

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES - AMENDED
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2019 - 7:00 PM
Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

CALL TO ORDER

The Vice-Chairperson, Rachel Chaleski, called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by the Danbury High School ROTC Cadets.

ROLL CALL

Present: Joseph Britton, Rachel Chaleski, Gladys Cooper, Richard Jannelli, Frederick Karrat, David Metrena, Emanuela Palmares, Ralph Pietrafesa and, Amy Spallino

Absent: Patrick Johnston and Kate Conetta

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

RECOGNITIONS - None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Wendell Johnson introduced himself to the Board He stated that he has been a resident of Danbury for 54 years; his wife, who is now deceased was a member of the City Council for four years and their two daughters attendant Danbury schools. He said he is an executive recruiter with offices in New York City, Stamford, Connecticut as well as Danbury. He has recruited individuals on a global basis at the senior level for corporations around the world, primarily at the \$500,000 and above level salary plus compensation corporations. He stated that he is keenly aware of exactly what a successful formula is for an individual to be successful in the corporate world. Consequently 36 ago he formulated, along with his wife, a non-profit organization, Multicultural Business Youth Education Services. It was for High school students to take advantage of some of the emerging careers that were available in the corporate world. Our initial program was developed at Western Connecticut State University followed by Danbury High School and then later in Westchester for four years. We moved on to the University of Connecticut, its Stanford branch and we have partnerships with them is since 2001. Over the years we've had an opportunity to invite Danbury High School students to our program to a strong degree but unfortunately, there has been a diminished enrollment. All of our programs are offered free of charge. We have partnership with some of the major universities around the world and he is delighted to say that in the 36 years, the majority of the 14,000 students have received scholarships to universities. I am here tonight to provide an overview of what our program is all about and, as I said in my e-mail to each Board member, we look forward to you visiting our next conference which will be held at the Stamford Campus of the University of Connecticut, on November 9. It will provide you with an opportunity to see first-hand what we're getting from other school districts in Fairfield County as well Westchester County. Thank you for this opportunity and I look forward to seeing you there on the 9th.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION: Gladys Cooper moved, seconded by Ralph Pietrafesa, that the Board of Education approve the item on the Consent Calendar, Exhibit 128 as recommended:

MINUTES

9/25/19 Board Meeting

Motion passed at 7:10 pm.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE

Spotlight Your School – South Street School

Principal, Carmen Vargas-Guevara, introduced three staff members and a South Street School parent who was in the audience this evening:

Craig Fay - 5th Grade Writing Teacher

Fernanda Oliveira - ESL teacher

Michael Mosca - Music Teacher

Mrs. DaSilva, Parent

Ms. Vargas-Guevara proceeded with her presentation to the Board. She said she was honored to be here tonight and to be a part of her wonderful school. This is her third year as Principal and she loves the school. She went on to say that this year they did something different by celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month. Her presentation showed a drawing of Sonia Sotomayor together with a photo of Sandra Cisneros, author and poet, Ellen Ochoa, Sylvia Mendez, and Laurie Hernandez. We also enjoyed some typical Hispanic food. She continued with photos of last year's school climates depicting special days; Kindness Day, Walk to School Event, Guest Readers with some very important people reading great books for Black History Month. This year we are adding a monthly Breakfast with the Principal. In June we had a STEM Fair at the War Memorial that was attended by over 20 different companies and a couple of Rogers Parks' students; it was so well organized, the kids had a wonderful time and the companies did too. I hope we can do it again this year. Last year we also had an art and music show. Our artwork is presently on the walls behind you. We have great music and art teachers that do amazing work with our students. Parent Nights included curriculum nights per grade, PTO nights, Choose love movements, mobile food pantry, math STEM nights, writing celebrations and upcoming monthly breakfast with the principal. If they are unable to come to the school, we encourage phone conferences or any way that we can get them to participate and to be more involved. We almost had a 100% turnout for parent conferences. I sent out a Calendar of Events that listed what we were doing at our school for the students from May 21 through June 19, ten events were family involvement. One goal that I have set for myself is looking at accessing the needs of our school and our parents and how I can support them at home with the homework. That's always been a struggle. There is a language barrier, and so many other barriers, for my parents. They want to help their children at home. I heard about Moby Learning. It is a computer program that really builds the foundation for our kids. It has fluency, reading and writing, science and social settings. The parents have given me positive feedback about the program. Because the license lasts actually a whole year, not a school year, we paid for an entire 12 months so the kids had access to it over the summer. Mrs. Vargas-Guevara then showed bar charts on imagine learning, literacy by grade, smart balance assessment cohort and smarter balance ELA cohort. She invited the Board to visit her school and thanked them for giving her the opportunity to spotlight South Street School.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

DHS Representatives: Larissa Costa and Claire Moreira

Good evening, we are Larissa Costa and Claire Moreira and we are the B.O.G President and Vice President. This month has already been off to a great start with many students participating in Spirit Week and the B.O.G having face painting during Friday's lunch waves and a dunk tank that cost a dollar a throw to raise funds for the Special Olympics. Our football team also won the Homecoming game against Westhill by 42-0! The morning after was a high school reunion for the class of '94 and '69 with the B.O.G giving tours of the school, while at night was our Homecoming dance with the theme, *A Night in New York*, which had around 800 students attending and dancing the night away in New York.

Our sports teams have been doing spectacular with our Varsity Boys' soccer team winning every game except one against Fairfield Warde, yet they will come back from it! Our Girls' Field Hockey team tied

on their game against Trumbull 1-1. Our XC and T&F teams also had 3 wins and 14-1 regular season. The girls' volleyball team will be serving others to help block out cancer in support of Ann's Place tomorrow, October 11th, for their Pink Night game at 4:30pm!

PSATS will be October 16th for freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, while seniors will be taking their annual class picture out on the field. Seniorfest will also be on October 18th with many activities planned by their class president.

Freshmen elections will be on October 25th with freshmen running for office and being able to vote for who they think will serve best in office. This is an exciting time for freshmen due to more responsibility and freedom!

The annual club fair will be held this year on October 29th. We have many new clubs this year, this is an opportunity for the students at Danbury High School to get more involved in our school community.

As we get closer to Veterans Day, we are hoping to get in contact with a couple veterans and have them visit our school to talk to our students and tell stories of their time serving our country, so students may learn the sacrifices many have made for our country and us so that we all might be more appreciative of our veterans and serving officers!

Thank you for your time and have a great night! We will see you next month with more updates!

ACE Representative: Tamara Souza

Good evening everyone and thank you for allowing me to represent the Alternative Center. We have some great opportunities for students and staff that I would like to share with you:

- *October 2nd*, Kyle Trocolla, and Tiffany Vasale took 13 students on a 7-mile hike along the Appalachian Trail in Kent, Connecticut.
- *October 4th*, Two ACE students participated in a photoshoot with Brian Mccarley, who is our new ceramics teacher, and Dr. Lomas from WestConn to celebrate a Grant that resulted in ACE receiving a Kiln and our first ever ceramics class.
- *October 15th*, Rob Melillo will take 6 ACE students to the STARS workshop.
- *October 16th*, All 9th, 10th, and 11th graders will participate in the PSAT's at ACE, which is overseen by our guidance counselor Dianna Dinardo.
- *October 22nd*, Full Sail University will visit ACE to run workshops with students in Film Making, Game Design, Entertainment Business Workshop, and Sports Media. This student opportunity was coordinated by Kyle Trocolla.
- *October 23rd*, Daniela Esposito and Dianna Dinardo will take 10 students on a 3-mile poetry hike at Steep Rock in Washington Connecticut.

Tamara thanked the Board, Cabinet members, and the community for their continued support of our ACE program and she looks forward to sharing the experiences of her ACE family throughout the year. May America always be above everything and God above everyone.

Kelly Truchsess mentioned that the College Fair will be at the Danbury Fair Mall on October 21 from 5:30 to 8:30 pm. Also, the Freshman Forum will be the following Monday, October 28 at Danbury High School.

Emanuela Palmares congratulated the student representatives. She said she went to DHS and graduated in 2001. She ran for the BOG and lost. All three of you are young Brazilian American ladies and I'm so proud of you.

PRESENTATION – None

ACTION ITEMS – None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Draft of 2019-2020 Superintendent's Goals

The Superintendent spoke about the four goals that are part of his evaluation. These are goals that were set by him and the Board. He updated the Board on what each objective was together with the evidence.

- Goal 1 Growth in Student Learning and Achievement and College and Career Readiness for all Students – Evidence: ELD Program design, implementation plans; revised curriculum template/rubric, increased multicultural texts in class libraries, school and department allocation recommendations reflected in the overall district budget.
On this Goal, there are three reports reflecting the three categories: Date Report 1 fall (October 23); Data Report 2 winter (February 26) and Data Report 2 (spring)
- Goal 2 Family, School, and Community Partnerships – Evidence: Family School Partnership Framework and survey results
- Goal 3 Fiscal Responsibility, Planning for Growth and Talent Acquisition – Evidence: City-District Task Force meeting minutes and agendas and the inclusion of the multi-year budget development process, including funds from outside sources
- Goal 4 Professionalism, accountability, and organizational learning – Evidence multi-year professional learning plan/calendar

There will be three reports one is already established and the next will be on October 23, 2019 and on February 26, 2020. The strategic plan that Kevin is putting together we have been planning for two years.

TDEC Update

Kevin Walston told the Board that TDEC had its first meeting of the new school year last week. Our agenda was an overview of our strategic plan. We are going to squeeze in one more meeting before the next Board meeting. We had a member of the AIS Committee provide us with an update on the Higher Order Thinking (HOT) grant. Kara Casimiro said there are a couple of different levels to the grant. It is sort of a progressive grant so the more buy-in from stakeholders at various models, the more that maybe the district or the school can actually ask to apply for at the different levels of funding.

Kevin Walston then restated Mr. Donovan's message to the Board about the NEASC visit to the high school and the process which will start on November 17th and conclude on the 20th. He also shared that the visiting team will be prepared to give highlights of the visit and then a more comprehensive report at a later date.

Kevin Walston said at our last meeting, we talked about racial imbalance. We phoned the State, after our last Board meeting, and asked the question if the rules are different for magnet schools. The response from the state was yes indeed the rules are different for magnet schools with a caveat. Magnet schools

with a lottery will be required to come up with evidence that there is a voluntary process to get in the school. We would still be under the state list but required to provide evidence of this process. It is different but still required to submit some kind of plan if we were to be 25% more racial imbalance. My recommendation to the Board is to still come up with a plan to help rest those discrepancies. I feel we need to get out to the community and promote AIS school. Its rules are different. The state will still run its racial imbalance report and if there is a school in any district that is 25% or more racially imbalanced that school will be required to come up with evidence that it is a voluntary process to get in that school.

We also talked about the Equity policy which was approved by the Board at its last meeting.

Kevin Walston said at the Citywide PTO meeting on Monday we talked about enrollment; Strategic Plan, town acquisition, trying to recruit and select staff that is a mirror of the population that we serve. Demographics in our community was also discussed. We still aspire to our goal, but we had to modify it a bit to be sure the staff that we hire is responsive to embrace the community that we serve. There were new parents at Citywide. He told the group that we had between 500-600 registrations this school year and our staff, teachers and administrators did a wonderful job of getting students registered. Our schools got off to an amazing start.

Citywide PTO “Meet the Candidates Night”, October 15th, 7:00 p.m. at Broadview

Kevin Walston said the Citywide PTO members asked that a robocall go out to parents inviting them to the “Meet the Candidates Night” planned for October 15th, 7:00 p.m. at Broadview.

Opioid Town Forum, October 2nd

Dr. Pascarella said that he attended the Opioid Town Forum on October 2nd. It was a round table discussion about adult addiction. Mayor Boughton was there together with other municipal representatives. The Attorney General of the State of Connecticut was also present. There were discussions and stories of family tragedies. It was said that there are organizations that support them and have a lifeline out there for a certain period of time. What we didn’t talk about were kids. This was all about adults. Mr. Jannelli told the Board that it was a waste of time. There were a bunch of politicians there who did nothing. They have nothing to offer but currently talk about counting how much of a lawsuit they were going to propose along with 25 other states against pharmaceutical companies. I think the most prevalent reaction or comment that was made was the opioid crisis is really out of hand and the general system itself whether be care or hospitalization is broken but there was no solution to revisit that or what was being done. The parents told heart-rending stories about deaths in their families, husbands complaining that they called the legislators but they didn’t get any responses. None of them had the brains to ask the Superintendent what his feeling was on the subject relative to kids. It really was a waste of an hour and a half, other than the politicians getting together and telling who they represent. When they are in a district with 12,000 kids and you have Superintendent of schools here at least they could have asked what he is doing or how education in the schools may help.

Kelly Truchsess said we are working with several people, as well as my team, on nursing services at the hospital and continue to partner better on some early intervention opportunities that we can do for kids. The other piece is that we are working to secure a grant. We did apply for one in the spring but unfortunately, we were not the recipient. We have sought out some additional grant opportunities with the purpose to do a model which the city is currently utilizing with some of the adults in the community. It has been found to be successful and that would bring all the agencies to the table. Of course with parental consent, we could do this partnership beyond the schools. Also, other community agencies including the Department of Children and Families and other organizations could help to support the family and collaborate with the school. A community care model would help beyond just the hours of their care with us. We are also looking at curriculum, particularly for some of the vaping prevention work

with our kids. We met with an individual concerning a smoking cessation program and that has really changed from cigarette smoking to vaping products. We will be bringing that into our class and will be piloting in November. We have a group of school counselors who can continue to carry on the program exploring some different online opportunities that might have a positive effect.

Kara Casimiro said this year there is an opportunity to use a little bit of grant funding on wellness. It's apportioned out so that's how we can get the money to do some pertinent development work for the vaping in particular. We just need to start much earlier so I'm looking at ways to vertically align what is an appropriate level for elementary, middle and high school. We will also be bolstering targets for Opioids as well.

Lottery

Frederick Karrat said that he wasn't here at the meeting when the lottery was discussed for the Magnet School. I'm just wondering what the status is. I know that we were exploring ways to make sure our student population is more appropriately represented in the Magnet School. Kevin Walston said we've actually started discussions with PowerSchool not handling the lottery but managing registration. Managing the registration process is something that could be helpful, specifically for West Side if we go in that kind of direction. Right now we have a person in my office taking the calls one by one. We are trying to find a more efficient way of handling the lottery. A further discuss ensued about the lottery in general. Rachel Chaleski asked if anyone was aware of any school that admitted students through an opt-out lottery process, to which the answer was no.

Dr. Pascarella said timing is not very good. Actually, in talking to Frank LaBanca they really need to open up just for timing programs in November. We need to look at the calendar. It will come down to a Board decision. We will do an analysis of who is out there. That is a good question that we have to look at. I did want to mention that at our facilities meeting we talked about, which I guess everybody knows, the AIS building belongs to the state and was given to Danbury for our use. After 20 years the building will be ours, we are in our 13th year. I'm going to ask Ryan Brigham, our legislator, who met with us to see if there is some language that would accelerate the time. We gave him some ideas about things we need to endorse. He will put something together for you to look at it or not. We are down to 7 years and if we do nothing, it becomes a Danbury building.

Debbie Warner Retirement

Kim Thompson told the Board that Debbie Warner will be retiring at the end of the month. We had 100 candidates and have selected Kara Pompano from Region 15. She worked for the Vice Principal at the high school and prior to that, she has an extensive background in municipality positions. She brings to us a different perspective in addition to an educational secretary. She has met some of the folks on our teams that she'll be working with and she was highly regarded. Kara will be here on October 23rd.

DISCUSSION

October 1, 2019 Enrollment Report

Dr. Pascarella told the Board that the official enrollment report is October 1st, but the district has until October 15th to reconcile the enrollment numbers. He advised them that they will be moving upward and it will make a difference in the ESC. With PreK included, we are approximately 12,000 students. At Rogers Park, the numbers are up for the 6th and 7th grades; and the same at Broadview. We are going to look at redistributing at both schools. He told the Board that they will be getting an Enrollment Report every month. He mentioned the numbers change because students leave and some students come back. Norwalk has the same problem and they also have gone back to the State for additional funding.

Kelly Truchsess said they have an additional 4 or 5 students who were not identified but displayed significant needs. We diagnosed them and placed them in a try-out place initially. These were students that presented severe cognitive disabilities or physical limitations, most of whom moved from outside the country and were not in a special education department previously. We had many new students and some of those students have required intense programming, one-on-one tutors. We are looking at some related services.

INFORMATION - None

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

Frederick Karrat said the Policy Committee got the by-laws with all the recommendations. They are being shipped to CABE and they are going to clean them up and send them back to us. They should be on the agenda, for the first reading, at the first meeting in November.

Rachel Chaleski told the Board she would like to update them on the 20/20 Task Force meeting on Tuesday. The Mayor, Council, Kevin Walston, Richard Jannelli, Kate Conetta, and Dr. Pascarella and PTO parents were there. The Mayor talked about an enrollment study to be done. The plan is for the peak year over a 10 year period and a study plan will be continually updated as a long term process. The Mayor has met with the governor several times who leans toward creative and regional solutions. He spoke about moving Adult Ed. The next meeting will be on November 6th at 4:30 pm at Beaver Brook.

Rachel Chaleski said she attended the "higher-order" thinking today training. They are very excited about their professional development and its cross-curriculum approach. There is an equity symposium on Saturday, October 19. She mentioned that she just wanted the Board to know that it is at Goodwin College in East Hartford from 9:00-3:30 it is for any individual here or in the public looking to understand or promote equity in our Strategic Plan. There is a CABE Roundtable on October 23rd. Richard Jannelli and I are attending. It is \$10 to register and is being held from 9:00-11:00 am in Wethersfield. I went to the "Mix it up Lunch" at AIS for the community helpers day today. They always do a fabulous job.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: Gladys Cooper moved, seconded by David Metrena that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing negotiations with NEA - Danbury and Teamsters Local Union No. 677 (Custodians), with possible action in public session.

Motion passed at 8:15 pm.

Present: Joseph Britton, Rachel Chaleski, Gladys Cooper, Richard Jannelli, Frederick Karrat, David Metrena, Emanuela Palmares, Ralph Pietrafesa, and Amy Spallino

Absent: Patrick Johnston and Kate Conetta

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

The Vice-Chairperson, Rachel Chaleski, called the meeting to order at 8:20 pm and turned the meeting over to Kim Thompson.

PUBLIC SESSION

MOTION: Ralph Pietrafesa moved, seconded by Frederick Karrat to return to Public Session.

Motion passed at 8:55 pm.

PUBLIC SESSION

MOTION: Frederick Karrat moved, seconded by G. Cooper, that the Board of Education ratifies the contract with NEA-Danbury as presented.

Motion passed at 8:55 pm.

MOTION: Frederick Karrat moved, seconded by Amy Spallino, that the Board of Education ratifies the contract with Teamsters Local Union No. 677 (Custodians) as presented.

Motion passed at 8:55 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Frederick Karrat moved, seconded by D. Metrena that the Board of Education adjourns its October 10, 2019 Board Meeting and the meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Gladys Cooper, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)