

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2020- 6:00 PM
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM
LIVE STREAM

<https://youtu.be/Ctyj46FVW-o>

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chairperson, G. Cooper, called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

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

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

RECOGNITIONS

Exhibit

- Westside Students Excel at Regional Virtual CT History Day _____ 20-40 (pg.4) Competition
- Dr. Frank LaBanca spoke on how the 7th and 8th grade Global Studies students had a chance to participate in History Day. The event is held at the school first and regional finalists are selected from there. Several students were able to attend the competition and are now heading to the state level competition which will also be held online. Hoping to advance to the national competition. Project based learning really gives students an opportunity to shine and they certainly did at the state level.
- Dr. Pascarella stated that there were a number of high school students that were also able to attend the competition and advanced to the state level.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Kathy Snow emailed in the following statement:
 - Congratulations to Dr. Cronin on her retirement! It is well deserved.
 - Thank you Board of Ed members for all you are doing to help ensure our students success. I watched the recording of the last meeting and thought it went well, considering it was virtual. I do however feel the need to make note of something a few members commented about. Before I do, I would also like to say I also agree that teachers have been working non-stop and they need to have set hours in which they will respond to emails so they can log off and be with their families. With that having been said, the comments I am referring to had to do with young students doing online school work late in the evening and remarks about how parents shouldn't allow this. Board members need to also remember that the majority of folks are working from home so maybe the only time a parent has to work with their child one-on-one with school work is after dinner when the parent

is done working, or when younger siblings have been put to bed, or perhaps the student is a natural night owl, or the family has only 1 computer that all siblings share, or the family has had to adjust to doing "night" school so the kids sleep in later in order for the parent to be able to get any of their own work done. Luckily, my two children are in high school, but I remember how it was when they were younger and I cannot fathom trying to work from home while they are with me and trying to help them with schoolwork and keep them entertained (plus cook all the time!). Never mind that they can't see their friends. So please, let's support everyone; administration, teachers, students and parents during this difficult time.

- Lastly and most important to my family - please postpone graduation is at all possible! Do not cancel it and I hope it isn't done virtually. Even if done in July or August, let these kids at least see each other, even from a distance. Just have the seniors there, no guests in the stands, parents can watch via a live stream. Use the entire football field and put the chairs far apart so they can all wear their caps and gowns and walk by Mr. Donovan and wave. Please, if you have any input on discussion of how graduation will be held - delay, do not cancel - my senior implores you!
- Rich Matzinger and Kathy Snow emailed in the following statement:
 - We are representing the Danbury High School PTO. We think everyone can agree that the Class of 2020 is missing out on a lot of activities that would have been happening in the next few months if it weren't for the COVID-19 quarantine. The PTO is selling yard signs to help celebrate the Senior Class of 2020. Signs are \$15 or \$20 for one that is personalized with a first name. Payment can be made by check or via Venmo to @dhs2020sign. The order form is available on the PTO page of the Danbury High School website and signs are available with the word "Congratulations" in English, Spanish or Portuguese, just indicate on the form which language. Orders are due by May 1st. We hope many Board of Ed members purchase signs as well as share this information. It would be great to see them popping up all over Danbury in the coming weeks! Link to order form: <https://sites.google.com/danbury.k12.ct.us/dhspto>

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION: K. Conetta moved, seconded by J. DaSilva that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibit 20-41 through Exhibit 20-42, as recommended:

MINUTES

4/1/20 Special Board Meeting _____ 20-41 (pg.5)
4/8/20 Regular Board Meeting _____ 20-42 (pg.12)

Motion passed at 6:10 pm

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

DHS Representatives: Jake Goodwin

- We had our virtual spirit week from April 6-10, right before Spring Break. Over 100 pictures were submitted and it was overall very successful! Over 16 students won gift cards, which will be sent to them.
- The Senior class officers have started an Instagram page to showcase where seniors have committed for college.
- Prom is not officially ‘postponed’ yet but we will keep everyone up to date on that.
- You can show your support to the senior class of 2020 by purchasing a \$15 yard sign. All information can be found on the Board of Governors Twitter page, and this is run by the PTO. Information on pick up for the signs will be disclosed soon.
- Danbury Girls field hockey and soccer teams worked together to give truck drivers snack bags.
- Chromebooks were distributed to students from mid March to early April.
- Distance Learning has been an adjustment to all students, but seems to be working itself out.
- All options for graduation are being considered currently, we will continue updating you as time moves forward.

PRESENTATION

- Update on Distance Learning
- Dr. Pascarella stated that every day is a new adventure. The Cabinet members meet twice a day. Once in the morning where they make decisions and then again in the afternoon where decisions are updated or changed.
- K. Casimiro and G. Jasmine presented the following:
 - Connectivity/Engagement
 - Four phases of implementation.
 - Declare shift to Distance Learning and communicate to parents, teachers and students. Obtain working agreements with all union leaders.
 - Increase teacher and administrative capacity to successfully navigate in a digital platform and use distance communication tools & interactive web based student learning programs.
 - Provide ongoing digital support and communication to teachers, parents, and students via Peer Support Team. Provide additional content and digital curriculum support for K5.
 - Provide responsive and timely service and support to improve all aspects of transition for parents, teachers and staff.
 - Food, safety and security is first priority.
 - First steps the district took really met the safety and psychological needs.
 - Still ongoing as we move forward.
 - Phase 1
 - Increased parent communication. Parent Portal numbers increasing. Parent engagement = student engagement. Prior to 3/13/2020 (first day of shut down), we had less than 30% of the district on the Parent Portal as well as correct parent email accounts. Portal was available at secondary level but not

elementary level. As of 4/17/2020, 92% of parent emails and 85% of Parent Portal accounts were established. This helps expand the communication the district has with parents.

- Device distribution request form was created and posted at each school's website. Sent out robocalls for parents to request a device for their child. Tied these device pickup times to food pickup times so it was able to serve two big needs for families in one shot. None of this could have been done without the many volunteers. 93% of device requests have been fulfilled as of 4/22/2020. This is ongoing and the district is still getting devices to families. There are now enough devices to give to families with multiple children.
- Parent survey was also done.
 - 37% of all DPS families responded. The majority of families that answered had elementary level students.
 - Based on parents who answered, students are spending an average of one to four hours a day on school work.
 - Majority of families that answered said their children were pretty independently working and somewhat able to do work on their own. District will use this knowledge and pass it on to the teachers.
 - Majority who answered said students do have a device. District is still reaching out to families who need devices and still hearing from families who need additional devices.
 - Majority of families said they do have internet service. The families who have said no, DPS has reached out directly to these families to get hotspots in their areas. K. Casimiro stated that many families were able to get free internet access when the district sent out information but some were not able to get appointments until mid to late April.
 - 79% of families who answered said they were able to get to the food mobile distribution.
- A teacher survey was also done. The questions asked were based on the teacher's student roster.
 - 39.3% of teachers reported that 100% of their students were connected.
 - 31.2% of teachers reported that 95-99% of their students connected.
 - 11% of teachers stated that 90-94% of their students connected.
 - Almost 82% of the teacher reported that they had at least 90% of their rosters connected.
 - Individual pie graphs have been created for each school by grade level so building principals can have a little bit more of a zoomed in information about the level of connectivity in each classroom.

- There is less connectivity in some of the ESL and bilingual classrooms as well as a few of the SPED and special service classrooms.
 - Generally if a student does not check into an ESL or bilingual classroom, they are also not checking in to their core classroom as well.
 - Goal is to create a mini action plan around why students are not connected, track down who those students are and create a plan to get them connected.
 - Two highest reported reasons inhibiting connectivity is a language barrier and a lack of understanding how to connect to the platform. Each week the connectivity is increasing. Just a matter of making sure that families are able to function in our environment.
- Phase 2
 - Created very clear roles on what teachers and administrators had to do in this environment.
 - Spent a lot of time in pre-launch on vision building.
 - A lot of creativity coming out of this time period and people really stepping up to fulfilling pieces of that vision for the future.
 - One of the things done really well was about building community in classrooms.
 - Coaches have been main supports in K-5 creating lessons that are consistent and common.
 - A lot of time spent on Google Classroom training, training on IXL, Raz Kids-ELL, Learning A-Z.
 - Challenges continue to be SPED confidentiality, delivery of mandated services and getting K-2 students to submit work. K-2 is challenging for other districts in the region as well.
 - Reinventing SRBI and figuring out how to use paras and tutors.
 - Phase 3
 - Superuser teacher groups. Teachers are teaching peers to collaborate and provide professional training.
 - Distance Learning workshops on Tuesdays.
 - Weekly pushout common lessons on K-5 Google Classroom. Teachers have the option to use them but they are highly encouraged so it is consistent across K-5. Very successful!
 - Parent and teacher tutorials with a link on the district webpage.
 - Professional development is being recorded for teachers to visit at a later time.
 - Challenges are balancing the flow of information and training in a strained environment. How much is too much and how much is too little?
 - Nine days in, the district checked to see how teachers were feeling. 79% of teachers were feeling confident. 4.5% are feeling lost and

measures are in place to reachout to teachers who need additional support.

■ Phase 4

- New virtual learning system and structures.
- Redesigned Helpdesk.
- Wednesday Grade Level and Department meetings.
- Dr. Pascarella Friday updates.
- Rapidly changing staffing needs. Meeting commitments with work life balance.
- SPED:
 - Continuing to move forward with the one-on-one Google Classrooms for every student receiving services. This is to maintain student confidentiality. Each page is individually created for the student and their services outlined in IEP.
 - Also moving towards having teachers do more Google Hangout meetings. Can check in with students to see how they are doing socially and emotionally and able to deliver services.
 - Some students are still having difficulty with the online learning format. Making individualized decisions for those students. For some, there is more of a work packet format.
 - Working out a system in which we may look to provide services, with parental consent, in smaller groups. There are a lot of confidentiality pieces that go into those decisions so K. Truchsess is working that out with district legal counsel.
 - Trying to resume PPT meetings virtually. Putting structures and support in place.
 - Extended School Years. Summer school programming. Started conversations on what that may look like.
 - Concerns of compensatory services. For students that have had gaps or lapses in services due to school closure. Need to relook if any students are owed additional service time. Ongoing and will wrap around to next school year. This will have fiscal impacts on the amount of time and support needed for students.
 - Making sure that district is connecting with ELL learners and providing support. SIOP coaches are providing tutorials for classroom teachers. Department Heads and K-5 ESL Bilingual supervisors are providing workshops, developing resources and classroom lessons for teachers.
 - Providing tutorials for families on how to get in Google Classroom and access work.
 - Looking for a way to test and identify new ELL students. We still have families registering for the district. How do we prevent a backlog by the time we do open. Make sure

we are efficiently testing and placing ELL students in appropriate classes.

- Professional Development
 - Some topics that emerged were how to assess students in this environment, how to create more interaction and how to provide effective feedback. Focusing on those three main areas.
- Grading Update
 - State has issued guidance. Bottom line is encouraging pass/fail options. Decisions are still local and flexible. Districts need to articulate what they have done so colleges can interpret.
 - This is created so it will not hurt students trying to get into colleges.
 - Different colleges will have different requirements. Some are still counting SATs, some are not.
 - As long as we are clear on how we handle this time period, colleges will use that as part of their criteria.
 - CT SDE has crafted articulations and agreements with CT Universities.
 - NCAA will not penalize student athletes for pass/fail.
 - Final decisions will be made with clearer guidance from the governor around the 5/20/2020 target date.
 - All grades for Q3 at DHS and T2 for middle schools are available in PowerSchool. Elementary report cards are being sent out this month.
 - J. DaSilva asked if grade requirements were only for public institutions or all colleges in Connecticut?
 - K. Casimiro stated that this is for Connecticut community schools and state schools. There were some private schools in the webinar she attended that were out of Connecticut and they said no one will be harmed by pass/fail if it is on a transcript. That is taken into consideration as a moment in time. Other things are still held very importantly such as letters of recommendations.
- Next steps:
 - Monitoring Google Classrooms. Virtual Data Rounds to inform decisions and support teachers.
 - Still planning for the unknown as well as normal operations (grading, budgeting, staffing, scheduling, summer school).
 - Consideration for looping students at lower elementary if we have a delayed opening in the Fall. K. Casimiro gave MRP as an example as they do this for K-2. The students would have the same teacher that they had the previous year. Seamless transition. The teacher knows exactly where the student is in education. They do not lose anytime with assessments. Teacher already knows the student's work habits and dispositions. When you loop students, you eliminate a lot of that so you can jump right in to teaching. Already have patterns, connections with students and families. Way to leverage growth and accelerate kids. Each school will be a little bit different. Has to be the right fit. Certification issues as some certifications are different for certain grade levels.
 - Ongoing: assuring our students, families and staff members are safe and healthy.
 - J. Britton asked what the verbage for is pass/fail. In his experience a pass does not affect your GPA but a fail does. K. Casimiro stated that we have a credit only

option at the high school now and it would be similar. The pass would not hinder the student but the fail would have a number. There are other options as well. If it pertains to stress, job loss, health, there are other options like incompletes and health codes that don't necessarily equate to a fail on a report card.

- Dr. Pascarella stated that this is still just in conversation based on the guidance from the commissioner. Not necessarily a decision made for Danbury.
- Dr. Pascarella stated that Danbury was selected to give a state presentation on the initiatives that are being done in the district. He thanked K. Casimiro and her group for the great job getting us this far.
- Dr. Pascarella stated the question for next fall is monumental. We are deeply concerned about gaps and we have a responsibility to all of our students to do justice to their learning needs. We need to come up with a helpful model for them.

ACTION ITEMS

A. Healthy Food Certification 20-43 (pg.24)

MOTION: K. Conetta moved, seconded by J. Dasilva that the Board of Education approves the healthy food option: Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the Board of Education or governing authority certifies that all food items offered for sale to student in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

Motion passed at 7:00 pm

MOTION: K. Molinaro moved, seconded by J. Dasilva that the Board of Education approves the food exemptions: The Board of Education or governing authority will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food sales.

Motion passed at 7:03 pm

MOTION: J. DaSilva moved, seconded by K. Molinaro that the Board of Education approves the exemptions for beverages: The Board of Education or governing authority will allow the sale to students of beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the beverages are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting or extracurricular activity. The “school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the beverage sales.

Motion passed at 7:04 pm

B. March Operating Results Analysis (General Fund & Grants)

MOTION: K. Conetta moved, seconded by J. Dasilva that the Board of Education accept the March 2020 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund & Grants) in accordance with _____
20-44 (pg.29)

- C. Leborious stated that the big picture for the operating budget was that the district has a \$228,000 surplus at this point in the budget. But that is offset by a gap that we have with the school lunch program that results in a \$750,000 negative. The net is about negative \$521,000.
- Every month that we operate the food service program, we operate in the red. We do it because it is the right thing to do as we are feeding about 2000 families a day.
- We have not laid off any staff members in accordance with the Executive Order 7R by Governor Lamont.
- The school lunch program is a revenue supported program. We are not making any revenue.
- We will have to make up for that deficit.
- Net positive of about \$125,000.
- Savings in not paying for daily subs, transportation, fuel, electricity, and propane. That is offset on things we had to invest in such as chromebooks, food services, specific technology for SPED students, Distance Learning software investments and PD in remote learning.
- Big savings in benefits right now. Saw a savings of about \$1 million in health insurance because people are not going to doctors. That is uncertain for the upcoming months as people may get sick.
- Strategy is to be as prudent as possible so that we can put ourselves in the best position to be in a good fiscal place next year.

- Refining look at benefits piece, making further adjustments with fuel and utilities (might purchase propane now since it's cheap). A grant report attached for Board members showed 82.6% spent year to date of all the grant funding. Total grant budget is \$32 million.
- Looks like we will be able to roll some of that alliance money to next year.
- We don't have a number yet from the city as the mayor is still working on the budget. We will have to be very prudent and very careful when we plan for our budget next year.

Motion passed at 7:16 pm

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- Graduation
 - This is a big issue across the state.
 - Commissioner said anything we plan has to be aligned with the health department.
 - We all want to have something for our students, but it has to be safe.
 - Might be a little difficult for districts to have control with the general public, so the commissioner is asking districts to be mindful.
 - Principal Donovan is getting input from the students.
 - Graduation right now is scheduled for 6/12/2020.
 - K. Walston stated that he will be speaking to Adult Ed as well on their graduation exercises to discuss at the next meeting.
 - J. DaSilva asked if we can bring students back for graduation so we can postpone instead of cancel. Dr. Pascarella stated that the commissioner spoke about that and some districts are thinking of postponing to July and even December, when students return from colleges and winter break. The possibility is yes if the Board chooses to do so.
- School Opening
 - K. Walston stated that the district was invited to participate in a webinar to encourage districts to reconvene it's security and safety committee to develop an annex to the district safety plans. Reconstitution of schools post Covid-19.
 - First formal meeting will be held on 4/20/2020 from 2:30 to 4:00 pm. A. Russo volunteered as the liaison.
 - Purpose is to review the safety plan as it is currently written.
 - Typically an annex to plan. One of the annexes to this plan will be around safety and security post covid.
 - Some items the team will need to consider is to identify key community members and stakeholders to be on the team. Chief of Police, EMS representative, fire department, head of facilities, head of security, cabinet members, etc.
 - Looking to develop goals for the committee. Goals would focus on hazards, such as Covid-19. Clearly define the roles of members on the team.
 - Frankly, we need to anticipate another wave of Covid-19.

- Address key prevention strategies in the plan and talk about how if we had to close schools again or if there was a modified school closing, have a plan in place for some type of academic engagement.
- In addition, plan school events and what social distance looks like at those events.
- Talk about how to get supplies in staff hands so that classrooms can be disinfected on a daily basis.
- Consider staff and student absences and how to support in the event of those cases.
- Tracking student and staff absenteeism to try to identify any trends in the data to see if we could learn anything.
- Continue to promote social distancing throughout the district.
- Look at the district calendar and talk about what a typical school calendar activity looks like. Perhaps reduce some of that school activity.
- Phase 4 is anticipating when there is an announcement of return to school and what conditions will look like.
- Continue communicating with the Health Department and ongoing collaboration with them.
- Heightened surveillance.
- Looking forward to getting back to school but also understands it will look very different when we come back.
- Communication with the public will be very important.
- CARES Act Summary/Governor's Executive Order 7R_____20-45 (pg.35)
 - We anticipate that the district will receive about \$2.2 million dollars based on our assumption with speaking to the State CFO. Application was submitted on 4/14/2020. Anticipated CT will get \$111 million of which Danbury will be allocated to get \$2.2 million (elementary and secondary relief fund). That funding is flexible in that it can support any activities that are authorized by the IDEA, ESEA and for any Covid related activities or Perkins Grant. Have a little over a year to spend it up until 9/2021. It will offset the food gap we have now. 83% of our title one allocation.
 - Governor's Emergency Act Fund. State will get \$28 million statewide. Broadly speaking, will go to most significantly impacted areas. Not sure how the governor will use that money.
 - FEMA funding. District is working with the city to submit FEMA claims related to materials purchased for this pandemic (gloves, sanitizers, masks, etc).
 - Memo will come through in regards to the \$111 million on 4/23/2020. 15% of that money will be set aside for governmental use. Rest will be distributed throughout the State of Connecticut. We have been arguing for categorical money, meaning it would come directly to the Board of Education. That has been achieved because the money is being distributed through Title I. That will be about \$2.1 million.
 - Concerned about allocation from the city. Hopefully that money that we do receive, if we are careful, we will be able to utilize it next school year.
 - Urban areas that are getting as much money as we are through Title I, probably will not see the other part of the money. That will likely be distributed to other districts that are not Title I eligible.

- Mayor Boughton is hiring czar for the Covid-19 money. Maybe we can find other grants to help bring other money into the district. Other than Title I \$2 million, don't see the district getting much more.
- Thanked L. Daly, Texas Roadhouse, E. Palmares, The Dream Foundation, United Way and Boehringer Ingelheim for providing lunches for students during Spring Break.

DISCUSSION

- Sal also said he spoke to Joe Britton. Will need to work on ed specs. Glen is working on getting a draft together for the board. Facilities committee meeting. Granville contact is signed. June 2nd is the referendum date. Specs need to have that in the city by the end of June.

INFORMATION

- K. Thompson spoke about the upcoming interview process.
 - 4/28/2020 will start with two middle school assistant principal vacancies by interviewing a small group of internal applicants. J. DaSilva will be Board representative.
 - Then will look at what went well and what didn't go well and figure out how to run the elementary interviews.
 - Teacher applications will be harder.
 - The HR team is looking at different virtual platforms for teacher interviews.
 - At this point, we will digitally onboard staff once they accept the position.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

- Policy Committee meeting will be held 4/29/2020 from 5:30 -6:30 pm.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: J. DaSilva moved, seconded by J. Britton that the Board of Education convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing vendor negotiations and legal strategy.

Motion carried at 7:30 pm

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

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

PUBLIC SESSION

K. Molinaro moved, seconded by J. DaSilva, that the Board of Education return to Public Session. The motion passed at 8:01 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

K. Molinaro moved, seconded by J. Dasilva, that the Board of Education adjourn its Meeting of April 22, 2020 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:02 pm.

Kathleen Molinaro, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)