

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, January 24, 2007 at 7:30 p.m. in the media center at John Lyman Elementary School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currlin, Mrs. Flanagan, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Hennick, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Raczka, Dr. Shoemaker. Also present: Mr. Gourley, Mrs. Viccaro.

Mr. Raczka called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

Mr. Raczka spoke to the large group of parents in the audience about the study being considered by the Board. He wanted people to understand that he knows that parents support choice and that the study is being done to quantify the costs and benefits of both programs. He feels that these questions need to be answered for the taxpayers and for the District.

Public Comment: Julie French of Durham supports choice. She questioned if a similar study was done in the past. Mr. Raczka said a study was done in the late 1980's. She is concerned about the cost of the study. The current budget was very difficult to pass and she wants to be sure it will be money well spent.

Deborah Cohen asked if there are recommended changes, does the Board expect to see them in place for the next school year?

Tina Gossner of Durham thanked the Board for their effort. She is concerned because the article in the Town Times made it seem like the programs were the same. She did not like the slant of the article. If the study has to be done she would like it to be more comprehensive and have them look at where we can save money throughout the district and not just focus on choice.

Mrs. Viccaro commented that program choice has been the number one issue that people believe costs additional money. She wants to be able to present the facts to the community.

Mrs. Adams said that the town selectman have also asked for this study; it is a growing concern in the political arena.

Maria Richardson of Durham supports choice. She feels it allows the District to become better. Because people get to see how the programs are run, the marketing fosters improvement. She hopes that if the study is done that they will also look at what additional value the District gets from having choice.

Julia Gossner, an 8th grader in the ID program found the newspaper article very offensive. She feels that she had a very different childhood than her friends in the Contemporary program. She asked the Board to look at the details; this decision can't be treated lightly. The cost of this study is very expensive and she feels that the money could be much better spent on textbooks. As a future taxpayer she wants choice to remain.

Lucy Meigs supports choice and believes it is worth paying extra for. If the study is done she asked the Board to think about the timing of its release so it does not occur near the budget vote.

Chris Davis of Durham has taught in and has had a child in each of the programs. She does not feel that you can quantify program choice. The program the parent supports is the one that the child will best succeed in. She is concerned that the study is being done to satisfy a

few people. She also asked if the idea to combine the Lyman and Memorial bus runs was ever explored.

Mrs. Viccaro said that Dattco studied the idea and dismissed it. She said that by quantifying the programs she means that we need to be able to tell the community the costs associated with each program. All parents should feel passionate about the program their child is in but the Board has a larger responsibility to the whole community.

Dr. Ochterski said that although the same few people speak up at Board meetings, many others talk to Board members outside of meetings and asks the same questions about the two programs. This study is not being done to satisfy a few people.

Rick Handley worked hard to help get this year's budget passed. He is concerned that the Board now feels they can spend over \$15,000 on a study that was not in the budget. He wants to know if there are clear objectives of the study. He is also concerned that the Board has put their faith in the bus company to derive the best plan for our bus routing.

Mrs. Viccaro explained that she and three members of the Board met with the NESDEC representatives to discuss the details of the study.

Mr. Raczka said that the Board did not put the study in the budget because they had hopes of getting it done for free. The District has been fortunate and has been able to save money on snow removal and heating costs because of the mild winter and feel that this year's budget can now support the cost of the study.

Next Board Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Education will be held at Brewster School on February 14, 2007.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Mrs. Flanagan the Board of Education unanimously approved the agenda.

Mrs. Adams made a motion, second Mr. Ochterski to approve the minutes to the meeting of January 10, 2007. Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currin, Mrs. Flanagan, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Hennick, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Raczka, Dr. Shoemaker voted yes. Mrs. Golschneider abstained.

Communications: Mrs. Flanagan said she received several calls regarding the study and one call suggesting that the Board consider changing the auditor next year.

Mr. Raczka read two letters that he received. The first was from Ernie Judson, as the Chair of Parents for Good Schools, in support of school choice. The second letter was from Maryann Boord requesting to use the high school lobby for a fundraiser craft fair on the night of the benefit concert for Haiti. He asked that it be copied for members and it will be discussed at the next meeting.

Mr. Currin read a proclamation thanking Mr. Gourley for all of his years of service to the District and to the Board of Education.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro asked the Board to consider whether they want to keep the February 28th Board meeting on the schedule. There will be meetings five weeks in a row if this meeting is held. She asked members to think about it and a decision will be made at the next meeting.

Mrs. Viccaro said that at Administrative council this week a presentation was held on mastery testing software. The program gives kids a chance to practice questions similar to the mastery tests. About 25 districts in the state are using the program. Mrs. Viccaro is considering

including money in the budget to pilot it at one school next year. Korn School and Strong School were both interested in the program. It would cost approximately \$15.00 per student to use the program.

Mrs. Viccaro said she has been looking into getting photo ID badges for the staff in the district. Francis Willette, from Emergency Services in Durham, has offered his services to work with Jack Fairburn and Larry Gaechter from CRHS to test the program. The Town of Durham owns the equipment necessary to make the ID badges and the District would just have to buy the supplies.

Mrs. Viccaro attended the BKPTA Harlem Wizards game this past week. Two Board members played in the game. The event was very well attended and a lot of fun.

Nancy Meyers, from Amazing Grace, met with Mrs. Viccaro and Beth Galligan this past week. She was so impressed by the success of the Community Round-up that she would like to approach other area towns to see if they might be interested in holding one in their town.

Mrs. Viccaro, Mr. Hauser, and Trooper Mazzetta attended a school safety workshop that focused on school shootings. It encouraged her to know that many of the recommendations suggested were things that the District is already doing.

A Mimeo demonstration was held for staff at the high school yesterday. It is technology that turns a whiteboard into a smartboard. The Mimeo costs about ½ as much as the smartboard and does not require a site license.

Mrs. Viccaro reminded Board members that they are invited to Strong School Reads on April 2nd from 6 to 7pm.

Mrs. Viccaro announced that the School Nurses of CT has named Judy Ellsworth, CRHS Nurse, School Nurse of the Year. She will be honored at a dinner at the Hawthorne Inn on January 25th.

Presentation- John Lyman School: Karen Brimecombe discussed how the arts are integrated at John Lyman. She also showed examples of how the two artists in residence are working with students. The 3rd and 4th graders are working with a writer/actress and the 1st and 2nd graders are working with a puppeteer. Mrs. Brimecombe also shared the welcome song sung by the Hello Chorus and how it is developed by the students each year.

Mr. Raczka thanked Mrs. Brimecombe and said experiences like these are why our kids can stand before audiences so well.

Request for a Special Testing Schedule: Dr. Wysowski explained that several years ago the State mandated that testing could not begin until after 9am. They have now rescinded this mandate. Dr. Wysowski is requesting that Coginchaug be able to return to their old testing schedule and have the freshman and sophomores come in at 7:25am and the juniors and seniors come in at 9:25am for the six testing days in March. The Board members had not received this information prior to tonight's meeting so it will be voted on at the next Board meeting.

Summary from the Commission on Education Finance: Mrs. Viccaro discussed the summary that was sent to Board members. The Education Cost Sharing subcommittee is recommending raising the foundation level by almost \$3000 per student. The subcommittee also recommends raising the State Guaranteed Wealth Level from the current 1.55 to 1.75. This increase will be beneficial to the districts in the middle range of Connecticut towns, such as Durham and

Middlefield. The Governor and State Legislators will be receiving this report during this session so it is important to be talking to local representatives about the proposed changes.

Mr. Hennick said that some aspects are already being looked at by the legislature and it has been suggested that the financing come from the budget surplus.

Framework for Connecticut High Schools: Mrs. Viccaro discussed the possible implications of the State Department of Education's Framework for Connecticut High Schools report. At this point it is only a draft but if adopted it will effect education throughout the District. One of the main changes is that students are expected to be proficient in a second language by graduation. In order to achieve this, teaching of other languages should begin as early as kindergarten. Mrs. Viccaro expects the State Board of Education to take action on the proposal in the near future. She expects they will adopt some, but not all of the recommendations.

NESDEC Study: Mrs. Viccaro said that since the last meeting she, Mr. Currin, Mrs. Flanagan, and Mrs. Adams met with the committee from NESDEC to discuss the proposal. She now has an updated proposal that includes transportation in the study.

Mrs. Flanagan was very impressed with Dr. Bettencourt's familiarity with the topic. She said the study is in no way a financial analysis. The District is looking at both programs to see that they are balanced and provide for the children. NESDEC had great ideas. They want to hold focus groups and want feedback from the teachers, students and community. She is very comfortable that a lot of useful information to better understand the programs will come out of the study.

Mrs. Adams spoke of Marge Clark, on the team from NESDEC. She feels she was very astute at looking at ways to cut costs and analyze data.

Mr. Currin has thought about whether the Board was doing the study for a small group of people and after meeting with the NESDEC team he felt differently. He feels that it is the mature thing to do. Both programs are strong and should be able to stand up to an assessment.

Mrs. Flanagan said the NESDEC team was sensitive to not wanting to disrupt the schools. They will not be here to evaluate teachers and do not plan on attending staff meetings. Mrs. Flanagan does not expect to see a report that gives a clear cut direction to the Board.

The cost of the revised study is \$17,932.00. It will take three months to complete after signing the agreement.

Dr. Ochterski suggested starting the study later so the results do not come out right at budget time. A possible start date of March 1st was discussed.

Mrs. Flanagan made a motion, second Mrs. Adams to approve funding \$17,932.00 to the New England School Development Council to study program choice.

Mr. Raczka asked Mr. Gourley if there was money in this year's budget to cover this expense. Mr. Gourley was comfortable with the expenditure.

Dr. Shoemaker suggested amending the motion to a not to exceed amount so the Board would not have to return if expenses were slightly higher.

On a motion by Dr. Shoemaker, second Mrs. Flanagan the Board of Education unanimously approved, as amended, funding an amount not to exceed \$18,000.00 to the New England

School Development Council to study program choice based on a schedule that works for both the committee and the Board.

Administrators' Contract: Mrs. Flanagan said an agreement was reached and has been ratified by the Personnel Policies Committee and the Administrators' Union. The gross wage increase for all administrators in each of the three contract years is as follows: 2.9% in 2007/8, 2.6% in 2008/9 and 3.5% in 2009/10. Also included in the contract was the reclassification of certain administrators into higher pay categories. An increase in the stipend for a Ph.D. and a graduated TSA benefit based on length of service were added in the second year of the contract. The health insurance co-pay for Administrators has been increased to 16% in the 1st year, 17% in the 2nd year and 18% in the 3rd year. The Administrator co-pay on prescriptions has also increased. The estimated net increase including all of the above mentioned terms is 2.8% in the 1st year, 3.2% in the 2nd year and 3.2% in the 3rd year.

Dr. Shoemaker made a motion, second Mr. Hennick to accept the Administrators' Contract for the time period July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2010. Mrs. Adams, Mr. Currlin, Mrs. Flanagan, Mrs. Golschneider, Mr. Hennick, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Raczka, Dr. Shoemaker voted yes. Mr. Hicks abstained.

Transportation Committee: Dr. Ochterski said the committee met last week with DATTCO. They had asked them to look at the bus routes to see what the impact will be if they stop going into cul-de-sacs. They reported that two buses can be eliminated. They also said that two buses could be eliminated if they had more time to complete the middle run. Five more minutes would need to be added to the Memorial School Day and ten minutes onto the elementary school day. The impact of this is going to be looked into further.

Buildings and Grounds: Mr. Hennick said the committee met with Joe Heller from CL & P to pursue the possibility of fuel cells. He said the concept will not work for our District because we would have to pay to bring a natural gas line to the complex and that may cost \$10,000,000 because it does not exist anywhere in town. Mr. Heller said the District is way ahead of the curve in energy saving measures. The District earned \$7,400 back by participating in peak load shed last summer. The committee will continue to track the Middletown High School project energy saving measures. Mrs. Viccaro is going to ask Joe Heller to put together a history of the conservation efforts the District has done so far.

Curriculum Committee: Mrs. Golschneider said a draft of the K-8 Science Curriculum is complete. Mrs. Luckenbach would like to present it to the Board for approval. The committee discussed changes being made to the way high school grading is done. They will report on this further to the Board at a later time. Mrs. Luckenbach shared the curriculum section of the District website with the committee. She is not completely done with it yet but it contains a lot of valuable information and will be a great resource to the staff and community. The committee also discussed the need for new textbooks in the budget. The priority is K-4 math. Grade 6 would like supplemental math units and they need new Spanish textbooks at Strong. Mrs. Luckenbach also put in a plea for a Reading consultant at Strong School.

On a motion by Mr. Hicks, second Dr. Shoemaker, the Board of Education unanimously approved to adjourn.