

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2017 – 7:00 PM
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: Eileen Alberts, Gladys Cooper, Michael Ferguson, Richard Hawley, Richard Jannelli, Patrick Johnston, Frederick Karrat, David Metrena, Kathleen Molinaro, Ralph Pietrafesa and Farley Santos

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

RECOGNITIONS - None

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Lynn Roman addressed the Board on behalf of Debbie Hocking a Retired Educator. Ms. Roman proceeded to read a letter to the Danbury Board regarding the paraprofessionals. Without that staff it is putting the teachers and students at a disadvantage. All areas of learning are affected by inadequate language acquisition. Lessons are delivered by teachers and these lessons were later reworked so paras could review the lessons with students. The paras also assisted with other services such as working with students going to computers in small groups for the much need phonics programs. She asked how the achievement gap is going to be closed if people in teaching positions are cut. If cuts have to be made, she asked, have you thought about cutting positons outside of those in direct contact with students. She would like a committee of retired teachers and teachers currently working and ask for their input before making decisions that affect students. She believes that a committee like this would give valuable information concerning what works and what does not.

Kevin Haddad, Fourth Grade Teacher at King Street, said in a conversation with colleagues they all felt they were drowning. The stress in the district for new teachers, veterans and mid-career teachers is affecting them physically as well as emotionally. It is a district-wide issue. He said he did some research and found it was a nation-wide issue as well. He read statistics regarding mental health, no influence in establishing curriculum, to name a few issues. His research on the web included: teachers' mental health declining amid job stress; disproportionate stress plaguing American teachers and coming crisis in teaching report. He stated he was not here to complain, but was here to tell the Board that Danbury has a unique opportunity to get out ahead of these issues. Mr. Haddad suggested that the Board and administration form an ad-hoc committee. He said in cooperation composed primarily of classroom teachers, building administration, Board members and parents to study the quality of work life which includes stress and workload and make recommendation to improve the quality of our work life which as we all know also impacts learning conditions for students.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION - R. Hawley moved, seconded by M. Ferguson that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 17-126 through 17-127, as recommended:

MINUTES

10/25/17 Community Relations Committee Meeting

10/25/17 Board Meeting

Motion passed at 7:09 pm.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE (SPOTLIGHT YOUR SCHOOL)

Great Plain School: The President of the PTO told the Board that our PTO is somewhat like a family. Parents are willing to help whenever we need anything extra. We have raised money to purchase school supplies and also have a fund raiser for field trips. The PTO is informed by the school concerning tests and scheduled parents' conferences. We appreciate that our school responds to our emotional needs. The Board was shown a slide presentation on how the students at Great Plain School relate to new students. The students made sure that the new student made friends, had someone to have lunch with and someone to enjoy leisure time with. The student in the presentation was not only new to the school, but new to the United States. The presentation showed kindness to themselves and others. It pointed out that they are a community of learners and they show compassion, gratitude and that is what increases their academic success. When the presentation was over, one of the Fifth Grade students thanked the Superintendent and the Deputy Superintendent. He stated that they realize the time and effort they put in for the children and staff in the Danbury Public Schools ... have a nice evening and good night.

Mr. Pietrafesa said that his children went to Great Plain School. He said they have a dedicated staff that he is familiar with. Students presented the chairperson with a plaque. The audience applauded.

Dr. Pascarella said early last year we were not pleased with the student achievement at Great Plain School. By the end of the year, I was very impressed. We collected the data and it took a lot for them to get where they are now. Addressing the Principal and the staff, he said you do great work and thank you very much.

The Board thanked the students for their presentation.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES (once a month – 1st meeting)

Danbury High School representative, Luana Barcelos, told the Board that she is the BOG treasurer and is here to speak on behalf of the student body of Danbury High School. The First Quarter closes on November 9th. Parent teacher conferences will be held on Monday the 20th, Canyon Creek is open for parents and students to schedule meetings with their teachers. Girls' volleyball and soccer and boys' soccer teams have all made States. Our girls cross country team came in 2nd at State Opens and we have 2 girls going to New England's. ELL college night is tonight to support and provide aid to families regarding financial aid and college applications. Our administrators are working with Impact Sports to create a new Hatter's logo that will be brought forward schoolwide. We have had great success with our student feedback. Over 1,000 students have replied to our surveys, we are striving to become more unified and less institutional. Construction in the front of the building should be completed within a week or two. They are in the process of installing the new glass. The Black Box Theater attached to A-wing and the freshman academy are both on schedule. They have bricked the freshman academy and are beginning to close up and get ready for winter. Speaking of, we're pretty cool at DHS but lately we've been a whole lot cooler. **wink** We hope that winter won't hit us too hard this year. However, we have had a great Quarter and look forward to the next one. Lastly, we said at the beginning of the year that as members of the BOG we would update you on the initiatives that we like to consider - making Danbury High School a community that cares. This month we have worked on getting school wide involvement

in recognizing our Veterans. So far, we have asked advisories to participate in one of the following activities: to partake in a door decorating competition in which they creatively design the door to their advisory in a way that uniquely showcases their gratitude to Veterans or to collect a variety of different donations into boxes that we will be sending to a base stationed in Iraq to whom we have been in contact with. Tomorrow we will have an Advisory Ceremony with our chorus singing the national anthem. Mr. Donovan will be recognizing Veterans amongst our staff, and the ROTC program reciting and honorary poem. We also have three Veterans who will be in the cafeteria during lunch periods to answer respectful questions or for students to simply express their gratitude. So far we have gotten a great amount of student involvement in these Veterans activities and we plan on updating you about them at the next meeting.

UNION REPRESENTATIVE

Sam Buck, Union Representative, told the Board that we are drowning. One of the six grades classes are in tears every afternoon due to the work that has been put on them. Just as Mr. Haddad said, the students and the teachers are stressed. None of us took the jobs in Danbury as a stepping stone. We like Danbury and believe in Danbury. I have been approached by two different districts for jobs and have turned them down. Teachers are in some cases leaving the profession for all the things being put on the teachers. I don't have the answer. We need to put together some kind of a committee or committees to find out how to relieve some of the teachers' stress. The teachers need your help and I hope you take this plea seriously. We are here because we want to be here. For those Board Members leaving us after the election, we would like to thank you for all your efforts.

PRESENTATION

Danbury Early College Opportunities (DECO), Sarah Roy

Ms. Roy told the Board that there are three students here to tell the Board about their classes and answer any questions the Board may have. She mentioned that they have 21 or more college credits and they are juniors; also have a 3.0 or better. She then showed a slide presentation, starting with their Mission Statement. The students have a variety of different skills. We are investigating internships with local business. We have three students starting their internships in research for a local company. Most internships are 6-8 weeks. We have a summer orientation program at Westside Academy. Our first "Meet and Greet" meeting was at WCSU. We are looking for mentors. Ms. Roy spoke about the various programs at Naugatuck Valley Community College. We have advisors from Naugatuck talk with the students and their parents about all the programs offered. One program is learning how to interview which is preparing the students for their first interview. Richard Hawley asked the students if they enjoy the program. One student said it is helping me with credits towards college. Another student commented that it is a lot of work, but doable, if you put your mind to it it's not too bad. A student said you have to focus on your studies and we do give up some high school activities.

Ralph Pietrafesa said a two year Associates degree in four years of high school is wonderful. Ms. Roy mentioned that these students here tonight have so many credits they are technically seniors, even though they are considered juniors. Ms. Roy also said that we started out with 99 students but we are down to 77. That is a more manageable number for us. She stated that she has received e-mails from parents that want their children be part of the program, but we have to limit it.

Dr. Pascarella said one of our strategies is trying to get some companies for internships and donations. So far we have not been successful with that. He said he met with a couple of Superintendents from surrounding districts and Danbury is far ahead of them in this regard. We have been able to keep this program because of the Alliance grant. Thank you for the work and dedication to the program.

ACTION ITEMS

2018-2019 School Calendar

MOTION: R. Hawley moved, seconded by K. Molinaro that the Board of Education approve the 2018-2019 School Calendar

Mr. Hawley asked if this was the regional calendar. The Superintendent said no, but it lines up with the surrounding districts.

Motion passed at 7:55 pm.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Budget Update

Mr. Martino said the State did pass the budget. We have about a \$200,000 cut in a grant. The Best Program for teachers - we are still putting pieces together on that. Dr. Pascarella said when we go to the City Council they asked us why do we need all those funds. The classrooms are getting bigger and we need the extra hands of our paras. The teacher workload is becoming tremendous. Mr. Martino mentioned that last year they cut \$250,000 from the Alliance grant. We really do need more resources and we think what we ask for is fair.

Facilities Update

Mr. Martino said we are imparking on portables for Westside. Six of them can be put at the back of the school. They are an economical solution for our overcrowding. We can have them in line by September. We will have a lottery. Dr. Pascarella said we should talk about this – we might be able to do 6, 7, and 8th grades. Mr. Martino said they have built-in lockers, but we will have to add some more. Where the portables are located the students will have access to the bathrooms.

Ms. Cooper said it's been five years now, we can't just keep putting up portables. How can we approach getting finances for what we really need? We are going to need more than portables. The Superintendent said the portables are short term; long term we have to put together a study group and make recommendations. We have to have a conversation about this.

Transportation Update – Future Plans

Mr. Martino said we have overcrowded buses. I need to talk to the Board about adding buses. We had a bus for Exit 2, but that is overcrowded. We need two buses. For the elementary schools we need a two or three tier system. There is not enough time to get to all the schools. Dr. Pascarella said we need to do a study about the times. Mr. Martino said the bus company also has someone taking a look at it. Mr. Johnston asked if we could survive with two busses and a mini. Mr. Martino replied, yes. Mr. Pietrafesa asked the cost of each bus. Mr. Martino said \$60,000 per bus. Dr. Pascarella said the overcrowding is now a safety issue.

Finance & HR Software Package Upgrade

Mr. Martino told the Board that he had a conversation with the City. They have new regulations and new software and we are going to partner with them. We are going to have the same software, but not comingle with them. It will be our own software package, which will be a lot more efficient than our current system which is 9-10 years old.

DISCUSSION - None

INFORMATION

1. Health Services Field Trip Protocol
2. Professional Development Day, November 7

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Dr. Pascarella said since the graduation requirements are changing, we will need to do some policy work.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

The Chairperson, Ralph Pietrafesa, congratulated all the new Board members that were elected on Tuesday.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: Kathleen Molinaro moved, seconded by Farley Santos that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing the status of negotiations with Para educators.

Motion passed at 8:21 pm.

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

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

Mr. Pietrafesa called the Executive Session to order at 8:22 pm and turned the meeting over to Kim Thompson. A brief discussion followed about the status of the negotiations with para educators.

PUBLIC SESSION

MOTION: Eileen Alberts moved, seconded by Farley Santos that the Board of Education return to Public Session.

Motion passed at 8:32 pm.

MOTION: Richard Hawley moved, seconded by Kathleen Molinaro to add an item to the Agenda to include response to teachers' load in the classroom.

A discussion ensued.

ADJOURNMENT

Gladys Cooper moved, seconded by Michael Ferguson, that the Board of Education adjourn its November 8, 2017 Board meeting and the meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm.

Kathleen Molinaro, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)