

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2017

6:00 P.M. RECEPTION FOR MORRIS STREET SCHOOL NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL

7:00 P.M. BOARD MEETING

Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairperson, Ralph Pietrafesa, called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Gladys Cooper, Michael Ferguson, Richard Hawley, Richard Jannelli, Patrick Johnston, Frederick Karrat, Kathleen Molinaro, Ralph Pietrafesa and Farley Santos

Absent: Eileen Alberts and David Metrena

Also Present: Drs. Glass and Pascarella, Kim Thompson, Kelly Truchsess and Joe Martino

RECOGNITIONS

Morris Street School named “National Blue Ribbon School”

Dr. Pascarella told the Board that Eileen Fitzgerald came from Massachusetts to attend this reception for Morris Street School. Eileen was the educational reporter for the Danbury News-Times for many years and wrote several stories about Morris Street School.

Mr. Pietrafesa told the Principal, Bill Santarsiero, and the teachers that were present that we are proud of what you do every day.

Mayor Boughton said to the teachers and Mr. Santarsiero, as a former teacher I know that you do it because you care. This is the first Danbury Public School to become National Blue Ribbon. It is the Principal’s great leadership and a great staff. I’ve been to the school many times and see the work you have done. My congratulations for you owning this building and being the leader that you are for 20 years. He then read a proclamation from the City of Danbury; which stated appreciation for the tremendous work of closing the achievement gap and exceeding academia excellence. You have made us all proud.

Mr. Santarsiero said that in Connecticut there were 664 Blue Ribbon Schools; in Danbury one public and one private. The public is us. He told the Board that 90% of the 365 students live in poverty. The school has closed the achievement gap so thoroughly it is now one of the highest performing schools in Connecticut. He thanked his teachers for knocking themselves out year after year. Mr. Santarsiero told the Board 20 years ago he had dinner with the Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Robert Dylewski and his wife. At that dinner he was offered the position of Principal of Morris Street. At dinner Dr. Dylewski handed him a small box which contained a variety of nuts and bolts. Not knowing what that meant, Dr. Dylewski said “Bill, you are to bring the school down to nuts and bolts.” I then knew what he meant. We did implement a lot of initiatives. You are looking at teachers who have worked very hard. I could not have carried out

these initiatives without these teachers. It was lovely to have us here this evening. Thank you everyone.

The Chairperson said four years ago Michael Ferguson and I visited Morris Street School. I remember the passion Bill had for the students and the teachers. Mike and I had a conversation in the parking lot after the visit and we just couldn't believe the vibes we got at the school.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Tom Young – Melissa Gabriel

Melissa Gabriel told the Board that she teaches Kindergarten. She thanked the Board for the reception. She wanted them to know that the para-professionals should also be recognized. Kindergarten is the child's foundation. If five students were struggling to learn their letters the paras would be helping them. I would try to do my best to help them but I have 14 other students. The ratio is 1 to 19 – don't forget about the role our paras play and we hope someday they can come back to our schools. I invite you to come to our classrooms.

Tom Young said we had a great school opening. Open house was very well attended. We are grateful to the Board for the Blue Ribbon. It is a group efforts that counts in our para-professionals. The Board well knows that unfortunately due to finances we don't have the math coaches and language coaches. We are grateful to everyone that worked hard. Thanks to Dr. Pascarella, Ms. Thompson and Mr. Martino we did have to wait an extra cycle to give us our paychecks. Thank you.

Nancy Marcus, former Board Member and Chairperson, stated that she is particularly impressed with Morris Street. You must have done a tremendous amount of work. I was a student up until the 4th grade. I remember going to a conference in Las Vegas, as a Board Member, and there was some information about Blue Ribbon Awards. When I read in the paper that Morris Street was awarded the Blue Ribbon I was excited. You need to be very proud of the teachers and paras who are very helpful. I am sure you will do your best, I understand about budgets. I am very proud of all of you.

Ms. Shari Styranovski congratulated Morris Street School and the teachers for receiving the Blue Ribbon Award. She stated that she has triplets at ASI and they love attending school there. Their education and safety has been at risk. I met with Dr. Glass and I have spoken to the administrators at the school and I have not gotten any answers to my concerns. My "A" student ended up "average". One of my children was in a dangerous situation. I have not received an answer why this is allowed to continue. I am hoping I can answers from the Board. There is a behavior problem, but can't change the class because the class in full. There are 20 other kids that are not learning. As a parent I would like an answer to insure my children will learn and assure my children are safe.

Mr. Pietrafesa told Ms. Styranovski we did get your letter and I know that the staff is working on it and they will get back to you.

Senator McLaughlin – Proclamation from the State of Connecticut – Morris Street School

Senator Michael McLachlan said he wants to thank the leadership of Morris Street School. He stated that he watched Morris Street go through many challenges over the years. You have much to celebrate by being awarded the Blue Ribbon. We want to shout that from the tree tops. The Senator then read a proclamation from the State of Connecticut General Assembly congratulating Morris Street stating that they are a shining example of hard work.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION - R. Hawley moved, seconded by K. Molinaro that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 17-111 through 17-112, as recommended:

MINUTES

9/27/17 Sites & Facilities Committee

9/27/17 Board Meeting

Motion passed at 7:31 pm.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE (SPOTLIGHT YOUR SCHOOL) - None

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES (once a month – 1st meeting)

DHS representatives – not present

ACE representatives: Ricky Hernandez and Caitlyn Delaney told the Board that on Thursday, September 28th, students from ACE and the Endeavor program participated in a day-long field trip to Camp Herrlich in Patterson, NY. Students engaged in a variety of team building activities, including the climbing of a 30 ft. wall. It was a great way to build community among both programs and the day was a huge success.

Students in John Webber and Kyle Trocolla’s advisory classes will be embarking upon a project to build T Chairs for elementary students in our district who would benefit from sensory movement during the day. The foundation of the chair will be created using our 3D printer and students will assist with the construction of the chairs. Amy Greene, a behavioral specialist in our district, came to speak with students in advisories last week. We look forward to designing numerous chairs for students in our district who will benefit from them. Also students in Kyle Trocolla’s Modern World class visited the Danbury Historical Museum last Thursday and explored the many historical artifacts in our City. Future visits are planned to delve deeper into some of the collections that the museum has to offer.

On October 24th and 25th, students will have an opportunity to participate in our first Outdoor Education trip of the year where students will hike 3.5 miles on the Appalachian Trail, pitch tents, make their own food and work as a team.

We are proud to announce that the average daily attendance rate for ACE during the month of September was at 92%. Students with excellent attendance will be recognized in large guidance and then provided a pizza party lunch.

On Saturday, October 28th, ACE will be hosting Breakfast with the Great Pumpkin from 8:30 - 11:30 and families are welcome for a morning of great food, arts and crafts, games and pictures with the Great Pumpkin. A portion of our proceeds will go to support Puerto Rico.

The Board thanked Caitlyn and Rickey for their report.

PRESENTATION

Standard Based Report Card Update

Presenters: William Glass, Stephanie Furman, Anna Rocco

Dr. Pascarella told the Board that two years ago we started to implement a basic report card. The reports that were going home to parents didn't fully explain what their children's grades meant.

Dr. Glass said in 1995 he was asked by the Commissioner to be on a task force. That is when the evaluation of the report card started to be promoted. In 2010 the states had an opportunity if they wanted to join the common core.

Stephanie Furman stated that in March 2015 we created a large committee since we want to involve everyone. We prepared a Mission Statement. One of the more lengthy conversations was about the scoring. Every grade level had different grades and different grade levels. We had to figure out how to let parents know about that. Sub-committees were then formed. Each grade level met as a committee. We did a field test and had parent's meetings at Hayestown School to explain what I am showing you tonight in the slide presentation. We also went to Ellsworth Avenue School. Anna Rocco, Principal of Ellsworth Avenue, showed a sample of the version of the report card, which is very barebones. She then showed the newest detailed versions. The results of the field test that came back from the parents and staff were: the teachers liked it and it was more in line of what they were teaching and the parents liked it because they could better understand how their child was doing. We are in the process of explaining this to three other schools. We are hoping, if all goes well, we can roll it out to all schools by the end of the year.

Ms. Molinaro asked if this was cumbersome for teachers to fill out so much information for 20 plus students that they have in their classes. Ms. Rocco said it does take a lot of time, but the teachers feel it is more in line with the curriculum and are willing to take the time to do it.

Mr. Hawley asked do you give any consideration on listing school or district expectations. On the key 1-4 could you add a line as to what the district or school expects? As a parent, to read my child is a 2 is that good or bad? Ms. Furman replied that if they are a 3, they have met the standards. There is a legend there. Mr. Hawley said, he didn't originally see it. Mr. Karrat said he likes how detailed it is. Ms. Molinaro asked if the parents come better prepared to talk about their children grades. It was mentioned that the parents did feel a better connection.

The Superintendent said we expect our students to do more in line with what is going on nationally. If a student leaves here and going to another district, it will give that district a better feel for the level the students has achieved.

Dr. Pascarella and Mr. Pietrafesa thanked Stephanie Furman and Anna Rocco for their informative presentation.

ACTION ITEMS

Board of Education Goals

MOTION: R. Hawley moved, seconded by G. Cooper that the Board of Education approve the 2017-2018 goals

Mr. Hawley and Mr. Pietrafesa told Dr. Pascarella that he did a nice job with the 2017-2018 goals. The Superintendent responded by saying I appreciate the Board acknowledging these goals.

Motion passed at 7:56 pm.

Head Start Food Service Agreement

MOTION: R. Hawley moved, seconded by K. Molinaro that the Board of Education approve the food service agreement for Head Start

Motion passed at 7:57 pm.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Budget Update

The Superintendent said there should be a budget in two weeks. Mr. Martino is working with the City so that we can meet payroll.

Reception Honoring New Staff at New Hope Baptist Church, Sunday, October 15, 1:30-3:00pm.

Ms. Cooper said the reception has been postponed, but will probably take place in the Spring.

Trip to Puerto Rico

The Superintendent said the trip to Puerto Rico has been cancelled.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Hawley asked about the enrollment. Dr. Glass said we think we are stabilized at Shelter Rock. The principals are saying everything is okay. Sometimes in January that all changes. Dr. Pascarella said at the next meeting we will have available the official enrollment report.

INFORMATION

College Fair, October 16, 5:00-8:30 pm, at Danbury Fair Mall

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

We are going to Washington, DC to receive the award for Morris Street School. We will give a report on our trip to the Board probably at the last meeting in November.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

Mr. Pietrafesa asked the Board to discuss where they would like the Annual Meeting on December 6th to be held. He stated that last year it was at Westside. He asked that they think about it over the next couple of weeks.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

ADJOURNMENT

K. Molinaro moved, seconded by P. Johnston that the Board of Education adjourn the October 11, 2017 meeting and the meeting adjourned at 8:06 pm.

Kathleen Molinaro, Secretary

(meeting was videotaped)