if they remain at the current level. The recommendations from the American School Counselors Association are not just a feel-good mantra, it is a necessity if our community is serious about improving graduation rates, promoting college and career readiness while simultaneously reducing discipline referrals and combating effects of poverty in our classrooms. The formula is simple, it's about relationships. School Counselors are uniquely qualified and motivated to provide the academic and emotional support that our students demand. They share in the responsibility to tackle the insidious effects of poverty on learning; the social and emotional wellbeing of students with special needs; the evolving challenges of a ubiquitous cyber cultural and the adverse effects stress has on the developing brain. Our counselors want nothing more than to empower and support students but fear nothing more than being unavailable to the cry of one student because it is muffled by the sounds of many more.
- Genevieve Morehouse - Ms. Morehouse is the parent of a student at Westside Middle School Academy and spoke about the need for an additional School Counselor at WSMSA. Ms. Morehouse has witnessed firsthand how the connection between School Counselors and students can create a sense

of self confidence and empowerment on a path toward self-awareness and self-advocacy for students. She has a freshman at DHS and a 7th grader at WSMSA. In middle school the counselors act as a bridge, aiding the students in their navigation of these sometimes-difficult times. There have been many times where her own children have sought out Mr. Darragh as a resource to work through their emotions, issues or situations before they could potentially become problematic. They foster a safe yet functional environment where sharing and expressing emotions and feelings is encouraged and problem solving is a main goal. Her children have also participated in enrichment activities both inside and outside of school that have been spearheaded by the WSMSA School Counselors. With the increase in student demands and sheer volume, these moments to engage with students one on one or in small groups will become less frequent. If our students are not able to emotionally present at school, then all the other learning cannot take place.

- Christina Sweeney - Ms. Sweeney is a parent of student at Westside Middle School Academy and spoke about the need for an additional School Counselor at WSMSA. She has also been a middle-level educator for the past 18 years and understands the integral role School Counselors play in a middle school. School Counselors do everything from working with anxious students to addressing potential concerns to figuring out scheduling snafus. They are pulled in a million directions. That's on a good day. On a bad day it can be compared to triage in an emergency room. Ms. Sweeney mentioned that Mr. Darragh regularly shows up at town sporting events to cheer his students on. She is worried though because at this pace and the sheer number of students with whom they work with is staggering. It is not sustainable to maintain a program without additional staffing.
- William Sweeney - Mr. Sweeney is a 7th grader at Westside Middle School Academy and spoke about the need for an additional School Counselor at WSMSA. Mr. Sweeney stated that the counselors help the students plan for the future and how to manage their academics so they can be up to speed. They also help them cope in difficult times and help them see the light in a world flooded with darkness. They don't only help students, they help parents, administrators and teachers to create a strong, healthy school environments free of bullies, violence and despair.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION - G. Cooper moved, seconded by F. Santos that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 19-16 through 19-17, as recommended:

MINUTES

1/9/19 Finance Committee Meeting

1/9/19 Board Meeting

Motion passed at 7:15 pm

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

DHS Executive Board of Governors: Joanna Wenchell

- Before the break, there was a lot of activity in the Music Department.
- There was a holiday concert in which the bands, orchestra and choirs participated in.
- There was also a jazz band concert January 14, 2019.
- The Board of Governor started a fundraiser at the high school through Krispy Kreme for Toys for Tots. On the Mentor Monday Flex time, flyers were handed out to each class to collect money for a week. Each class that collected at least \$15 dollars would get two dozen boxes of donuts. The top three classes that raised the most amount of money would win a breakfast for their Flex provided by the Hatters Cafe students and cooks. It was a great success and \$1300 was raised which has been donated to Toys for Tots. A Toys for Tots representative will come to the breakfast on February 5, 2019.

- Flex extensions started a couple weeks ago which is where students who are passing all of their classes and don't need extra help, or to make up work, can use their Flex time to learn life skills and participate in fun activities. An example would be “learn to change your tire” Tuesday in the auto shop. That was a success and the students seemed to enjoy that option.
- Winter sports are entering championship season. The wrestling team is number one in the state as of right now. Boys basketball is 2nd in the FCIAC division. Girls basketball is on a 10 game winning streak putting their head coach, Jackie DiNardo, only two wins away from 500 career wins. The boys and girls track teams have also had much success at the armory this winter.

PRESENTATION

Graduation Report: Dan Donovan and Meghan Martins presenters

- Danbury High School has outpaced the state in growth despite an increase in graduation requirements, expectations and shifts in demographics.
- Free and reduced lunch was 23% in 2009 and is now 58%.
- Graduation rates between 2013 - 2018 have increased 13% for Hispanic students, 9% for Black students, 7% for students eligible for free lunch and 16% for SPED students.
- Newcomer students (students who come in with limited schooling) has also increased.
- Students who complete all four years (defined as a cohort) at DHS went from 78.90% in 2013 to 83% in 2018.
- Student population went from 2878 in 2013 to 3077 in 2018.
- Free and reduced lunch students went up to from 44.5% in 2013 to 57.9% in 2018.
- ELL graduation rate has maintained with 13.3% in 2013 to 14.3% in 2018.
- SPED graduation rate has increased with 12.2% in 2013 to 13.7% in 2018.
- SPED and ELL students are a large portion of students who stay longer than four years so they can benefit from the services that the district provides.
- An “Other” category was discussed. Some of these students are considered traditional dropouts. It is any student who has come for their four years, but they don't have enough credits to graduate. Continuing with the traditional day school schedule is not an option for them as many of these students must work to provide so they continue on with Adult Education. The high school does not get “credit” for any of these students.
- “Other” also includes students who transferred to another school district but never enrolled in that district or have an unknown status.
- If a student starts DHS in the middle of their Freshman year, they are already a semester behind. Mathematically, they can't complete the four-year cohort.
- The Twilight Program (school after school) can help these students. It is an after-school program to make up credits they have missed from the previous semester. They can make up the seat time and learn the information they missed.
- An ESL summer school was also attempted this past year. It was free of charge. There was initially a large interest but not many students registered due to students working in the summer or traveling.
- The DHS message to the student body is “let us help you through the application process” for college.
- As of January 13, 2019, 70% of seniors have submitted a college application. 77% of SPED and ELL students have submitted a college application. 81% of the students have started an application and submitted it.
- 65% of seniors enrolled in college the fall immediately after graduation.
- 70% of seniors enrolled in college at any time during the first year after high school.
- 75% of seniors enrolled in college at any time during the first two years after high school.

- 87% of seniors completed the first year of college and returned for a second year (Freshman to Sophomore Persistence). This is 13% higher than the national average.
- Increased expectations, Newcomer Course, School Climate Specialist, SIOP Coaches, Twilight School, Expanded Twilight School for ESL, block schedule, Flex Program, Professional Development and Instructional Rounds all contribute to this data.
- Achievement gaps continue to concern administrators, will focus on that.
- Need to look at different kinds of programs for over-age and under credited students.
- Also looking at what interventions can be put in place prior to high school.
- CSDE just made an Early Warning Indicator Dashboard. Hopefully that will help us as a learning organization to be able to intervene earlier for students who need it.
- This data will not be comparable after 2023 with the increase of credits needed to graduate.
- E. Palmares asked what kind of ESL model is being used at DHS? Mr. Donovan said bilingual education for Hispanic and Portuguese students. Portuguese has not run due to lack of enrollment. They also double down, where student goes to a class everyday versus every other day like traditional students with block scheduling.
- E. Palmares would like to get a presentation from the state department and see if there are different ways to look at how we are delivering ELL education. Central University has a professor who has dedicated her life to ELL, and she would like to get a workshop together to look at the information.
- F. Santos asked if administrators are finding it a challenge in communicating with the parents/students due to language barrier and if there is a rate of minority teachers that are helpful with translations? Mr. Donovan said there are two very proactive ELL counselors. Ms. Martins stated that communications are always pushed out in Spanish, Portuguese and English. Next year they will try the Twilight Program for semester one as well as semester two.
- F. Santos asked if there was a solution on how to fit extra credits in Flex period? Mr. Donovan stated that Flex is not a credit bearing course. Block scheduling will allow students three more opportunities to gain those credits. Right now, there are three blocks a day. They will also be running a mock schedule with a fourth block to see how that runs. Mr. Donovan stated that 50% of seniors graduate with 25 or more credits. Only 80 students had 21 credits last year. The new graduation requirements will be a big challenge.
- F. Santos asked how many counselors are at DHS. Mr. Donovan stated that there are 10 counselors and one department head. The average caseload is 300 to one. SPED is 330. Freshman counselors are lower. Two ELL counselors are 300.
- R. Chaleski asked if they will reattempt the summer ELL program. Ms. Martins stated that a lot of energy was expended, and she is afraid the answer will be the same. They will again offer it and see how it goes. Ms. Martins stated they are open to suggestions to get more students to commit to the program.
- Current 8th grade class will be in the new 25 credit mandate.
- Ms. Martins stated that more students are inquiring about taking college classes a la carte. That is something DHS would accept as transfer credits. They are trying to be flexible with accepting of credits through universities.
- R. Pietrafesa asked for a brief overview on how the Flex program works. Mr. Donovan stated that every Monday students go in to Mentor Monday. That teacher sets the student's schedule of Flex classes for the rest of the week. Teachers are not supposed to pull students more than twice a week. For instance, if a student has a low class, that teacher can pull the student for Flex. More teachers are starting to work with specific groups of kids. AP teachers are pulling AP students and working with them. There is also the option for students to enroll themselves in Flex. The idea of Flex is really good and if they are taking advantage of it, it's very useful. If a grade falls below 75, Flex is pulled automatically. Flex is not supposed to be a study hall. Extension and enrichment classes are a little different. That is permitted but a form must be filled out.

- F. Karrat asked what is policy on recognizing college credit? M. Martins said that it's a largely silent policy. There is a policy existing on virtual learning, which will need to be revisited. They are treating it as an accredited university granted a credit so DHS will accept the credit. That does not count towards GPA or class rank. Dr. Pascarella stated that the policy is very good now. It's not restrictive, it's open so long as it's an accredited organization.
- Dr. Pascarella stated that the DECO Program, AP Program, collaboration with WCSU, all of that goes to the rigor of the school in terms of presentation in the classroom. There is an increased number of kids taking risks, taking college prep courses and that's why the college rate is so high. Students are performing and doing well because of the things the Board has permitted the district to work on. The students have thrived because they can and even with a deficit, they are up for the challenge. The greatest problem is not ethnicity, it's the poverty level.

ACTION ITEMS

December 2018 –Operating Results Analysis (General Fund/Grants/Projects)

MOTION: G. Cooper moved, seconded by D. Metrena that the Board of Education accept the December 2018 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund/Grant/Projects)

Motion passed at 7:59 pm

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. DPS Public Policy Agenda 2019

Dr. Pascarella shared the DPS Public Policy agenda for the Legislative Session that included the following:

- Implementing the ECS Phase-In Formula, urging our legislative delegates to continue their strong advocacy for funding.
- To pay special attention to the maintenance of multiple grants that have a significant impact on programs that are currently offered at our schools (Alliance Grant, Priority School Grant, School Accountability - Summer School, Family Resource Center, Extended School Hours, 21st Century Grant)
- The Early College Opportunity was created to support collaboration between high schools, universities and industry. We request legislative language to financially support career pathway programs and fund Danbury's ECO Program.
- That the legislatures pay careful attention to bills and language that include additional mandates and requirements for school districts. The most recent list of mandates composed by the CAPSS reflects 380 requirements. This presents a significant logistical, fiscal and operational challenge.
- The Disruptive Classroom Bill. Danbury strongly urges legislators to refuse to support any language that contradicts practice that promotes our current efforts regarding supporting our most challenged students. We are extremely concerned about the language which contradicts previous efforts to reduce suspension and reform the nature of school discipline to a more positive and proactive manner of working with children. PA 18-89 will increase the number of suspensions for many of our early primary students. These students should not be excluded from school, rather they need to develop social emotional skills that will increase their success in the school environment.
- Rescind the new Graduation Requirements. The graduation requirements have increased from 21 to 25 credits. These requirements will cost the district approximately \$800,000 to \$1,200,000 in staffing alone.

B. Update on CABE Legislative Session, January 15th

CABE is asking for the same things that we are.

C. CAUS Legislative Meeting, January 22nd

D. January 17th Incident Update

- a. Ellsworth incident. No resolution to problem in terms with what happened, and individuals involved, the Danbury Police Department is still investigating. Dr. Pascarella stated that the staff handled it remarkably well as it happened right at dismissal time. Danbury police were present and escorted students' home. Unfortunately, when these things happen, we discover something that we could change so personnel is debriefing. Regarding getting out information in time, we do the best we can. We want to make sure we send out the right information. With this incident, we didn't know where the perpetrator was. First thing we focus on is the students and staff and that they are safe.
- E. Dr. Pascarella stated that at the last Board meeting during public participation, an issue with band uniforms was brought up. J. Martino stated that some money was moved around, and they are assisting with the band uniforms.

DISCUSSION

2019-2020 Budget

- On January 22, 2019 at 2:30 pm sprinklers in the C building froze and two sprinkler heads burst. The water went from C-4 down to the cafeteria. JP McGuire was on scene by 3:30 pm and stayed until 2:00 am. Damage was done to ceiling tiles, floor tiles, furniture, computer lab, textbooks and a copier. The insurance company has been contacted and there is a \$100,000 deductible on the claim. J. Martino feels we will reach \$100,00 damage. Some areas of the floor tiles have glue with asbestos so temporary carpeting will be put over them. We will need a whole week to do an abatement, so carpets are temporary. Dr. Pascarella stated that the environmental company was called in to test the air and make sure that it's safe. The abatement is costly and not covered in insurance policy. Dr. Pascarella contacted Ryan Bingham to see if he can get legislature to help with paying for it because that is money that will come out of our budget. Should know more by next week. J Martino stated that it will be a room by room basis.
- F. Santos asked how this happened and if the room was not heated properly to prevent the pipe from freezing. J. Martino stated that there was an issue with the fresh air damper, so it pumped more cold into the room.
- F. Santos asked what the ballpark figure was on damage to which J. Martino replied probably around \$250,000.
- K. Truchsess commended the staff at DHS on their efforts. Even though the school was on a three-hour delay, staff was still there in the morning going through their materials to prepare for the school day.
- R. Chaleski said she had emailed question on terminology on bilingual versus ELL. In new ECS formula there is a 15% weight for ELL and that should have happened this year. Dr. Pascarella stated that they didn't use it in the calculation.
- R. Chaleski inquired if the Board will receive updates from Ryan Bingham like we did last year to which Dr. Pascarella and J. Martino said yes.
- R. Chaleski stated that there was a good conversation at the CAFE breakfast regarding the Disruptive Classroom Bill and that the Board should be aware that it will come up again during this legislative session.
- The Disruptive Classroom Bill was vetoed last year. If it goes through as it is now, money is going to have to go to interventionists, counselors and behaviorists in another fashion. This bill puts too much burden on the school and district to react in a way for every student when there are a certain number of students to spend the money on. R. Chaleski stated that the bill also goes against the whole movement for proactive and positive discipline.
- K. Truchsess stated that it also violates the IDEA by giving one-person authority to make a unanimous decision.

- Dr. Pascarella stated that if this goes through, we will see a high number of students expelled. This bill takes the authority away from the administrator.
- J. Martino stated that there will be a meeting on January 30, 2019 with City Council members. The packet provided to the Board at tonight's meeting is the current proposal.
- A school counselor is proposed for DHS and WSMSA, as well as increased teaching staff, particularly at secondary level.
- There is an increase in SPED staff from 3 FTEs to 4 FTEs. K. Truchsess stated that DHS needs three alone. They need two resource teachers to accommodate growing needs in 10th and 11th grades and one self-contained teacher as well as an additional elementary teacher. They are looking at some of the growth on incoming preschoolers as well.
- Change in staff on contractual increases. 3.4% salary increase. \$7.7 million overall total increase.
- 2.8 FTEs at WSMSA with growth. There will be growth at WSMSA in the next couple years, as well as DHS.
- Dr. Pascarella stated that SPED is growing and bilingual is growing so we need to address that.
- J. Martino stated that we did not have to add extra busing.
- K. Truchsess stated that they are partnering up on SPED transportation with other districts which is helpful. The district is looking to do the same with partnership for transportation to the agricultural school.
- The Board will vote on the budget on February 14, 2019 and it will then be handed over to the Mayor on February 15, 2019.
- G. Cooper asked how we can get parents and community to support our budget? R. Pietrafesa brought up that they have tried to hold budget workshops for the community with a very low turnout. Dr. Pascarella stated that we can make a better effort at the PTO monthly meetings and inform them to spread the word back to their schools. Teachers have indicated an interest in helping out as well. F. Santos stated that this issue is something that can roll into the Community Relations Committee since it's their job to get the community informed.

INFORMATION

- A. Educational Specifications for oil tanks
King Street Intermediate, King Street Primary and Rogers Park Middle School had oil tanks that failed their tightness test and need to be replaced.
- B. Morris Street School's PTO received a \$6,000 grant for technology.
R. Chaleski asked which grant was awarded. Dr. Pascarella stated that he would look into it.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

- A. Board Committees/PTO liaisons
- B. PTO Liaisons:
 - DHS - K. Conetta will replace A. Spallino
 - RPMS - E. Palmares will replace K. Molinaro
 - Ellsworth - K. Conetta will replace K. Molinaro
 - Mill Ridge - A. Spallino will replace K. Molinaro
 - Morris - K. Conetta will replace E. Palmares
 - Shelter Rock - R. Pietrafesa will leave, F. Santos will remain
 - Stadley Rough - R. Pietrafesa will replace A. Spallino
- C. Board Committees:
 - R. Chaleski will add TDEC/TEVAL and Ad Hoc interviews
 - G. Cooper will add Negotiations/Teachers and Ad Hoc interviews
 - R. Jannelli will add EdAdvance
 - F. Karrat will add Policy

- K. Conetta will take Community Relations
 - E. Palmares will add Policy and Adhoc interviews
 - E. Palmares will leave Negotiations/Non-Teaching
 - R. Pietrafesa will add Operations and Superintendent Evaluation
 - R. Pietrafesa will leave Policy and Negotiations/Teachers
 - F. Santos will leave Community Relations
 - F. Santos will add Ad Hoc interviews
- K. Truchsess encouraged anyone who hasn't yet gone to an expulsion hearing to attend one. It is not something done often so there isn't a committee in place. If anyone is interested, the requirement is to observe three before you can participate.
 - F. Karrat suggested having five people available that can rotate through.
 - E. Palmares asked if it would be possible for D. Warner to include in expulsion emails the difference to participate and to observe this way Board is aware of the policy. K. Truchsess stated she will take care of that.
 - Dr. Pascarella stated that we can hire a hearing officer if we have difficulty getting Board members to expulsion meetings.
 - R. Pietrafesa asked if it can be done later because it's difficult for working people. K. Truchsess said sometimes we are working with police officers and the time has to be convenient for them administrator dealing with explosions and the student's family. K. Truchsess stated that she cautions making an actual committee. When the email goes out, it is best to "reply all" with your availability dates and times.
 - G. Cooper asked if we can look at moving expulsion meetings back to a set time of 6:30 pm the way they used to be done. The majority of Board agreed with that time.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

- R. Chaleski stated that CABE's A Day on the Hill will be held on March 20, 2019 at the Bushnell Autorino Great Hall. It will be another opportunity to talk to legislatures.
- Budget workshop on January 30, 2019 at 7 pm.
- Ad Hoc on January 30, 2019 at 6 pm.
- Enrollment Study on February 13, 2019 at 5:30 pm.
- Dr. Pascarella stated that Danbury Day has been rescheduled and he will keep the Board updated on new date.
- F. Santos informed the Board that the Danbury Schools and Business Collaborative (DSABC) will be holding a wine, beer and food tasting fundraiser at MAX Wine and Spirits on March 22, 2019 at 6 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

G. Cooper moved, seconded by D. Metrena that the Board of Education adjourns its Meeting of January 23, 2019 and the meeting adjourned at 8:59 pm.

Gladys Cooper, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)