

MINUTES OF REDISTRICTING  
COMMITTEE MEETING  
OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Stamford, Connecticut  
February 4, 2008

The Redistricting Committee Meeting of the Board of Education was held on February 4, 2008 at the Toquam Magnet Elementary School, 123 Ridgewood Avenue. The meeting was called to order at 7:12 p.m. by Ms. Nabel, Chairperson, with the following Committee members present: Mr. Freedman, Ms. McManus, Ms. Nabel, and Mr. Rubino. Not in attendance: Mr. King. Also in attendance: Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Dr. Starr, Ms. Swerdlick, Ms. Thessin, Dr. Singer, and approximately 250 guests.

Ms. Nabel introduced the Board members and Dr. Starr. She noted that Dr. Starr would give a presentation which would be followed by Steve Polo, Toquam representative, who would be addressing the Board with questions given to him by the Toquam community.

Dr. Starr noted after his presentation that he had answered all the questions that they currently have and that he would do as much as he could to help everyone understand what the implications are, what the rules are, and the complexity.

Mr. Polo asked “how will you ensure that Toquam children will not end up isolated and mere place holders for the real students and curriculum at the Environmental Magnet School?” Dr. Starr responded that he would hope that no educator in the Stamford Public Schools would isolate any child. The principal that we hire will have an understanding of the complexity and sensitivity of this situation. Ms. Nabel noted that the motivating factor for transitioning Toquam families into the new building is to try to maintain, as nearly as we can, the sense of community, the sense that children travel to a new school with classmates that they know, and hopefully go to school with teachers that they know and recognize. They would certainly be less isolated than they would be if they were in a building that is being phased out, much less isolated than they would be if they were each going to their districted school, and they will not be at all isolated because students in the school building will have their community.

Mr. Polo noted that there is a great amount of optimism building in the community revolving around being fully integrated and involved in the new science based curriculum. He asked “will Toquam’s current educational program

be integrated into the environmental magnet, phased out immediately, or will it be isolated and phased out with the student current population?” “Will the new Environmental Magnet school 6<sup>th</sup> grade in 2009-2010 and how will it be enrolled?” This was already answered during the presentation.

Mr. Polo asked “If this move occurs our children will have experienced a major disruption in education. “Will the relocated students have automatic entry into the middle school in order to minimize that disruption and promote continuity?” Dr. Starr responded that unless the State gives us a waiver, which we will apply for, we can’t automatically enroll 5<sup>th</sup> graders from Toquam to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade in the Environmental Magnet. If we are not able to get the waiver, Toquam students would go to their middle feeder school. Ms. Nabel noted that the transition between 5<sup>th</sup> grade and 6<sup>th</sup> grade is a question that parents of every 5<sup>th</sup> grader faces regardless what elementary school their child is in. We are fortunate in Stamford because we have one choice of a magnet (Scofield) and then there are districted schools. The parents of Toquam students who graduate from 5<sup>th</sup> grade have a choice of the middle schools, their districted elementary school or Scofield Magnet. You have, and we will work, but can’t guarantee that you all have a choice and an option that will not be available to parents of all middle schools and that is to leave your child in the same building. Mr. Freedman said there are 75 students per grade in Toquam and we only have 45 seats at the middle school and did not think we could guarantee to everyone, but presumably there will be some amount of attrition.

Mr. Pollo stated that the dedicated Toquam teachers are working with a great deal of uncertainty regarding their future. “Is there any part of this staff not moving to the Environmental Magnet?” He further asked “if the program and staff were to be slowly terminated by attrition and how will you assure positive morale for the staff?” Dr. Starr noted that he is sensitive to the disruption to staff and if we could afford the \$5.4M to keep Toquam open we would. He also noted that we are bound to the teachers’ contract and he will work with the SEA president on this matter.

Approximately 15 parents spoke on various issues such as the curriculum, Toquam students being isolated, would Toquam students have some classes from the Environmental Magnet, staffing, sibling policy, Rossco program, and environmental testing on the site.

Ms. McManus encouraged all to write their State representatives for more ECS and grant funding since Stamford is not receiving enough.

Ms. McManus moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 p.m. with the following Committee members voting in favor: Mr. Freedman, Ms. McManus, Ms. Nabel, and Mr. Rubino.

Joshua P. Starr, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
Executive Officer