

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION WORKSHOP MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 2018 – 6:00 PM
Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Vice Chairperson, David Metrena, called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

ROLL CALL

Present: Rachel Chaleski, Gladys Cooper, Richard Hawley, Richard Jannelli, Patrick Johnston, Frederick Karrat, David Metrena, Kathleen Molinaro, Emanuela Palmares, Farley Santos, Amy Spallino

Absent: Kim Thompson

Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Dr. Glass, Joe Martino, Kelly Truchsess

Presenters:

Deputy Executive Director, Penelope Marzulli

Executive Director, Daniel Rubenstein

- Core values of curiosity, respect, persistence and passion.
- International Baccalaureate World School (IB).
- School should be a joyous place.
- The learning in Prospect Schools is that we focus on not just the person in front of the classroom, but also the person who is sitting beside you.
- K-12 preparatory community.
- Currently operate 4 schools, around 1,250 students, all in NYC.
- Diversity, excellent teachers, world class excellent program.
- Diversity matches up very well with DPS.
- Socio economic standpoint, stand side by side with DPS students.
- Fortunate to be able to recruit incredible teachers from around the world.
- Per State of CT law, charter school is required to have certified teachers.
- Outperforming middle schools.
- Many students go on to some of the most competitive colleges.
- Intend to open in Fall of 2019. Single middle school with 100 6th grade students. Grow up from there.
- Ultimately, grades 6-12.
- Open to all Danbury residents
- Lottery based.
- Locations in Downtown area.
- School will offer World Languages as well.
- Full Liberal Arts Program.

Q&A Section

- Collaboration. What does that mean to us?
 - We would want to be seen and want to work as one of the public schools in Danbury. Should we be chartered, Dr. Sal would have the opportunity to nominate a Board member to sit on the Charter Board. Opportunities for our students to interact both socially and athletically. Success in past with being able to interact with other charters and public schools.

- Concerned with lottery system. How do you outreach so that the community is educated enough that they are aware to participate in the lottery? How will you educate the community that this is available? Also, how are you finding space and we can't find space? Are you taking away funds from the City of Danbury relative to the state funding us?
 - Because diversity is such a part of our mission, we have spent many years working on the lottery system. We will have a person who will be solely dedicated on getting to know parents. Sending out postcards. Getting to know schools and local areas. Collect information on students applying. Collecting demographics. This way they can see who is applying and work with communities and dig into the recruitment. They do a lot of outreach to make sure all families feel supported.
 - There is a reason large cities have embraced charter schools. And that is financial. Charter school funding comes from a separate line item in the budget. It would increase overall funding for the City of Danbury students. Certain services, as any public school student requires, that will come out of district budget. Transportation and SPED, for instance.

- Opt out lottery option was proposed.
 - Not something we have thought a whole lot about. Something the district would have to discuss. The hurdles might be greater for district than the charter school. Not opposed to it. Logistically the school board would have to pull that off. Charter not against it.

- Once you get established and one of our Board members is on your board, how will we work cohesively together?
 - There is a complaint process that we take very seriously. Certainly if it came from the BOE, it would be immediately addressed. The Board member that is selected would be an engaged trustee.

- How are you able to recruit so well (staff)?

- We start out with getting a very qualified and attractive Principal. Someone who is very skilled. Once you get a great team, it becomes very perpetuated. It's like building a third grade kickball team. Getting the coolest kid first on the team. IB World School with teachers are trying to get back into working in the states, they are one of the few. Teachers feel very empowered. Built for school but built by teachers. Teachers feel they have the autonomy in the classroom and they appreciate that.
- How have you worked before with synchronizing school schedules?
 - It has been an issue. It's an issue for families and faculty/staff. The annual calendar matches up pretty well with the public school calendar. In NY the bussing situation has worked well because there is only one set of buses. Most of our families have adapted. We have not come up with a great solution. Our NY schools have come up with a sibling preference. 3:45 dismissal is typical for charter schools. After school programs have been developed to help mediate the issue.
- Currently have 4 schools in NYC that services roughly 1,200 students. So Danbury will be one of the largest? Are you comfortable that that model works?
 - Not all of them are completely filled. Two middle schools in Brooklyn will be the same size as Danbury. Significant amount of research done shows that grades under 150 students in size, that they can have a collective identity. Above 150 students, start to lose some of that collective identity. This is one of the big reasons they try to keep their schools under 150 per grade.
- Staffing per student?
 - Different in NY. Currently nine to one teacher to student ratio. Not typical for schools in our surrounding community.
- Expecting to do one building for Middle and High School or two buildings?
 - One building will be difficult. Working on it.
- How do you find those buildings?
 - In NY it is public funding. Separate line in charter law. Comes out of taxpayers dollar.
- Is there any way we could get information of where the funding would come from?
 - This is our biggest challenge and it's a challenge for you too. Part of the problem is that until we are chartered, we are not sure we can get clarity on that either.

- How far in the pipeline are you to get chartered?
 - Hearing to get chartered (at Henry Abbott Tech at 6pm on 3/15/18), then it goes to state BOE for recommendation, then to State Legislature, then separate funding hurdle to go through, then must find a building.

- Separate line item, how long has that existed in CT State Budget? Has that amount increased, decreased or stayed the same?
 - Started in 1992. It has increased for next year.

- Why Danbury?
 - We love it here. We've been thinking of growing. Got to know some folks up here. Got to know the Mayor. Like the community up here. Diversity is super important for us. Danbury is one of the few cities in CT that has a growing population. Wanted to have a school that was in a smaller city. We want to be the first charter school in a city that we felt needed a charter school.

- How is discipline addressed in the charter school?
 - Very restorative community. One of our middle schools had zero suspensions this whole year. We felt that was a huge accomplishment. We have students with a range of behavioral and learning needs. We do a really great job with incorporating those needs. Middle School retention rate is 97%

- Have any of your students had to transition back into their home school, such as if they get expelled?
 - We have had a very low number in the past 10 years. Answer was if a student does not make it at charter, they go back to their Danbury home school.

- Comment made "\$11,000 per student is being funded and we get only \$3,000 per student and then we have to put money towards a building rubs me the wrong way. We shouldn't have to have any funds taken from Danbury. And funding issues should have been resolved prior to."

- Comment made "In order for you to maintain your ration, please utilize the assets of Dr. Anne Mead, Emanuela Palmares and Gladys Cooper."

- What kind of experience do you have with ELL population?
 - We have experience but not as much as Danbury does. We have been sending our team out to strengthen our ELL program.

- Aside from initial cost of coding for building, are there any other funds that we will have to provide to the facility on an ongoing basis?
 - That has not been determined.
- Comment made “As you progress in your walk in becoming a charter, please continue to work with us and communicate with us.”

ADJOURNMENT

R. Chaleski moved, seconded by D. Metrena, that the Board of Education adjourns its Workshop Meeting of March 14, 2018 and the meeting adjourned at 6:59 pm.

Rachel Chaleski, Secretary