

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 6:30 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board members present: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone

Board members absent: Ms. Betty and Mr. DelVecchio

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Brough, Human Resources Specialist, Mrs. Quarato, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation and Development, Mrs. Siegel, Associate Director of Learning, Innovation and Accountability, Mr. Pietrasko, Director of Infrastructure and Security Technology, Mrs. Stone, Principal of Coginchaug Regional High School, and Mrs. Trainer, Assistant Principal of Coginchaug Regional High School.

Mrs. Dahlheimer called the regular meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### **Approval of Agenda**

*Mr. Mennone made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stone, to approve the agenda, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the agenda, as amended: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

### **Presentation**

#### **A. CRHS Activities Update**

Mrs. Stone introduced Paige Konopka and Noah Levesque to the board. Paige reported that the Capstone was held last Friday where 80 seniors presented about their job shadowing. Her Capstone was on preK special ed and speech pathology. The Robotics program had their state tournament and DECA conducted a career development conference. Several students will be competing further. There was also a CT Debate Association tournament with 11 schools. Upcoming events include DECA's Mr. Cog on March 15<sup>th</sup>, juniors take the SAT on March 20<sup>th</sup>, Bye Bye Birdie will be the musical on March 21-23, musical students will travel to New York to compete and see a Broadway show and five students' artwork will be featured in the Shoreline Features art show.

Noah reported that boys' basketball finished with an overall record of 12-8 and lost in the quarterfinals of the Shoreline tournament. They were a nine seed in the state tournament, but lost to Coventry in the second round. Girls' basketball finished with an overall record of 11-9 and qualified for the Shoreline tournament. They were the 16<sup>th</sup> seed in the state tournament, but lost in the quarterfinals. Boys' Indoor Track finished third in the Shoreline Conference championship and 14<sup>th</sup> in the state championship. Girls' Indoor Track also finished third in the Shoreline Conference championship and 7<sup>th</sup> place in the state championship. The cheer squad finished third in the conference cheerleading competition and competed in the Class S championship. Coginchaug had two swimmers competing with a collaborative team with Sheehan and Lyman Hall High Schools and both swimmers competed in the state championships. A freshman also competed in gymnastics alongside Daniel Hand High School and she placed third all-around in the Shorelines. Boys' ice hockey competed with a cooperative team with Westbrook and

Southington High Schools and finished 5-15 this season. Girls' ice hockey competed with a cooperative team with Guilford and finished 3-13 this season. Unified Sports hosted the I Choose to Include pep rallies at Brewster and Lyman. There will be another pep rally at Coginchaug on April 1<sup>st</sup> and will challenge the teachers to a basketball game.

Paige stated that she will be attending Fitchburg State University in the Fall to play softball. Noah noted that he plays baseball, indoor track and football.

**Public Comment - at the beginning of the meeting public comment should refer to items on the agenda**

**A. In-person public comment**

None.

**B. Remote public comment**

None.

**Approval of Minutes**

**A. Board of Education Work Session - February 7, 2024**

**B. Board of Education Regular Meeting - February 7, 2024**

**C. Board of Education Work Session - February 21, 2024**

*Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stone, to approve the minutes of the Board of Education Work Session of February 7, 2024, Board of Education Regular Meeting of February 7, 2024, and Board of Education Work Session of February 21, 2024, as presented.*

*In favor of approving the minutes of the Board of Education Work Session of February 7, 2024, Board of Education Regular Meeting of February 7, 2024, and Board of Education Work Session of February 21, 2024, as presented: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried, with Mrs. Caramanello abstaining.*

**Superintendent's Report**

**A. Grade Level Reconfiguration 2024-2025 Update**

Dr. Schuch reported that preliminary staffing assignments were sent out last month and are tied to the current budget proposal. About a week later, information about packing and moving went out to everyone. They are encouraging staff to go through excess materials and purge as much as possible. The movers are set to come in the Monday after graduation.

There will be drop-in sessions for parents whose children are moving to a different building. Most of the teachers will also attend to welcome the families. They will be held on March 19, March 26 and April 2. Children are welcome, but those evenings are not really designed for them. The children will have opportunities probably in May. Dr. Schuch noted that the union has asked them to be sensitive to the time

the teachers have to relocate and try to make the beginning of the year a little less encumbered. They plan to move convocation to an asynchronous virtual convocation to allow them to watch at their convenience.

Mr. Roraback asked if the teachers that don't have to make any moves could maybe help the teachers that are moving. Dr. Darcy asked what the actual plan was for moving classrooms and Mrs. Neubig stated that they did budget for professional movers. They have color-coded labels and teachers are responsible for packing their boxes. Teachers oftentimes want to unpack their own rooms, but she is considering having students available. Dr. Schuch added that staff members will do all of this when they want to. Mrs. Stone stated that they will put that out to the students, but she believes most teachers will want to do it themselves.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked at what point they will be introducing the teams of teachers and Dr. Schuch explained that they decided not to post anything on the website until they are through the budget process. Mrs. Dahlheimer also asked if there has been any discussion about collaborative events between the PTOs. Mr. Brough stated that PTOs will be reaching out to parents to join meetings in May. Mrs. Dahlheimer hoped that the principals will encourage the parents to attend. Dr. Schuch noted that they feel like there will be more energy about that in late Summer.

#### **B. NEASC Update**

Dr. Schuch reviewed that a gentleman from NEASC attended a meeting last July and talked about doing a district-wide accreditation. Because of the reconfiguration and building project, they now feel that the high school should go ahead with accreditation at this point and maybe consider district-wide in 10 years. No one had any objection to that.

#### **C. Other Updates (if applicable)**

Dr. Schuch reported that this is board member appreciation month and noted that there were gifts at everyone's place. He thanked the board members for all of their hard work and Meg Maloney for putting the gifts together.

#### **Staff Reports**

##### **A. Director of Finance - Kim Neubig**

Mrs. Neubig reported that the month of February closed at 59 percent expended and 65 percent revenue received. They have encumbered 99 percent of the district's expenditures.

##### **B. National Honor Society Update - Deb Stone**

Mrs. Stone reached out to her fellow Shoreline principals for information and noted that they are controlled by the National Association of Secondary School Principals who oversees the National Honor Societies. They are the ones that accredit the local chapters. She had sent the constitution of the National Honor Society to all of the board members.

There has to be a faculty council which does more than just assess the applications. They are the ones in charge of revising and developing procedures for selection, discipline and dismissal. There are a number

of models of different ways of assessing character on the website. The chapter can decide whether to increase grade point average or any other standards.

Mrs. Stone reported that there are two new advisors this year and needed some time to get their feet under them. They plan to look at senior applications by October to give them time to reapply. Mrs. Stone felt that if they are to increase the GPA, they would need to start with the incoming freshmen.

On March 27<sup>th</sup>, the chapter will induct 27 students into the National Honor Society. She noted that the acceptance rate for the junior class this year was 71.4 percent of those who applied. Two seniors applied and got in. Dr. Darcy asked if the gender ratio was consistent with numbers of kids in the school. Mrs. Stone explained that 89 percent of the boys that applied were accepted and 65 percent of the girls, but that equals eight boys and 17 girls. Many more females were academically eligible. Mrs. Stone asked the board for any ideas they may have and she will bring them to the advisors. Mr. Moore asked if they had done their service project yet this year and Mrs. Stone will check on that.

Mr. Roraback asked if there was a financial aspect to the application process and Mrs. Stone stated that there is no fee to apply or for leadership positions in school. Mrs. Petrella asked about getting the word out to students and Mrs. Stone intends to get the handbook out to the junior class before the end of the school year. She would also like to get the information out to parents of freshmen and sophomores. Mrs. Dahlheimer suggested putting this on the agenda for the Student Achievement committee as well. Mrs. Stone added that any junior who applied to NHS this year got junior privilege, even if they didn't get in.

## **New Business**

### **A. Update and Possible Vote on Increasing Educator Diversity Plan**

Mr. Brough explained that Public Act 23-167 requires each Board of Education in Connecticut to submit an increasing educator diversity plan for review and approval. District 13 is not terribly diverse, so they have targeted key strategies to address that. He reviewed the vision statement, theory of action and team members. The state identified the structure of the plan and it is divided into three major parts: recruitment, hiring and selection and a retention portion. There are seven major components including a broad-based goal, who manages that goal, strategies, indicators of progress, resources required, risks and mitigation, and communication/engagement efforts.

In the recruitment portion, the district identified two major goals to increase recruitment efforts and create opportunities to engage in partnerships with colleges and universities. Mr. Brough reviewed the strategies for each of the goals. In hiring and selection, the goal is to attract and hire highly-qualified diverse candidates and Mr. Brough reviewed the strategies for that. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked about anti-bias training and Dr. Darcy explained that anyone who sits on a hiring committee has to go through that training. Some districts do anti-bias training for all employees.

For the third part of retention, the district's goal is to develop initiatives that promote retention of under-represented individuals by creating a supportive culture and Mr. Brough described the strategies for that as well. Mr. Brough added that the team will meet four times a year to monitor progress on the goals and adjust strategies, as needed. Mr. Mennone summarized that the plan is to get a recruitment team that has had bias training that will go out and solicit employees. Dr. Schuch added that the district is not really

resourced to do active recruitment and they need to be realistic. Middletown had sent teams to colleges and got zero recruits.

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that they should be trying to increase substitutes and paras from diverse backgrounds as well. Mr. Brough stated that they have seen growth in teaching assistants and ABA therapists and hoped to be able to build capacity in that and possibly get them certified. Dr. Darcy added that a committee has submitted recommendations to the state legislature to change some of the certification requirements. Mr. Mennone asked about the application process and Mr. Brough explained that there are a couple of essays in the process but they then have questions and interview steps designed for the specific positions. Mr. Mennone asked if that was a standardized process that needs to be followed and the answer was no. He then asked if parts of the process may be eliminating people that shouldn't be eliminated and it was thought that that was what this plan will address. Mr. Mennone then asked who would review that and how it gets approved. Mr. Brough stated that the district recruitment and selection team will vet those questions and adapt the recruiting process to make it a better match for all candidates. Dr. Schuch added that most interview protocols are almost identical and a lot of certification programs train people on how to prep for those interviews. Mr. Mennone felt that the plan and its presentation was fantastic and was just noting the difficulties that occur in the hiring process.

Mrs. Dahlheimer stated that kids of diverse backgrounds want to be able to connect with someone who looks like them. She added that a number of candidates that don't go to certain districts feel that they lack welcoming policies. Mr. Brough reviewed that the plan needs to be submitted this week, the state will then review it and provide feedback. Any revisions would need to be submitted by May 15<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Moore felt that the only role for the board is to approve the plan, but a commitment to that plan needs to be made as well, which is probably financial. He asked about paying for advertising and paying for transportation for student teachers. Mr. Brough noted that the State Department of Education is providing \$10,000 grants for that type of thing. Dr. Schuch added that the district doesn't hire very many people because people come here and want to stay. Mr. Roraback mentioned that the curriculum may be restrictive to certain people of diverse backgrounds.

Dr. Darcy stated that the state wants to see data about ways diversity will be increased and what the commitment to that is. They will want to see specificity. She also felt that communication should be put out to the community as well. The efforts for retention need to be focused on the environment into which new teachers are placed and the real work lies in the culture. Dr. Darcy added that studies show that white men are more likely to apply for jobs when they don't check all the boxes, but women and people of color will not. Dr. Darcy felt that they need to add in the communication to the community part and the focus on the environment before submitting the plan.

*Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to approve the Increasing Educator Diversity Plan with modifications to community outreach and to authorize the Superintendent or equivalent board administrator to execute any plan revisions that may be required.*

*In favor of approving the Increasing Educator Diversity Plan with modifications to community outreach and to authorize the Superintendent or equivalent board administrator to execute any plan revisions that may be required: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried unanimously.*

**B. Approve CRHS Field Trip Request - Anaheim**

Mrs. Stone explained that this is the DECA trip to Anaheim where Diya Patel will be presenting. Mr. Donecker has taken students on DECA trips for years.

*Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the CRHS field trip request to Anaheim.*

Mrs. Stone added that DECA has been fund-raising for this trip and she has not heard of any financial problems. She did not have specifics about who will be going, but Mr. Donecker was confident that the four kids that were invited will take their spots.

*In favor of approving the CRHS field trip request to Anaheim: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried unanimously.*

**C. Approve CRHS Field Trip Request - Paris and Madrid**

*Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the CRHS field trip request to Paris and Madrid.*

Mrs. Stone explained that the trip to Guatemala did not receive as much interest as they had anticipated for this coming year, so Mrs. Plourde and Mrs. Germond would like to reinstitute an international trip. This trip is planned for Spring break next year. Pre-COVID, these trips were hugely popular with the students. Mrs. Trainer felt that they were trying to appeal to as many learners as possible. This will also provide them a year to do fund-raising. Dr. Darcy felt that the cost will be prohibitive for a lot of families and asked what plan exists to defray the cost. Mrs. Stone explained that they will do fund-raising once kids commit to the trip. Dr. Schuch added that this might be an incentive for kids to get summer jobs. Mr. Mennone asked who is going to pick the 12 students and Mrs. Stone explained that that is just what they are anticipating, but no one will be picked.

*In favor of approving the CRHS field trip request to Paris and Madrid: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried unanimously.*

**D. Approve CRHS Field Trip Request - Panama**

*Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mennone, to approve the CRHS field trip request to Panama.*

Because CRHS is a Unified Sports champion school, they were invited to the USA games and the World games. At the World games, they were asked to apply for the Unified Youth Exchange through Special Olympics. This trip is being run by the US Department of State Sports Diplomacy Division and they have awarded a grant of \$95,000 for outbound and inbound travel with students from Panama. They are still working on exact dates and getting students in Panama to apply to be part of this. Tentative dates are May 18-25, 2024. Mr. Bajoros will vet all of the students from Panama. Students will also have to do a project as part of this trip and they hope to have the project here during the Durham Fair. Mr. Bajoros

and Mrs. Keane are actively working on this, along with Mrs. Winkler. Visas are not required, but passports will be. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked how the selection of participants will happen and Mrs. Stone explained that it will be four typical and four unified students. An email was sent to all students who were eligible and students have now been identified.

Dr. Darcy hoped that they would be sure to have the Panamanian kids understand that the Durham Fair is an agricultural fair which will impact them going through customs to get home. Mrs. Stone was thankful to have the State Department on their side with this trip. Dr. Darcy also recommended that at least one adult has CPR training. Mr. Moore asked to have The Hartford Courant engaged in this and Mrs. Stone agreed and added that she would reach out to Channel 8 and others as well.

*In favor of approving the CRHS field trip request to Panama: Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried unanimously.*

### **Committee Reports**

#### **A. Policy Committee Meeting - February 21, 2024**

Mr. Moore reported that the committee met and asked that some adjustments be made to the policy on admission to public school before age five and be brought back to their next meeting. They also talked about having an exemption in the nepotism policy for board members or faculty that have student teaching or substitute teaching. They also felt they would keep the fund-raising policy as it is, but make sure that permission forms are readily available and include the Durham Fair.

#### **B. Building Committee Meeting - February 21, 2024**

Mr. Moore reported that Pickett Lane phase 2 is complete and phase 3 is in process. A barrier was installed at the chicken farm but something more permanent is needed. There was supposed to be a meeting today on the preliminary design of the electrical installation and bathrooms in the field house. Mrs. Neubig explained that the lights are a reimbursable project, so they need to do the work and then get paid for it. Work cannot be started until they receive the bid waiver for the lights and have three quotes for the bathrooms. One more flow test is needed for the fire pump and a significant amount of money will be saved on that project. The turf replacement will start on June 17<sup>th</sup> and will take four to six weeks. No one will be able to use the track or turf during that time. Mrs. Neubig added that they will communicate that to both towns as it gets closer.

The Building committee also talked about the screens donated by the Benchwarmers for the tennis courts and Mrs. Dahlheimer added that they are done and look fantastic.

#### **C. Student Achievement Committee Meeting - February 28, 2024**

Mrs. Petrella reported that they received an EL update and middle school discussion. Mrs. Mariani gave them a presentation with more details. They reviewed the Kiddom online platform that is used in grades K-5 and Mrs. Petrella described that to the board. The cost for Kiddom is a little over \$5,000 for each elementary school and will be a little over \$3,000 for sixth grade. The Student Achievement committee needs to see data that shows that each student is making adequate growth.

They also talked about the evaluation update. The goal is to bring everything to the meeting in May for approval and to send that information out to staff. The committee received a competencies update as well with the next step being to develop implementation plans. A draft of the competencies will be brought to the full board. The committee also received an update on the high school pathways and the Health and Human Services was chosen to be shared with students and parents at the end of the year. This includes health services, human services, government law and public administration. The Business pathway has three concentrations: marketing, business administration and finance and should be complete by the end of this school year. Seven three-credit classes will be available to all levels of students: Accounting I, Physics, Macroeconomics, Intro to Psychology, Criminal Justice, Chemistry and Exercise Science. Business and Engineering pathways may require more staff.

Dr. Schuch added that they plan to move forward with the EL program in the sixth-grade next year and scale it up one year at a time through the middle school, ending with eighth grade. This has already been addressed in the proposed budget. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that she and Mrs. Petrella met with Dr. Schuch and Mrs. Quarato and came to the consensus that the program seems to be working really well. Social studies is being taught and the students will have what they need. Dr. Schuch added that the EL program will require a change to the master schedule to put more time in for English Language Arts and teachers and the literacy coach have already started training. Dr. Schuch added that their goal is to make fourth and fifth more than just a single teacher model, but less than kids changing classrooms for every subject. Mrs. Dahlheimer hoped for a schedule update before the end of the year.

**Board Communications and Professional Development**

Mrs. Dahlheimer reported that today was CAFE day on the hill and a group testified at the state level. Liam Fitzpatrick, a junior at CRHS, was there interning with one of the senators. There were over 100 testimonies today and 120 on Monday. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that they did receive a good amount of emails about the math department.

Mr. Moore noted that the play is next week and tickets are available online. Mr. Coginchaug is also a fun night. Mrs. Dahlheimer added that the Capstone projects were amazing. Mrs. Petrella felt that the projects were more focused this year.

**Public Comment - at the end of the meeting public comment should refer to items not on the agenda**

**A. In-person public comment**

None.

**B. Remote public comment**

None.

**Adjournment**



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

*In favor of adjourning the regular meeting of the Board of Education: Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.*

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz  
Alwaz First