

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, February 22, 2012 at 7:30 p.m. in the library at Coginchaug High School. Board members present: Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Flanagan, Mr. Fulton, Ms. Gara, Mr. Hennick, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Renninghoff. Members absent: Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Hicks. Also present: Mrs. Mangini, Mrs. Viccaro.

Mr. Hennick called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

Public Comment: Karen Cheyney of Durham said the performance by ESPN held last week at the track and field was a breach of the contract on the part of the school district. The event started before 7am and none of the neighbors were contacted. She also questioned the use of the field by the Falcons every Sunday as their use was never approved by Planning and Zoning. She asked that a clear policy for the use of the field be established and requested that the Board monitor the administrations use of the field.

The next Board meeting will be held on March 7, 2012 at Strong School.

On a motion by Mrs. Adams, second Mr. Renninghoff, the Board of Education unanimously approved to amend the agenda to include a discussion on future employment of an employee under Executive Session and a motion to proceed with a demographics study during the Finance Committee Report.

On a motion by Mrs. Flanagan, second Mrs. Adams, the Board of Education unanimously approved the minutes to the meeting of January 25, 2012.

Mrs. Flanagan made a motion, second Mrs. Adams to approve the minutes to the meeting of February 8, 2012. Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Flanagan, Mr. Fulton, Mr. Hennick, Dr. Ochterski, Ms. Parsons, Mr. Renninghoff voted yes. Ms. Gara abstained.

Communications: Mrs. Flanagan received a request regarding the school calendar from a staff member. They asked if we could alternate vacations between February and April so that people that enjoy winter activities can have a vacation in February. Mrs. Viccaro said she heard this request and has asked the administrators to pole their staff and she will report back to the Board if this is a popular option.

Michael Doyle, a parent who arrived late at the meeting, asked for the opportunity to address the Board. He said he has been dealing with a very sensitive issue at the high school. He is still giving Andre Hauser the benefit of the doubt that it will be handled correctly but he said he will be back to the Board if it is not handled appropriately.

Discussion with Legislators: Senator Ed Meyer and Representative Matt Lesser were both present to address the Board and answer questions. Senator Meyer said a major focus of the legislative session is on education reform. They are concerned about the gap growing between Connecticut and the rest of the country and also the gap between the United States and the world. The Governor's plan is very aggressive and involves an annual evaluation of teachers as well as changes to teacher tenure. Senator Meyer is a critic of the plan. He believes educational excellence starts with curriculum.

Representative Lesser is on the Education Committee. They are currently going line by line through the Governor's education bill. There are three sections: the first deals with administrative reforms that the Governor has already put into place; the second section is regarding the waiver to opt out of No Child Left Behind and the third focuses on education reforms. As a part of the reforms they hope to reduce some of the red tape and mandates for high performing districts.

There was some concern about a \$1000.00 charge that sending Districts will have to pay per student to go to Charter Schools.

Mrs. Viccaro is also concerned about parents being able to select magnet schools and not having to inform the District. It does not allow the district any time for budgeting.

Rep. Lesser is also concerned about taking money from the Districts to support the Charter Schools.

Mr. Fulton asked the legislators to keep their eyes on the changing ECS formula and how it will affect the District in the future. He is also concerned about the amount of time spent gathering data and statistics for things that don't really apply to our District.

Mrs. Viccaro used the example of the new bullying policies and how much time and money it has taken to train staff for something that is not a big issue in our District.

Mrs. Flanagan agreed that a broad brush approach is very pervasive and no benefit to our District. The annual professional development required in the bullying policies is an example of an unfunded mandate that results in teachers losing time with students for professional development that is of little value to either the teachers or the students.

Mrs. Viccaro said it is a constant struggle. The expectations on teachers are phenomenal. She is going to send the list of our unfunded mandates to the legislators.

Mrs. Flanagan suggested that a formal way for the legislators to communicate with area superintendents should be established.

Mr. Hennick thanked the legislators for attending the meeting.

Concussion Impact Testing: Mrs. Viccaro said she talked with several districts that are already using the impact testing program. They reported that students with concussions are managed very differently. It allows physicians to make very good decisions regarding treatment and it is very helpful to parents. It will only cost \$500.00 per year for the program for the high school. Dr. Jubelirer is in support of using it at the high school only at this time. He has also given Mrs. Viccaro samples of permission forms and policies and procedures for the District to implement. Mrs. Viccaro has applied for a grant from Dick's Sporting Goods to pilot the program for one year at no cost.

Mrs. Mangini said our CIRMA insurance representative said if policies and procedures are carefully followed conducting impact testing can actually lower our liability as a District.

Superintendent's Report: Mrs. Viccaro distributed copies of the Program of Studies for the high school. Students are selecting their courses on-line for the first time this year.

Donna Cashore, a World Languages teacher at Coginchaug has had her students participating in a COLT language letter writing contest. Their letters were in support of keeping world languages in the curriculum. Students were given extra credit if they emailed their letter to Superintendent Viccaro. Mrs. Viccaro said she enjoyed reading the letters.

Mrs. Viccaro showed Board members the pedometer that she has been wearing as a part of the "10,000 Steps" campaign that started in the District last week.

All Day Kindergarten: Mrs. Adams said the Curriculum Committee met with the principals to discuss all day kindergarten. The Common Core is driving the need to increase to an all day program. The State expects the children to be reading with good comprehension by the end of kindergarten. It will give the District the opportunity to identify issues with students earlier and to begin remediation. There is no formal proposal prepared yet.

Mrs. Heckler, Principal of Brewster School, said she is definitely in favor of all day kindergarten. They have looked at how it will be implemented; they have the rooms available and most of the equipment. She distributed samples of books showing the reading level that the kindergarteners will be expected to be reading at by the end of the school year.

Dr. Linda Berry explained that because the curriculum will no longer be spiraling from year to year, it is very important to get this implemented now. We can't delay any further. The staff is ready to implement the standards and to write the curriculum.

Mrs. Viccaro said it will be cost neutral to add all day kindergarten this year due to not replacing some teachers that are retiring and savings on transportation. Some positions will look very different. Both buildings have the space available. Lyman has the furniture available; Brewster will need some additional items.

Mrs. Viccaro believes that now is the time to move forward with all day kindergarten. Close to 70% of the districts in the State have all day programs and many more are looking to add it this year. The requirements of the Common Core are driving the need to make this happen now, but we have been moving in this direction for several years.

Mr. Fulton said he supports all day kindergarten but he feels more focus needs to be put on how we implement it and when. He would like to see the results of the demographics study. He would like to present to the public and get their feedback. He feels it may be too late to have it in the budget for this year.

Mrs. Flanagan is also supportive of an all day kindergarten program but is concerned about looking at only one budget year. We would be implementing changes that will affect every budget going forward. She wants to make sure that the plan is not rushed and done well.

Mr. Renninghoff said these are annual reoccurring expenditures. The only real savings are in transportation. It will be cost neutral for only this year. There may also be additional expenses for cafeteria help and benefits for those employees.

Mrs. Mangini said the Director of Food Services feels it will be advantageous to the lunch program to add kindergarteners. He may add one person for a couple of hours a day, but the employee would not be eligible for benefits.

Dr. Ochterski clarified that the decision for the Board tonight is not whether the Board approves all day kindergarten, it is just whether Mrs. Viccaro includes it as a part of her budget presentation on March 7th.

Mrs. Viccaro said her presentation will include a detail of costs, professional development, staffing, schedules, timeline for implementation, parent meetings, etc.

Mr. Fulton still wants to take the time to do this right. It is a big decision. We owe it to the townspeople to have a dialogue before proceeding.

Mrs. Adams is not concerned about the implementation of the program. She trusts the professionals to be able to plan the time for the kids. She was most concerned about the cost.

Mr. Hennick suggested that a public forum be held prior to one of the budget meetings.

Ms. Gara said we can't keep deferring and studying all day kindergarten to death. She wants the proposal to be brought forward so they can see the detail.

Ms. Parsons would like all day kindergarten to be in the budget presentation. It may be the right time to do it.

2010-11 Strategic School Profiles: Board members received copies of the 2010-11 Strategic School Profiles. This is the first time in two years that they were issued, due to some complications at the State. Mrs. Viccaro asked members to send questions to her if there is any aspect they would like her to discuss.

Mrs. Adams would like to see comparisons to prior years.

Mr. Fulton asked Dr. Berry to combine this information with the data she discussed at a prior meeting regarding student achievement. She will review with prior year's profiles to see where we need to improve achievement. It will be put on a future agenda.

Policy Committee: Mrs. Flanagan explained that there were mostly minor changes in the policies that are being brought forward. The policy regarding contracts has been changed to require Finance Committee review and BOE approval of any contract that exceed \$100,000 over the term of the contract; whose term extends beyond the current approved budget year; or that exceeds the amount approved in the current budget by \$5,000 or more.

On a motion by Mr. Renninghoff, second Mrs. Flanagan, the Board of Education unanimously approved the changes to the following policies: Food Allergy 5140, Uniform Treatment of Recruiters 2230, Video Cameras on School Buses/in School Facilities 5145 and Contracts 3324.

Curriculum/Achievement Committee: Dr. Berry said the curriculums that are coming before the Board were approved by the Curriculum Committee at the end of last year. It was an oversight that they were not brought to the Board for final approval.

On a motion by Mrs. Flanagan, second Mr. Fulton, the Board of Education unanimously approved the following curriculums: Message of Film, Monsters in our Mist, Psychology in Literature, Senior Journalism, Theater Arts, Women's Literature, Academic College Writing, Fantastic Literature, Creative Writing, Hero in Literature, and Journalism.

Finance Committee: Mrs. Flanagan said the Finance Committee interviewed three firms to perform a demographic study of the District. It was the unanimous decision of the Committee to select H.C. Planning Consultants to conduct the study.

On a motion by Mr. Renninghoff, second Mrs. Flanagan, the Board of Education unanimously approved to engage the services of H C Planning Consultant, Inc. for a demographic study to include district-wide enrollment projections by grade, town enrollment projections by grade, and individual school enrollment projections by grade, at a cost not to exceed \$18,000.

The firm is able to start this spring and it will take 8-10 weeks to complete the study.

Mrs. Flanagan said the health insurance projections are favorable this year. We are expecting a single digit increase for the first time in several years.

A meeting has been scheduled with the Middlefield Board of Finance for March 20th at 7pm and a meeting is being set up with the Durham Board of Finance. The Finance Committee will be meeting every Wednesday at 5:30pm during the month of March to discuss budget items.

Follow-up: Strategic School Profile questions or topics for discussion
List of mandates will be sent to legislators

On a motion by Mrs. Adams, second Mrs. Flanagan, the Board of Education unanimously approved to move into Executive Session to discuss the future employment of an employee.

The Board moved back into regular session.

On a motion by Mrs. Flanagan, second Mr. Fulton, the Board of Education unanimously approved to adjourn at 10:30 p.m.

Susan Gaudreau