

Board of Education Ellington, Connecticut

March 28, 2018

A regular meeting of the Ellington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, March 28, 2018, in the School Administration Building.

Present were: Messrs. Blanchette and McNamar; Mesdames, Kiff-Judson, Foster, Socha (8:06 p.m.), Kupferschmid, and Dzen (depart 9:20 p.m.); Dr. Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Erin McGurk, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction; Dr. Kristy LaPorte, Director of Special Services; Mr. Brian Greenleaf, Director of Finance & Operations; Mrs. Anita Yost, Coordinator of Accounting, Central Office; Mr. Mark Mahler, Ellington Education Association Representative; and Mr. Nicholas Willett, Student Representative. Mrs. Picard-Wambolt, Dr. Young, and Mr. Purcaro were absent.

Also present were Michele Cirillo, Curriculum Supervisor of Language Arts, Social Studies and World Languages; Jason Scavotto, English Teacher, EHS; Emily Wry, Literacy Specialist, EHS; Sean Byrne, Social Studies Teacher, EHS; and Caleb Johnston, English Teacher, EHS.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mrs. Kiff-Judson, Chairperson.

Mrs. Kiff-Judson asked for a round of introductions, then reviewed the guidelines for the Citizens and Staff Forum.

CITIZENS AND STAFF FORUM

Patricia Patton, 14 Roseanne Street, Enfield, stated that she is the Food Service Director for the Ellington Public Schools. She distributed a packet made by her department for the Board members and administrators. Mrs. Patton stated that the Ellington Food Services offer nutritionally balanced breakfast and lunch options that meet or exceed the USDA nutritional standards for school meals. Her employees are offered a variety of programs, trainings and seminars, they focus on students' nutritional well-being, and they maximize resourcefulness in order to remain financially independent and fiscally responsible. Mrs. Patton stated that Ellington Food Services would like to ensure that the Board of Education makes an informed decision, and they would like to schedule a Q&A session with any Board member that would like additional information regarding how the Food Services department operates. She thanked the Board members for their time.

Fred Gerber, 67 Glenstone Drive, Vernon, addressed the Board in his role as a maintenance worker for EPS and as president of the AFSCME Local 1303242. His union represents non-certified Ellington Board of Education employees, including

custodial, maintenance, and food service workers. Regarding outsourcing food service operations, the union states their opposition to this idea and encourages the Board to seek other alternatives. Mr. Gerber posited that outsourcing food services is a dangerous and flawed concept that has failed in districts across the country; he cited Bristol and Middletown, CT as two such districts. Mr. Gerber noted the downfalls of private companies taking over cafeteria services, and stated that the students of Ellington are a top priority.

Susan Trotter, 13 Cider Mill Road, Ellington, stated that she has worked for the Ellington Board of Education for 31 years, first as a van driver and later as a food service worker. She currently works at the high school. Mrs. Trotter – as a parent, taxpayer, and Board employee – is troubled and concerned by the possibility of outsourcing the food services program. She reported that the food service workers are ‘everyday heroes’ to students, and these essential school staff members serve as mentors, cheerleaders and protectors of the children that they see every day.

Clayton Bannock, 67-½ Snipsic Lake Road, Ellington, stated that he is a supporter of keeping the food services in-house because he works in the industry and has experience with outsourcing. He is not clear on the objectives, whether they be food quality concerns, access to different menu items, or to lower costs. He asked the Board for transparency and to report their objectives in outsourcing the food services program to the actual leaders of food service program in Ellington. Mr. Bannock stated that he read that the food services program was \$18,000 in the black, which to him, sounded like the program was positive and successful.

Meahgan Margelony, 35 Hoffman Road, Ellington, stated that she is concerned that the Board will be spending money on outsourcing the food program, of which the current in-house program shows a profit, when that money should be spent on other items in the schools. She mentioned equipment fixtures as an example.

Gabbi Mendelsohn, 34 Newell Hill Road, Ellington, stated she was speaking regarding the email she received about the collapsing of levels at the high school. She stated that in previous Board meetings close to two years ago, she was told that de-leveling would be ‘revisited,’ then she attended a Board meeting about six months ago where she was told ‘de-leveling is not happening.’ When she received the recent email about de-leveling, Mrs. Mendelsohn decided to inquire as to what work and training has been done in that timespan. She wants to make sure all students are receiving the supports needed if classes are actually de-leveled.

John McTighe, 64 Egypt Road, Ellington, stated that he was present two years ago regarding the issue of de-leveling. The email surprised him in terms of teachers speaking at the meeting in favor of de-leveling. He feels most of the community is

opposed to de-leveling. He asked the Board to make sure they listen to the community and wished to personally speak with Board members regarding the matter.

Mrs. Kiff-Judson thanked all speakers for sharing their comments.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mrs. Kiff-Judson asked if anyone wished to remove any item from the Consent Agenda. As there were no objections, Consent Agenda items one through six were adopted.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the February 28, 2018 Regular Board Meeting.
2. Acceptance of the resignation of Desiree Daigle as a part time paraprofessional at Crystal Lake School, effective February 26, 2018.
3. Acceptance of the resignation of Rachel Sanzo as a part time paraprofessional at Ellington Middle School, effective March 21, 2018.
4. Acceptance of the resignation of Joshua Parker as a custodian at Windermere School, effective March 23, 2018.
5. Acceptance of the resignation of Timothy Lehane III as a custodian at Ellington Middle School, effective March 23, 2018.
6. Acceptance of the resignation of Michelle Bennett as a part time paraprofessional at Crystal Lake School, effective April 6, 2018.

REPORT AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

Special Reports

Equitable Learning Environments: English and Social Studies Course Configurations at Ellington High School

Mrs. Cirillo provided an update on English and Social Studies courses; she was joined by Ellington High School staff as they presented information on learning environments and course configurations.

Teachers who presented:

Jason Scavotto
Mark Mahler
Caleb Johnston
Emily Wry
Sean Byrne

Teachers who attended in support:

Noreen Fidler
Patrick Gosselin
Laura Lombardi
Jennie Brady
Kim Reilly
Beth Simmons
Ken Gardiner

She stated that two years ago, she approached the Board regarding re-configuring the EHS English courses to allow for more diversity in courses that students could take. One goal was to offer more semester-based electives to students in 11th and 12th grade. She stated that part of doing that included placing students taking courses for Honors and College Prep credit and scheduling them into the same heterogeneously grouped class sections. In a presentation, Mrs. Cirillo and EHS teachers reported on the findings of heterogeneous classes to date.

Scheduling classes heterogeneously supports a more equitable learning environment.

- It supports the belief that all students can and will learn when they are valued, supported and challenged.
- When educators and parents refer to “honors students” “low kids” “regular kids” and “smart kids,” the labels placed on students represent beliefs about the students and what they can learn.
- We are working to replace this language with a focus on the work that students are doing: “Students doing honors level work.” “Students taking the Honors Challenge.”

Taking the “Honors Challenge”

- Students elect to take the course at either the College Prep or Honors level.
- Students taking a course at the Honors level earn Honors credit, including notation on transcript and weight of Honors course for class rank.
- Curriculum is written to include rigorous core expectations and clearly defined options for Honors Challenge work.
- Students are scheduled into courses heterogeneously - with both College Prep and Honors students in the same classroom at the same time.

Mrs. Cirillo stated that the “Honors Challenge” work may include additional coursework extending the application of the skills acquired in the course. For example:

- More complex, challenging texts as part of the course.
- Inquiry-based research project(s) related to the themes or content.
- Increased rigor or complexity of the assessments in the unit.
- Enrichment beyond the standard curriculum

- Student choice in assessments
- Self-reflection that is tied to assessments

Current Structures and Information:

- All English semester courses are currently scheduled heterogeneously with students choosing to enroll at either the Honors or College Prep level
- New semester based elective courses in Science & Social Studies have been offered and scheduled heterogeneously with students choosing either Honors or College Prep
 - Science:
 - Inquiry & Exploration in Physical Science
 - Earth & Space Science
 - Forensics
 - Social Studies:
 - Exploring our World through Personalized Inquiry and Research

Overall Increase in Challenging Coursework

In 2016, we had:

- 56% of freshmen and 68% of sophomores enrolled in honors level English courses
- 65% of juniors enrolled in honors level or ECE English courses.

In 2017-2018, we have:

- English 1 Honors = 67% English 2 Honors = 74%
- Junior Year:
 - AP/ECE Semester Courses = 40% students (81 of 204)
 - Honors Semester Courses = 40%
 - College prep course selection = 20%

Successful Integration of Students

- English semester classes have successfully integrated Honors Challenges into their coursework that differentiates for students at all levels.
- This new configuration has allowed us to offer more English electives that were not running in the past, and to add new electives to the Program of Studies
- Increased opportunity for students to take College level coursework. Such as:
 - Offering 2 sections of ECE American Studies
 - Offering 3 sections of ECE/AP Language
 - Offering 1 section of AP Literature
 - Dual enrollment with UHART and/or UCONN

Student Success Stories

- Created more personalized pathways for students
- Identified and encouraged more students to take the “Honors Challenge”
- Students are selecting courses based on personal interest - not the level of the course
- Overall positive and equitable classroom learning environments

Recommendations and Next Steps

- Continue to heterogeneously schedule all new courses
- Support curriculum writing around “honors challenge” course work
- Recommend that we heterogeneously schedule the following courses for next year with students selecting to take the course as either College Prep or Honors Challenge:
 - English 1 and English 2
 - Modern World History

After the presentation, Mrs. Cirillo thanked all the teachers who spoke and who attended this meeting.

She welcomed feedback and questions from the Board. The Board asked several questions of Mrs. Cirillo and the attending teachers regarding the measurable success of heterogeneous groupings, the effect on high-achieving students, and the support of heterogeneous class groupings among teachers. The presenters offered information on their experiences with differentiating material for high-achieving students, and Mrs. Cirillo indicated that all teachers who will be teaching the proposed expanded offerings of heterogeneous classes are in support of the change.

A motion was made at 8:21 p.m. that the Board take a five minute break.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. G. Blanchette

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

The Board returned to session at 8:28 p.m.

Regular Board Committee Reports**Communications Committee**

Mrs. Kiff-Judson reported that the Communications Committee met on March 19, 2018. The committee reviewed a summary of next steps on Board Governance. The position statement on communications with the public was referred to the Policy Committee for discussion on the policy level first. The committee discussed a position statement on the 2018-19 Budget and recommended edits. The committee also reviewed nominees for the Ellington Friend of Education Award.

A budget video, created by Dr. Nicol and Ms. Kiff-Judson, was shared. The committee recommended distributing it through the webpage, social media sites, and SchoolMessenger. The committee also discussed individual BOE member videos.

The committee recommended to the full Board the adoption of the position statement related to the 2018-19 Budget, as amended. The motion was approved in committee.

The committee recommended to the full Board the approval of the two nominations submitted for the Ellington Friend of Education Award. The motion was approved in committee.

Policy Committee

Dr. Foster reported that the Policy Committee met on February 27, 2018. The committee discussed Student Discipline Investigation Protocol and Wellness School Protocol. There was a continued discussion regarding Administrative Regulations, which include Field Trips, Selection of School Library Learning Resources, and Evaluation and Selection of Books and Instructional Material.

Administrative Reports

Superintendent's Report(s)

Superintendent's Goals Update

Dr. Nicol provided four examples that align to the Superintendent goals. First, he praised the Invention Convention, which touched base on goal 1, b and c: ensure equitable, personalized learning opportunities to enhance students' talents and co-create an environment that supports innovative practices. The Invention Convention was led by Mrs. Liz Cole and attended by many Board members.

The second example Dr. Nicol discussed was the TEPSEP program, the expulsion program, which directly aligns with goal 1a, to increase student achievement, particularly for special needs subgroups.

The third example connects to 1d – establish a Mastery Based Learning Task Force - and 2d, execute progressive communication strategies to parents.

The fourth example is in relation to Superintendent goal 3b: enhance safety and security of schools. Dr. Nicol stated that the Ellington Public Schools communicated to the Journal Inquirer and the entire community the attainment of Dr. Joseph Erardi as a short term consultant. Dr. Erardi is former superintendent of Newtown Public Schools. He will provide recommendations in terms of school safety and security, and Dr. Nicol anticipates an executive session in April or May to discuss these issues. Dr. Nicol stated that based on teacher, parent and student requests, safety and security procedures implemented for the next school year will be based on thoughtful, methodical assessments.

Update on Graduation Date for the Class of 2018

Dr. Nicol stated that the graduation date will be set by the Board after April 2. Currently, the last day of school is Thursday, June 21, with graduation and the Safe Grad Party on Friday, June 22. The recommendation to the Board will be for graduation to be on Friday, June 22, 2018.

Nonrenewal of Non-Tenured Teachers 2017-2018

Dr. Nicol asked Board members to refer to Exhibit A of the packet. Once the budget passes in June, all teachers are renewed. The nonrenewal of non-tenured teachers is an Action Item.

2018-2019 District Calendar Revision

Dr. Nicol stated that the 2018-2019 district calendar was slightly revised, and each Board member received the document in their packets. Approval of the calendar is an Action Item.

Board Liaison ReportsStudent Representative Report

Student Representative Willett reported on the Future Business Leaders of America attending the Junior Achievement Conference and the annual Connecticut Student Leadership Conference. Many Ellington FBLA members have been invited to participate in the National level of competition in Baltimore this summer. The Opening Knight Players traveled to Meriden for the Connecticut Drama Association competition and won numerous awards. OKP has been invited to perform to the 2018 New England Drama Festival. Mr. Willett also reported on the March 14 walkout, the boys' baseball team, Track & Field, Mr. EHS, and the Good Music Good Cause performance, which benefited KidSafe CT.

ACTION ITEMS

A motion was made to add as Action Item #12 the approval of the 2018-2019 Board of Education Budget Position Statement.

1st. J. Foster

2nd. A. McNamar

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

A motion was made to add as Action Item #13 the acceptance of a request for a leave of absence for child-rearing purposes from Sheri Shaw, School Nurse.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. J. Foster

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

1. A motion was made that upon the recommendation of the Policy Committee, the Board hold a first vote to adopt the Ellington Public Schools Policy 6163.1 – Selection of School Library Learning Resources, as presented.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. Not Required

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

2. A motion was made that the Board approve the Ellington High School Opening Knight Players/Theater Arts overnight field trip to the New England Drama Festival from April 25, 2018 – April 28, 2018, subject to the conditions as outlined in Board Policy #6153.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. G. Blanchette

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

3. A motion was made that the Board approve the Ellington High School Performing Ensemble's field trip to Festival Disney at Walt Disney World, Orlando, Florida from April 4, 2019 – April 7, 2019, subject to the conditions as outlined in Board policy #6153.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. M. Kupferschmid

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

4. A motion was made that the Board approve English I, English II, and World History course configurations, effective at the start of the 2018-2019 school year, as proposed by the Curriculum Committee.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. Not required.

VOTE: Ayes: T. Kiff-Judson, K. Socha, G. Blanchette, M. Kupferschmid, A. McNamar.
Nay: J. Foster. The motion passed.

5. A motion was made that, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-151, the Ellington Board of Education non-renew the teachers' contracts of the list of teachers contained in Exhibit A at the end of the 2017-2018 school year as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

I further move 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. A. McNamar

2nd. J. Foster

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

6. 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, 2018 and ending June 30, 2019, and to appropriate the same to the Board of Education in a sum estimated at \$1,937,389 as detailed on Exhibit B.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. G. Blanchette

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

7. A motion was made that the Board approve the revision to the District Calendar for the 2018-2019 school year as presented by the administration.

1st. J. Foster

2nd. K. Socha

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

8. A motion was made that the Board approve the nominees presented to receive the 2017-2018 Ellington Friends of Education Award.

1st. J. Foster

2nd. G. Blanchette

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

9. A motion was made that the Superintendent recommends that the Board of Education participate in the SDE Healthy Food Certification Program.

1st. J. Foster

2nd. A. McNamar

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

10. A motion was made, as recommended by the Superintendent, that the Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided 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; 3. The food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. M. Kupferschmid

VOTE: Ayes: T. Kiff-Judson, K. Socha, M. Kupferschmid, A. McNamar.

Abstain: G. Blanchette. Nay: J. Foster. The motion passed.

11. A motion was made, as recommended by the Superintendent, that the Board of Education will allow the sale to students of beverages not listed on the state statute provided 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; 3. The beverages are not sold from a vending machine or school store.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. K. Socha

VOTE: Ayes: T. Kiff-Judson, K. Socha, M. Kupferschmid, A. McNamar.

Abstain: G. Blanchette. Nay: J. Foster. The motion passed.

12. A motion was made that the Board approve the 2017-2018 Board of Education Budget Position Statement as presented by the Communications Committee, as amended.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. Not Required

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

13. A motion was made that the Board accept the request for a leave of absence for child-rearing purposes from Sheri Shaw, School Nurse at Windermere School, effective on or about June 8, 2018 through September 30, 2018.

1st. A. McNamar

2nd. J. Foster

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

A motion to adjourn was made at 9:40 p.m.

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1st. M. Kupferschmid

2nd. K. Socha

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracey Kiff-Judson
Chair

TKJ/amd