

MINUTES OF THE WORKING MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION Stamford, Connecticut May 12, 2009

The Working Meeting of the Board of Education was held on May 12, 2009 at the Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard. The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. by Ms. Nabel, President, with the following Board members present: Ms. Heftman, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Mr. King, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade. Absent: Mayor Malloy. Also in attendance: Dr. Starr, Dr. Hamilton, Ms. Nicholson, Ms. Gagne, Ms. Karwan, Mr. Murphy, Ms. Arnold, representative from the SEA, representative from the Advocate, and approximately 8 guests.

Salute to the flag.

MISSION STATEMENT

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

STUDENT SHOWCASE

Students from Stamford High School Drama Club performed a scene from their current production "Once Upon a Mattress."

REPORTS/DISCUSSIONS/RESOLUTIONS

FISCAL

Ms. Heftman asked Mr. Murphy to give an update on the 2009-2009 Operating Budget. Mr. Murphy reported that the month of April has not been closed yet, but there are some indications that there might be a little bit more funds available due to the cross charges from Technology coming in lower. The year end balance is solid. Ms. Heftman inquired about the building permit fees that are collected and where it is located in the budget. Mr. Murphy noted that it does not show up directly in our operating budget, but we use those funds to hold down costs in our 420 Repair and Maintenance account. Ms. Heftman requested a report on the School Building Use Fund account and information on who authorizes the spending and where the money actually goes.

Dr. Starr reported on the 2009-2010 Operating Budget noting that the Board of Representatives voted almost a \$1.6M cut on top of the \$5.8M cut by the Board of Finance for a total of \$7.4M reduction from the Board of Education

approved 2009-2010 operating budget. The Board of Education's original request was for an increase of 3.7% and these cuts brings us to a .36% which is essentially flat from what we received this year. He is now in the process of determining how to reduce the proposed expenditures and will be presenting his recommendations on May 21, 2009 and the Board of Education will vote on May 28, 2009. The final number is \$219,408,146 which has not been confirmed.

Ms. Heftman reviewed the May 6, 2009 memo from Hugh Murphy that responded to Board Member questions and asked if all questions had been answered satisfactorily. The following additional requests were made:

- Mr. Mathews - consultants information (Attachment 1), he would like to formulate a set of questions and have the Fiscal Chair and Superintendent review them quickly before the reallocation process.
- Ms. Heftman - clarification on Attachment 2 for AITE and the dollar amounts of \$4.8M and \$4.5M. Mr. Murphy noted that the difference is due to the grant funding, but will get the exact information.

Ms. Heftman referred to Ms. Gagne's memo of May 5, 2009 which was a listing of non-union staff whose salaries are governed by us. She asked for an accurate number of what exactly that savings would be if we did not award the raises next year. She also inquired about the salary for the clerical person for the GE College Bound program which is paid for out of the grant. Ms. Heftman also asked Mr. Murphy to see if there would be any savings that could be captured from the Teacher Retirement account with respect to the early retirements. Ms. Heftman also asked Dr. Starr to provide information on how much support is offered between central office and building level content support.

Ms. Nabel noted that with the types of questions that are answered here, we need to get back to quarterly reports on some of the metrics of our budget. We see the transfers monthly, but at one point we were moving more toward doing this quarterly. She stated that consultant invoicing and payments that have been done could be reported on quarterly. Also, in terms of the budget reallocation, how much information will be in the package this Friday aside from answers to the questions that have been asked tonight? Will there be proposals for us to read and think about before next Thursday or will it all be presented next Thursday. Dr. Starr indicated that he intends to present next Thursday. Ms. Nabel asked that the draft of the 2009-2010 Operating Budget options dated April 21, 2009 be included in this week's package.

Ms. Lorenti asked for an update on the RFP for food service. Mr. Murphy reported that the bids have closed and he is visiting other school districts to sample food. His Committee will meet on Wednesday, May 13, 2009 to interview vendors. He is aware that food service is needed for summer school.

Ms. Heftman noted that with respect to the Budget Reallocation process, she would hope that the Committee will come up with its set of recommendations based on what the Superintendent gives us and what other Board members might want to add. We will then take those recommendations to the full Board.

Ms. Heftman stated that if we are not thinking about making any changes to our transportation plan, then we need to take this item off the agenda. Mr. Rubino inquired about a follow up memo regarding magnet busing. Dr. Starr indicated that he is waiting for Mr. Mooney to get back to us with a decision.

CURRICULUM

Dr. Starr reviewed the “draft” of the Middle School Reform which shows what has occurred, what will occur, and when. There are two issues that we are striving to address. One is the unacceptable difference between the achievement level of some of our students and others of our students. In some schools we have a 50 point difference between our different sub groups in reading and math achievement which is unacceptable. The other is the knowledge and skills gap where our standards are not high enough for anybody. The more important issue is raising the bar for everyone and then helping everyone get there and that has been the focus of our work.

Questions from Board members ranged from staff development training, advisory positions, contractual issues, duplicating the Scofield model, student placement changes and how guidance counselors fit in, date of parent notification of child’s placement, what type of measurements would be in place for those students already at goal, will decreases be tracked and how will we know whether that is a result of changes in grouping structure vs. changes in curriculum, book clubs and how much reading is taking place, Foreign Language, Algebra I classes, and sharing successful practices/programs between schools. Dr. Starr noted that a better “draft” document will be ready for the June 2nd meeting.

Dr. Starr indicated that the notification of level date depends on when we receive the CMT’s back from the State which is usually the last week of July or the first week of August. Ms. Nabel repeated that we will see the Middle School Reform document before June 2nd in a slightly revised form. Ms. Nabel suggested a summary be put on the website.

Ms. Lorenti noted that the Literacy Audit update will be discussed at the June working meeting. Also, we received a copy of the Curriculum Management Design from Dr. Nicholson. Dr. Starr noted that this is an area where curriculum and policy get interwoven and thought this might be a conversation for the Policy Committee.

Resolution 05-26-09:105

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

BE IT RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education approves the Educational Technology Plan – July 1, 2009-June 30, 2012.

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

AD HOC PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Ms. Wade reported that the Committee met on May 11, 2009 and the discussion was a process discussion to set ground rules, purpose, expectations for both sides, and what organizations ought to be represented. There was a discussion on how to engage the students who have interests that were perhaps less academic so we included groups such as ROTC, the arts, sports, and other types of groups and how we might be able to identify them. The students also suggested representation from the AVID or from ALTA. We generally agreed that the meetings would be held monthly beginning next year. Dr. Starr was also hoping to create a list of active students for specific issues forums. This group could identify a group of high school students from the 3 high schools to create a forum on specific issues. Dr. Starr also noted at the meeting that it was important the students know who makes the decisions on certain issues and whether it is the Board of building level. This would be an item to discuss at our next meeting. A meeting was tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, May 27th at 6:30 pm in the Government Center. In the future we may hold meetings at the various high schools on a rotating basis. Ms. Wade noted that it was brought to her attention that there is a conflict for the meeting on May 27th and she will look at alternative dates.

POLICY

Ms. Nabel referred back to the Curriculum Management Design document that was mentioned early, but before that discussion she wanted to speak to the natural interface between the middle school reform discussion and an update on the LAP conference that took place April 30, May 1, and May 2 which she attended with Dr. Starr, Ms. Lorenti, and approximately 21 from Stamford which included teachers, administrators, central office and Larry Leverett and Laura Boutilier from Panasonic. Ms. Nabel reported that a great deal of “nuts and bolts work” was done on the two issues that we have spent the most time talking about which are middle school reform and literacy and the implementation of initiatives growing out of the literacy audit, both of which fall roughly under the umbrella of

the Board's work in curriculum. Most of the time at the conference was spent out ironing out real procedural and technical aspects of how to implement middle school reform and a new literacy curriculum. She will summarize the minutes of the conference and send it out for the Board package. She was very impressed with the fact that Dr. Starr, Dr. Hamilton, leader of the SEA, and the heads of the SAU were able to sit across a table and confront each other with the issues that are preventing these reforms from happening and really working out intermediate steps and working out what is called in the SLC meetings achievable results middle school reform, and upgrade the literacy is in concert with what the people who do the work are actually talking about. The basis for the discussion at the conference around curriculum was the Curriculum Management Design document and its place in what we will be talking about in policy development at the Board Retreat.

Dr. Starr indicated that the Curriculum Management Design process document that the Board received from Dr. Nicholson, which is an outgrowth of our partnership with the Panasonic and Connecticut Center for School Change, should form the basis of policies around curriculum, instruction, etc. He asked that everyone read the document and be prepared to discuss and then we will work through to determine what it means to turn this document, assuming that the Board agrees, into policy statements.

Ms. Nabel asked that everyone who had sample policies that they were going to research to e-mail them to her and she will make sure everyone has copies. We should focus on page 2 – “Guiding Principles of Stakeholder Engagement” which states “putting new curriculum into practice and determining success of the curriculum.” If we can start thinking about what the Stamford Public Schools’ Board of Education wants to say about what we expect from our schools in terms of implementing a curriculum, even if it is just as simple as we expect all 12 elementary schools to implement the new math curriculum, K-12, by X date, we need a few sentences to start with and compare with policies from other districts and begin to craft a word document that we can amplify or cut down, but we need something to start with. Secondly to that with Dr. Starr’s guidance, how are we going to measure whether or not the policy is successful? What do we want to look at? Dr. Starr encouraged all to go on the Greenwich, CT website and see the way they have done their policy manual.

Ms. Nabel indicated she is working on a location for the Board Retreat on June 5th and 6th.

Under Information Items, Ms. Nabel mentioned two items not on the agenda. By going paperless with the Board package we are realizing a cost savings of \$10,243.80 annually for the schools. Also, there is a scheduled meeting, as part of our Board By-law policy, for the Superintendent’s Evaluation on Tuesday, May 19, 2009. Each Board member has received a package and she asked that any handwritten notes be sent to her for a summary document by Sunday night. Also, in order to accord the Superintendent the same privileges of

confidentiality that are accorded to other professionals in our system, there will be a motion to conduct this meeting in executive session.

FACILITIES

Mr. Mathews reported that he reviewed with Mr. Barbarotta items that will be brought forward to the meeting on May 26, 2009. We will have a report relative to the AITE Energy inquiry and the boiler claim. About 2 months ago there was a meeting regarding the possibility of a legal claim against the vendor for the boilers and we might be able to have action taken where we recoup money. Mr. Barbarotta will have a report on our boiler situation. Also, he is trying desperately, since time is growing short, to have Nancy Domiziano come and appear before us to give us a brief report on energy costs. We will also have an update on the EMG report. Mr. Rubino inquired about the walking access to the EMS. Dr. Starr responded that we are still waiting for an answer. Mr. Mathews will notify Ms. Nabel prior to May 22nd of any changes to his agenda items.

Ms. Heftman asked that since there was a cut to the Capital budget, does that necessitate the Board of Education voting again. Dr. Starr indicated the Board would have to vote again.

LABOR RELATIONS

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak reported that there were no changes. There are no contracts being negotiated right now and there are no changes in staffing. There is a grievance hearing scheduled for Thursday, May 14, 2009. Ms. Nabel asked Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak a question for discussion with Ms. Gagne which is that we will need to schedule a Board concern discussion regarding the SEA upcoming contract negotiations.

Resolution 05-26-09:106

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 personal leave(s) for the 2009-2010 school year for the following teacher(s): Viviana Toure.

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

Ms. Heftman asked that with respect to the \$1.1M cut are we going to request from the Board of Finance that they put this amount into a contingency fund because if we don't do this and the money goes to the City we will never be able to get it. Dr. Starr indicated that this is a good point and will follow up.

Mr. Rubino moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 p.m. with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Heftman, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Mr. King, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

Dr. Joshua P. Starr
Superintendent of Schools
Executive Office