

**DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28, 2018 – 7:00 PM**  
**Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Chairperson, Patrick Johnston, called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by the Danbury High School ROTC Cadets.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Rachel Chaleski, Gladys Cooper, Richard Jannelli, Patrick Johnston,  
Frederick Karrat, David Metrena, Emanuela Palmares, Farley Santos, Amy Spallino  
Absent: Kathleen Molinaro, Richard Hawley  
Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Dr. Glass, Joe Martino, Kim Thompson, Kelly Truchsess

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

- Tracy Guerrero - 5th grade teacher at Morris Street School. Her students are required to take three state tests in May. Language Arts, Math and Science. Elementary classroom teachers are required to follow an instructional pie chart which breaks down how much time they are to spend on each subject, each day of the week. The pie chart states that they should be teaching Science for 55 minutes one day per week. It is almost impossible to expect that students will be successful on this assessment when they are learning under an hour of Science per week compared to 350 minutes of Math and 600 minutes of Language Arts. Ms. Guerrero also stated that due to inadequate substitute coverage at her school, the school Interventionists are often the ones who get pulled for coverage. Students therefore have to stay in classrooms where the classroom teacher is conducting their small group and oftentimes are not at the same level, reading the same material or working on the same assignments. This means they have to sit and complete independent work or read silently and do not get to receive their specialized instruction.
- Brian Cullagh - ELA Teacher at Broadview Middle School. In February of 2017, teachers were presented with a revised curriculum. While there were some meaningful topics in the 7th grade portion of the curriculum, instead of nurturing those skills built into the topics, teachers spend an excessive time assessing students, and too often, the assessments are only days apart. There have been times this school year where his students have taken a mid-unit assessment, only to take the end-of-unit assessment three days later. Then, within two class periods complete and turn in an argument essay. The time it takes for a teacher to grade this many assessments is approximately 17.5 hours. Unfortunately, the tests are given back to the kids with little to no time for reflection and not turned into teachable moments. This has led to an increased frustration-level on the students and teachers' part that he has not seen in his 15 years in the district. Mr. Cullagh also stated that the amount of time it takes for teachers to properly prepare for a school week has tripled in the past two years. In the past years, teachers had to create three lesson plans. Now they have to create 10. Teachers spend at least an hour and a half by the copy machine preparing copies for upcoming lessons. Most weeks EL (a part of the curriculum) requires five lessons to be taught. Each lesson must be read (some lessons are more than 40 pages long), and modified. Three more lessons a week are prepared for the accelerated class, and two intentional small group lessons, which requires each teacher to plan, find and differentiate materials and create assessments for four rotating stations. Mr. Cullagh concluded that the teachers would like to see more trust given to them to better use class time to delve deeply into the rich thematic concepts the curriculum offers. To allow them to use the classwork and other assessments to create prescribed instruction that best meet the needs of their students. They propose a transparent, in-depth survey that asks parents, students, teachers and administrators to respond to the strengths and weaknesses of the ELA experience this past year, and to make any logical modifications from the feedback. Mr. Cullagh also invited any member of the Board and Administration to spend time with him to observe the time constraints and other stresses the teachers and students experience daily.
- Meg Shaw - Parent of AIS student. Resides in Brookfield. Compiled info for how many days off schools have. Danbury and surrounding towns have about 25 days off. Issue is one hour early release. No other school in surrounding towns does one hour early release. Consensus from other parents is that it is difficult to keep children on a schedule. She did the math and there is a total of 18 early release days which adds up to 3 total

days off. This bumps Danbury up to 28 total days off for the school year. More than any other school in local districts.

- Ken Amaral - Block scheduling. Wondering about seniors who have done all their courses and if they can get out early to go to work. Board stated that it would be addressed during the meeting.

### **CONSENT CALENDAR**

**MOTION -** D. Metrena moved, seconded by G. Cooper that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 18-40 through 18-42, as recommended:

A. MINUTES

3/14/18 Board Workshop

3/14/18 Board Meeting

B. DONATION

\$3,000 Grant from Audubon Society to Broadview Middle School for Roots & Shoots Program

**Motion passed at 7:16 pm**

### **EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE (SPOTLIGHT YOUR SCHOOL)**

#### South Street School.

- Principal Carmen Vargas-Guevara.
- South Street's First.
- Recognized as a School of Distinction.
- Third grade class has been recognized as second highest growth in reading in DPS.
- First STEM night this year.
- Eli Whitney Museum came for 3rd and 4th graders where students made rubber band cars and wooden houses to show electricity.
- Door extravaganza based on student learning with 100% participation.
- Running first ESL class in many years. Currently 60 families participating.
- 4th and 5th grade departmentalized.
- Fire Department visit where students were able to get on fire engine, touch equipment and learn about fire safety.
- Invention convention participation of 150 students. 20 moved forward to regionals and six that are going to the state. Three of those students briefly shared their presentations for the Board.
- 5th graders had a Skype Q&A session with astrophysicist Professor of North Carolina State University, Katherine Mack.
- Principal stated this was just a glimpse of what we do at South Street School.
- Ended with the first South Street School chorus, named "Little Voices".

### **ACTION ITEMS**

A. Graduation Requirements

**MOTION:** D. Metrena moved, seconded by G. Cooper that the Board of Education approve the graduation requirements

F. Karrat stated that there were differences with state requirements and district requirements and it seems as though we are making it more difficult. F. Karrat also asked if we could table the requirements at this time. Principal Donovan stated that we wanted to make personal finance a requirement for every student, while the state does not require that. Mr. Donovan stated that some of requirements were non-negotiables, like 7.5 in Humanities. F. Karrat asked in Humanities, why require 9.5 when state requires 9? Mr. Donovan stated it was like that because of personal finance. F. Karrat stated that maybe we should re-evaluate shuffling some courses around. D. Metrena stated that a motion was seconded so it could not be tabled. F. Karrat also mentioned online courses. Mr. Donovan stated he felt this fell into a Union issue. K. Thompson stated this would require us to sit down and see what can be offered and not offered.

Dr. Pascarella stated to look at the requirements on the bottom where it states State Statute. Recent law permits literacy standards for students. We have to work through it. We have kids that are bilingual and trilingual so next year we need to come back and look at that.

**Motion passed at 8:04 pm** (Opposed by F. Karrat)

B. February 2018 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund)

MOTION: D. Metrena moved, seconded by G. Cooper that the Board of Education accept the February 2018 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund)

R. Jannelli stated that as we are getting closer to end year, are we going along our spending or should we hold our breath for anything that may surprise us. J. Martino stated there have been some SPED increases. K. Truchsess stated we received non-nexus students that we didn't anticipate. There is an upswing in juvenile detention placements as well as students who have been placed in facilities for drug and alcohol. Placements last between 4 - 6 months at \$400-\$500 a day. Upswing in crisis intervention and given short term placement at hospitals, we provide tutoring while they are at facility. We need to support and educate them but there is no way other than looking at previous year to have an exact science of knowing how many students we are going to get per year.

**Motion passed at 8:08 pm**

C. February 2018 Operating Results Analysis (Grants/Projects)

MOTION: D. Metrena moved, seconded by G. Cooper that the Board of Education accept the February 2018 Operating Results Analysis (Grant/Projects)

**Motion passed at 8:09 pm**

D. Temporary Classrooms at Westside Middle School

MOTION: D. Metrena moved, seconded by F. Santos that the Board of Education authorizes the Chairperson of the Board and the Superintendent of Schools to approve the final plans, contract specifications, and cost estimate for the temporary classrooms at Westside Middle School Academy and sign the SCG-042 form and submit to the State of Connecticut for approval.

G. Cooper asked when planning to have portables in place. J. Martino stated by September 1, 2018. Already went to state for approval. State meeting is April 19, 2018. Cost estimate is in, higher than normal. Construction of portables is down south and then they are transported up to us. Confident they will come in lower. Bidding for 8 classrooms. Dr. Pascarella stated if something happens with building delay, we will admit students anyway and we will do an altered schedule. Cost estimate of just over \$1 million. J. Martino said he could send the info to the Board.

**Motion passed at 8:13 pm**

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

A. Safety Update

- Have been able to work with DPD. Duty officer there now at DHS East gate.
- This morning convened a Safety Committee with Fire Marshall and town officials.
- Walked away with understanding that they will be able to build a new gate.
- Additional card access systems will go there so gate will be opened by badge.
- Also collecting updated safety plans from the schools.
- Looking at software for four schools. J. Martino said boxes came in yesterday (3/27/18). J. Martino anticipates a full roll out to all schools.
- Filmed Pockets of Excellence this morning for Hatters TV with the Chief that focused on safety.

- A lot of software packages and apps are out there that would create a false sense of security. We have to have something we can manage. We are getting inundated with lots of different software. We are reviewing everything. See something, say something has been and continues to be our “app”.

#### B. High School Construction Update

- J. Martino said we are in the final stages.
- Tile is down.
- Few snags with Black Box.
- Additional turn over time end of April, early May on Main Wing.
- No issues with students and construction.

Dr. Pascarella was asked last week about focus questions, it is within the works in terms of discussion.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### A. Block Scheduling

- Principal Dan Donovan spoke.
- Most important thing to understand is the drive behind this is the CT graduation requirements.
- In order to keep somewhat consistent, better to use block versus periods.
- How will this work for seniors who work and need to leave early? Answer was given that it will be the same thing as they do now; they will just miss a block. Either they come in late or they leave early.
- In the Freshman Academy, where they have block scheduling, students have had less discipline referrals, have passed more classes. They compared this data to other students on wave schedule. Made sure data was even with SPED, ELL, Algebra, Pre-Algebra and Geometry students.
- Block schedule limits transitions.
- Appears it will be around 80 minute classes which will be 4 transitions during the day.
- A negative will be a lunch is in the middle of a block so they will have class, go eat lunch and then back to class.
- E. Palmares asked what are instructional advantages of this? Mr. Donovan stated they will get longer instructional time and will be able slow it down and allow teacher to reteach. In a 45 minute class that is very difficult to do.
- E. Palmares asked if he has seen a change of positive outcomes with the Freshman Academy. Mr. Donovan said yes but he can't say that's 100% due to block scheduling because he also has them on a separate floor. The first year of Freshman Academy, the year prior to that 44% of freshman failed at least one quarter of classes and that was cut down and well as suspensions cut in half.
- Middle school and elementary schools are also block schedules.
- Students can't sit for 80 minutes. They shouldn't be sitting for that amount of time. The teachers teach, then students should have an activity, then teachers re-teach. That's up to teachers and administrators to make sure that a teacher is not lecturing for 80 minutes straight.
- R. Jannelli asked about Flex Time. Mr. Donovan stated that Flex Time is something that he believes will help the school. Extensions for students, meditations for students and interest for students.
- Flex Time is a software program.
- Extension is if there is a teacher that wants to do an extension that they didn't get to do in class, they can pull that flex time period and kids can sign up for it.
- The interest time part comes in where as we start getting good at it as a school, teachers can start developing their own interests on what they want to do, such as a book club.
- R. Jannelli asked operationally in a school that size, what do you do to prepare students for block scheduling? Mr. Donovan stated that once the schedules are set, it will be explained during advisory to the students. Flex Time will also be explained.
- Mr. Donovan visited other schools to look at different blocks.

### **BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

P. Johnston asked for volunteers for the interviews needed for the principal positions at DHS and RPMS. Interviews will be held on April 25th and 27th. Board members were asked to please let K. Thompson know.

**BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS**

R. Jannelli represented BOE last Saturday at Community Fair at Sports Dome. It was phenomenal. The population was overwhelming. It showed the amount of different resources that Danbury has. Was an incredible venue. Summer school, kindergarten registration, sports venues.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

MOTION: F. Santos moved, seconded by R. Jannelli that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing teacher scheduling negotiations; and to discuss facility and safety updates.

**Motion passed at 8:24 pm**

Present: Rachel Chaleski, Gladys Cooper, Richard Jannelli, Patrick Johnston,  
Frederick Karrat, David Metrena, Emanuela Palmares, Farley Santos, Amy Spallino  
Absent: Kathleen Molinaro, Richard Hawley  
Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Dr. Glass, Joe Martino, Kim Thompson, Kelly Truchsess

**PUBLIC SESSION**

MOTION: D. Metrena moved, seconded G. Cooper, that the Board of Education return to Public Session. The motion passed at 8:50 pm.

**ADJOURNMENT**

D. Metrena moved, seconded G. Cooper, that the Board of Education adjourns its Meeting of March 28, 2018 and the meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.

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Rachel Chaleski, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)