

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2020- 7:00 PM
Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chairperson, G. Cooper, called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Joseph Britton, Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Loren Daly,
Joseph DaSilva, Kathryn Hodgdon, Richard Jannelli, Kathleen Molinaro,
Albert Russo, Amy Spallino

Absent: n/a

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

RECOGNITIONS

Alton Spencer, DHS Senior, Recognized For Discovering New Planet.

A. Spencer is a 17-year-old student currently enrolled in 12th grade at Danbury High School. Alton has a computer program that allows him to take data and monitor stars. He used an algorithm and that is how he discovered a habitable planet 100 light years away. The planet, currently named TOI 700 D, is only 20% larger than Earth. Sadly, the planet will not be named after him due to name convention rules in place. Alton was invited to coauthor a recently published paper and credited with the findings. MIT has invited him to spend the summer at the college and he is hoping to attend there next year.

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION - K. Conetta moved, seconded by J. DaSilva that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 20-24 through 20-27, as recommended:

MINUTES

2/11/20 Board Budget Workshop
2/12/20 Board Budget Workshop
2/12/20 Board Meeting
2/20/20 Superintendent Evaluation Committee

R. Chaleski requested an edit for the 2/11/2020 Board Budget Workshop which stated that K. Molinaro was present, but she was not.

Motion passed at 7:16 pm

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

ACE Representative: Tamara Souza

- On 3/6/2020 Laura Blake will be taking five ACE students to Hartford to attend the Women and Girls Day at the Capital.
- Rob Melillo and four students participated in a STARS workshop on 2/21/2020, which allows ACE students to collaborate with other Alternative Program students from around the state of Connecticut.

- Thursday Intervention and Enrichment continues in the month of March and will include SAT prep for the 11th graders who will be testing on 3/25/2020.
- ACE Humanities Dept has begun preparing for their Renaissance Fair, which will occur on the afternoon of 4/8/2020 following their Career Fair in the morning.
- As the warmer weather approaches, ACE staff will be finalizing plans for outdoor adventure trips such as a whitewater rafting trip on the Hudson River, poetry hikes in Connecticut, and a 14 mile hike on the appalachian trail in Massachusetts.

PRESENTATION

2019-2020 Superintendent Goals Mid-Year Update

- Dr. Pascarella referred to a presentation on the Superintendent Goals.
- Dr. Anne Mead has been working on family, school and community partnerships.
- 90% of school buildings have been inspected by the fire chief.
- C. Leborious stated that the district has initiated a multi-year planning process. The district will be planning with the Cabinet, Board and building principals. This multi-year process will be initiated in the spring and aligned with the strategic plan. District is also working with a consultant to help engage with principals and school staff. With the reductions that come from the city, they will be building out a plan for next year in the spring as well as for the next two years.
- K. Casimiro thanked C. Leborious from a curricular and student support standpoint for including so many details on what the district needs.
- K. Thompson has been working on teacher recruitment. This has included going south to black universities and Connecticut based schools like UConn, Southern and WCSU. They are working on early solicitation of high flyer candidates. Some of the challenges they face year to year are retaining potential teachers over the summer and they will make an effort to focus more on that piece. They will also be soliciting administrators for openings that are currently filled by interim administrators. The district is casting the net as wide as they can. There has been some success with local advertising. The State Department of Education is also working with the district to heighten the district's presence on the State Department of Education platform to attract all kinds of candidates, including candidates of color. The district aims to create a workforce that reflects the demographics of our students.
- There are three administrative positions open for the next school year. K. Thompson stated that it is a fairly rigorous hiring procedure for principals, assistant principals and cabinet positions. The superintendent, assistant superintendent and K. Thompson screen candidates. There are two panels of interview committees that run concurrently made of six to seven members (two of them are Board members). The first panel is mainly administrators. The second panel is PPS staff, teachers, and other staff who will be actively engaged with the particular candidate. K. Thompson then debriefs with both panels. Once the process is done, there is typically a list of two to four candidates that interview with the superintendent and his leadership team and a final selection is made. K. Thompson will be asking for volunteers for the panels.
- K. Casimiro stated that carving out professional development time on the calendar was very critical. They started a process of data dives and school review data rounds. Not just looking at data and having conversations but generating questions about that data and then visiting the schools to generate solutions and strategies for the problems of practice. In those visits, it is clear that there are several areas that need to be worked on. There is a lot of training to do, specifically around numeracy literacy and English language learners. That PD time is needed to work with teachers and to get student supports. They need training on Standards-Based Instruction and SIOP training among other things we haven't had training on. They have been engaging in

professional learning with principals and PLCs with teachers. Teachers deserve to have the support they have been asking for.

- Dr. Pascarella spoke about the English Language Development programs. The district is piloting it now. K. Casimiro stated that the new curriculum template calls for imbedded language supports and activities, and using texts that are multicultural and diverse in nature.
- Dr. Pascarella stated that if we can't budget for these goals this year, then we have to put in the following year's budget.
- Kara Wanzer presented a college and career readiness report.
 - Will provide an update to the Board once graduation rates are released.
 - DPS continues to offer Advanced Placement and dual enrollment courses.
 - Went from 250 students taking AP to about 500 students.
 - Increased minority students in AP.
 - Students who participate in AP courses have a higher success rate if they want to go into college and succeed.
 - DECO was put in place for a number of reasons, but one of them is for the capability of students taking college credit courses.
 - DPS Accountability Index maintained ratings in eight indicators, decreased in four and increased in six.
 - In the 2015 - 2016 school year there were 620 AP students with 38% of them identified as minority students. There were 21 AP classes offered.
 - In the 2019 - 2020 school year there are 622 AP students with 52% of them identified as minority students. There are 23 AP classes offered.
 - There were 56 AP sections in the 2017 - 2018 school year, 54 sections in the 2018 - 2019 school year and 61 in the 2019 - 2020 school year.
 - There are currently 390 students enrolled in the college credit program, DECO. 38% of these students do not have English as their home language.
 - Accountability systems serve important purposes such as tracking progress, help schools and districts make improvements, show where support is needed the most, recognize successes, promote transparency and satisfy federal and state requirements.
 - Indicators of the accountability system:
 - Academic achievement (Performance Index)
 - Academic growth and progress towards English proficiency (SBAC, SAT, LAS Links, NGSS)
 - Assessment participation rates
 - Chronic absenteeism
 - Preparation for postsecondary and career readiness (coursework and exams)
 - Graduation (on track in ninth grade, middle schools get credit for this)
 - Graduation (four year adjusted cohort and six year adjusted cohort)
 - Post Secondary entrance rate (high school gets credit for this)
 - Physical fitness
 - Arts success
- 2018-2019 report stated that DPS was above state average on
 - ELA Performance Index - High Needs Students
 - Math Performance Index - High Needs Students
 - Science Performance Index - High Needs Students
 - ELA Academic Growth - High Needs Students
 - Progress Towards English Proficiency - Literacy
 - Progress Towards English Proficiency - Oral
 - Chronic Absenteeism - All Students
 - Chronic Absenteeism -High Needs Students

- High needs students are students who get free and reduced lunch, English Language Learners and/or special education students.
- Overall we scored 72.6 and the state scored 74.2.
- Compared to the 2017 - 2018 school year, there are four new indicator categories:
 - Science Performance Index - All Students
 - Science Performance Index - High Needs Students
 - Progress Towards English Proficiency - Literacy
 - Progress Towards English Proficiency - Oral
 - Decreased in four categories (as a district) and increased in six. Stayed fairly the same in eight categories.
- Achievement Gap and Graduation Gap.
 - State monitors these very closely.
 - We have a graduation rate gap in the 2016 cohort.
 - Some students were dropping out because they would not graduate on time. To help with this issue, DPS now offers a twilight program and summer school. Some students are EL students who will have to have longer schooling so they can be proficient and graduate.
- What makes a school of distinction?
 - High performing (elementary, middle and HS are evaluated separately)
 - High growth
 - Greatest improvers
 - DPS has the highest number of schools of distinction and is the only district with seven schools of distinction.
- Next Steps:
 - Continue school data reviews and instructional rounds at all levels.
 - Continue to assess current structures and resources to increase efficiency and build a more comprehensive and effective intervention system.
 - Increase the professional knowledge base of both teachers and principals, culturally relevant teaching practices, pedagogical supports for ELL students and assessment literacy.
- K. Walston stated that the final NEASC information should be available around April.

ACTION ITEMS

A. January Operating Results Analysis (General Fund & Grants)

MOTION: K. Conetta moved, seconded by J. Britton that the Board of Education accept the January 2020 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund & Grants).

Motion passed at 8:26 pm

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- February 20th Legislative Visit Recap
 - a. Met with the legislative group as well as the Mayor and his staff. They were open to the district's ideas.
 - b. Focused on accelerated cost with ECS.
 - c. They suggested forming a coalition.
 - d. Stamford and Norwalk are also experiencing ECS funding issues as well.
 - e. The district has asked the city for an 8.35% rate increase.
 - f. Also discussed if there was a possibility of reimbursement if the city renovates an existing building to make a school versus building a new building.

- g. K. Walston stated it was a great visit and that they also spoke about the Portrait of a Graduate at the visit.
- Citywide PTO March 2nd Meeting – Budget Presentation
 - a. Will be held at the Blackbox Theater.
 - b. Budget will be presented.
 - c. Presentation on the School Lunch Program by Barry Mollengarden.
 - d. Presentation on Safety by Rich Torres.
- Terminology and Educational Definitions – BOE Reference
 - a. Document for clarity on acronyms given to Board members to describe some of the lingo that is often used at meetings.
- City’s Budget Preparation Calendar
 - a. Minor adjustments to dates.
 - b. The Mayor now presents the budget to the City Council on 4/7/2020.
 - c. The budget now has to be submitted to the City Council for final approval on 5/5/2020.

DISCUSSION

- Dr. Pascarella addressed the concern surrounding the Coronavirus.
- The Cabinet had a meeting on 2/26/2020 to discuss the “what if’s”.
- The State Department provided a list of points to discuss.
- Dr. Fong was also in attendance.
- Unity of communications with the city and medical advisor.
- An overall good meeting.
- K. Thompson stated that it is a big project and will need a lot of collaboration. The first priority is the communication piece and then a series of “what will we do if?”. Pieces such as food security for free and reduced lunch students, childcare for students, payroll for staff and transportation. It is good to be discussing it now, so we aren’t scrambling at the last minute if it does come to Danbury.
- Dr. Pascarella also spoke to the commissioner to be mindful on makeup days if we do need to close the schools.
- K. Molinaro asked if it would be a good idea to send a robo call to inform parents the school has had this meeting? K. Thompson stated that the district will work on a letter of notification to parents on 2/27/2020. Anything that we put out will be coordinated with the Department of Public Health first.
- R. Jannelli suggested having a handout available at the City-Wide PTO on 3/2/2020.
- CDC is talking to the state, which is talking to its local chapters, so when the district speaks to the Department of Education, we are getting the best information we can.
- DHS has a trip to Italy. Dr. Pascarella informed the high school to be prepared if it gets cancelled.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT

- G. Cooper stated that the Superintendent Evaluation meeting for 3/11/2020 needs to be rescheduled.
- Nick Corusso from CAGE will be attending the meeting on 4/8/2020 at 5:30 pm before the Board meeting.
- A. Spallino will attend the Portrait of a Graduate meeting on 2/27/2020 as G. Cooper is not available.
- There was a motor vehicle accident by South Street School during dismissal time on 2/26/2020. Is there a way to make sure the students are safe during dismissal time? Perhaps adding a light similar to the ones at WCSU. Dr. Pascarella stated that Rich Torres will be working with the

person in charge of traffic to see what can be done. A Safety Advocate will be put out there temporarily.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

- R. Janelli
 - Community Relations met on 2/25/2020. Set out to establish a guideline on plans for this year and next year.
 - First plan of attack for this year is to get the budget out to the public, whether it be in the newspaper, social media or electronically. Have the public more aware of what the budget means so they can advocate for DPS.
 - Asked for an addition of three more Board members to join the committee.
 - K. Conetta will be lead on this. Members were asked to inform her if they would like to join the committee.
- R. Chaleski
 - Attended PTO meeting at AIS. One of the things that this budget includes is all of the extracurricular programs. It builds a connection for a child and their own education. These activities get them excited, connected and generate better attendance for school. AIS has Crazy 8's (math program for younger students), Math Olympia, math tutoring, Special Friends, Mad Science and more. Some of these programs are paid by grants and some are led by parents. These programs are so important, and this budget sustains these things.
 - All City Orchestra happened on 2/25/2020.
 - Musical theater productions. Hairspray for Rogers Park, Into the Woods Jr for Broadview and Beauty and the Beast for Westside which tickets can be bought online at the WCSU ticket box office.
- J. DaSilva
 - Also attended the All City Orchestra on 2/25/2020 and it was wonderful.
 - Park Ave had their Bingo Night on 2/21/2020. It was packed, probably around 150 people. There were whole families there playing bingo, it was a great event.
- J. Britton
 - Sites meeting held on 2/26/2020.
 - Had an update with asbestos inquiry at BVMS. All is good there and being taken care of.
 - Discussion held of projections data.
 - Nashville kicks off in a couple weeks.
 - Brief discussion about DHS and options there.
 - Matrix was discussed as a possibility.
 - Would like to reconvene when the Nashville Committee comes back to make recommendations to the full board on locations.
- A. Spallino
 - Attended BVMS PTO meeting on 2/13/2020.
 - Parents said this is the first year with free breakfast and lunch. Still working on inconsistencies with the food offered.
 - 7th Grade Sweethearts Dance coming up, chaperones are needed.
 - 8th grade trip to DC at the end of March.
 - The PTO requested a water filtration outlet. Dr. Pascarella stated that they are still waiting for the city.
 - Grant from the United Way presentation.
 - Would like to see more parents involved in the PTO.

ADJOURNMENT

K. Conetta moved, seconded by K. Molinaro, that the Board of Education adjourn its Meeting of February 26, 2020 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Kathleen Molinaro, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)