

Board of Education Ellington, Connecticut

March 26, 2014

A regular meeting of the Ellington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, March 26, 2014, at Ellington High School Library/Media Center.

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by Mr. Keune, Chairperson.

Present were: Messrs. Roberson, Keune, McNamar, Purcaro (7:20 p.m.), and Young; Mesdames Kiff-Judson and Picard-Wambolt; Mr. Stephen Cullinan, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Kristy LaPorte, Director of Special Services; Dr. Erin McGurk, Director of Educational Services; Mrs. Margaret Devlin, Director of Business Services; Student Representative Alissa DelPiano. Also attending was Sergeant Patrick Sweeney, Ellington Resident State Trooper. Mrs. Hayes, Mr. Blanchette and Mr. Friedman were absent.

CITIZENS AND STAFF FORUM

No one addressed the Board.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Keune asked if anyone wished to remove any item from the consent agenda. As there were no objections, Consent Agenda items 1 through 4 were adopted.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the February 26, 2014 Regular Board Meeting.
2. Approval of the Minutes of the March 4, 2014 Special Board Meeting.
3. Acceptance of the Personnel Resignation of Denise Ackeifi, special education teacher at Ellington High School, effective March 28, 2014.
4. Acceptance of the Personnel Resignation of Kari Bissell, health assistant at Ellington High School, effective March 14, 2014.

REPORT AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

Special Reports

Update on School Resource Officer Program

Mr. Cullinan reminded the Board that following the tragedy in Newtown, the Board requested that the town submit an application for a full time school resource officer. However, due to a shortage of resources at the state level, it has been unable to

provide, to date, a full time resource officer. Last August, Resident State Trooper Patrick Sweeney approached the Board about using constables in the school system to provide the same type of service that would be done by a school resource officer. This was to be temporary until a full-time officer became available. The program has successfully progressed with two part-time constables who provide full time service. On March 14, 2014, school principals and administrators met with Mr. Cullinan and Sergeant Sweeney to review the program to date and review positive and negative feedback.

Positive feedback from the principals included: Ability to expedite issues before they escalate; provide flexibility and multi-scheduling; have a familiarity with the buildings and a good rapport with students; provide presence at events; ability to follow-up issues between school and home life; provide continuity and clear communication. One disadvantage noted was the break in continuity as constables switch shifts; this may affect communication.

Sergeant Sweeney noted the expense of acquiring another trooper compared to the cost savings of continuing to use the constables as resource officers. He said the program was working very well, and he asked the Board to decide on a plan of action.

Mr. Cullinan stated that continuing to use the constables as resource officers would meet the needs of the district and make financial sense. In the future, there is the possibility of adding hours to these two officers' roles, or hiring a third or fourth part-time officer. It is incumbent upon Sergeant Sweeney and the school board to provide ongoing training of the school resource officers through the state police, as there will be future changes in security protocols.

It was decided to add an Action Item to expand the constable program. Mr. Keune and the Board thanked Sergeant Sweeney for his participation and feedback.

Update on Reading Results and Resources in the Ellington Public Schools

At the request of the Communications Committee, Mr. Cullinan and Dr. McGurk provided an update on resources and results in reading in the Ellington Public Schools. The five areas discussed were: District Instructional Plans; Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; Professional Development; Staffing and Other Resources, Results; and Next Steps.

Starting in school year 2006-2007, the Ellington Board of Education has adopted District Instructional Plans, which contain specific, measurable goals related to reading and mathematics. Each school in the district then uses the District Instructional Plan to adopt individual school plans which contain specific, measurable goals related to reading and mathematics. The plans contain specific actions, strategies and interventions, timelines, staff responsibilities and anticipated outcomes. Annually, these plans are submitted to the Board of Education for approval, and each month a report is

provided to relate progress in these particular plans.

The plans show the percentage of students at goal or better, students not at goal, and identify students who are at basic or below basic, their level of performance, and establishing targets for growth for each student, what resources are available for each student, and plans for intervention. The plan specifically targets any student who is not at goal or better.

Dr. McGurk discussed the areas of curriculum, instruction and professional development. Ellington has had a significant focus on building capacity for teachers and administrators to support high quality reading instruction. Our collaboration with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project has strengthened our core curriculum in both reading and writing, and has supported the transition to Common Core State Standards. Beyond the school day, teachers and administrators in Ellington have collaborated with other school districts to share challenges, successes and best practices in implementing reading and writing workshops. She also discussed Ellington's participation in summer institutes, ongoing study groups and workshops, the initiation in 2008-2009 of SRBI training and intervention block model, and the expansion of standard based report cards from K-2 to K-8.

Dr. McGurk also highlighted work that has been done to ensure coherence of our reading programs, including the creation of Bottom Lines documents, report card revisions, and expectations for benchmark assessments. She shared family literacy activities and other ways that the district supports a strong reading culture for students and staff members. Mr. Cullinan reported on the staffing changes that have been made to support reading instruction, including increasing staffing for reading intervention in every building and increasing special education staffing at Windermere.

Mr. Cullinan stated that since 2007-2008 the district has added the following positions: .5 FTE K-8 District LA Consultant; 1.0 FTE Certified ELL Teacher; .5 FTE ELL paraprofessional; 6.6 FTE Reading Teachers; 2.0 FTE Special Education Teachers; 5.0 FTE Elementary Classroom Teachers; .8 FTE Speech/Language Pathologist; 1.0 FTE Special Education Supervisor; 1.0 FTE Assistant Principal at Windermere School; a 1.0 FTE Curriculum Supervisor in English/Language Arts; and multiple paraprofessional positions. The district spent \$40,000 from the ARRA grant to expand classroom libraries and has annually provided funding for classroom libraries and just right books.

Mr. Cullinan reported on long term district trends in student achievement, with the percentage of students scoring at goal or above in grades 3 to 8 increasing each year (from 77.9 to 85%) between 2007-2013, while the percentage of students scoring at the basic or below basic levels has dropped from 12.6% to 6.2% in that time frame. Finally, Dr. McGurk shared next steps for continued improvement, including strengthening instruction in literacy in the content areas, as called for in the Common Core State

Standards, enhancing the English curriculum at the high school, and creating additional performance tasks to measure complex reading skills.

Mr. Cullinan stated that in his opinion the plans, programs, resources, and the work of staff and of our students is showing significant success in reading.

Mrs. Kiff-Judson thanked Dr. McGurk and Mr. Cullinan for their presentation. She thought it was important that this information be brought before the public due to a negative newspaper article on this topic.

Regular Board Committee Reports

Policy Committee

The Policy Committee of the Ellington Board of Education met on Monday, March 3, 2014. They continued the review of 1000 series policies as presented in CABE's Customized Policy Review and determined if each policy is in keeping with Board philosophy and what additions and deletions were necessary. Policies 1170.1 through 1314 within the 1000 series were discussed and determined which policies to include in our manual. Regarding Policy 1250-Visits to the Schools, it was determined it would be best to send the regulations for administrative review to make sure they are in keeping with our current practices and security procedures. The next Policy Committee meeting is scheduled for April 7, 2014.

Curriculum Committee

The Curriculum Committee met on Friday, March 14, 2014. Also present were Michele Cirillo and Liz Cole, curriculum supervisors; and Leslie Mancuso, K-8 mathematics specialist.

Mr. Cullinan and Dr. McGurk presented an overview of work that has been done to strengthen reading curriculum, instruction and assessment in the district.

Mrs. Mancuso reported on a new resource being used in the district, *Bridges in Mathematics*, which is aligned with Common Core State Standards, and was developed by the Math Learning Center in Salem, Oregon, a non-profit organization promoting high quality mathematics instruction.

The next meeting of the Curriculum Committee is scheduled for May 16, 2014.

Operations Committee

Mr. Cullinan reported that the Operations Committee met on Thursday, February 27, 2014. Also present were Mr. Tim McCluskey, Athletic Director, and Mr. Tim Webb, Director of Public Works.

The committee reviewed a STEAP Grant prepared by Mr. Webb that would provide for lighting on the high school football field, the practice field and the tennis courts. Previously, the town received STEAP Grants for the tennis courts, the football bleachers and most recently for the expansion of the Human Resources Department. The town has also submitted a STEAP Grant for the expansion of Town Hall.

The Operations Committee recommended to the full Board support and approval of the submission of the STEAP Grant to provide lighting to the football stadium, the practice field and the tennis courts as presented. This item is listed as an action item.

Special Board Committee Reports

Communications Committee

Mrs. Kiff-Judson stated that the Communications Committee met on Tuesday, March 4, 2014. The committee discussed the unified budget message, highlighting achievements of district, per pupil spending, communication timeline with tasks and dates, and the Friend of Education Award. Dr. McGurk noted increased opportunities in core academics and the arts. The committee discussed speakers for the Board of Finance Hearing. Student representative DelPiano has agreed to speak.

The next committee meeting will take place at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 1, 2014.

Administrative Reports

Superintendent's Report(s)

Introduction of Pilot Breakfast Program

Mr. Cullinan reported that Mrs. Trudy Luck Roberts and Ms. Patti Patton have worked together to bring a Pilot Breakfast Program to Center School. The program will begin on Monday, April 21, 2014 in a 'grab and go' format, with classes coming to the cafeteria between 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. to purchase breakfast and morning snack. Offered will be a variety of prepackaged breakfast breaks. The price for breakfast will be \$1.75 and is available as part of the free and reduced lunch program. Mrs. Roberts and Ms. Patton are hopeful that this pilot program will be successful to allow more breakfast programs to be established within our district.

Monthly Update on Building Projects

Mr. Cullinan reported that on March 7, 2014, there were two preconstruction meetings, one for each school project. Enfield Builders is going to do the Crystal Lake project, and All Phase Enterprises is going to do the Windermere School project. David Stein of Silver Petrucelli ran both meetings. Also present were Peter Welti, Permanent Building Committee, Nick DiCorleto, Finance Director, Town Attorney Atherton Ryan, Michael Larkin, Steve Moccio, and Rob Butler, Director of Facilities.

On March 12, 2014, the Permanent Building Committee approved both contractors, and contracts are being finalized.

Also, there was a March 17, 2014 meeting regarding playscapes at both schools. A Plan Completion Test meeting is going to have to be scheduled with the state. Along those lines, the results for the Plan Completion Test meeting for the FF& E at Crystal Lake School from last December should be done processing soon.

Preconstruction meetings for both projects will be held on April 3, 2014, at 9:00 a.m. for Crystal Lake and 10:00 a.m. for Windermere.

The next meeting of the Permanent Building Committee is April 1, 2014.

Monthly Instructional Report – February

Mr. Cullinan stated that the February report was included in the board packet. Crystal Lake School reported on data team work and SMART goals for each grade and professional development for Responsive Classroom. The Safe School Climate Committee also met, and third and fourth grade teachers familiarized themselves with the new Google Chromebooks. Parent Conferences were held along with a book fair. Center School students made valentines for the Meals on Wheels program, reported on their Reading for Fun store, and held a PBIS assembly and science fair.

Windermere Elementary School's K-4 literacy team held professional development in guided reading and a kindergarten orientation; the PBIS team held a student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS) workshop. Windermere Intermediate School teachers created grade level writing checklists and noted the work of their behavior intervention team. At Ellington Middle School, teachers continued mathematic assessments aligned with the new standards-based report cards and worked on strategies based on the publication Note and Notice for Close Reading.

At Ellington High School, Mr. Rinaldi attended a presentation in Boston with other schools that made the AP Honor Roll, ten students attended the Eastern Region Music Festival, and there was professional development in Smarter Balance testing. Also, the event Little Kids Big Kids was held, along with a pancake breakfast by the Ellington Friends of Music. EHS indoor track and cheerleading won NCCC Championships.

Dr. Laporte and Ms. Haberern developed a system to support individual student needs for Extended School Year (ESY) for summer 2014. The middle school and high school held joint department meetings for curriculum alignment, textbook selection, instructional strategies, and transition processes.

The report also contained many student and staff recognitions.

Nonrenewal of Non-tenured Teachers

Mr. Cullinan reported that spring nonrenewal of non-tenured teachers must be completed by May 1, 2014. The budget can impact tenured and non-tenured staff but especially non-tenured teachers. The non renewal action this time eliminates in certain instances the requirement for the BOE to hold individual hearings for non-tenured staff if they should lose their position. As part of the process, each non-tenured staff member was sent a letter notifying them that Mr. Cullinan would be recommending their nonrenewal at this meeting. Once the Board has taken this action, each impacted staff member will receive a second letter confirming the Board's action. Later in the spring, when the budget is settled, Mr. Cullinan will request from the Board to reinstate all or most of those positions.

In his capacity as Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Cullinan recommended that the Ellington Board of Education non-renew the teaching contracts of the following list of teachers at the end of the 2013-2014 school year in accordance with the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-151. Mr. Cullinan read the list of non-renewed teachers – (See Exhibit B).

Valerie Baigert
Michelle Bashaw
Peter Beebe
Jennifer Blalock
Amy Borio
Shannon Bostiga
Marissa Boucher
Jennie Brady
Michele Cirillo
Elizabeth Cole
Rebecca Dean
Amy DeMarco
Richard Diamond
Christine DiVenere
Amanda Ducharme
Allison Frankel
Megan Glunt
Lori Greenberg
Melissa Haberern
Jessica Hall
Jaclyn Ham
Courtney Harris
Buffey Harris-Fogarty
Abigail Hoffman
Deborah Hurlburt
Caleb Johnston
Tara Kelly
Erin LaFleche
Lisa LaForte

Erica Lombardi
Deborah Lubas
Douglas Luginbuhl
Jessica Luginbuhl
Mark Mahler
Jessica Marshall
Caitlin Masopust
Jessica McEleney
Allison McKeegan
Cristin Millen
Allison Morris
Katelyn Moule
Tiffany Newton
Gina Olearczyk
Andrea Olivieri
Michelle Patenaude
Karen Penda
Stephanie Pruden
Christina Roy
Catherine Ryan
Christina Saccoccio
Adam Schumacher
Laura Sobolewski
Katherine Sokoloski
Jamie Strolly
Colleen Thornberg
Jacklyn Tobin
Emily Wry
Melissa Wills

Mr. Cullinan stated that he was making this recommendation for the following reasons, any one or all of which he viewed to be a sufficient basis for the recommended action:

1. budgetary considerations consistent with the reduction in force provision of the teachers' contract,
2. elimination of a position to which a teacher was appointed or loss of a position to another teacher;
3. other due and sufficient cause.

Mr. Cullinan informed the Board that each teacher named had been advised prior to this meeting that he intended to make this recommendation; and, if the Board takes action, the teacher has the right under Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-151 to request the reasons for the Board's action to non-renew his/her contract of employment and that further, depending upon those reasons, may be entitled to a due-process hearing to consider the Board's decision to non-renew the contract of employment.

Mr. Cullinan also recommended that he be authorized and instructed to communicate notice of this action in writing to the affected parties and to respond for the Board to any appropriate requests, which may be forthcoming from the teacher or his/her representatives as provided in the Teacher Tenure Law.

Update on Regional Common Calendar Committee

Mr. Cullinan stated that Public Act 13.247 created a uniform regional school calendar task force, which develops a regional school education calendar to be used by each district. The task force provided the following guidelines to Regional Educational Service Centers:

- A common student start date of the last Wednesday in August with +/- three day window
- Three Vacations of at least one week; summer; 4th or 5th week of December; 2nd or 3rd week of April
- Election Day as a Professional Development Day (Regional)
- One other common regional Professional Development Day
- Work towards agreement on Veterans Day, Columbus Day, and other single holidays
- Discuss and work towards agreement on February break
- Allow five Flex days

The CREC Regional Common Calendar Committee met on March 11 agreed to the following:

- Five Flex Days
- A common student start date of the last Wednesday in August with +/- three day window
- Labor Day - No Students
- Columbus Day - No Students

- Election Day - No Students and will be a Regional Professional Development Day
- Veterans Day - Students are in session
- Thanksgiving Break is Thursday & Friday
- The December Break was agreed to
- Martin Luther King Day - No Students
- February – Presidents Day – No Students; Tuesday - No Students (can be a Professional Development Day)
- April is still under discussion
- Memorial Day - No Students
- The following would require use of a flex day – Jewish Holidays. Three Kings Day; Good Friday; “Fair” days

The current Ellington 2013-2014 calendar and proposed 2014-2015 calendar match all of the agreed upon language with the understanding that April has yet to be decided by the Regional Committee.

The next and final meeting of the CREC Regional Common Calendar Committee is scheduled for April 1.

Presentation of 2014-2015 District Calendar

Mr. Cullinan reviewed the proposed 2014-2015 school calendar stating that it is aligned with the recommendations of the CREC Common Calendar committee. The Student start date is the last Wednesday in August. On Labor Day and Columbus Day no students will be in session. Election Day will be a Professional Development Day. On Veterans Day students will be in session. The December Break is aligned with the recommendations. On Martin Luther King Day students will not be in session. The February Break will be the 16th & 17th. The third week of April will be a vacation week.

Directors' Reports

Presentation on Ellington Preschool Program

Dr. LaPorte introduced Mrs. Sandy Suib-Dutcher and Mrs. Carol Connolly, preschool teachers at Center School. Dr. LaPorte presented a PowerPoint presentation on the preschool program; she began with a recap of special education laws that protect students with disabilities or students with special needs then discussed preschool services provided in Ellington. She related the start up of special education in Ellington to the present day; there are students currently enrolled in preschool and students coming in next year with disabilities or special needs. She stressed that Ellington preschool offers a solid, critical educational foundation for students by starting in preschool.

Dr. LaPorte explained the Peer Role Model program, the regular day program, the extended day program, and tuition expenses and breakdown of costs. The Ellington

preschool program, she noted, is significantly less expensive than other preschool programs in Ellington. She succeeded in bringing awareness to the Board of the tireless work educators in preschool do each day, along with speech pathologists, and various paraprofessionals/instructional aides. Dr. LaPorte offered recommendations on ways to increase tuition without impacting parents to retain them in the preschool program.

Business Report

Meg Devlin reported on the status of the water damage and ongoing repairs at the Administration Building. Anticipated completion/final clean up is Friday April 4, 2014. Mrs. Devlin noted that the company was professional, courteous, and accommodating.

Student Representative Report

Student Representative DelPiano reported that AP Chemistry students participated in a Chem-Olympiad at UCONN, students in grades 9-11 are taking Smarter Balance testing, Winter Sports Awards were held, the Phone-a-Thon for the Ellington Scholarship fund was a success, as was the Penguin Plunge. Unified basketball has finished their season, and Relay for Life is approaching. Last, there was an FBLA fundraiser and a Good Music/Good Cause fundraiser enjoyed by all. Mr. Keune thanked Ms. DelPiano for her continued updates on the achievements of EHS students.

ACTION ITEMS

Move to add as action item #7, the appointment of Christine Zaremski as a long-term substitute teacher at Windermere Intermediate School.

1st. M. Purcaro

2nd. A. McNamar

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Move to add as action item #8, the acceptance of the personnel resignation of Cathy McCullough.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. K. Picard-Wambolt

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Move to add as action item #9, the authorization of the superintendent to pursue the extended funding of the school constables.

1st. M Young

2nd. M. Purcaro

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

1. A motion was made to approve an increase in the 2014-2015 preschool tuition from \$4.00/hr. to \$4.75/hr. and to add one addition regular education tuition student to each morning preschool class.

1st. M. Purcaro

2nd. A. McNamar

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

2. A motion was made to recommend to the Annual Town Budget Meeting acceptance of prepaid grants and funds fully reimbursable for the fiscal year commencing on July 1, 2014 and ending June 30, 2015, and to appropriate the same to the Board of Education in a sum estimated at \$1,618,119 as detailed in Exhibit A attached.

1st. K. Picard-Wambolt

2nd. T. Kiff-Judson

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

3. A motion was made that pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-151, the Ellington Board of Education non-renew the teacher contracts of the following list of teachers (*as previously read into the record by the Superintendent*) at the end of the 2013-14 school year as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

It was further moved that the Superintendent of Schools be directed to communicate this action of the Board in writing to the above noted teachers and that the Superintendent of Schools be authorized to respond on behalf of the Board of Education to any requests for a hearing, if required by law, or for other data which may be forthcoming from the teacher and/or his/her representative pursuant to applicable provisions of Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-151; and further move that the Superintendent be directed that any response to a request for a hearing, if a hearing is required by law, indicate that such hearing is to be before the Board of Education

1st. T. Kiff-Judson

2nd. K. Picard-Wambolt

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

4. A motion was made that the Board recommend that the First Selectman submit a STEAP Grant in support of funding for lighting for the high school football field, the practice field and the tennis courts as recommended by the Operations Committee.

1st. T. Kiff-Judson

2nd. M. Purcaro

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

5. A motion was made that the Board approve the 2014-2015 district calendar as presented by the Superintendent of Schools.

1st. A. McNamar 2nd. T. Kiff-Judson

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

6. A motion was made that the Board accept with regret and best wishes, the personnel retirement request of Mary Donohue, special education aide at Ellington High School, effective June 30, 2014.

1st. A. McNamar 2nd. T. Kiff-Judson

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

7. A motion was made that the Board appoint Christine Zaremski as a long-term substitute sixth grade teacher at Windermere Intermediate School, effective March 11-28, 2014.

1st. K. Picard-Wambolt 2nd. A. McNamar

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

8. A motion was made that the Board accept the personnel resignation of Cathy McCullough, sixth grade teacher at Windermere Intermediate School, effective June 30, 2014.

1st. A. McNamar 2nd. T. Kiff-Judson

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

9. A motion was made to authorize the superintendent to pursue extended funding of the school constables.

1st. M. Young 2nd. M. Purcaro

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Keune reported on a letter from Robert C. Sandberg Jr. regarding the purchase of property, which the Board of Education has no jurisdiction over. Mr. Cullinan forwarded the letter to the First Selectman's office.

A motion was made at 9:25 p.m. to enter into executive session for the purpose of reviewing exempt documents pertaining to strategies related to negotiations and to invite the Superintendent of Schools, Stephen Cullinan, into the executive session.

1st. M. Purcaro

2nd. T. Kiff-Judson

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

The Board came out of executive session at 10:21 p.m.

A motion to adjourn was made at 10:21 p.m.

1st. M. Young

2nd. D. Roberson

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

TKJ/ad

Tracey Kiff-Judson
Vice-Chair