

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2019 - 7:00 PM
Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

CALL TO ORDER

The Chairperson, Patrick Johnston, called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Joseph Britton, Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper,
Richard Jannelli, Patrick Johnston, Emanuela Palmares,
Ralph Pietrafesa and Amy Spallino

Absent: Frederick Karrat, David Metrena

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

RECOGNITIONS

Gabriella “Ella” Brown, 8th grade student at Westside Middle School Academy, named one of the Top 300 MASTERS in the 2019 Broadcom MASTERS, a program of Society for Science & the Public grew biofilms in the lab. Ella was one of 300 winners chosen from more than 2,300 entrants across the country. Frank LaBanca, Principal at Westside, told the Board that it was a pleasure to be here to tell you about one of our star students, Ella Brown, who conducted a research project last year as part of our school exploration. She had the number one research project in the State of Connecticut which included home schools, all public and private schools. She was selected as one of the 300 national semi-finalists which is a pretty awesome accomplishment. She will be doing research again this year. Dr. LaBanca said it is pretty cool stuff we do at Westside. We don’t do volcanoes; we do cutting-edge stuff. If we are lucky, we’ll be in the top 300 again in the National finals. Ella told the Board that this year she will be working on medicated bandages using biofilms.

Patrick Johnston, Chairperson, gave Ella an award and congratulated her on this wonderful accomplishment. Ella approached the Board table and each member congratulated her. Dr. Pascarella asked her to invite her Mom, Dad, and sister for a photo. (applause)

Kimberly Moran, 6th grade math teacher at Rogers Park Middle School, received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). Kimberly was one of four Connecticut teachers to receive the Presidential Excellence Award in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering. The honor was awarded to more than 200 educators nationwide for 2018. The award program is the nation’s highest honor for K-12 educators.

Mayor Boughton said this is a big deal and a huge honor for everything you’ve done in your career. We, the City of Danbury, Dr. Pascarella the Superintendent, and the Board want to recognize you for the Presidential Award for mathematics and science teaching. We know you have a lot of career ahead of you so we are expecting even more great things from you. You’ve made the students' lives better. The Mayor then presented Kimberly with the City of Danbury and Mayor’s Proclamation and read it to her

and the audience. The Mayor also presented Kimberly with an Award Certificate from the Board of Education on behalf of Dr. Pascarella and the Board Chairperson, Patrick Johnston.

Kimberly said this is her 16th year in Danbury. It's an honor to be recognized for the award. I have learned from my students and my colleagues over the years and I am grateful to be teaching in Danbury. She thanked everyone for allowing her to go to DC and mentioned what a wonderful experience it was. She also said she has learned so much being here and appreciates the experience the Board had allowed her to have. Thank you, I'm honored for the award. Rogers Park is a wonderful school. She thanked Dr. Zaleta for her support.

Dr. Kristy Zaleta, Principal at Rogers Park, said we are proud of Kim, she always goes above and beyond. She has a great partnership with the co-math teachers in the 6th grade. They work tirelessly to figure out how to meet the needs of our very unique population. Kim is also a co-teacher with one of our other bi-lingual math certified teachers. They did an amazing job with their partnership for our kids to grow exponentially. We're just so proud of our team. We look forward to many more years with her. (applause)

Mayor Boughton recognized Albert Russo, who was in the audience and has just been elected to the Board of Education.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Oswaldo Chin complimented the Board on the good job they are doing. He said it is not easy being a public servant. He held up for the Board to see the campaign piece that he received in the mail about Charter schools. He said that his taxes increased by \$2,000 and he is not willing to have a Charter school in the district. He doesn't feel our taxes should go to private schools. We have to be very careful about having a Charter school. What we need to do right now is come together and support our public schools and teachers and come up with solutions. Forget about the Charter school and bring those public funds to our schools.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION - Rachel Chaleski moved, seconded by Ralph Pietrafesa, that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Exhibits 19-140 through 19-143 as recommended:

MINUTES

10/10/10 Amended Board Meeting
10/22/19 Adhoc Subcommittee Meeting
10/23/19 Board Workshop
10/23/19 Board Meeting

Motion carried at 7:21 pm.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE

Spotlight Your School – Stadley Rough School

Lenny Cerlich, Principal of Stadley Rough School, introduced the Board to Dan DeRubis who is going to show you a video of a "Day in the Life at Stadley Rough." It showed the student's doing their lessons, community awareness and also their recess activities. After the video, Mr. Cerlich told the Board about the various clubs they have at his school. One being the 'Kindness and Compassion Club. This is for

grades 3-5 and is an after school activity. Deb Ireland and Danielle Catanese lead the community awareness of kindness, buy making sandwiches for Dorothy Day. At the end of the school year, we have a 'Don't dis my Ability Dance.' The last week in October is Kindness Week. Monica Hasaan took over the lead in promoting goodwill to all. One of the days was, 'Nobody Eats Alone,' which also promotes goodwill to all students. We had a finalist in the Invention Convention. We've had a finalist every year for 10 years in a row. Last few years it was led by Dan DeRubis. 'Spooky Reading and Math Night' was a great activity for Halloween. The evening was filled with STEM activities with all staff involved. We started out with 20 students, it then quickly became 120+ students and parents. We have a strong PTO community who always goes above and beyond to support our school with a welcome back picnic, an ice cream social and a VIP dance. We have three ESL nights: October, December, and May in collaboration with SERC. At the conclusion, Mr. Cerlich invited the Board to visit his school and thanked them for the opportunity to Spotlight Stadley Rough. (applause)

Mr. Johnston thanked Mr. Cerlich for an interesting and informative presentation.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

DHS Representatives D'Ostilio and Jake Goodwin said this month has already been off to a great start!

October:

- The class of 2020 took their senior pictures dressed in all black on the 16th of October! How exciting to be graduating soon.
- The Danbury boys' soccer team won vs Stamford 1-0 with 8:30 left in the game on October 21st! Good job boys!
- The 34th annual college fair took place in Danbury Fair mall from 5-8 pm also on October 21st! Colleges from all over set up tables and helped give students an idea of their future after high school!
- On October 22nd the DHS Girls Volleyball team presented Jack Bouffard, from Ann's Place, with a check of \$261. These funds were donated at the volleyball Pink Game bake sale!! Go hatters!
- Congratulations to cross-country runner Daniella Grullon-Pena on her 3rd place finish at LLs and All State Honors!
- The freshman forum was held in the DHS auditorium on October 28th, which helped to introduce parents and students to life at Danbury High.
- Danbury boys' soccer won 2-0 against Ridgefield on October 28th!
- The SENIOR NIGHT GAME for the girls' volleyball team was held on October 29th! What a great season.
- Danbury High one of our largest club fairs ever, with over 30 clubs in attendance. Because of the weather we had to move it indoors, but it was a success nonetheless.
- On October 30th, students in our CNA program held a health science career fair with jobs ranging from RN to Pediatric nutritionist.

November:

- The new Danbury high school track was opened November 6th, which we are very excited about! We can now host track and field competitions at our school.
- A big congratulations to Meilee Kry for girls Cross Country, and Aidan Coleman for boys Soccer! Both named FCIAC Exemplary Scholar-Athletes for the Fall Season.
- On November 4th, Mr. Marchinkoski won science teacher of the week, so congrats to him.
- Danbury High school productions has just started rehearsing for their upcoming show, "Newsies" which will open in early April.
- Danbury cross country runners Daniella

Coming up on Sunday, a NEASC committee will be coming to Danbury High School with Board members and other members of our community. The Board of Governors officers will be there as well. We hope to see everyone there! Thank you for your time.

ACE Representative, Tamara Souza said she would like to thank you for allowing her to represent the Alternative Center for Excellence and share what is going on with our family at Locust Avenue:

- Saturday, October 26th ACE hosted our Breakfast with the Great Pumpkin Fundraiser. 31 ACE students showed up that Saturday morning to volunteer and participate in a great opportunity for service learning.
- Today Paul Thrasher took his Financial Literacy Class to participate in a Financial Literacy Workshop at WESTCONN.
- On November 19th Rob Melillo will take ACE students to participate in STARS workshops, which provides an opportunity for students and staff from Alternative Programs from around the state to collaborate.
- Tuesday, November 26th ACE invites you all to join us for our Thanksgiving Dinner, which allows us to give back and say thank you for all of the support we receive.
- Wednesday our ACE community service volunteers will sort and bag coats, hats, socks, backpacks, toiletries, and sleeping bags for our Thanksgiving Coat Drive, which will service those in need of support on Thanksgiving morning at 6 a.m. on the corner of Main St. and Elm Street. Donations will be accepted until Friday, November 22nd.
- December 4th Joanne Tolles and Daniela Esposito will be taking 21 students to view a performance of Les Miserables (Ley Miz).

Tamara thanked the Board for their continued support of our effort to educate, engage, and empower at the Alternative Center and may America always be above everything and God above everyone.

Dr. Pascarella asked Rebecca to tell the Board about the Workshop Committee that she and Tamara were on.

Rebecca D'Ostilio told the Board that she and Tamara were involved in a Committee three weeks ago that discussed ways that we hopefully can work on district plans for the future. We had six students: four from DHS and two from ACE. We started out sitting at a table and talked about six steps. We gave the presentation then discussed as students what we think could be implemented in the schools. We then split up. We had one community member and a public service worker at each table. We were assigned one of six points and we had to come up with ways to plan. It was really insightful because the students now will know what is going on. That is something we spoke about bringing the plan to the students.

Dr. Pascarella then asked Rebecca if she was thinking about doing something at the state level. She said she is applying to be the Connecticut State representative for public schools and she hopes she can represent Danbury at the state level. Mr. Johnston said, "That is great!" (applause)

PRESENTATION - None

ACTION ITEMS - None

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

City-Wide PTO Council

The Superintendent said the City-Wide PTO Council meeting on October 7th was a great evening. The attendance was tremendous. Almost every school was there. They discussed many subjects. CT School Finance Project presented about state education funding. They presented the funding mechanism. They talked about strategies to go forward and how they can advocate for Danbury. Erika is going to work with Courtney on the funding mechanism.

School Calendar

Kevin Walston called the Board's attention to the highlighted dates. I recall this time last year we had conversations around early release days. We have a draft tonight for your consideration. We reduced PD sessions down from 11 last year to 6. The sessions are a little bit longer but you will note there are only 6: October, December, January, February, March, and June. I think that is one of the things that people will notice quickly. You will also notice that Columbus Day, although it has no impact on the community, schools will be closed with no PD that day. New teacher orientation – we are proposing two pre-opening Professional Development days separated by the weekend. We also have in November a number of parent conferences currently, and we are considering moving all parents' conferences to December to better align with report card distribution. We need to stagger the conferences, so we have translators available at various levels.

Dr. Pascarella said we were asked why we are starting so early in the year. There is a real struggle at the beginning of the year and that is why there is an extra day there. In April you will decide what the graduation date will be. Conferences are a problem for teachers. We need interpreters and we try to spread it out. The subject came up about teacher conferences and it was briefly discussed.

Rachel Chaleski said in regard to the teacher conferences scheduled for November, she doesn't know how comfortable she would feel waiting that long to hear from her child's teacher. It is a long time. I do get the interim report and I appreciate the additional information, but they are 2½ months in school and I am eager for conferences. She also told the Board that since there was no school on Veteran's Day, she was able to bring her kids to the Veteran's Ceremony at Rogers Park. It made it more meaningful. I would love to do that again with them. I saw a few veterans there with their kids.

Ms. Chaleski also asked about Rosh Hashanah on September 18th. She said it begins at sundown and this year they scheduled a PTO meeting on that evening. I don't know if it's worth putting on the calendar that on the evening of Rosh Hashanah no school events or activities should take place.

NEASC Visit - November 17th – 20th

Just a reminder of the Danbury High School NEASC Visit. It will start at 2:00 pm.

November 5th Professional Development Feedback

Kevin Walston said the feedback from our session was met with satisfaction by teacher groups at multi-levels. We had 38 different professional development sessions, almost double that of October. Sessions in November were content related PD and also a high Restorative Justice conferences with staff. School leaders participated. In 2018-2019 we started Justice training throughout the school year and so this year we had that same professional development.

Emanuela Palmares asked Mr. Walston to explain for everyone's understanding of the concept of Restorative Justice and the focus of that training. I think that we touched on this before. It's interesting for us to know some of the areas that professional development is focusing on as a Board, as well as to understand the things that are being addressed by our teachers.

Mr. Walston said last year a conversation started about the social and emotional development of students district-wide. As a district, we began to explore programs for kids in that effort. We are always trying to get better at keeping kids in school so exploring different ways to do that we landed on adopting Restorative Justice. We feel pretty comfortable in that it focuses on building community in our classrooms in our school community. It's an opportunity for kids identify with other students and a trusted adult in the classroom. So, in that environment if a student is struggling with issues, whatever those might be, ideally we're hoping that they would bring that to the attention of a trusted adult. We are also hopeful that through Restorative Justice in the building it will focus on opportunities for us to remember that learning is beyond curriculum. We make mistakes sometimes as kids, even as adults, and this provides a framework for our kids to learn from those mistakes.

DISCUSSION

Proposed Legislation Agenda

Dr. Pascarella said you have a copy of the new Legislative Agenda for 2020. This is a draft put together with the help of Ryan Bingham and Erika Haynes. Kelly Truchsess wrote the Special Education piece. One of the things we did talk about was the Magnet School and is something you may want to consider. The school opened 13 years ago with bonds from Education Connection. In 20 years when the bonds retire, the school then belongs to Danbury and not the State. It becomes an intramural Danbury School. You may want to consider the legislation for the remaining 7 years on the bond retirement. Ryan did look into it and it will require different language. Thinking about one of our solutions to space is to play out where it becomes an intramural rather than a Magnet School, then you may want to consider the legislation for the remaining 7 years.

Kate Conetta asked the Superintendent as far as that is concerned, what does that mean for the students who are out of district already and currently attending that school? He replied to be fair to everyone and if we think this is going to happen as students phase out, we would phase in students.

Rachel Chaleski asked about the Advisory Council. The Superintendent said it has not been rescheduled yet. She said she would like to bring this up to the Advisory Board first and start the conversation there. She is all for exploring the idea. It doesn't make sense that we are educating surrounding towns while ours are learning in closets. I would like to move formally with our partner districts.

Dr. Pascarella responded that he just doesn't want to lose sight of the reason for the program which was to integrate the school with the surrounding suburbs that don't have any diversity to speak of and the idea

here was to have those youngsters exposed to the diverse populations and that's why it was funded by the state. If that is what you want to do to bring it before the Advisory Council, we can.

Gladys Cooper said we need to be careful before we do this. We need to be sure it is the correct thing to do for our kids and the district. The Superintendent then talked about ESC funds, Pathway and university partnerships, state mandates and Special Education services.

Kelly Truchsess said we wanted our legislators made aware of the influx of students in Danbury. This year we had 80 students that moved in that required Special Ed services. Those were not the students that were with us last year that we identified as needed for the service. Some of the students that came in are relatively easy to program and don't have a large impact on our overall programming. But we have other students due to the nature of their needs, and the courses, may be in a class of 8 or 10 students. When you get two or three students around the same grade level of that profile you see how that could become troublesome for staffing purposes. We are only staffing at the end of the last school year in anticipation and we always try to project fluctuations of students coming in. But this year, in particular, the team was extremely challenged with students. For example, at Pembroke, the school got hit significantly within the first four weeks of school. We placed 10-12 students in 6 classes that are traditionally small in size, therefore, each class increased by two which did present some unique circumstances. Ms. Truchsess also said another unique circumstance was with students that moved to the United States who needed services. We knew as soon as they registered that we had to place them in a special education program and there is no process we can go to immediately to figure out the exact specifics of what those children needed. So those students who were coming in on the first day were placed in a fragile program and a non-verbal autism program. My team was being called daily saying "I don't think that this child is appropriate for a classroom." Our central registration did a really great job. The Special Ed program has some pretty significant budgetary problems.

Rachel Chaleski said she has a suggestion and you can take it or leave it. I appreciate and understand the consequences of the potential legislation, as well as what their intentions might be. But everything has a fiscal impact and logistical challenge. But just a thought about maybe putting something in there that when CABE puts out testimony that we are members and I feel their testimony weighs a whole lot more than an individual or a certain few. We're part of their team and they speak for us as well.

Update Mayor's 2020 Task Force Meeting

Dr. Pascarella said they are meeting next week and have asked the legislators to come. We would like to see if we can get the legislators behind us. The meeting is on November 20th here at 4:00. The Board is invited to attend. They are going to start talking about some options and there are two issues. What are you going to do long-range and if you decide to do long-range where you might put that building and what would it look like in terms of grade structure? What are we going to do in the interim if we have a reoccurrence of what happened this past summer? You are already oversaturated. You walk around schools today and see people on wheels and students in closets. About eight years ago there was a Savin report that they spend \$250,000 for. Antonio was at the meeting and he is going to update that for space utilization to see what we are entitled to.

Richard Jannelli said this will be a brainstorming session; moving kids to different towns and a lot of facts to be gathered and opinions to look at objectively. There are 20 people represented. A cross-section of the town. You will get a good representation, but don't be alarmed. This is a public session and a lot of opinions. The faster we work on this the better we are. If we are to build a new school, the Mayor said, there is a plan in March to have a referendum. Time is of the essence. He said there were two things that we looked at, a short term problem and a long term problem. All this has to be worked with the Site and

Facilities Committee. It is going to be difficult to coordinate 25-30 people. He said that this has to be worked in with the Sites and Facilities Committee meetings because everybody has to be in on these conversations.

INFORMATION

Interim Assistant Principal at Broadview

Ms. Thompson told the Board that Tany Douangta, who has been a counselor at Broadview for many years, will be the Interim. She participates in the leadership groups with Kevin Walston and someone that we're eager to give an opportunity to as Interim.

Veterans Day Activities

Dr. Pascarella said there were various activities that took place in the classrooms throughout the district.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Annual Meeting December 4, 2019, 5:30 pm at Beaver Brook

Nellie Mae Convening Invitation -November 19th – 21st

CABE/CAPSS Convention November 15 - 16th

Ms. Chaleski said she is going on Saturday. The Alliance District Workshop caught her eye and she will bring back materials to share with the Board. She also said she would be happy to drive anyone who would like to go.

Ms. Cooper said she wants to congratulate the principal, Kesha Smith, at Great Plain School for a well-organized Halloween treat for the students. Some of the activities were in the auditorium and some were in the gym. It was nice to see how well the young people conducted themselves. Ms. Smith and her staff did a wonderful job for the kids.

Ralph Pietrafesa said since I will not be here for the next meeting, I want to say thank you. It was a pleasure working with everyone. One thing I will miss is the people, but not the problems. You will probably see me a couple of times participating, but this is my last meeting and I know you all understand how difficult it is. I will still advocate for the district, just on the other side of the table. So, I just want to say thank you. I feel confident some of the new people whom I don't know, but in what we have here, I think you are taking the district in the right direction. (applause)

Ms. Cooper thanked Ralph Pietrafesa for his service and all that he has done for the schools while he was on the Board.

Rachel Chaleski said we had a Policy Committee Meeting, Fred Karrat isn't here to talk about it, but we went through the CABE policy series 1000 in its entirety. Our modifications will be sent to CABE and they will provide the revised series to the full Board. Kevin Walston said it will come back to us and we will have a first reading. We are still waiting for Policy Series 9000 to come back. We will have that for our next Board meeting.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: Rachel Chaleski moved, seconded by Richard Jannelli that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing negotiations with Danbury Paraeducators CSEA/SEIU Local 2001, with possible action in public session.

Motion carried at 8:30 pm.

Present: Joseph Britton, Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Richard Jannelli, Patrick Johnston, Emanuela Palmares, Ralph Pietrafesa and Amy Spallino

Absent: Frederick Karrat, David Metrena

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

The Chairperson called the Executive Session to order at 8:35 pm and turned the meeting over to Kim Thompson. A brief discussion followed.

PUBLIC SESSION

MOTION: Richard Jannelli moved, seconded by Rachel Chaleski, that the Board of Education ratify the contract with Danbury Paraeducators CSEA/SEIU Local 2001, as presented.

Motion carried at 8:50 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Rachel Chaleski moved, seconded by Ralph Pietrafesa that the Board of Education adjourn its November 13, 2019 meeting and the meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Gladys Cooper, Secretary

(meeting videotaped)