

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, May 16, 2018 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Strong School, Durham, Connecticut.

Board members present: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino

Board members absent: Dr. Taylor

Administration present: Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools and Mrs. Neubig, Business Manager.

Mr. Moore called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

### **The Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Approval of Agenda**

Dr. Veronesi would like to add the school calendar under New Business as item 13E.

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Augur, to accept the agenda, as amended.*

*In favor of approving the agenda, as amended: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino.*

### **Public Comment**

None.

### **Administrator Welcome - Scott Sadinsky**

Scott Sadinsky, principal of Strong School, welcomed everyone to Strong School. He explained that today should have been the fourth and final day of testing, but that has been pushed to tomorrow. Mr. Sadinsky reported to the Board how proud he is of the students and staff for their incredible commitment they have made to this testing. The testing is all done online and couldn't have been smoother.

Mr. Sadinsky also reported that his staff had a presentation last week regarding vaping by the Local Wellness Coalition. He also reported on the musical and how thrilled the students were to perform it on the high school stage. He also reported that last night was supposed to be sixth grade orientation as well as the pride and spirit event, but they have been postponed due to the storm. The annual Blue Devil fair will be held next Friday when the eighth graders go visit the high school.

Mr. Sadinsky also announced that this is the 31<sup>st</sup> or 32<sup>nd</sup> year that Strong seventh grade students have gone to Camp Jewell. Groups are being formed and 55 boys will stay in one cabin. He explained what a great opportunity this is for the students.

### **CABE Student Leadership Awards, STEAM Logo Design and STEAM After School Program at Strong**

Dr. Veronesi stated that it was her pleasure to recognize Margaret Fiondella and Tim Arcari for outstanding leadership, both academically and in their daily life, by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education. Dr. Veronesi stated that they are outstanding individuals and fine examples of the

District's core ethical values. She read a summary that was submitted by their teachers and congratulated both students on their achievements.

Mrs. DiMaggio reviewed that the STEAM initiative had been started last year and showed the Board the STEAM mission. She then recognized Kylie Melillo for her design of the STEAM logo. Dr. Veronesi asked Kylie about how she came up with the design and Kylie explained that it was through a lot of trial and error. Mrs. Parness awarded a plaque to Kylie and there will also be one in the awards case at Coginchaug.

Mrs. DiMaggio explained that through the sponsorship of Middlefield Parks and Recreation and the leadership of Brenda Parness and Tina Hurlbert, an after school STEAM program was started for students in grades 7-12. Mrs. Parness stated that they had been approached about app design and coding and robotics, so these were offered and 17 students joined the club. Rebecca Denhart and Catherine Taylor, seventh graders, and Davin Hettrick and Rachel Sorensen, eighth graders, were amazing. A brief video was played showing the group in action.

While the students set up a demonstration, Mrs. Parness explained what their hopes are for this in the future. They will be offering a STEAM summer camp for fourth through eighth graders. The students then demonstrated their color-sensing robot. Mrs. Boyle asked if they built the robot, but the students explained that the robot was already built but they programmed it and installed the sensors. They chose from color sensors, ultrasonic sensors and touch sensors. Dr. Friedrich asked what the technical problem was for the demonstration and the students explained that there had been a connection problem.

### **Approval of Minutes**

A. Board of Education special session meeting - March 28, 2018

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education special meeting held on March 28, 2018, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education special meeting held on March 28, 2018, as presented: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino.*

B. Board of Education regular session meeting - April 4, 2018

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education regular session meeting held on April 4, 2018, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education regular session meeting held on April 4, 2018, as presented: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino.*

C. Board of Education regular session meeting - April 11, 2018

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education regular session meeting held on April 11, 2018, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education regular session meeting held on April 11, 2018, as presented: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino.*

D. Board of Education Public Hearing - April 11, 2018

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Public Hearing held on April 11, 2018, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education Public Hearing held on April 11, 2018, as presented: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino.*

**Next Board Meeting - May 30, 2018 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School**

### **Strategic Coherence Plan/Strategic Visioning Progress Update**

Dr. Veronesi reviewed the three focus areas of the Strategic Coherence Plan, including the goals of student achievement. She hopes that the Board has seen evidence of the District moving closer and closer to the vision. Strategic actions included aligning assessments to student learning outcomes and they are shifting to iReady which has been piloted this year. There is also an assessment calendar and a cycle of data analysis.

Dr. Veronesi pointed out the particular focus on critical thinking and the 4Cs. They are finding that, by creating curriculum documents that are structured with the Understanding by Design model and following different instructional approaches, everything involves higher order thinking skills across the District. They are continuing to work on educational programming design that will be aligned with the District grade configuration.

With the passage of next year's budget, they will explore many things including the expansion of STEAM and engineering planning in the high school. They will also be exploring partnerships with China and beyond. They would also like to begin exploring international partnerships ranging from K to 12 that are developmentally appropriate for the students.

In the area of well-being, they have tried to shift the commitment to make the plan actionable and hold the District accountable. A committee was formed at the beginning of the year and that committee will meet in a few weeks to determine what the strategic plan in well-being will be for next year. The committee has looked at research-based best practice and has done various school visits. They also met with the social, emotional learning department of Central Connecticut State University who would like to explore a partnership with RSD 13. This would be a first for the university.

Based on a concern about diversity from the community, an equity team comprised of representatives from town, parents, and teachers has been formed with Ms. Manning and Dr. Veronesi. The team is looking to have a community-based process where they look at issues regarding diversity, understanding equity, perspective taking and becoming a partner either with Middletown or other schools in the consortium area.

They continue to look at safety and security as well. Students' well-being, their social-emotional learning as well as issues related to mental health are included in the district's focus on safety.

The focus on engagement included having Board members fully engaged and helping to be ambassadors to the community; being able to clearly communicate the work of the Board in many areas including budget priorities and utilization work. The work in developing a communication plan continues with the specialist from ACES and a finalized plan for next year will be submitted on Friday. The Board of Education's work has included developing policies and aligning resources with identified student learning goals.

Dr. Veronesi also commented that the Utilization work completed with year has been significant and a very open and dynamic process. She also felt was a very courageous endeavor on the part of the Board and the administration and one that will continue. School learning plans will be shared in June, including student achievement over the course of the year.

As for the strategic visioning process, Dr. Veronesi reported that the school-based team has been meeting once a month and the second meeting of the month includes parents and community members. Last night, a team of students were invited to be part of the strategic visioning process. The idea was to cross-reference what had been identified as priorities and beliefs with what the students' experiences have been.

Six high school students sat in a circle with Dr. Veronesi and they had a discussion. About five minutes into the discussion, the high school lost power and the generator did not engage. Using flashlight apps, they continued the discussion and the themes that arose were the importance of connection to each other, the school and learning, having different topics integrated. They also talked about the concept of control in terms of self-directed learning. They want to be able to move about, to have space to meet together, to be less restricted by furniture. They talked about the importance of collaboration and the desire to be innovative and creative.

Mr. Moore felt a couple of very interesting themes were more diversity in their program, in their school and in the people that they meet. They understand that the community is pretty one-sided, but they wanted to have diversity. They felt that having the two programs keeps kids away from each other until high school and they were sad that they hadn't met those friends earlier in their life. Mr. Moore explained that the kids were more high performing learners in the school and they wanted to have more vertical classrooms where they had more diversity in learning. They want to be and willing to be mentors. They had brilliant ideas about how to make the schools better. They'd like a lot of outside space, some open space and would love to be able to actually see things outside and learn from nature. They want to be able to experiment, they want space where they can try things and work with other students and they love the career center and what it offers them in terms of understanding various careers.

Dr. Veronesi explained that the "fish bowl" protocol means that they were in the center talking while the adults were on the outside of the circle and simply listening. Normally, the students would then go to the outside of the circle to talk, but that was changed due to the power outage. She had each student pick three adults and have an open conversation. Everyone was saying how important the discussion was and how important it will be to have more diverse groups of students participate in this type of protocol to offer their feedback on their school experience.

Next year, the Center for School Change in Hartford will work with the District. Mansfield schools have recently gone through a similar process and the consultant that worked with them has agreed to work with RSD 13. Part of the process will be to create a vision of the District 13 citizen and then doing a crosswalk, which includes looking at what experiences are offered to students. They are hoping to have a recommendation for the Board by November.

Mr. Yamartino asked if most of what the students had to say supported what Dr. Veronesi and Mr. Moore had already felt. Mr. Moore stated that the other meetings had all been teachers and some parents and he found that the students were more precise. Dr. Veronesi felt it was very closely aligned. The students were more articulate and more precise and they really indicated that they want more control. They want more choice. They want teachers who have so much enthusiasm that they can't help but love the subject matter. They want teachers who care about them, who know them and who value them. The six students are all quite connected to the school, but they talked about students who they know aren't and they want that to be different.

Dr. Veronesi acknowledged that the two-program design is a sensitive topic and some students say they wish they didn't have it. Other students are saying they wished they knew the other students when they were in kindergarten; they wish they had more time together, but were not making this statement as a commentary on program design. Mr. Moore felt that the students recognize the community as part of their lives and their experience in school.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **A. Utilization Committee - May 16, 2018**

Mr. Augur reviewed that Utilization met earlier this evening and talked about planning focal points in transportation, communication, building disposition and financing. There are specific time frames involved and a fairly comprehensive plan. They spent a short amount of time on safety and security. Dr. Veronesi will meet with Eric Costa to get additional detail on the MOU for the SRO, with the hope to have a draft available for the June Board of Education meeting. The next Utilization meeting will be on May 31<sup>st</sup> when safety and security will be their main topic of conversation.

### **Communications**

Mr. Moore reported that he has received emails from Jenna Driscoll (budget), Maya Lis (seventh grade issues) and Nick Faiella (field house). There may be more, but Mr. Moore did not have power today.

He also reminded the Board that Memorial School will be putting on Annie tomorrow night, Friday morning and Friday night.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Veronesi reiterated that they enacted the NIMS protocol due to the storm last night. They hope to have an update by the end of tonight's meeting as to the power situation at Coginchaug. As of tonight, only one street in Durham is unpassable (Creamery Road).

Dr. Veronesi also reported that they are nearing the end of negotiations with support staff and they hope to report that the contract has been ratified by the June meeting. They are also beginning the search for the principal of Brewster School and have had a couple of screening interviews. Mary Ellen Manning is working with the Brewster staff on a focus group and has also sent out surveys for parents to participate. They will then put together an interview team. They are looking for someone with experience in arts integration and possibly HOT school experience and with the skills that have been talked about through the strategic visioning process.

Dr. Veronesi also stated that Strong School has its second instructional rounds visit on May 30<sup>th</sup> when they will be looking for the use of higher level questioning as well as deliberate student collaboration.

Mrs. Neubig reported that the power is back on at Coginchaug.

### **Business Manager's Report**

Mrs. Neubig updated the Board about hiring a 1099 contracted employee as a hall monitor at the high school until the last day of school. Feedback has been positive and issues have been greatly reduced, specifically in the girls' bathroom. Mrs. Neubig and Dr. Veronesi would like this person to continue next year if an SRO has not been hired. The funding would come from the Purchased Services line item.

Back in March, a request for proposal was sent for a health insurance broker and the District received four proposals. Mrs. Neubig worked closely with Middlefield and Durham and they were able to choose the lowest vendor and had a great kick-off meeting on May 4<sup>th</sup>. By doing that, the District saved \$84,000 net of the broker fees. They will not be going out for carrier bid due to time constraints this year.

Mrs. Neubig also explained that the first open enrollment benefits fair for employees was held yesterday and a second one will be held on Thursday.

As for the monthly financials, there is nothing out of the ordinary. The budget is roughly 78 percent expended year-to-date and revenue is at roughly 87 percent. The second payment from the Excess Cost Grant should be at the end of May. The end-of-year projected fund balance is estimated to be approximately \$983,000, which consists of quite a few staff members on leave, unfilled positions or positions filled at a lower rate and several turnovers resulting in a salary surplus of \$446,000. Benefits are also lower and employees on long-term leave pay their own health insurance. There has also been a reduction in the workers' comp premium. The surplus in benefits is \$325,000, totaling \$772,000 in the Salaries and Benefits line. There is a small surplus in Transportation and Special Ed. As in the past, the fund balance is used in generating the 2019-2020 budget. MTA is 86 percent expended and 90 percent of the revenue has been received.

Mr. Moore also encouraged the Board members to attend the MTA graduation on June 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM.

Mr. Yamartino asked about the legislation that was passed regarding ECS and Mrs. Neubig explained that that was for 2019 and works out better for Durham, but less so for Middlefield.

Mrs. Neubig also mentioned that the bus contract ends on June 30, 2019 and the District will need to consider if they want to go out to bid or extend the Dattco contract. She suggested that due to the upcoming changes and work she is asking Dattco to do, this may not be the time to go out to bid. There will also be a decision needed on leasing buses or using Dattco's buses. Mr. Yamartino suggested that the Board take a look at their policy and at the contract to see if they need to go to bid.

She also reported that the District will soon offer a request for qualifications for landscaping services for 2018-2019 and the snow removal final amount came in over budget by \$17,200.

### **New Business**

#### **A. Field House Proposal**

Dr. Veronesi explained that this is actually a Coginchaug High School field storage facility proposal. She explained that she met with Laura Francis, Ed Bailey last month and Jon Brayshaw asked if the District would engage in collaboration around reexamining the field house proposal by looking at it in terms of a

school storage facility. There is a group of people who are meeting about this, including Don Gates, Jon Brayshaw, Henry Bugai, John Cross and Nick Faiella. Mr. Faiella has provided some information to Dr. Veronesi and Mr. Moore that is similar to the proposal that was shared in December, 2015. The structure is similar to some of the structures that have been built at the Durham Fair. He provided similar examples of structures in Clinton and Middletown as well.

Rather than going over the details of the proposal, Dr. Veronesi wanted to share that they want to know if the Board has any interest to have a couple of Board members be part of this group and begin to look at this as a potentially viable project. Dr. Veronesi stated that the updated cost that was shared today is \$69,000 which does not include the lights. Mr. Faiella has reached out to get some quotes on lights.

Mrs. Boyle did not want the Board to lose sight of the lawsuit against the District. Dr. Veronesi stated that the proposal does include a bathroom. Mrs. Boyle felt that it was impossible for the project to include a bathroom at that price.

Mr. Yamartino was concerned because the Board has had this discussion a few times and it has gone to referendum and was turned down. He understands that the amount was much greater than \$69,000, but he wasn't sure what has changed. Mr. Moore explained that it would be a framed building with metal sides and a metal roof on the current foundation, with three or four toilets. It would help to protect the electricity and plumbing that currently exists out there.

Dr. Veronesi summarized that they feel that this is an unfinished project that was supported by the community and they are recommending something different than was turned down at the referendum. They are no longer suggesting \$1 million project. Mr. Yamartino felt that the project was complete because the original bonding was to build a pad and they would acquire private funding to build the rest. Mr. Yamartino would like to talk to the committee to find out what is different about this proposal. He does not like the eyesore that currently exists, but also doesn't like the fact that someone will come back to get money for lights.

Dr. Veronesi asked if a Durham Board member would be interested to have the initial conversation along with Mr. Yamartino and Mr. Moore stated that he would.

**B. Safety and Security**

Dr. Veronesi explained that both this item and the next were covered by the Utilization Committee update.

**C. School Resource Officer**

Mr. Moore summarized that they next step in the process will be looking at a draft MOU with costs.

**D. Budget Results**

Mr. Moore reported that the budget passed, Durham 388-265, Middlefield 173-131, with a total yes of 561 and no of 396. This was a record low turnout with a record high margin. Mr. Yamartino publicly thanked Dr. Veronesi and her staff for all of their hard work to come in with a zero budget. He also thanked Mr. Moore for his work with Dr. Veronesi to heavily involve the communities. Mr. Yamartino reminded everyone that last year's budget passed by just six votes and he felt that the Board has turned a

corner in terms of communication with the public. Dr. Veronesi also commented that having an outstanding Business Manager has made all the difference.

Mrs. Boyle also felt it was very beneficial to have both towns' Boards of Finance sitting at the table and having a voice. It shows that this Board is very transparent and is willing to collaborate. Mr. Yamartino felt it was the first time that he has ever heard the First Selectman of Durham publicly endorse the school budget.

#### E. School Calendar

Dr. Veronesi has not received anything from the State about the unprecedented days off and she does feel that there will be school districts in western Connecticut that may see a couple more days before they get back to school, but she recommended that the Board leaves the last day of school and the date for graduation on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. Since the teachers are already scheduled to work a half-day on June 25<sup>th</sup>, she suggested that staff make up the additional half-day after school between now and June 25<sup>th</sup> or add that time to June 25<sup>th</sup> as a full day. Dr. Veronesi is trying to make it so that the staff does not have to come back on June 26<sup>th</sup>. The teachers prefer to make up that time after school between now and the end of the year.

Dr. Veronesi explained that this has been done before and teachers could stay for an additional hour at the June faculty meeting and work with their administrator for when they would make up the additional hours. It would clearly be easier to assure that everyone makes up the time if it is all on the same day.

*Mrs. Boyle made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hicks, to accept Dr. Veronesi's recommendation to have the last day of school for the teachers be a full day on June 25, 2018 and drop the students back to 180 days.*

Dr. Friedrich asked if he understood Dr. Veronesi correctly that the teachers would rather distribute the three hours which makes it difficult for the administrators. Dr. Veronesi confirmed that and stated that it would be difficult for the administrators, but doable. She also suggested that people could be offered the choice to make the hours up from now until the end of the year or to do them in the afternoon of June 25<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Hicks shared that he has been on the other side of this issue and had to make up hours. He felt that making up the time was meaningless for the teachers. Dr. Veronesi felt that meaningful work could be done in the time that the teachers need to make up. Mr. Yamartino asked if the Board could offer to just pay the teachers for the time, but other people felt that that was contractual. Mrs. Boyle felt it would make negotiations difficult and these are contractual obligations.

Dr. Veronesi wanted to recognize the tremendously hard-working staff, both certified and non-certified, 12-month and nonunion, that work in the District and she would like to prevent bringing them back on June 26<sup>th</sup>.

*In favor of accepting Dr. Veronesi's recommendation to have the last day of school for the teachers be a full day on June 25, 2018 and drop the students back to 180 days: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino.*



**Public Comment**

Kristen Prout, of Durham, pointed out that a lot of the students involved in the strategic visioning are highly-motivated, disciplined students who talked about self-directed learning and she felt that it was important to remember that not all of the students can do that. She also felt that the flip side to taking classes because of the teacher is that there are long-term subs that are sometimes in a situation where it doesn't work out well for the students or teachers in their last year before retirement who are not as motivated. She would like to see enthusiasm across all of the teachers and subjects. She also commented that her son had taken a prerequisite for a technology class he wanted to take and now it's not being offered. She felt that a broad technology-based program would be great to see.

Melissa Booth, of Durham, agreed with Mrs. Prout about the caliber of the students at the Strategic Visioning meeting. She was also wondering if they will be involving students from younger grades and she encouraged the Board to not just look at the kids who are the senators and highly motivated to be involved. Mrs. Booth also commented that she grew up in a bigger town with eight elementary schools and they students didn't come together until middle school, so she doesn't necessarily think it's fair to compare programs based on that.

Theresa Weimann, of Durham, is happy to hear that it sounds like everything the students want is what Integrated Day is. She feels that should be a big consideration and there should be an important distinction between the fact that Integrated Day is the foundation and HOT strategies are just a bonus.

Gwen Hutter, from Middlefield, was very happy about the meeting that was held last night and also felt that the distinction of the ID program is very important. The parents are listening and are eager to cheer on the ID program and she hopes the program continues in the District.

Christine O'Connell, from Durham, wanted to get some information directly instead of from the rumor mill. She felt that tonight's meeting was great and hopes that the Board celebrates the students often. Regarding the STEAM program, she applauded Tina Hurlbert and hoped that her program could be implemented within the structure of the school day as well.

**Adjournment**

*Mr. Hicks made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.*

*In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Dr. Friedrich, Mrs. Geraci, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.*

Meeting was adjourned at 9:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First