

West Hartford Public Schools
Board of Education
Regular Board Meeting
October 18, 2011

Unofficial Minutes – Pending Approval on 11/22/2011

Present: Ms. Brassil, Mrs. Brassil Spinella, Ms. Katz, Ms. Kindall, Mrs. Ma, Mr. Putterman, Mr. Schmitt, Superintendent List, Student Representatives Ellis Boettger (Conard), Jennifer Ros (Hall)

Regular Meeting – Town Hall-Legislative Chamber

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The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

*Roll Call/Pledge of
Allegiance*

There were no Public Communications.

Public Communications

Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Ms. Katz:

*NEASC: Presentation
of Mission Statements*

THAT the Board of Education approve the Mission Statements for Conard and Hall High Schools

Dr. Eileen Howley, Dr. Pete Cummings and Dr. Don Slater presented the revised mission statements and reviewed the importance of the process for NEASC accreditation. The principals addressed how the staff and school community derived and approved their mission statements and the NEASC standards each must meet. The commitment of each school to be aligned with the mission framework of the district and each other was reviewed. Both principals recognized the effort and work of the steering committee's members.

Board discussion included expressing appreciation for the involvement of and contribution from families and the larger community. The changes in standards during the last ten years and the NEASC accreditation process and implementation were reviewed. Involving and engaging those students who will be affected by the changes in 2013 was discussed. Board members commended the process and the finished statements.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Putterman moved, seconded by Mrs. Ma:

*Motion by Lib Brassil
Spinella, Bruce
Putterman, and Terry
Schmitt to Accept the
Revision of the Following
Board Policies – First
Reading*

THAT the Board of Education accept as a First Reading the following policies which were revised by the Board Policy Subcommittee:

6236 Instruction About Religion

6240 Extracurricular Activities

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6240 Field Trips

Mr. Putterman addressed the purpose of including the new policy on religion that would require a vote. Board members discussed each policy separately. Dr. Howley, Mr. Moore and Kimberly Boneham, Assistant Corporation Counsel were available to answer the questions of the Board.

The implied emphasis and meaning of policy #6236-Instruction About Religion based on sentence order and wording was considered. The Board agreed to send the policy back to the subcommittee. An explanation for the proposed changes in policy #6240-Extracurricular Activities was offered and the definition and interpretation of multiple intelligences was discussed. The Board agreed to send the policy back to the subcommittee. The intent and purpose of the changes in policy #6260-Field Trips was explored. Board members expressed their support for and discussed the importance of field trips. Clarification was sought on the Administration's commitment to out of school experiences and the need for field trips to enhance and be tied to the curriculum was emphasized. Wording of the policy was debated and the suggestion was made to monitor its implementation. The Board agreed that the Second Reading should present each policy as separate motions.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Putterman moved, seconded by Mr. Schmitt:

THAT the Board of Education accept as a First Reading the following new policy which is proposed by the Board Policy Subcommittee

6236.1 Observance of Religious Holidays

Mr. Putterman reviewed the new policy and the impetus leading to its development. The objective of the Board to insure sensitivity is demonstrated around the observance of religious holidays with regard to assigning homework and scheduling various school activities and events was explained. He emphasized that the concerns expressed to him were from members of many different religions.

The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. List shared she attended a reception for the new President and CEO of the Children's Museum and gave an overview of his

*Motion by Lib Brassil
Spinella, Bruce
Putterman, and Terry
Schmitt to Accept the
New Policy 6236.1 –
First Reading*

Superintendent's Report

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background and wished him well. She provided a reminder that the district was distinguished in receiving the *Healthier U.S. Schools Challenge Award* and would be recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture at an upcoming ceremony. Dr. List informed the Board about Smith's School's award winning *Be the Media* videos.

Mr. Chip Ward and Mr. Tom Moore presented an overview of enrollment and class sizes as reported to the State. Comparisons of the enrollment projections and actual enrollment at the elementary, middle and high school levels were reviewed. A historical comparison of class sizes over the last five years was provided. Mr. Ward and Mr. Moore were available to address the questions and concerns of the Board.

*October 1 Enrollments
and Class Size Analysis*

Board discussion addressed concerns about the number of classes that exceeded class size guidelines. Board members acknowledged the reduction in class size overages at the elementary and high school levels but specific concerns were expressed about classes at King Philip. Mr. Moore provided an explanation for the overages and offered reasons why it can be problematic to correct after the start of the school year. Mr. Moore expressed his dissatisfaction that the overage in class size occurred and gave his assurances that it would not happen next year. The impact on enrollment numbers by Open Choice students was discussed.

Mr. David Downes presented a summary of the High School and PreK-8 summer programs and goals. He attributed the reduction in enrollment to the economy, loss of funding and competition with other summer activities attractive to students. He stated he was working to reduce costs and address the challenges to the programs while continuing to meet the needs of students. Mr. Downes and Mr. Moore were available to answer the questions of the Board.

Summer School Report

Board members commended Mr. Downes' efforts and the summer school programs. Concerns were expressed about the elimination of the K-8 programs and assurances were sought about continuing to provide services to at risk students. The benefit of continued learning throughout the summer and the practice of ARC candidates student teaching in summer classes were discussed.

Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Mrs. Ma:

Approval of Minutes

THAT the Board of Education approve the minutes of the regular Board meeting of October 4, 2011

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The clerk noted the addition of Ms. Brassil as present.

The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Katz provided a reminder of the 'Growing Great School' upcoming taste testing event and encouraged Board members to attend. Mrs. Brassil Spinella expressed gratitude to Trish Molloy and Rosey Bonner for their efforts in responding to changes in health and nutrition standards over the years. Ms. Kindall announced the West Hartford Adult Continuing Education graduation is scheduled for November 2, 2011 and encouraged all to attend.

*Reports from Other
Boards and
Organizations*

Jen Ros (Hall) reported on Fall Fest and awards received by students and clubs. She provided an update on sports and performing arts events.

*Report from Student
Representatives*

Ellis Boettger (Conard) reported on the upcoming College Fair for juniors and the scheduled practice tests for the PSAT and CAPT.

Ms. Kindall announced the following meeting dates:

*Announcement of
Meeting Dates*

1. Next Regular Board Meeting, Tuesday, November 1, 2011, 7:00 p.m., Town Hall, Legislative Chamber, Room 314

Ms. Kindall requested an update on the status of the K-8 Summer School programs.

*Request for Future
Agenda Items*

Alex Katz, 967 Asylum Ave., addressed the Board regarding anti-bullying.

Comments from Visitors

Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Mrs. Ma:

Executive Session

That the Board move to Executive Session for the purpose of Labor Negotiations at 9:18 p.m.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Ms. Katz:

Return to Public Session

THAT the Board return to Public Session at 9:51 p.m.

Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Ms. Katz:

Adjournment

THAT the Board adjourn at 9:53 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clare Kindall, Chairperson

Naogan Ma, Secretary

Respectfully submitted by: Ms. K. Lawrence, Clerk of the Board

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