

# **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION Stamford, Connecticut February 24, 2009**

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held on February 24, 2009 at the Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Ms. Nabel, President, with the following Board members present: Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak (arrived at 7:25 pm), Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade. Absent: Mayor Malloy and Ms. Heftman. Also in attendance: Dr. Starr, Dr. Hamilton, Mr. Dunn, Dr. Nicholson, Ms. Swerdlick, Ms. Gagne, Ms. Karwan, Mr. Murphy, Ms. Hanna, Mr. Meyer, Ms. Arnold, Mr. Barbarotta, Mr. DiBlasio, Representatives from the Advocate and Stamford Times, State Representatives Pat Proctor, Nancy Capello, Tony Gasper, Bob Pittaco, Deb Richards, and Susan Kennedy, and approximately 45 guests.

Salute to the flag.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Ms. Wade presented the mission statement of the Board of Education.

## **MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**

Ms. Lorenti moved, seconded by Mr. Rubino, to accept the Minutes of the Special Board Meeting – January 23, 2009 – pp. 155.

The minutes were accepted with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. King, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

Mr. King moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti, to accept the Minutes of the Special Board Meeting – January 24, 2009 – pp. 156.

The minutes were accepted with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. King, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

Ms. Lorenti moved, seconded by Ms. Wade,  
to accept the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting –  
January 27, 2009 – pp. 157 - 171.

The minutes were accepted with the following Board members voting in favor:  
Mr. King, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms.  
Wade.

Mr. Mathews moved, seconded by Ms. Wade,  
to accept the Minutes of the Special Board Meeting –  
February 5, 2009 – pp. 172 - 173.

The minutes were accepted with the following Board members voting in favor:  
Mr. King, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms.  
Wade.

## **STUDENT & STAFF ACHIEVEMENT**

A Westhill High School student was honored for being named a  
Presidential Scholar candidate by the U.S. Department of Education and  
students from Scofield Magnet Middle School for combining community service  
with hands-on science learning by studying the Diamondback Terrapin.

Mr. Stephen Wright, CAFE Area Director for Area 6, presented CAFE's  
Communication Award for the 2007-2008 District Calendar and Guide to the  
Stamford Public Schools. Ms. Nabel accepted the award and noted that we are  
very proud of the school district that produced the calendar. In this case we owe  
a great deal of thanks to Sarah Arnold and to the student artists whose art is  
displayed throughout the calendar. She thanked all who were involved with this  
publication.

Dr. Starr acknowledged George Vollano for his work on the calendar. He  
noted that the 2007-2008 was the first calendar we did this week and had artwork  
from students pre-K through elementary. The 2008-2009 calendar has middle  
and high school artwork. The first sponsor was Patriot Bank and we appreciate  
their sponsorship. This year's calendar was sponsored by First County Bank and  
we also appreciate their support. Dr. Starr recognized the teachers who helped  
the children develop the skills sets that they need to do the art. Dr. Starr noted  
that George Vollano was the driving force behind this project and he, working  
with Ms. Arnold, coordinated and made it happen. Dr. Starr acknowledged the  
art teachers by name and with a certificate.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Starr reported that he held his quarterly meeting this morning with the  
Board of Representatives and Board of Finance to discuss budget and the  
Federal stimulus package. He also advised that the Stone Soup event will be

held on Saturday, March 21, 2009 starting at 9:00 am at AITE. On Wednesday, February 25, 2009 there will be a Community Conversation meeting regarding Middle School Reform at Turn of River Middle School starting at 7:00 pm.

Dr. Starr noted that the partners from the State of Connecticut were in attendance this evening who have been involved with the State Department subsequent to the legislation passed a couple of years ago that changed the accountability environment in the State. We have undergone training, conversations, reviews by the Cambridge Education Group that has assessed where we are as well as our schools. Tonight we will briefly present the Quality Review that Cambridge conducted which will be prefaced by the State who will be discussing the review process and the work they are doing with us, and then the results will be discussed. Representatives from the State are Pat Proctor, Nancy Capello, Tony Gasper, Bob Taco, Deb Richards, and Susan Kennedy. Ms. Richards, Head of Accountability for the State, will discuss the process and Mr. Proctor will discuss the support, and then Dr. Starr will review the findings.

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak arrived at 7:25 pm.

Ms. Richards from the State Department gave the history of how the Bureau of Accountability, Compliance, and Monitoring and the Bureau of School & District Improvement came into existence and the steps that they have taken to help individual school districts, Stamford included. Mr. Proctor from the State Department gave a report on the work that has already been initiated in Stamford and what we can anticipate for the future of that work as we move forward together in this partnership initiative. Dr. Starr gave a brief presentation as to the steps he is taking to implement the State recommendations and to bring the district to the next level.

Ms. Nabel asked what were the original 12 districts and how were they chosen. Ms. Richards responded that they were Bridgeport, Waterbury, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Meriden, Windham, Hartford, Norwich, Norwalk, Middletown, and East Hartford and were all districts that were at year 3 in need of improvement at the whole district level. The 3 new districts added this year were Stamford, Ansonia, and Danbury. Ms. Nabel asked if there were other criteria for how these districts were chosen. Ms. Richards responded that the only criteria was based on their status of need of improvement using the NCLB criteria. There are also 7 districts that we are working with now who are identified in year 3 just for a sub-group.

Mr. Polo asked how long they had been working on this. Ms. Richards responded that we began last September with the 12 districts and we are now in our second school year and then added the other 3 districts this past fall. Mr. Polo asked how the process was going. Ms. Richards responded that it varies from district to district. We have some districts that were ready, eager, jumped in, moved forward and one had already participated in the CALI training. Some districts moved forward with the Cambridge process and although it did not require them to do all the schools in the district, they chose to do all the schools

in the district. In general we are pleased with the partnership that we have with all 12 districts, but would say we have a handful of districts that really have embraced this and moved forward with a real sense of urgency. That is a piece of this – how do you kind of intervene and work with the districts because we do feel there is a sense of urgency. On the other hand we don't want to make people so crazy that everyone is getting in everyone else's way. The real piece of how do we manage to support the district. Our real focus is getting the district to focus. Not that you are not doing enough, but you are probably doing too much. We have had representatives from the 15 districts come and meet with us. When we talk with teachers we hear a lot about initiative overload, initiative fatigue, and every day there is a new program and a new process. In trying to assist the district with helping teachers see that this is really part of the work and will actually make some of your planning and collaboration with groups of teachers once you establish the framework for that to happen, it really does eliminate some of the work that they are doing on their own. The districts that were most successful were districts that had strong relationships with their union, strong relationships with their teachers and that varies dramatically in our urban centers.

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak asked how the establishment of the demonstration schools work, how is it funded, and how does that learning get shared with the rest of the district. Ms. Richards responded that there are different pots of Title I money and we had an opportunity to apply for "School Improvement Title I" money which is different than the Title I money that already gets distributed to the districts. One of the challenges with Title I money is that it comes with lots of rules around it. We saw an opportunity with the grant that said we could apply for money that would have to be at least \$50,000 and had to go to a school. We could not apply for it and give it to Stamford and say okay do with it what you want. We had to come up with a model. We also knew that when our legislators passed the legislation and said okay move forward, in their mind they said we gave you a little increase in ECS money and accountability legislation, so come back in a year and show us how much better the school is. We know that for us minimally to turn things around in a systemic way it will be 3-5 years, but we felt we had to at least demonstrate that we had a good model of intervention that was researched and would be successful. We choose to apply for that money and originally gave one demonstration school to each of the 12 districts. We applied for more money this year and were able to give a second demonstration school to each of the 12 districts and two to the new three districts. This is all based on our CALI model which is a research based model. What we provide to each of the demonstration schools is an Executive Coach who is working with the principal around the priorities of student achievement and those priorities are established between that coach and the principal. The Data Teams at the instructional level what we have found that in professional development activity you had staff who had gone out and had the training, but came back and said now what do I do with it. They were not quite sure of how to get the Data Teams up and running, what data should they be looking at, even though it had a defined process. We provided through the people that we work with to provide the training and technical assistance to provide a Data Team Facilitator who is

someone from the outside who comes into the school, works with groups of teachers who are actually executing the process and provide feedback and help them structure. The other challenge we have seen is that in some districts this whole model really requires teachers to have time to collaborate and to meet on a regular basis and dedicated time to do that. Some of our districts already had this planned and was possible and other districts it was the biggest obstacle in moving this forward. We provided a fund of stipend money to give to the school to either pay for substitutes to come in to release teachers for the meetings or to pay teachers to stay after school, do vacation work or summer work. We were very pleased that of the 12 demonstration schools last year 5 of them made AYP and safe harbor and had not previously. We were optimistic given a relatively short period of time (6-7 months) that they were moving forward with this intensive approach. These were folks that were very eager and ready to hit the ground running.

Dr. Starr thanked the State for their presentation and overview and also thanked staff to help integrate the work that we have already been doing with the accountability work that we are required to do. A lot of credit goes to Amy Karwan for doing all the legwork and organization around this. Dr. Starr noted that he had shared with the Board members over the weekend the letter from the Commissioner, the synopsis, and the report itself. He gave a presentation which highlighted some of the items. He noted that there is no one indicator of achievement. We don't say a child can be summed up by a test score, we now have the PDK audit, we have the Cambridge Quality Review, our annual report data, student achievement data, the work from last year from Lawrence Rine with math, and we have a lot of information that needs to be put together and discern the patterns and what is it that is going on. We look at this as another solid piece of information that helps us understand ourselves better, ask better questions, helps us move forward and say how do we improve. Does it say everything about the Stamford Public Schools – no. Does it say some things that are really very telling and consistent with what we already know – yes. There is a lot of good information for us to act on and we have to look at in concert with all the other information we have, particularly the PDK Audit.

Dr. Starr stated that looked at everything in 6 domains – our effectiveness in securing positive outcomes for students, the effectiveness of the district's support for student learning, the effectiveness of the district leadership and management, the effectiveness of the district management of human and fiscal resources, the effectiveness of the district's operational systems, and the effectiveness of which the district engages stakeholders and evaluates their satisfaction. He noted that if people throughout the Stamford Public Schools and community did not believe so deeply in the work that we are trying to do then whatever he said would just be in the wind. We have assembled a group of people that have the capacity to advance the work of the district. If we apply ourselves with logic and a methodical way, we work hard in doing what is right and we have that evidence with Every Day Math, and other things as well, we will get results that are promising.

It was noted by the State that our fiscal procedures and operations are excellent and that we are spending our money well and we are very transparent. We have been obtaining money from the corporate community that has been used to enhance curriculum development.

He reviewed the areas for improvement and the initiatives that we have in progress. One area of improvement is to ensure that our support for student learning is effective in raising the achievement levels and closing gaps. We are already doing some things in this area which is all our reform in curriculum instruction (math, literacy, science) which is all part of this. The effort we are putting in to creating a balanced accountability system that uses not only standardized tests results, but uses the vertical scale information. We will be talking next month about surveys that will be done. Our Middle School Reform work, which is really part of our curriculum instruction reform work, is also included. Another area of improvement is improving outcomes of students with disabilities by having a strategic action plan. We are currently doing response intervention, content professional development, and individual learning needs coaches. We have seen a decrease in referrals as a result. This is a huge area of work for us as we discussed during the budget time. With respect to the area of Developing a Leadership Capacity and Culture of Empowerment Ownership and Reciprocal Accountability we have our Emerging Leaders program and our professional development has become more principal driven. They are working with Dr. Hamilton and leading the agenda of what kind of professional development they want, and we are increasing times for principals to work together to share practice. Another big area is the Enhanced Implementation Process and Procedures. We talk about this in terms of monitoring. We need to be monitoring what we are doing.

We have specific action plans along with conditions for success which was developed in our work with Panasonic and Connecticut Center for School Change and have been agreed upon by our bargaining units, administration, and Board members. These are the conditions under which we will meet our criteria for success. We are working to monitor standards and processes. Yesterday we were presented with a model for monitoring our math and science work. We will pilot it in that area and then roll it into other areas.

Finally, improving communications between the district office and all stakeholders – there is work that never stops. We have some internal communication and collaboration mechanisms, whether its use of e-mail, regular meetings with bargaining representatives, and participation of multiple people. We have our System Leadership Council where we spend a day a month with the SEA leadership, SAU leaderships, Board members, and 3 of the members of the Superintendent's cabinet work with the Connecticut Center for School Change and Panasonic to look at the big picture, big systemic issues that we are working on in the district.

Dr. Starr encouraged all to read the synopsis. We have given this as a template to all the schools so when the school reports come out if they choose,

it's optional, and we will be following the same process. So for each school report we will have something similar or something that they have decided to do on their own. This information will be on the website. We have learned a lot this year and we are looking at the next level of work. We have been on a good path. You have heard me say before – I don't believe that we are being held accountable by the State – I believe that we have to account for what we are doing and if we continue to account for what we are doing and since we are doing the right things, it will lead to improved student achievement we will not only meet the letter of the law, but we will exceed the expectations of standards that have been set by the federal and state government.

Ms. Wade noted that there is lots of data available, but making the data available to those individuals at the school level and classroom level seemed to be problematic. How is the data being distributed to them? Dr. Starr responded that this is a big area of growth for us. We have a data warehouse which allows us to integrate the data from different sources. We are intending next year to roll out what is known as Dashboard. We decide on what the key indicators are and everyone throughout the system will have access in a push out approach. Our professional learning communities are based on the notion behind the professional learning communities which is that they use student work and student achievement data. It can be a mix of assessments that the grade level team has decided to give, it can be CMT strand data, or a piece of writing. There needs to be a straight line between the data that people are looking at the PLC level, the school improvement plan, and the district work.

Ms. Wade asked if there is going to be professional development around how to access the data so it can be applied on a per student basis. Dr. Starr responded that there already has been. We have had people participate in CALI, power users, PLC training and that was about the data base decision making process. It also comes down to an issue of technology and people having access in their classrooms. Ms. Wade noted that Dr. Starr had talked about slowing down and since a lot is being driven feels as if there isn't any slowing down and that it is a push out to do ever more with more information. How is this balanced between the urgent need to solve and resolve with stepping back and taking a look to see what it is that we actually need to be doing? Dr. Starr responded that there is a difference between motion and movement and productivity and activity. There is no doubt that there is a great sense of urgency as was evidenced in the first bullet point of what we do well. The rate of change is a constant challenge for any school district and certainly for ours. We want to do a lot, but we can't do everything at once and we have to make sure that we are doing the right things that we can build on. The good thing is that what we have done over the last couple of years has shown some very promising results. We have a good foundation to build on and part of the slowing down process is saying what is it that we really want to accomplish, what are resources that are necessary, what is the capacity, and how do we learn from what we have done in order to get there. Ms. Wade asked if this would be brought to the Board for ongoing discussion so that we stay aligned with administration. Dr. Starr responded that as discussed at the Board Retreat in January and we did have

that discussion about what our strategic priorities are and linking the Strategic Plan to the District Improvement Plan. That is the ongoing work that the Board of Education and Superintendent and Ms. Nabel will actually be talking about the next steps in that process that we began last month.

Mr. Mathews asked that if he moved from the west side of Stamford to the east side of Stamford what expectations should he have relative to standards based curriculum and instruction that my son at Westhill High School is going to receive the same instruction he received in Stamford High School.

## **BOARD REPORT**

Ms. Nabel stated that she had e-mailed everyone the notes from the retreat over the weekend and what she would like to do is get everyone focused on what the work of the Board should be in our next initiative. We need to move on and she thought that it was very clear from the work that we did in the retreat that policy is our next area of focus. To her it was made even clearer through the PDK audit that the Board needs to take a look at its own policies in curriculum with an eye to developing curriculum policies that really give some teeth to what is said in the Cambridge and PDK reports which is that we the Board talked about common curriculum and uniform assessments, but we don't have a policy that puts any real strength in our expectation that all schools work across a common curriculum. She suggested having everyone look at the retreat notes and when you have had time to read the assessment and digest it and the PDK that on March 10, 2009 we come back to the policy part of our agenda and do two things: (1) begin to formulate some kind of plan or timeline for examining curriculum polices and as a preface to that she has asked Ms. Lorenti to begin with CABE to perhaps research what some curriculum policy templates might be. She will have those policies to show us in March, and (2) Develop a timeline. The audit in particular asks that we look at our own policies in the Policy Manual which are policies 6154, 6120, 6119, 4125, 2110, 4001, 4110, 4111, and 5001.

Ms. Nabel also noted that in the Cambridge report there was a lot to be proud of with respect to our operations and fiscal systems. There were also some very complimentary words about our Bilingual/ELL Department and the community and family engagement that goes on as well as through the Community & Family Engagement office. Dr. Starr noted that Cambridge is very clear that they are not looking for good stuff and are looking at the stuff that we need to do better at.

## **TIME FOR THE PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**

One person spoke regarding the Stamford High School Jazz Ensemble went to Berkley High School Jazz Festival in Boston. The whole ensemble played in a non-competitive group level and were in the top third of the groups. The Jazz Combo, which is a smaller subset of the ensemble, played in a very competitive small group class against 13 other combos and came in

4<sup>th</sup> place for Honorable Mention. The schools they competed against came from all across the country and many, if not all of the schools, had very strong music departments and programs including Norwalk. There are two upcoming Jazz Festivals. One is Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup> at Brien McMahon and another one in two weeks in Norwalk.

Also, in breaking with the hometown rivalry between the two high school teams there is now a new combined called the SHS/WHS Winter Guard which is a group of 9 girls who participated in the SHS Marching Band Color Guard. They started competing in January. There are 3 remaining competitions before the championship on March 28<sup>th</sup>. Also there will be a Winter Percussion Ensemble which will be kicking off its 2009 schedule when it hosts the Math Competition on Saturday, February 28<sup>th</sup> at Stamford HS at 5:00 pm.

The speaker also noted that one of the Oscar winners at the end of their thank you speech thanked his drama teacher who had given him a small part. Knowing that the budget situation is going to be tight, but this reinforces the idea that arts and the extras are really important and helps people move forward with their lives and makes a well rounded student.

## **REPORTS/DISCUSSIONS/RESOLUTIONS**

Ms. Nabel noted that the Board is embarking on a new format this year and this being the second meeting of the month this is our action meeting. The various committees that are listed on the agenda discussed these resolutions at our working meeting earlier this month.

## **CURRICULUM**

Ms. Lorenti mentioned that at our working meeting Dr. Nicholson gave us a presentation regarding the literacy work that we will be working on over the next three years from the audit that we received. We also discussed the School Improvement Plans and we have a resolution for the SIP's. She noted that she did not receive any questions from anyone for follow up on the SIP's. The resolution was approved by the Committee on March 10, 2009.

### **Resolution 02-24-09:74**

Ms. Lorenti moved, seconded by Mr. Mathews:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve the School Improvement Plans for the schools identified as In Need of Improvement (Davenport, Hart, K.T. Murphy, Newfield, Northeast, Rogers, Roxbury, Springdale, Stark, Stillmeadow, Cloonan, Dolan, Rippowam, Turn of River, Stamford High, and Westhill).

The resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

Mr. Mathews suggested that we give some time to discussing the mid-term exams in general, but specifically the Algebra I and IA exams that were recently administered. Ms. Lorenti asked for some information and the differences between the two schools for the March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. Dr. Starr asked for guidance as to what questions the Board may have so that he provides the correct information. Ms. Lorenti noted that she has a list of questions and will work with Dr. Nicholson and give her a list of her questions going back from last year and just moving forward. What happened from last year vs. this year in freshman algebra? Ms. Nabel asked for a review of the algebra mid-term development and administration and reporting out.

## **FACILITIES**

Mr. Mathews asked Mr. Barbarotta and Mr. Dunn to give a status update on the items listed. Mr. Dunn noted that with respect to the Facilities Audit, EMG was in last week and spent the week at Northeast and Rogers which are the two pilot schools. They have returned to their offices and are working on a preliminary report for us, which we will review with the Engineering Department. Then we will basically see if that is satisfying our needs and/or add or delete what we think they should be working on.

Mr. Dunn reported that there is no update on the walking access to the Environmental Magnet School at this point. Mr. Rubino asked where we are on the walking access to EMS. Mr. Dunn responded that the City is now negotiating with Clairol who is now negotiating with a potential buyer. This is on their shopping list to either give us access or expand fencing on Cove Road. Ms. Nabel noted that when Lou Casolo and Dominic Tramontozzi were here last time they said that the City is in discussion about a lease to provide walking access on the Cove Road side and that fencing was the only expenditure and we were basically waiting for a lease. Mr. Dunn responded that part of it surrounds who the potential buyer would be and what the uses of that facility would be. Mr. Polo stated that the lease we were talking about with the State was next to the highway which is a different issue. Ms. Nabel asked that Mr. Casolo be asked back to the next meeting to give us a concrete update. Mr. Barbarotta noted that Mike Freimuth is the one who is heading up the negotiations with Clairol and the new buyer. We met with him right after that meeting and he has it on his agenda as part of the negotiations and an update from Mr. Freimuth would be appropriate also. Mr. Barbarotta will follow up on this.

Mr. Barbarotta reported that our Energy Management System is up and running in all of our schools and we are starting to see some results. Nancy Domiziano from Engineering reported to him that she saw, not across the board, but in a majority of the instances, about a 9% decrease in energy costs. We are now able to control each of the schools from here. We have trained all the head

custodians, tradesman, our staff here, looked at start times, when we turn the heat on and off and, will do the same with the air conditioning, to look at ways to address a new program that we have implemented and have actually sent all our people for training. Through a State program called Energy Star Portfolio we are going to be able to take a look at month by month, last year vs. this year, school by school dollars, btu's, and kilowatt hours with electricity to rate our performance. We will be rating each building with an Energy Star rating. A 75% rating is our goal which means the building is energy efficient. We have some schools that we are looking at that are in the 30-40% and what we can do to improve those schools. What the program does, and this is something that every school system is going to have to do by 2011 by State law, is manage their energy better in a program similar to the Energy Star Portfolio. Stamford was one of the test programs and we are working with Bill Leahy from Eastern Connecticut State University. Right now we are inputting all the base information into the system which is basically the utility bills with the dollars, kilowatts, and Btu's and you will start to see those reports. We are working with the Engineering Department, Nancy Domiziano specifically, but she is inundated with a whole bunch of other projects that she is working on and it is tough for us to get the information. We have entered 14 of the 23 schools into the system and we will start sharing information on a regular basis. When you start looking at how much you are spending at each school it provokes lots of questions. One of the other programs that we are doing, but are not ready to share yet as it has not been finalized, is going school by school and taking a look at where we use electricity. How many vending machines in a school, how many microwave ovens, how many illegal heaters, how many copy machines, and anything that you plug in, and will do a comparison school by school as to where we are using our electricity and then take a look at where we can impact some savings school by school. We are looking at a multi-million dollar budget here and any money we can save here and give back to you to put into the curriculum would be our goal. Mr. Dunn noted that a cold drink vending machine uses 900 watts of electricity every day. How many of those machines are out there and what is the cost.

Mr. Polo asked what the timeframe was on the 9% savings. Mr. Dunn responded that it was January year to date and this fiscal year vs. last fiscal year. Mr. Polo asked if this primarily came from changes in policy or usage. Mr. Dunn replied that some of it is and some is a recovery from the Per Diem software program that actually shuts down a computer if someone forgets to shut it off it will be put into a sleep mode. This is a work in process and eventually there will be a database. Mr. Barbarotta noted that this really the first year where we have our energy management systems working and understood by all of our rank and file. Mr. Polo asked about the plug in load and if it would be possible to break out or does the report break out who benefits from those machines and where the usage is. Mr. Dunn indicated that is exactly where we are going and asking why is the machine there and who is benefiting from it and should they be paying the electrical costs, which is something the Board would need to decide. Our job is to give you the facts. Mr. Barbarotta indicated that he is doing a similar review of the overtime budget and trying to control the hours. We find that we will open up

a school on a Sunday or a holiday for a car wash to make \$200 and it will cost \$600 to open the school and run it.

Ms. Wade asked if the energy audit would allow you to prioritize differently what you recommend that we address in the capital budget. Mr. Barbarotta responded that it will be very helpful as you are going to see schools that are just energy hogs and we will have to, through this program, identify what the issues are whether it be unit ventilators, single pane glass, doors, and old boilers. We made significant improvements, but we still have some schools that we call energy hogs. Mr. Dunn stated that now he wants to see where we think our next big project should be instead of waiting and reacting from a repair/maintenance mode. When we went to the Planning Board meetings we asked for an increase in the Boyle Stadium request of \$1.2 to \$1.750M, but he also asked for a restoration in the capital budget on some of the energy savings projects and some of the boiler projects that had been eliminated by the Planning Board. These are the types of projects that will generate a cost savings and a payback.

Ms. Wade asked if any moneys from the Economic Recovery Act money could be used for boiler replacement. Mr. Barbarotta responded absolutely and Mr. Dunn noted that some of the money could go to Turn of River since we are shovel ready at that location. Ms. Nabel asked if that money comes in will that be in addition to our capital budget or will it be seen as a mechanism for reducing the capital budget requests we have already made. Mr. Dunn responded that he really did not know and Dr. Starr noted that the City is managing all of that and that we don't manage the capital budget, capital budget projects, nor would we be determining the distribution of any ARRA money that comes through. Ms. Nabel asked Mr. Mathews and the Committee members, that as it does not sound as though it is particularly productive to have the energy audit every single month, perhaps among the Committee members and in discussion with Mr. Dunn and Mr. Barbarotta you can determine how frequently we need to revisit this item. It was agreed not to carry this item at every single meeting. Ms. Nabel noted that Mr. Polo did request specific figures on AITE as a follow up to Mr. Rubino's request from a few months ago as to how we are doing in terms of monitoring the energy consumption at that school and how this school year looks as opposed to last year. Mr. Dunn responded that actually it looks very good. He also noted that he should come back to the Board with an update from the Legal Department on our efforts to recover money on the high electrical cost last year and the second update that we are trying to get is that the Engineering Department has been asked to go back to the boiler manufacturer to try and recover damages. Mr. Mathews reported that he and Mr. Dunn attended a Board of Finance meeting earlier this month relative to the situation on the budgets and legal recourse was discussed and we are moving on that. Mr. Barbarotta stated that there is a class action suit against HB Smith for the boiler.

Mr. Mathews moved on to the resolutions and noted that they were both close out resolutions.

Mr. Polo asked if there was any resolution on the Boyle Stadium project. Mr. Barbarotta indicated there was no decision yet.

**Resolution 02-24-09:75**

Mr. Mathews moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve completion of School Construction State Project #135-0203 A/CV Rippowam Center Renovation.

Mr. Barbarotta explained that for State projects where we seek reimbursement for a percentage of the project, which is about 28%, requires approval by the Board. This project goes back to when we changed the curtain wall on the whole school and code updates in the school. Although the school needs a lot of work this first phase of the project needs to be closed down and then as we set a priority to get back to Rippowam to do the next phase of the project we will open up a new project number. In order to close out both of these projects with the State and get the final reimbursement from the State the Board needs to accept these projects as completed.

The resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

**Resolution 02-24-09:76**

Mr. Mathews moved, seconded by Mr. King:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve completion of School Construction State Project #135-0219 VA/N Westhill High School Vo-Ag Center.

Mr. Barbarotta noted that this is the same situation. The Vo-Ag Building that we built behind Westhill High School is complete and we need to close out the paper work to get the final reimbursement from the State and we need to accept the project as being completed officially.

The resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

## **FISCAL**

Ms. Nabel noted that Ms. Heftman, Chair of the Fiscal Committee, is not here this evening and she asked Mr. Dunn to give an update on the 2008-2009 Operating Budget and the 2009-2010 Operating Budget. Mr. Dunn reported that we are currently forecasting a surplus for the year in the amount of \$250,000 which hopefully will help the City with some of its financial challenges. Within that we have cancelled out the \$600,000 energy challenge we had. We were basically able to accomplish this by freezing a number of positions and reducing our non-labor accounts by 3%. We have had favorable medical trends and some prescription drug rebates. The \$250,000 is based on January 2009 results and we will keep you updated.

Mr. Dunn indicated that with respect to the 2009-2010 budget we are in the process of finalizing the presentation to the number that the Board approved and it will then go to the City boards. We are in the process of preparing a presentation for the Board of Representatives and Board of Finance. Ms. Nabel noted that the dates are March 9<sup>th</sup> and March 30<sup>th</sup> for the Board of Representatives presentation. She also reminded all that the Joint Public Hearing on the budget for the Board of Representatives and Board of Finance is on Monday, March 16, 2009 at Turn of River Middle School starting at 6:30 pm.

Ms. Nabel followed up with what Dr. Starr had reported on earlier with respect to the Quarterly Budget update with members of the Board of Representatives Fiscal and Education Committees and Board of Finance Education Committee. We had an extended conversation about the Federal Stimulus Package and what it may or may not mean in terms of our budget for next year and the years following. It was a good discussion and her take away is that there are not too many knowns at this point in terms of dollars or time of delivery and that we need to be mindful that we are careful in considering those dollars as monies that can't supplant things we already have in the budget and to make sure other Boards understand this. Ms. Wade asked if Dr. Starr would be providing talking points and Dr. Starr indicated that he would, but is waiting for some more solid information from the State so we don't have to send things out multiple times.

Mr. Rubino indicated that he would like to start a dialogue on transportation sooner rather than later. Although it is too late for the 2009-2010 budget, at some point he would like to start this discussion and would like to have this item added to the pending part of either the Fiscal or Policy agendas. Ms. Nabel indicated she would discuss this with Ms. Heftman and agreed that it needs to be written down somewhere on the agenda so we don't lose site of it.

## **LABOR RELATIONS**

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak reported that there was a Committee meeting on February 10, 2009 at the Board of Education Working meeting. At that time we had a status update on the labor contracts and the staffing. She noted that

unless anyone wanted to hear that update again, she was not going to ask Ms. Gagne to come to the table. No one asked to hear the update and Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak moved on to the resolutions which were discussed and approved in Committee.

Mr. King left the meeting.

**Resolution 02-24-09:77**

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve the filling of 1 Special Education Assistant at Springdale effective February 25, 2009.

The resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

Mr. King returned to the meeting.

**Resolution 02-24-09:78**

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve an extended childcare leave for the 2009-2010 school year for the following teachers: Sarah Martino and Cara Gregorio Reilly.

The resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

**Resolution 02-24-09:79**

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak moved, seconded by Mr. King:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education hereby appoints Milton Thomas as the Independent Hearing Officer to preside over formal hearings governing school accommodations and student disciplinary matters conducted in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Sections 10-186 and 10-233, respectively, which hearings shall also be conducted pursuant to the accompanying policies and regulations promulgated by the Stamford Public Schools. As the appointed Independent Hearing Officer for such matters, the duties of said Hearing Officer shall include presiding over formal hearings for student expulsions and school accommodations,

including residency and transportation hearings. Said appointment shall be effective immediately and shall continue through June 30, 2010.

Two typo corrections were made in the last sentence.

The resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

## **POLICY**

Ms. Nabel noted that at the March 10, 2009 meeting we will have Report Items for Curriculum and Transportation policies. Dr. Starr noted that there are two items for policy that he would like to bring forward. One is on the Transportation Hearing Process and he is describing the content without the exact policy. The other one is on the Out-of-District and Out-of-Zone placement both which had been drafted and have not been brought forward. They are ready to be brought to the Board for discussion. Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak stated that in light of starting to look at policies with an eye towards setting a clearer direction for schools and more student success, she would like to look at our Graduation Requirements policy at some point. Ms. Nabel noted that it was on the Policy agenda as a pending item for a while because the State may have been poised to make some changes in its recommendations. Dr. Starr cautioned the Board against this since this policy is a critical policy to consider. It is important as the Board goes forward with policy work that it is in concert with the curriculum instruction work, the school improvement work, the Strategic Plan work, and the District Improvement Plan work that the Board has begun taking part in and will continue to take part in. The process by which the Board determines what policies to review and when has to be consistent with what the critical priority work is of the district. Dr. Starr stated that he will be prepared at the March 10, 2009 meeting to discuss the policies that are necessary to review and/or develop within the context of a 3-5 year Literacy Revision Plan. The PDK audit is on elementary school and while we can certainly back map from high school graduation requirements he would like the opportunity to put before the Board those policies that we believe are most important to consider in light of the work we are doing. Once you put High School Graduation Requirements policy on the table it becomes a big issue and will become an issue that consumes a significant amount of time. He asked for the opportunity to put forward those policies that we believe are germane to the priority work that we have already determined for this year as well as the recent review documents that we have been presented with.

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak responded that she understands that and certainly did not think that we could successfully make too many changes at the same time. However, at the same time she does not want to lose sight of this as it does set the tone for the district and every year that we don't address our graduation policy we are continuing to let some children graduate without the same level of education as others who get guidance from parents and guidance

counselors to work at a higher level than what they are required to. She is concerned that we are allowing children to graduate without requiring them all to achieve at the same level if we don't strengthen our graduation requirements. She would like to this to stay on the agenda and is within our 6 month discussion range.

Ms. Nabel moved on to what was discussed at the last meeting which was the 2009-2010 School Calendar. There was information in the package which answered the last couple of questions.

**Resolution 02-24-09:80**

Ms. Lorenti moved, seconded by Mr. Mathews:

**BE IT RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approve the proposed 2009-2010 school year calendar.

Mr. Rubino indicated that he would be voting against this resolution. His feeling is that 50% of the families in this district are economically disadvantaged and this is a hardship for them. Also many have both parents working. They are not jetting off to the Bahamas, but are working through these vacations and they have to pay for childcare which could run \$1,000 a week if you have more than one child. He thinks this is the wrong thing for families and we have to look at who the families are that we are serving. It also might not be the right thing to do vis a vis the standardized tests that we take one vacation before it anyway. Everyone he has talked to in terms of parents was in favor of eliminating one vacation week. One officer from PT Council spoke in favor of it in the Advocate. There was one voice against it which was the SEA and they have a right to their opinion, but we don't run this district for the SEA.

Ms. Lorenti noted that she did not disagree with Mr. Rubino, but because we are so late in the process for this year, she thought a charge was to go back and ask Ms. Arnold to go back and talk to the Bargaining Units and work it out for the next calendar year.

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak indicated she has no problem with the February vacation and is fine with looking at it again. She did not think we could use the economic hardship argument. Children are in school 181 days and we are not proposing to change the number of days they are in school, so the 184 days in the year parents still have to provide for their children whether those days are in February, March, April, or June..

Mr. Polo stated that he was under the impression that we were going to put this on hold and then try and work 2 years out. He did not know if now is the time to change this particular calendar. We have an obligation to work 2 years in advance and should stick to that idea.

Ms. Nabel stated that the specific discussion was that are own internal set of regulations called for the Board to come to a decision on this in December. It is important to the community to know at this time of year what the calendar will look like for the next school year. Our discussion specifically was since that there was not a weight of opinion the vacation scheduled for 2009-2010, that we would resolve the issue and go forward with the 2009-2010 calendar and as the next step the administration and Ah Hoc Public Engagement Committee would begin to formulate some questions and a survey technique for 2010-2011 and with the eye to that if you are making a change to make it for the next two school years. There was a commitment to go forward this.

Mr. Rubino mentioned that he has been talking about this for 3 years. You have a certain number of days and, to the point that Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak brought up, it is much easier to handle an extended summer vacation for a parent than it is to keep these vacations in the middle of the school year. In terms of the Bargaining Unit, they are entitled to their opinion and he understands that, but did not think it is something that you need to go back and negotiate. Dr. Starr noted that he did not have the exact terminology of the contract, but the language is along the lines of consult, not negotiate.

Ms. Nabel thought that the reason it fails every year is that there isn't not enough support for Mr. Rubino's position. There is the weight of experience in this district. There were 2 years when we did not have the February vacation and it was not a successful experiment. The second thing is that if you are going to start examining making the lives of working parents more difficult, then we need to look at the entire school calendar and look at early release days and everything else. She did not want to open this discussion now, but if we want to examine change in the calendar we need to start next month, do it in a very slow and systematic way so that the change is examined, surveyed, announced, shared with the public, and is not sprung on anyone.

The resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, and Ms. Wade. Opposed: Mr. Rubino.

Mr. Polo asked to add an item under Information Items for the March meeting. He asked to explore and understand how the new Toquam districted areas from the Rogers International School will impact the diversity and class size at Toquam and going forward how the lottery magnet draw will work for 2009-2010 and onward. Ms. Nabel noted that Mr. Polo is basically asking for an update on the administration of the magnet policy as it applies to the new Rogers School and Toquam. Dr. Starr will bring information to the March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## **AD HOC PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Ms. Wade responded to Mr. Rubino's request to look at the school calendar, she will schedule a meeting with her Committee and Sarah Arnold next month to talk broadly and then specifically about what are options are and what the survey might look like to formulate some questions. The next step would to bring it out of Committee for review and response. Once everything is decided there will be discussion on how to implement. Dr. Starr noted that Ms. Karwan should be brought into these conversations also.

Mr. Rubino went back to Policy and indicated that he had an additional item. In view of recent events and talking about school safety especially high school safety, he would like to bring one other item on to policy with respect to bathrooms in the high schools and even in the middle schools. He has been hearing comments that kids fear for their safety in using the bathrooms. Ms. Nabel asked for the flexibility to discuss this with the Superintendent and it will appear on the agenda. Mr. Rubino noted that safety and inappropriate behavior are the items.

Mr. Mathews asked if he should bring something up again or if Ms. Nabel wanted to speak to it. Ms. Nabel stated that is why she asked for the ability to formulate a report and place it in the appropriate place on the agenda.

Ms. Wade continued with her report and noted that they have received a response from about 30 organizations for the Stone Soup Event and are hoping to double this. They are planning on having more than 1,000 attending over the day. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> leg of the three legged stool of the Office of Family & Community Engagement in that it is an outreach to the community, engaging the community, identifying issues that the community has identified and then acting upon them in concert with the OFCE. There are two services that we would like to bring to Dr. Starr. One is that we are hoping to have a directory where everyone that provides a service for families is listed as either a directory of directories that are available or actually list them with the types of services that they provide and then post on the Stamford Public Schools website. Secondly, we will be conducting a survey with data that will either be collected on Survey Monkey or Mind Survey, but would also love input from the Stamford Public Schools as to the kinds of questions you would like to have asked and answered so that some of the information is directly aligned with the kind of information that you are attempting to gather out in the community. Ms. Nabel asked who the umbrella organization for Stone Soup.

Ms. Wade referred to a New York Times Article (February 23, 2009) about educational secretary Arnie Duncan is going to rebrand NCLB. One entry alluding to the bank bailout program suggests that it be called the Mental Asset Recovery Plan. Another is the act to help children read gooder. One is no child left untested and no school board left standing.

## **SPEF**

Ms. Lorenti reminded everyone about the SPEF Event on March 9, 2009 at Morton's Steak House.

## **CABE**

Mr. King indicated that he had nothing to report.

## **STAMFORD PARTNERSHIP**

Ms. Wade reported that she was not able to attend the meeting, but would be obtaining information from Ms. Walsh. Dr. Starr indicated that he does not attend the Stamford Partnership meeting as it conflicts with the day and time of his District Administrators meeting.

Ms. Nabel asked for a review of the Systems Leadership Council and Dr. Starr responded that he would obtain the information.

Ms. Lorenti moved, seconded by Ms. Wade to adjourn the meeting at 9:58 p.m. with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

Dr. Joshua P. Starr  
Superintendent of Schools  
Executive Office