

## **Board of Education Ellington, Connecticut**

June 9, 2021

A regular meeting of the Ellington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, June 9, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. in the Ellington High School Library Media Center, 37 Maple Street, Ellington, CT.

Present were: Mr. Blanchette and Young; Ms. Dzen, Kupferschmid, Picard-Wambolt, Moser, Underwood, Nord, Mullin, and Socha and Dr. Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Schools.

Administration present were: Mr. John Collins, Director of Technology; Mr. Brian Hendrickson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance and Operations and Dr. Kristy LaPorte, Director of Special Services.

Also in attendance: Ms. Jennifer Brown, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/Human Resources Coordinator; Mr. John Guidy, Principal, Ellington High School; Mr. Marc Richard, Assistant Principal, Ellington High School; Ms. Gomathi Ramachandran, Teacher, Ellington High School; Mr. Michael Nash, Co-Principal, Ellington Middle School; Ms. Nicole Bolduc, Science Teacher, Ellington Middle School; and Ayushman Choudhury, Appointed Board of Education Student Representative.

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Ms. Dzen, Chairwoman. (00:01:30 )

Pledge of Allegiance (00:01:38 )

SPECIAL RECOGNITION \_\_\_\_\_(00:02:03)

Best Community for Music Education \_\_\_\_\_(00:02:17)

Dr. Nicol commented that the K-12 Music program in Ellington Public Schools has continued to be impressive and requested Mrs. Sharon Bigge and Mr. John Cheman; Music teachers from Windermere Elementary School and Mr. Timothy Adams; Music Teacher from Center School to address the Board.

Mr. Cheman began by stating his privilege to work in the Music department in Ellington Public Schools and presented the recent recognition of the Best Community in Music

Education awarded to the Ellington Public Schools for the third year and looked forward to familiar musicality returning to the classroom next year and beyond. Ms. Bigge expressed her appreciation to be part of the EPS Music Department, the honor to work with her colleagues and in receiving the prestigious award. Ms. Bigge complimented both staff and students for their resiliency and dedication to teach and learn in all formats of learning (i.e in-school, hybrid, remote) during the unprecedented pandemic. Mr. Adams echoed the comments from his colleagues and added his appreciation for the talented teachers in the Music Department of each elementary, middle and high schools. K-12 students have continued to impress through the band, jazz band and vocalists/chorus and was honored to be recognized at the national level.

Ms. Dzen congratulated the Music Department for their well deserved recognition.

Nicole Bolduc - OpenSciEd \_\_\_\_\_ (00:05:38)

Mr. Nash expressed his appreciation to be present and recognizing Ms. Nicole Bolduc for her amazing contributions not only to the Ellington community but to the greater science community across the country as well. Mr. Nash complimented Ms. Bolduc as a wonderful educator and put forth a creative approach to teaching. Ms. Bolduc was a leader when the NGSS standard testing was implemented in the district and has worked with both elementary and high school science teachers throughout the district.

Mr. Nash continued by stating, that Ms. Bolduc received two amazing opportunities for the summer: the first working with the Open SciEd Organization in California, modeling demonstration lessons for teachers and the second working with the Right Question Institute in Kentucky and discussing the technique QFT (question formulation technique) and its strategies that that Ms. Bolduc has used it in instructing students in her classroom. Mr. Nash concluded that Ms. Bolduc was an asset not only to Ellington Middle School but for the entire district.

Ms. Bolduc thanked Mr. Nash for the kind words and with this opportunity was excited to bring equality to the classroom for science education for all students.

Ms. Dzen stated that the Board of Education was very proud and looked forward to seeing and hearing about Ms. Bolduc's experiences in the fall.

Ayushman Choudhury - 20-21 BOE Student Representative \_\_\_\_\_ (00:10:06)

Ms. Dzen recognized Student Representative Choudhury and his accomplishments and involvement in the Ellington community. Student Representative Ayushman has performed at Carnegie Hall playing piano, been a valuable asset to the Board of

Education especially in times of challenge, part of the reopening committee, contributed to the improvement of the math program and assisted students with math, and had been an important voice to the Board of Education. Ms. Dzen congratulated on his accomplishments, thanked him for his time and service and wished Student Representative Ayushman the best of luck in all of his future endeavors.

Student Representative Choudhury expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve and was honored to be the Student Representative.

CITIZENS AND STAFF FORUM \_\_\_\_\_ (00:12:52)

Mrs. Corissa Dubord addressed the Board with her concern of the current mask mandates and requested the Board of Education discuss options for all students at the start of the 2021-2022 school year. Ms. Dubord expressed her appreciation for all the administrators, staff and teachers and what has been accomplished for students this school year. However, Ms. Dubord felt that masks should be optional and ultimately the decision would be left to parents who will then advocate and protect their own children.

Mrs. Nicole Roy began with her appreciation for all the Board of Education members and administrators that made the best of a challenging school year. Mrs. Roy expressed her disappointment with the mask requirements for students this current school year and hoped that discussions would continue and that the district would follow the science and its recommendations. Mrs. Roy spoke on behalf of over sixty parents in town that had the same concern. Mrs. Roy wanted to publicly address the Board of Education of the concern and strongly urged masks to be optional for the upcoming school year.

Mrs. Holly Godek thanked the administration for their efforts this year and respectfully asked if the district would discuss eliminating the mask mandate for the upcoming school year. Mrs. Godek's concern was the long term health effects of students wearing masks.

Mrs. Cristin Millin addressed the Board of Education on behalf of her son who would be participating in Ellington High School graduation ceremonies on June 11, 2021. Based on previous correspondence with Dr. Nicol, Ms. Millin strongly requested another administrator present her son's diploma at graduation and had included all correspondence within the Board of Education packet presented at the meeting. Ms. Millin firmly asked Dr. Nicol to step aside and allow another administrator or Board member to distribute her son's diploma at graduation.

Ms. Dzen thanked all citizens for their comments.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT (00:22:27)

Ms. Dzen reported that the newest Board member, Ms. Moser, would be joining the Curriculum, Policy and Operation Committees. Ms. Dzen continued her report by stating the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education would meet monthly going forward where discussion should take place regarding the twenty five credit requirements for high school graduation and its effects on future graduations; concerns regarding summer programs for schools; and the social and emotional aspects of full remote students transitioning to in person instruction; student growth versus academic growth regarding students returning to the classroom from remote instruction.

Ms. Dzen continued her report with the Legislative wrap up session for CABE would be held on June 14, 2021 from 11:00 a.m to 12:30 p.m. virtually via Zoom.

Ms. Dzen concluded her report with the proposed navigation of not wearing masks in the full capacity for sporting events, and how district rules differ for indoor and outdoor and the challenge for schools to manage spectators.

CONSENT AGENDA (00:25:36)

1. Approval of the May 19, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes.
2. Approval of the employment of Nicole Boske, Administrative Assistant at Crystal Lake School, effective June 7, 2021.
3. Approval of the employment of Zachary Webber, Technology Technician at Ellington High School, effective June 7, 2021.
4. Acceptance of the resignation of Allison Morris, Teacher at Center School, effective June 18, 2021.
5. Approval of the employment of Taylor Rose as the Coordinator of Human Resources, effective June 28, 2021.
6. Acceptance of the resignation of Lauren Smaglis, Grade 3 Teacher at Center School, effective June 30, 2021.
7. Approval of the employment of Nicole Collins as a Pre-K Teacher at Windermere School, effective August 30, 2021.

8. Approval of the employment of Brandon Higley-Blair as a Technology Education Teacher at Ellington High School, effective August 30, 2021.
9. Approval of the employment of Hannah Jackson as a Grade 5 Teacher at Center School, effective August 30, 2021.
10. Approval of the employment of Valerie Krzanowski as a Grade 5 Teacher at Center School, effective August 30, 2021.
11. Approval of the employment of Shawn Trout as a Math Specialist at Ellington Middle School, effective August 30, 2021.

Discussion: Ms. Nord requested information on items #3 and #8, in which Dr. Nicol clarified.

Ms. Dzen asked if anyone wished to remove any item from the Consent Agenda. Ms. Dzen announced that hearing none, the Consent Agenda is accepted as written.

#### REPORT AND DISCUSSION ITEMS (00:27:09)

##### Special Reports

##### Appointment of Board of Education Student Representative Madeleine Willett: Mr. Guidry, EHS Principal (00:27:11)

Mr. Guidry expressed his appreciation to Ayushman Choudhury for his service to the Board and the Ellington High School community.

Mr. Guidry introduced Madeleine (Maddie) Willett as the 2021-2022 Student Representative for the Board of Education. Mr. Guidry stated that Ms. Willett's teachers had many accolades on her achievements academically and personally. Ms. Willett's cumulative GPA was well above one hundred, currently in the top ten of her class, involved heavily in community service, has had leadership roles in many clubs offered at Ellington High School, and was very passionate about both education and government.

Ms. Willett thanked Mr. Guidry for his introduction and was excited for the opportunity and honored to serve as Student Representative for Ellington High School and the Board of Education.

A motion was made that the Board of Education approve Madeleine Willett as the Board of Education Student Representative for the 2021-2022 school year.

1st. J. Mullin                      2nd. K. Socha

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Ms. Dzen congratulated Ms. Willett and welcomed her to her new position as Student Representative.

Proposed Field Trip to Southwest National Parks: Mr. Richard, EHS Assistant  
Principal & Ms. Ramachandran, Teacher (0:31:40)

Dr. Nicol clarified that the Board of Education was required to approve field trips if they were overnight trips, regardless of location and introduced Mr. Richard and Ms. Ramachandran to present the proposed field trip to the Board.

Mr. Richard began by explaining the MRIA (Metacomet Ridge Interdistrict Academy) in which inner-city schools and suburban schools teamed up and would perform science based studies. In his research, Mr. Richard discovered the Grand Classroom which was run by former science teachers and Mrs. Ramachandran expressed her enthusiasm to the program.

Mrs. Ramachandran addressed the Board with information about the Grand Classroom that she collaborated with Mr. Richard. Mrs. Ramachandran presented a video trailer of the proposed field trip, and the educational objectives of the trip. Mrs. Ramachandran mentioned that an application to EDU innovate was submitted prior to the presentation.

Mrs. Ramachandran explained that the purpose of the field trip was to give an immersive and experiential hands-on trip to Ellington High School students. The design of the program was created by using the Ellington High School science curriculum and science department values in mind. The program would facilitate an experience for students to reconnect to the restorative and rejuvenating power of the natural world (geology, astronomy) after a year of Covid-19.

Mrs. Ramachandran stated that the Grand Classroom had nineteen years of experience, was partnered with over four hundred and fifty schools nationwide, an industry leader and specialist in outdoor education in national parks and abroad, and all Grand Classroom guides are certified wilderness first responders.

Mrs. Ramachandran continued to explain that the grant applied through EDU innovate would be tailored for three enrichment activities which tied in specifically to life science, earth science, and physical science. The students would meet with California condor field specialists and learn how data would be collected and efforts to save the California condor (endangered species). Students would travel to Zion National Park to meet geologists currently working in the management of erosion and weathering events. Additionally, students would have the opportunity to attend a private astronomy program with the dark ranger of Bryce Canyon National Park.

Mr. Richard added that for each experience there would be alternative options that would take current weather conditions on the trip into consideration.

Mrs. Ramachandran discussed the planning process which would take approximately one year, and upon the return, students would reflect on their experiences. The creation of choice project opportunities (i.e monthly meetings with chaperones or advisors where guest speakers would discuss the trip), students would start field journals after attending meetings, and would maintain the field journals while on the trip to present a video of the experience to the Board of Education. The hope would be to have twenty students participate in the trip, the experience recorded as a documentary that would be shared with other EHS science students and be used for promotional material.

Dr. Young questioned if students could submit questions from the monthly meetings that could be answered by the experts, in which both Mr. Richard and Mrs. Ramachandran replied yes.

Ms. Mullin inquired to achieve the twenty to twenty-five student anticipated participants, would there be a class prerequisite, would it be open to the entire school, would it be open to the first twenty students who submit a deposit and how would students be selected. Mr. Richard stated that with this proposed Grand Classroom field trip, the goal would be the participation of twenty students where the cost would depend on the number of participants. Mr. Richard explained that Grand Classroom's financing would be individual to the families. The ninety-nine dollars deposit would hold their spot and financing would be determined between the families and Grand Classroom.

Dr. Nicol requested clarification that if forty five students showed interest in participating, would that be a possibility. Mr. Richard replied yes, and the logistics and financing would need to be reviewed and established.

Ms. Nord asked what the cost for the families of those participating students would be. Mr. Richard stated that the trip would be all inclusive. The cost of the trip, if deposits

were received by September 17, 2021, would be approximately \$2,850.00. After September 17, 2021, the cost would be approximately \$2,999.00. The registration deadline would be October 31, 2021.

Ms. Nord inquired about a student who would benefit from this proposed trip experience but was unable to afford the cost. Mr. Richard explained that Mrs. Ramachandran had connections to an individual who would work at Yellowstone National Park in the summer of 2021 and would have a donation box available for patrons to contribute to Ellington High School students trip payment. Mr. Richard added that it would be similar to the structure of free and reduced lunch and a portion could be used towards the trip. The Grand Classroom also used crowdsourcing where an interested student would have family or friends contribute towards the payment of the trip.

Dr. Nicol stated that students should learn about the trip and become excited about the trip prior to learning about the cost, in which administrators, teachers and counselors could help with the logistics. The school district would make sure, with a variety of options to receive funds, that any student who would like to participate in the trip would not be prohibited from doing so.

Mrs. Ramachandran stated that she had discussions with Diane Lasher-Penti of Ellington Youth Services regarding a possible scholarship and the Ellington High School PTO president as well for funding.

Move that the Board of Education approve the Ellington High School Field Trip to Southwest National Parks from April 7, 2022 - April 12, 2022 subject to conditions as outlined in Board Policy #6153.

1st. K. Socha

2nd. M. Kupferschmid

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Summer 2021 Programming: Mr. Hendrickson, Assistant Superintendent & Dr. LaPorte, Director of Special Services (00:51:15)

Mr. Hendrickson began his report by stating that there were slightly over three hundred students total participating in the upcoming ESY Summer Programming and New Intervention Model Summer Programming. Mr. Hendrickson continued, as presented in the Board memo, a pay rate increase was implemented for staff. The memo included the ESY Summer programs, the no cost summer program and an invitation to the summer math and reading camps at the elementary school level.

Ms. Socha thanked both Mr. Hendrickson and Dr. LaPorte for their work in the development of the summer programs. Ms. Socha asked Mr. Hendrickson when the SBAC scores are available would there be a way to compare the remote learner scores versus the in-person scores and determine areas of improvement across grade levels in terms of learning. Mr. Hendrickson responded that could be done internally within the district and reported to the Board; however it had yet to be determined if the State of Connecticut would be releasing that information publicly by school district and grade level.

Ms. Mullin stated that from a communications standpoint, the summer programs would be promoted in the next Behind the Scenes of the BOE.

Mr. Hendrickson thanked all the staff and administrators who worked collaboratively to develop the summer programming. Dr. Laporte added that both Dr. Christine Marcotte, EHS School Psychologist and EHS School Counselor, Jessica Marshall were extremely helpful in the development of programming and would help facilitate credit recovery for students (with IEP's & 504's) who need to finish out their year.

Ms. Nord inquired about how many students have enrolled in the summer programming at this time, in which Mr. Hendrickson replied appropriately 300 students in all three available programs, with openings available to students who may be interested in participating.

#### Regular Board Committee Reports

(00:58:56)

#### Curriculum

Dr. Young reported that the next Curriculum Committee meeting will be held on June 15, 2021.

#### Finance

No updates at this time.

#### Operations

No updates at this time.

Communications

No updates at this time.

Policy

No updates at this time.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Superintendent's Report \_\_\_\_\_ (00:59:29)

Recommendation for Jennifer James, Windermere Assistant Principal, unpaid extended child rearing leave from TBD to June 30, 2022.

Dr. Nicol commended Mrs. James for an amazing job and great effort as acting Principal at Windermere School earlier this year while Principal Jennifer Hill was out on maternity leave. Dr. Nicol continued his report to say that Mrs. James would be expecting a baby in August of 2021 and has requested unpaid extended child rearing leave for the duration of the 2021-2022 school year after the FMLA would be depleted within the terms of her contract. Dr. Nicol continued that there would be an internal posting for an Interim Assistant Principal position in which any teacher with an 092 who may want a leadership opportunity for the 2021-2022 school year may apply. The Interim Assistant Principal position would be filled for one year only, and Mrs. James would have rights back to her position for the 2022-2023 school year.

A motion was made to approve the unpaid child rearing leave request of Jennifer James, Assistant Principal at Windermere School, to commence on the competition of our FMLA and to conclude June 30, 2022.

1st. K. Picard Wambolt                      2nd. J. Mullin

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Directors' Reports \_\_\_\_\_ (01:03:52)

District / School Improvement Plan Update: Mr. Hendrickson, Assistant Superintendent

Mr. Hendrickson began his report by referring to the memo presented to the Board of Education regarding the more thorough report to be presented at the July 2021 Board of Education meeting which would include artifacts for each of the action steps and key areas. An area of focus was Social and Emotional Learning with the distance learners, and more information would be available for the RULER program and the development of a comprehensive behavior support program that would be consistent across all schools.

Mr. Hendrickson continued to report the development of talented and gifted enrichment and stem enrichment with the LMS Reorganization, specifically commenting on Mrs. Ramachandran, who would become the grade 5 and 6 Stem Enrichment Teacher and Tech Integrationist.

Mr. Hendrickson commended the efficient operations and the amazing work with the reopening across all of the schools and all the safety measures established. SEL will continue to be a focus going forward, data visualization with Infinite Campus, and the recent addition of the Human Resource Coordinator position will help support all staff.

Ms. Socha inquired when SBAC results typically are posted in which Mr. Hendrickson replied possibly in July. Ms. Socha stated that once the scores are posted, support should be available for distance learners. Mr. Hendrickson agreed that once the SBAC date is available, strategies would be discussed to help those students that need academic support.

Dr. Young suggested that once the SBAC scores are available, discussion should take place at the next Curriculum meeting. Mr. Hendrickson confirmed that homeschool students did not participate in SBAC testing as homeschooled students do not have the specific public school student identification number (SASID).

Monthly Financial Report: Mr. Greenleaf, Director Finance & Operations (01:11:26)

Mr. Greenleaf reported that there was a healthy balance that came down and adjustments expected to return a couple hundred thousand dollars more than expected back a couple months ago to the town based on one-time savings.

Dr. Young questioned item number 733 furniture and fixtures down a thousand percent in which Mr. Greenleaf stated that the item was tied to approved pre-purchasing by the Board of Education during the budget presentation.

Ms. Dzen inquired if propane and natural gas would be worked with the Town of Ellington in which Mr. Hendrickson replied it needed to be determined if usage had increased or it was a pricing issue which would be examined and shared with the Board at the next meeting.

Dr. Young requested clarification of furniture expenditures in which Mr. Greenleaf explained there was an encumbrance meaning a purchase order had been created.

Board Liaison Report \_\_\_\_\_ ( 01:14:57)

CREC Liaison Blanchette reported that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday June 16, 2021.

CABE Legislative Wrap Up meeting would be held on Monday June 14, 2021, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Student Representative Choudhury summarized his report with the Senior Class Day and Senior Class Night successful events, today June 9, 2021, being the Senior class last day of school and graduation being held on Friday June 11, 2021.

ACTION ITEMS \_\_\_\_\_(01:17:13 )

1. Move that the Board of Education accept, with regret and best wishes, the retirement request of Denise Armes, Preschool Teacher at Windermere School, effective June 30, 2021.

1st. M. Young                      2nd. L. Nord

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

2. Move that the Board of Education approve the personnel leave request of Andrew Coleman, full-time Special Education Aide at Crystal Lake School, from May 18, 2021 to June 30, 2021 per article 14 leaves of absence without pay of the Ellington Paraprofessionals CSEA SEIU local 2001 collective bargaining agreement

1st. J. Mullin                      2nd. M. Kupferschmid

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

3. Move that the Board of Education approve the personnel leave request of Carianne Clemente, full-time Special Education Aide at Center School, commencing May 12, 2021 for approximately four weeks per article 14 leaves of absence without pay of the Ellington Paraprofessionals CSEA SEIU local 2001 collective bargaining agreement

1st. A. Moser                      2nd. J. Mullin

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Socha requested that at a future Board of Education meeting, depending on the state level, the topic of masks for students for the next school year be discussed.

CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Dzen stated the following correspondence:

- Fred Johnson in regards to hearing in Ellington Public Schools
- Mark and Becky Smith sent correspondence regarding support of Dr. Nicol.
- Pamela Caso sent correspondence in response to the school system and the Ellington Board of Education.
- Meredith Lamalva sent correspondence regarding the hearing.
- Cristin Millin sent correspondence regarding the hearing.
- Andrea Hany sent correspondence regarding the mask mandate.
- Kristen Deptula sent correspondence regarding the mask mandate.
- Cristin Millin sent correspondence regarding the diploma receipt protocol.

Ms Dzen stated that all Board members had received all correspondence received via email or in the Board packet prior to the start of the meeting.

ROUNDTABLE

NONE

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:21 p.m. (01:21:26)

1st. M. Kupferschmid                      2nd. M. Young

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Kris Picard-Wambolt  
Secretary