

**DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2019- 7:00 PM**  
**Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Chairperson, P. Johnston, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Rachel Chaleski, Gladys Cooper, Frederick Karrat, Emanuela Palmares, Ralph Pietrafesa, Farley Santos, Kate Conetta, Patrick Johnston, Amy Spallino, David Metrena  
Absent: Richard Jannelli  
Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Joe Martino, Kelly Truchsess, Kim Thompson, Kevin Walston, Kara Casimiro

**RECOGNITIONS**

Westside Middle School STEM Students move on to the regional level of the Connecticut Invention Convention

Jon Neuhausel presented. Invention Convention is a national competition for K-8 students. Last year WSMSA sent one student on to nationals from the state event. It's an opportunity for students to improve or expand upon an existing invention or come up with a new invention that solves a problem. Not only do students self-select their project, they also work on skills such as problem solving and communications skills. Students must build a prototype which gets into the math and engineering. The competition promotes STEM education and celebrates student success through the student expo every year. This year, 10 students are moving on to the state event which will be held on May 4, 2019 at the University of Connecticut in Storrs.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Oswaldo Chin thanked the Board and district for all the work they put in to the schools. Mr. Chin supports the new budget and believes we all need to support the budget. However, Mr. Chin feels the budget is not far enough. We need to take a hard look at how to invest in our schools. Mr. Chin's online research found that Danbury schools are rated low in the state. The rating stars compared to surrounding towns was a four, but Danbury is so low in the rank. Mr. Chin stated that we need to come together and see what can be done to rescue our schools. Mr. Chin encouraged the Board to take the lead and educate the community and parents to take our schools to the next level. We need to involve parents, CEO's, employees, everyone to save our schools.

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

**MOTION** - R. Chaleski moved, seconded by R. Pietrafesa that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 19-31 through 19-33, as recommended:

**MINUTES**

2/6/19 Board Budget Workshop  
2/13/19 Board Workshop  
2/13/19 Board Meeting

**Motion passed at 7:15 pm**

## **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES** (4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday Board Meeting each month)

### **DHS Executive Board of Governors: Alisha Nagarsheth, Gabrielle D'Ostilio**

- School Fair and Open House for 8th graders will take place on Monday, March 11th from 6-9 pm. This will feature tables representing school clubs, sports teams, and specific academic courses, and will be a great way for students and parents alike to experience everything going on at Danbury High School.
- Danbury's chapter of the International Music Honors Society held a "coffeehouse" in combination with one of the school's new classes, Modern Rock Band. It was open to the public for a night of singing, instruments, and poetry.
- This past Valentine's Day, the Key Club celebrated by selling carnations, raising over \$600 for the Thirst Project. This is the only national youth run project to address clean water sources worldwide.
- The wrestling team took first place in the FCIAC Championship, as well as opens. There are also seven students from the team that will compete in New England's.
- The boys' basketball team won the FCIAC semifinals against Wilton (68-48) and will play the championship game against Ridgefield on February 28, 2019 at 7 pm in Wilton.
- Varsity and JV cheerleaders finished both their seasons undefeated at the New England Cheerleading Association.
- Boys' swim team had an outstanding win over the Crosby-Waterbury Career Academy, finishing with a score of 101-68 and multiple 1st place finishes.
- Improvements to the passing and graduation rates at DHS have officially removed it from its place on the list of "focus schools" due to the students' ability to embrace change and strive for the best.
- Flex is being used for club meetings, play rehearsals, making up tests or quizzes, and homework help. Administration successfully opened flex scheduling to students, and 30% of flex classes are now scheduled by students themselves.
- Danbury High School's musical production of Godspell will take place in just over a month on April 4th, 5th, and 6th. It will begin with a student matinee for other Danbury schools on Thursday, April 4th and there will be three night-time shows, as well as a matinee on Saturday.
- Rehearsals are well under way for the acting class' production of The Laramie Project which will take place May 2nd, 3rd, and 4th in partnership with the schools' Gay Straight Alliance Club. It will take place in the school's brand-new Black Box Theater.

### **ACE: Tamara Souza**

- Five students graduated at the end of Semester One from ACE and will return to be celebrated in June with the rest of the 2019 graduates.
- As we begin Semester Two, ACE welcomes 18 new students to the ACE family.
- We are continuing to run our Thursday Enrichment and Intervention groups for ACE students during our Career and Life Skills course.
- Teacher Rob Melillo and six students participated in a STARS workshop, which allows ACE students to collaborate with other Alternative Program students from around the state of Connecticut.
- The ACE staff and students have continued to work to employ restorative practices to help restore relationships, aid in student success, increase engagement, and decrease attendance issues.
- ACE has begun offering after-school clubs such as the Design and Create Club with DJ Jimenez, the Art Club with Melissa Lasky, the Music Club with Kyle Trocolla, and the ACE Healthy Fitness Club with Daniela Esposito, Laura Blake, and Anthony Hellman.
- As the warmer weather approaches ACE staff will be finalizing plans for outdoor adventure trips such as whitewater rafting, poetry hikes, and a 14-mile hike on the Appalachian trail in Sheffield, Massachusetts

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **A. January 2019 –Operating Results Analysis (General Fund/Grants/Projects)**

MOTION: R. Chaleski moved, seconded by R. Pietrafesa that the Board of Education accept the January 2019 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund/Grant/Projects)

**Motion passed at 7:21 pm**

## **SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

### **A. AIS Magnet School Application Update**

799 applicants for the lottery. J. Martino stated that good numbers came out of the compact and non-compact towns which means our reimbursement will be at a higher level. The projected enrollment (377 right now) will be closer to 400. J. Martino will report back to the Board with final acceptance numbers. Dr. Pascarella stated that the lottery is not done on campus but rather with an outside agency who then sends the information over to BBAC. Dr. Pascarella stated that Ms. Stanton at BBAC has done a great job with the lottery!

### **B. Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Rollout**

K. Thompson stated that there has been a tremendous need over time for access to a plan like this one. This is a program which has an 800 number that administrators and supervisors can use to get help from certified social workers. Also, a resource for employees and immediate family members. Not tied to our insurance so any employee of Danbury Public Schools can access this plan. Gives access to legal services, financial planners, pet care, adult care, day care. Very broad program designed to give people information. In addition, there is a whole range of webinars and presentations to access for development opportunities by the district and also for employees to access for themselves. There will be flyers, mailers, magnets and presentations rolled out so all can know what is available.

P. Johnston stated that his company has had it for 14 years and he has heard wonderful feedback. He is very glad to see this in the district.

### **C. Next Generation Accountability System, 2017-18 Results Released**

\*Schools of Distinction (AIS, EAS, GP, HA, MRP, MO, ShR)

\*DHS removed from focus monitoring

\*(will be invited to March 27<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting)

The new accountability index looks at a multi facet number of things along with assessment exams. It looks at growth, attendance, exams and different characteristics to make a judgement on how a school is performing. All the schools did relatively well but this year we had seven schools of distinction which is phenomenal. Danbury High School was also removed from the list of focus schools due to their achievement on tests and graduation rates. This reflects the hard work of the teachers and administrators. This is the reason why we fight for the budget and there is still more that we can do.

### **D. Board Workshop (Goals/Data), March 6<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 pm at BBAC**

### **E. Board Workshop (Vision & Mission), April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6:00 pm**

Dr. Pascarella asked the Board for approval to have this meeting. The meeting was approved.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **A. Governor Lamont’s State Budget Proposal (Ryan Bingham, Government Affairs Associate/Lobbyist will attend March 13<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting)**

Dr. Pascarella stated that there are serious proposals going about. Senate Bill 874 which primarily discusses the Governor's budget. There will be a \$1.5 million deficit in 2020. The following year, there will be a \$2.2 million deficit. We need to be knowledgeable about those items. There is the idea of consolidation and the savings in consolidation. All that has been released right now is the consolidation of services and some conversations about small districts. There is also legislation in there about working with other districts and putting in particular services with special ed which we

are already doing with shared transportation. D. Pascarella doesn't really see the impact for DPS. They are also asking for (in the Governor's budget) something about social emotional learning. We will learn more about it and a task force will be set up.

- What will impact us a lot is teachers' retirement. There is a proposal to add a fee to local city and municipalities regarding their contribution. We figure the first year, 7% (fee) of 25% (salary count) as somewhere under \$500,00. The second year, if it comes to fruition, will be somewhere around a million dollars. We are not on the list of distressed school systems because distress is not defined by the school system. It is defined by the municipality (housing stock, bond rating). Danbury does not make that list, even though we are in the poverty and alliance districts. So, this makes us responsible for that higher fee as opposed to distressed communities who will have a 5% fee. Dr. Pascarella stated that we are looking to see what that means for us as a district.
- Legislation is also qualifying students now on the SNAP program. ECS has been based on free and reduced lunch accounts. We think this will be to our advantage with their redefining of qualifying students that receive food stamps. J. Martino stated that the numbers look favorable.
- Confirmed this morning that they are going to stay true to implementation of ECS grant calculation and not walk away from that. By doing that at least there is a calculus on how money is going to be allocated to Danbury.
- E. Palmares stated that Danbury not making the distressed list makes the case that Danbury has two stories to tell. One of progress, growth and poverty yet we are still doing better than most cities in Connecticut. The Board is very committed to doing what's best for our kids. Some members of the community who are opposed to the budget want their dollars to go towards the roads or to the light that is not working on their street and that is where the debate happens. We have to figure out how to sell our idea to people who don't have a stake in the game, who is not educator in community or who doesn't have a child in the schools. For them to understand that if we elevate our schools, we will elevate the property values as well so it's not so much of us versus them.
- On Friday, March 22, 2019 the Governor will be at the Ethan Allen for the Legislative Breakfast at 7:30 am. The program will begin at 8:00 am.
- Also looking to put together an early childhood study group. The district will be making recommendations to the state. Dr. Pascarella met with the preschool administrator, Eileen Costello, from EdAdvance. We have had an increase in request for seats.

## **INFORMATION**

### **A. Community Forum on Mental Health, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 pm, DHS Black Box**

- K. Truchsess stated that this will be an information session for community members, particularly targeting parents of students in our district. There will be a focus on topics in mental health, how to seek out referral sources if needed and how to deal with recent trauma. Keynote speakers are coming from a variety of different agencies. One department that will be there is The Department of Mental Health and Rehabilitation Services which is an agency that can help people who are going through challenging or difficult times. There will also be a representative from Suicide Prevention Association. There will be an information session, time for Q&A and any individual questions can be answered by supported assistance. Childcare will be provided by high school students and staff.
- E. Palmares asked if we engaged anyone from Danbury Hospital to which K. Truchsess said not for this particular session. K. Truchsess stated they've been in touch with agencies that are in collaboration with health care but not directly through Danbury Hospital. E. Palmares suggested to reach out to someone from the Danbury Pediatric Psychiatric Department to which K. Truchsess stated that Danbury Hospital does not have one, so they reached out to agencies that have experience in this area.

- Dr. Pascarella stated that Terry Budlong, Director of Prevention Services at MCCA, has also been helpful in planning this evening.
- K. Truchsess stated that this is part of a series of ongoing events. There will be follow up topics to this in collaboration with the Department of Health Services, with Lisa Morrissey, to help our community.

B. Community Budget Forum, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 pm, RPMS

A flyer was available for attendees at the meeting. K. Conetta asked if a Facebook event was made? Dr. Pascarella stated that signs will be put out around the city. F. Santos asked if Robin Provey can please create a Facebook event. The event is helpful as it can show RSVPs and an alert will pop up that day to remind the public to attend.

C. Early Childhood & Summer Learning Fair, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 10:00-1:00 at Danbury Sports Dome

**BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS**

- A. Spallino stated that there was an Ad Hoc meeting before tonight's BOE meeting. They are looking at a few different things such as professional development of Board members and that will include orientation, understanding data and the calendar. They spoke about strengthening their communication with community. They are looking at having a Board self-assessment. They would like to go over the bylaws at the next meeting of March 13th at 6pm.
- B. P. Johnston proposed a Board Workshop. After discussion a meeting date and time was agreed for April 10, 2019 at 5:30 pm.
- C. F. Santos stated that his family faced a personal tragedy last year. Out of this tragedy he and his wife, an employee of the district, tried to find some greater purpose to put their focus on. They just finalized a scholarship in honor of their son's memory. This scholarship is open to one graduating senior of DHS and one graduating senior of Henry Abbott Tech beginning this year. The scholarship will go to someone who comes from a low-income family, displays community service and care for their peers.
- D. R. Chaleski stated that she attended the All State Orchestra concert at DHS and it was a great concert. She very much enjoyed seeing whole city instrumental students come together under one roof. She thanked the teacher, Ms. Mary Peters.
- E. D. Coopers thanked K. Walston, A. Mead and J. Coco for their presentation of the vision statement the night before. It is very clear as to what the group is getting ready to do and she appreciates the time they have dedicated to the district.
- F. J. Martino stated that it was confirmed that the band uniforms (DHS) are all set and ready to be delivered. There was a miscommunication with the payments, but it is all straightened out and the district has made up the difference of the cost.

**ADJOURNMENT**

G. Cooper moved, seconded by F. Santos that the Board of Education adjourns its Meeting of February 27, 2019 and the meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

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Gladys Cooper, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)