

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, October 5, 2016 at 7:00 PM in the Library at Coginchaug Regional High School, 135 Pickett Lane, Durham, Connecticut.

Board members present: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Willett and Mr. Yamartino.

Board members absent: Mr. Hicks and Mr. Renninghoff.

Administration present: Mr. Melnik, Business Manager, and Dr. Veronesi, Superintendent of Schools.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Administrator Welcome

Nancy Heckler, principal at Brewster School, made comments on the transition from Korn and the beginning of the school year. Transition for the Korn third graders and staff began a year ago and they received a lot of input from parents, staff and students. The team tried to answer all questions and Mrs. Heckler believes the transition went very well.

Mrs. Heckler explained that she has two goals for the transition this year, one being that the third graders have an extremely rigorous educational year. She felt that that included curriculum, but also included responsibilities and leadership characteristics as well as their well-being. Her other goal is to make sure that the 18 new staff members felt integrated into Brewster School. Team building activities have been on-going since last Spring. The theme for Brewster School this year is Embrace Change. The third graders have had no problem transitioning into third grade and because of that, they can focus on student achievement, engagement and well-being.

Mrs. Heckler also commented that grade levels are together for the first time, with kindergarten in one wing, first grade in a wing and the second and third grades share a wing. She also has been able to provide common planning time four days a week. The teams meet with the instructional reading coach, the math coach, the science specialist and the integrated technology specialist once a month. They also have two PLC times per week, completely focused on data, achievement and instruction, including how to integrate the 4C's into what we are doing. Mrs. Heckler gave the Board an example from a classroom.

Mrs. Heckler also commented that the well-being of the students is as important as anything else and how important that base is for the students. The staff at Brewster takes it seriously to teach the core ethical values. In summary, Mrs. Heckler stated that they were off to a great start and invited Board members to visit.

CRHS Reporters

Emily Leibiger reported that spirit week starts next week, with pajama day on Tuesday, twin day on Wednesday, Coginchaug gear on Thursday and class colors on Friday. There will be a pep rally on Friday, with classes competing in games. Student achievement and student athletes will be honored. A bonfire will be hosted on Friday night by the National Honor Society with help from the Fire Department. The homecoming football game is on Saturday, with the homecoming dance on Saturday night at Coginchaug. On November 10, the Music Department will host the Veterans' Day concert with all the bands and choirs coming together to honor service men and women. Also, on October 30th, the National Honor Society will be hosting a Haunted Hallways night for the children of Durham and Middlefield with trick or treating held at Coginchaug. Ms. Leibiger also reported that the Durham Fair performances went very well. Dr. Veronesi also commented that the Veterans' Day concert will be held at either 7:00 or 7:30 and she will confirm that. Dr. Veronesi is also visiting the two senior centers to invite them to the concert.

Sam Marteka reported that the freshman class will be attending a presentation by Jennifer DiMauro, a Region 13 parent, on prescription drugs and the dangers of using them inappropriately. The other classes had the presentation last year. The Guidance Department will hold their financial aid night on November 9th at 6:30 PM. For the athletic update, girls' volleyball will sell baked goods to raise awareness for breast cancer on October 8th and all proceeds go to support breast cancer awareness and research. Coginchaug will host a Unified Sport soccer tournament, to include Coginchaug, Hand, Valley Regional and Middletown High, on October 19th. All the Coginchaug sports teams will be involved in the tournament, helping to warm the teams up, cheer and referee. He also reminded the Board that the football team's homecoming game is on October 15th, followed by the homecoming dance. Cheerleading sells baked goods during the football games to raise money for cancer research.

Mr. Marteka reported that girls' soccer had their first win the other day, boys' soccer remains very competitive and both cross country teams have either come in first or second in every race this year. There will be a meet at Wickham Park in Manchester this Saturday which is a good preparation for the State tournament. He also reported that Sam and Jess Drop, Ben Tabor and Christian Alberico, all alumni, ran at a meet at Lehigh University recently.

Lauren Donnelly reported that the Honor Societies for French, Spanish and Latin will all be inducted on October 17th. She will be getting inducted into the French Honor Society that night. The French Honor Society volunteers at the Corn Maze at Lyman Orchards, along with students from other schools. They also write to orphans during the holidays and one of the children will be coming to Coginchaug on October 13th. Spanish Honor Society tutors kids throughout the district in Spanish. They also provide gifts to children in need in Mexico at Christmastime. Latin Honor Society collects money for UNICEF at Halloween and they are looking for other volunteer opportunities.

Ms. Donnelly also talked about the senior trip to Washington, DC and how excited the class is to go. An itinerary was distributed to the Board members. They will stop at Camden Yards, the Smithsonian Space Museum and the zoo. They will also see the Vietnam Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Korean Memorial, FDR Memorial and Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial.

Public Comment

Missy Booth commented that she had been updated by Mr. Moore and Dr. Veronesi about the kindergarten aide situation and wanted to express her appreciation and thanked the Board for doing the right thing for our children. Mr. Moore explained that several members of the Board visited the kindergarten classes this month and are very impressed with what the kids are doing and what they have learned so far.

Next Board Meeting - November 16, 2016 in the CRHS Library

Approval of Agenda

Dr. Friedrich made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Mrs. Flanagan. Mr. Moore explained that he had an amendment to the agenda regarding policies that need to be voted on and will be added during Committee Report. Mrs. Flanagan made a motion to add a review of policies to item 12B on the current agenda. Dr. Friedrich agreed to the amendment.

In favor of approving the agenda as amended: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Willett and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Approval of Minutes August 24, 2016 Amended and September 14, 2016

Mrs. Flanagan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Willett, to approve the amended minutes of August 24, 2016.

In favor of approving the amended minutes of August 24, 2016: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Yamartino and Mr. Willett. Motion passed.

Mrs. Flanagan made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella to approve the minutes from the September 14, 2016 meeting. Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to add the words "investment" before policy in her statement made during the Business Manager's report. Mrs. Flanagan agreed to the change.

In favor of approving the amended minutes of September 14, 2016: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Yamartino and Mr. Willett. Motion passed.

Communications

Mr. Moore appointed Lindsey Herzig and Merrill Adams to work on the Benchwarmers' proposal committee with Dr. Friedrich and Mr. Renninghoff. Dr. Friedrich will set up their meeting.

Business Manager's Report

Mr. Melnik stated that the financials through September were included in everyone's packets. There have been no significant events to impact the budget since the last meeting.

A tag sale will be held at Korn School on October 22nd from 9:00 AM until 2:00 PM. Flyers will be distributed and an article will be in the Town Times. The towns of Durham and Middlefield have been invited to preview the sale two days prior to the event. Student groups from Cuginchaug will be asked to assist the day of the tag sale. Mr. Melnik does not feel that significant funds will be raised from the event.

Mr. Willett asked if a project has been started for generator replacements at Strong and Memorial. Mr. Melnik stated that no project has been started, but money has been reserved for that.

Mr. Melnik also explained that the District belongs to an oil consortium which includes 61 towns and school districts. The consortium buys 4,750 million gallons of oil and goes to bid every year. This is done to predict budget certainty. District 13 buys approximately 86,000 gallons of heating oil and about 48,000 gallons of diesel fuel for the buses. Heating oil will be at \$1.95/gallon and diesel fuel will be at \$2.02/gallon this year. The strike price set for next year is between \$1.85 and \$1.95 for heating oil and \$1.92 and \$2.02 for diesel. The consortium gets together once a month to discuss the best time to buy and Mr. Melnik will return to the Board, when necessary. Mr. Yamartino asked if it would be advantageous for the Board to authorize Mr. Melnik to pursue buying oil without coming back to the Board for approval, but Mr. Melnik stated that they usually get notice.

Mr. Yamartino made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to grant the authority to Mr. Melnik to enter into an agreement with the consortium for the purchase of heating oil and diesel fuel, with the price of heating oil not to exceed \$1.95/gallon and diesel not to exceed \$2.02/gallon for the 2017-2018 budget year.

In favor of approving the motion: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Willett and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Veronesi reiterated that Mrs. Heckler's presentation is a good representation of the growth and progress that has been made across the District.

Contract negotiations will begin with the teachers' union on October 12, 2016 when proposals will be exchanged. The administrators' union had a reopener for their contract for insurance and once that is ratified, Dr. Veronesi will report back to the Board. The proposed Cadillac tax has been postponed which was the reason the contract was originally scheduled for a reopener.

Silver Petrucelli is continuing to work with the schools, holding focus groups and have submitted a draft feasibility study. Dr. Veronesi will have that study reviewed and will then turn it over to the Utilization Committee. They are also holding a parent focus group on October 24th, which is a little different than other what some others schools which is to not always include parent input. Following the focus groups, Silver Petrucelli will submit a program proposal which will summarize their recommendations and costs. This proposal would have to be approved before we can move forward with the EDO49. The EDO49 is a request to go before the Bonding Commission that would need to be submitted by June 30th, with a one-year lag. Dr. Veronesi has been very pleased with Silver Petrucelli and commended the teachers for their feedback.

The Board discussed the time frame for both the EDO49 as well as the construction. Mrs. Flanagan commented that the Utilization Committee expected construction to start no sooner than 2019-2020 and more likely in 2020-2021. Dr. Veronesi wanted the Board to have an update and would like to keep the public informed as well.

Dr. Veronesi also reported higher numbers in pre-K and is projecting higher pre-K numbers next year as well and she has asked Mrs. Emory, Mrs. Heckler and Ms. Manning to look into a long-term plan. There is also a team involved with the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents on a project called High School Reimagined. That team is working with schools around the state as well as the state legislators. Dr. Veronesi reviewed the personnel on the team and explained that they will meet to review policies. A critical area that has been identified is exploring and understanding careers with the development of a career center in the high school.

Dr. Veronesi also reported that the District will be hiring 1.5 additional teaching assistants to provide full-time coverage during all academic periods for kindergarten classes at both Brewster and Lyman. That will be fully in place by next Tuesday. This coverage will exclude periods like gym, art, music, library and snack. Mr. Willett asked if this additional staff would be a modification to the budget line item for salaries. Dr. Veronesi reminded the Board that there was a budget line item for interns of \$72,750 and the District was not able to get interns this year. The additional teaching assistants will come in significantly under that \$72,750.

Mr. Moore commented that the policy regarding teaching assistants in the kindergarten classrooms needs to be addressed at the next Policy Committee meeting.

Dr. Veronesi also explained that as part of the gentleman's agreement with the State Police using Korn School, the State Police will be looking over the District's security plans as well as lockdown drills. The training at Korn School is about to finish up and Sgt. Jones invited Dr. Veronesi to see the practice drills. The State Police will also send some officers to the schools when lockdown drills are held this month. This would all be communicated with parents and kids.

Dr. Veronesi also commented that the administrators are regularly talking about the 4Cs in the classrooms. She acknowledged the administrators for demonstrating their professional leadership in faculty meetings, including digital literacy, technology integration and greater degrees of engagement.

Dr. Veronesi remarked that they have been working on professional development and there is now a high-level professional development plan. Staff members are now signing up and give feedback. Dr. Veronesi described an example and will email it to the Board members. Finally, Dr. Veronesi distributed the enrollment numbers which included class size distribution in every grade. These numbers were just run today.

Mrs. Boyle asked if the District is using Korn School at all and Dr. Veronesi explained that there is now a conference room there and Rob Francis and Susan Michael have their offices there. Kevin Brough, who is due to retire in December 2016, is also working out of Korn School, exploring before and after programming. Mr. Willett thought that the District was not supposed to be utilizing Korn School at all and that the budget did not support keeping the building open. Dr. Veronesi explained that the budget did include keeping the building open as they knew that BASREP would be there. She also explained that Mr. Francis moved to Korn School because the new Director of Organizational Development was utilizing his prior office. Mr. Moore also commented that Parks & Rec will still be using Korn School as well as elections.

Dr. Veronesi also mentioned that the Strategic Planning Committee will meet tomorrow from 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM. They will discuss the three- to five-year plan. Mrs. Boyle suggested that the next Utilization Committee meeting be announced in an article in the Town Times to hopefully get more people interested in attending those meetings.

The Board took a quick break at this point.

Presentation of Student Achievement Data - Dr. Linda Berry

Dr. Berry, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, introduced herself and explained that she will be presenting an overview of District data. The Board members were given binders and Dr. Berry reviewed that they included the presentation, the assessments and definitions and the 2014-2015 student achievement data.

Dr. Berry began with the benchmark assessments or universal assessments which are given three times a year to every student. She explained the different screenings and assessments that are given to the students and added that they do look at the results, from the beginning of the year to the end. The STAR assessments allow the results to be broken down further and provide trends.

There are three ways to look at the data: comparing a grade this year to a grade next year, comparing a group of students in one grade last year and the next grade this year, or growth vertical scale scores which is probably the most effective measure. Vertical scale scores take one student, looking at their test scores throughout the year and their years overall. These assessments are critical to Dr. Berry, the administrators and the teachers.

Dr. Berry explained that the District's students took a close proximity to the new PSAT last October and the Board had paid for every 10th and 11th grade student to take it. This year, every 9th grader will also take the PSAT. The District's mean total scores were 997 in 10th grade and 1037 in 11th grade. She also explained that math and evidence-based reading and writing are included in this test. Based on this test, our high school data is something to be very much celebrated. The test is the same for both 10th and 11th grade, but the benchmarks are different and the test for the 8th and 9th grade is different from that test. Mr. Yamartino asked for a definition of the benchmark and Dr. Berry explained that those are career and college readiness benchmarks. She also commented that our students tend to do consistently better on the literacy piece than the math piece. Dr. Berry also felt that, as time goes on, there will be a better understanding of the measurements.

Dr. Berry also explained that, in the past, approximately 25 percent of the District's students took the PSAT as 10th graders primarily to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship. That is now at 100 percent, but Dr. Berry also commented that students cannot opt out of that test.

The new SAT test has the same two subtests as the PSAT. Dr. Berry reviewed the data from the last class that took the old SAT. The State of Connecticut is now requiring that every junior take the SAT (and is only one of four states in the country to do so). This past March, approximately 95 percent of the District's juniors took that test, with the remaining 5 percent perhaps special needs students. Exemptions need to be submitted to the State. The percentages are fairly similar to the PSAT scores and the District is certainly doing better than the state average and the national average.

Dr. Berry explained the District's DRG rankings for the SAT are exactly at the DRG average of 558 in the evidence-based reading and writing and below the 538 average in math. Mr. Willett asked if there was a way to compare the 2015 averages and Dr. Berry said she would get that information to Dr. Veronesi to send out.

Dr. Berry went on to explain the District's Advanced Placement standings and pointed out that the number of students in AP classes has gone from a low of 44 in 2012/2013 to 75 last year. There are now seven AP classes in the high school, though students can sit for more than one exam. The tests are scored 1 to 5 and 3 is considered a passing score. Of 134 tests that were taken, 91 percent scored 3 or higher. Dr. Berry also reviewed the benefits of AP classes. Dr. Berry congratulated Mr. Falcone and the AP teachers for their efforts.

The CMT and CAPT tests are still used in Science and will be until probably 2021. The District can take great pride in science, with rankings above the state average and second in the DRG in 10th grade. Dr. Berry attributed this to Lorrie Martin's ability to engage students through nature walks and field trips. Mr. Willett asked for a comparison of improvement from year to year. Dr. Berry commented that this is the best the District has done in five years and directed the Board to the five-year trends. Mr. Yamartino asked about the difference between proficiency and goal. Dr. Berry explained that there are four performance bands that are scored and that she will provide information on what the differences are.

The SBAC, or Smarter Balance, test is an online assessment given to students in grades 3 through 8 which is very rigorous in terms of content and types of questions. The digital literacy teacher in grades 1 through 4 has proven invaluable for this test. Dr. Berry described several examples of items on this test. Again, the scores are better in literacy than in math and Dr. Berry is not happy with these scores. She does not feel that these scores reflect the quality of our students. Our DRG ratings for SBAC are higher in the literacy and below the DRG average in math. Dr. Berry is reaching out to districts that are consistently high to see what they are doing.

Mr. Willett asked if there are any programs that allow the District to promote the SBACs as being fun. He reported that his younger son called the SBAC, the sit back and cry, and the students are already in negative mode. Dr. Berry is a firm believer that this type of learning should happen all year and not be taught just prior to the test. Dr. Berry also explained that the District is required to report these scores on the students' transcripts, but are not reflected in progress reports.

Dr. Berry went through the chart of SBAC cohort rankings, showing the progress from one grade to another.

In summary, Dr. Berry reiterated that there is a strong performance in science and our students perform consistently better on the ELA than the math. Our cohort analysis shows a positive increase and strong improvements in PSAT and SAT scores are very encouraging.

Dr. Berry explained that performance targets have been developed that are tied to the District's goals. These are to improve student performance in literacy, math and science by using the PLC process. This includes using data to help identify students in need to interventions. She has also challenged teachers to address what the highest-achieving students need to have to continue to make those high gains. Dr. Berry described some of the goals and performance targets and stated that the District needs to be in the top half of the DRG. There were no performance targets last year, but the summary shows what targets were met last year. Dr. Berry explained that she developed the targets from past trends, class size, percentage change and consistency through the grades. Dr. Berry said she has asked higher performing school districts how they are performing at those levels.

Mrs. Petrella asked how these goals affect teachers and classroom instruction. Dr. Berry explained that an SRBI (scientifically-research-based instruction) program is being implemented. This is a tiered method of intervention and support services and she described the different tiers. Dr. Berry has also been meeting with each of the principals to review the data.

Mr. Moore asked Mr. Falcone how he thinks these goals help to evaluate the student and teacher performance. Mr. Falcone reported that the benchmarks are important at the high school level, but that they are looking at the subscores for the actual teachers. They will be correlating the PSAT and SAT subscores and the teachers will focus on those. Professional development will be provided to the teachers about what types of questions will be asked on the tests. Mr. Falcone also reported that he is working with other principals within the DRG and they are all sharing ideas on how to improve scores.

Dr. Veronesi also commented that the Student Achievement Committee is also looking at it from the District level, down to the teachers. Dr. Veronesi stressed that this is not preparing for a test, but how the kids become better thinkers and better problem-solvers. She stressed that curriculum and instruction is what this is really about. There has been a sort of shift in philosophy from remedial help and intervention to what Dr. Berry has talked about in terms of what does instruction for all kids look like and what does professional development and support for teachers look like. Mr. Falcone also commented that the students scoring highest did better on advanced math problems than basic algebra. A lot of these students took algebra in 8th grade and are now taking the SAT in 11th grade, so the math teachers are brainstorming on ways to help all students.

Mrs. Boyle commented that having gone through the paradigm shift to Common Core and having the SAT shift and the SBAC and all those changes, there have been a lot of changes in this past five years and complimented Dr. Berry on the depth of the data and analysis that the Board is seeing. Dr. Berry stated that it is a tribute to the whole team.

Mr. Moore summarized that the focus on student achievement is critical to the Board and the entire school system.

Committee Reports

A. Educational Resources Committee

Mr. Moore reported that the Educational Resources Committee met tonight and had a presentation by Morgan Stanley on the pension investment program. The Committee will be looking at some modification to investments in November.

B. Policy Committee

Mr. Moore reported that the Investment Policy Statement was presented last month and is due to be voted on tonight.

Mrs. Flanagan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Willett, to approve the Investment Policy Statement as distributed for the defined benefit pension plan for the employees of RSD 13, effective October 4, 2016.

In favor of approving the motion: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Willett and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

The next policy, item 3320, is to change the amount for purchasing procedures from \$5,000 to \$25,000.

Mr. Willett made a motion, seconded by Dr. Friedrich, to approve the change to policy 3320, Purchasing Procedures, as noted. Mrs. Petrella asked what the impetus was for changing that amount. Mr. Melnik stated that it was talked about in November of last year and the \$5,000 amount had not been changed since 1991 and this would be an update to be in line with the Town of Durham and the cost of doing business.

In favor of approving the motion: Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Willett and Mr. Yamartino. Opposed: Mr. Augur. Motion passed.

Mr. Melnik also explained that policy 3260, Sales of Books, Equipment and Materials, was also set in place in 1991 and readopted in 1997. The policy would now suggest to dispose of items while enhancing financial benefit as much as possible. The money would go into the general fund.

Mrs. Flanagan made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Boyle, to approve the change to policy 3260, Sales of Books, Equipment and Materials, as noted.

In favor of approving the motion: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Willett and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Mr. Willett mentioned that every year in October, the Durham Volunteer Fire Company holds a Public Safety Day with fire prevention and the State Police. Mr. Willett is very excited about this year's program as it will include pre-K through 3rd grade and invited the Board members to attend on October 17th at Brewster.

Mrs. Flanagan asked members of the Utilization Committee to give her dates that they might be available for the week of October 17th.

New Business

A. Field Trip Request - Coghinchaug High School Band and Choir, Virginia Beach, VA

Mrs. Flanagan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Willett, to approve the field trip request for the CRHS band and choir to Virginia Beach, VA with the standard stipulation that should the administration determine, for any reason, that it is not safe to proceed or not in the best interest of the students to proceed, that they have the authority to cancel it or delay it.

In favor of approving the motion: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Willett and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

Public Comment

None.

Adjournment

Mrs. Flanagan made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mrs. Boyle.

In favor of approving the motion: Mr. Augur, Mrs. Boyle, Mrs. Flanagan, Dr. Friedrich, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Willett and Mr. Yamartino. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First