

BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
January 5, 2010

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Present: Mrs. Brassil Spinella, Ms. Katz, Mrs. Ma, Ms. Mudge, Mr. Putterman (via phone), Mr. Schmitt, Superintendent List, Student Representatives Chloe Singer (Conard), Lia Weintraub (Hall)

Absent: Ms. Kindall

Regular Meeting – Town Hall-Legislative Chamber

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The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m.

Roll Call/Pledge of Allegiance

Jasdeep Singh, 89 Greenhouse Blvd., addressed the Board regarding fostering a partnership between the Board and the teachers. He urged Board members to visit the schools to dialogue with teachers.

Public Communications

Mary Hardy, 133 Pioneer Dr., addressed the Board regarding the co-teaching model, and requested information about co-teaching in the elementary schools in the absence of the Adjusted Curriculum program.

John Joyce, 170 South Main St., addressed the Board regarding the recent allegations reported in the newspaper and suggested that the situation be discussed with students.

Ms. Mudge moved, seconded by Mrs. Ma:

THAT the Board of Education ratify the negotiated agreement between the local 1303-340 of Council #4, AFSCME, AFL-CIO (Security Union) and the Board of Education, for the period of July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2014.

Ratification of Local 1303-340 of Council #4, AFSCME, AFL-CIO (Security Union) Contract

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Ledwith gave a brief overview of the agreement. He commended the members of the security union for their collaborative efforts in developing the agreement. Mr. Ledwith and Mr. Dunn were available to answer questions from Board members.

Mr. Schmitt commended Mr. Ledwith, Mr. Dunn, and the security union for their cooperative negotiations. He acknowledged the sacrifices made on the part of the union in an effort to support the Town in difficult financial times.

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Ms. Katz moved, seconded by Mrs. Ma:

THAT the Board of Education approve the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in support of the State Department of Education's Application for the **Race to the Top Grant**.

Dr. List briefly reviewed points from the meeting she and several representatives from West Hartford and other districts attended with the commissioner. She explained that the State of Connecticut is seeking \$175 million from ARRA funds through a competitive grant program entitled "Race to the Top." She noted that the district stood to receive about \$170,000 per year over a four year period along with access to professional development if the grant was obtained. Dr. List highlighted sections of the grant that would benefit the district and outlined requirements for participating.

Board members stated that the benefits were significant and worth the effort that needed to be put forth to obtain the grant. Members expressed concern over the timeline and some of the requirements of the grant.

Dr. List clarified that there was an option to withdraw 90 days from the date of receipt of the grant.

Board members discussed the flexibility within the requirements and suggested specifics could be reviewed if and when the district was awarded grant money.

The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. List complimented the Charter Oak staff and leadership on their continuing efforts to become an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program school. She stated that conversations were taking place at the secondary level concerning possibly extending the IB program beyond the elementary level. Dr. List announced a family forum on January 20th at 7:00 p.m. at Conard High School. She announced that January was National Mentor month, and that the goal was to recruit 30 mentors in 30 days. She shared information on home languages in the district.

*Motion by Ms. Katz
and Mr. Schmitt
Regarding Approval for
the Signing of the
Memorandum of
Understanding for the
**Race to the Top
Grant.***

Superintendent's Report

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Dr. Howley, Ms. Thompson, Mrs. Burke, Mrs. Gwara and Ms. Dolan gave an update on the International Baccalaureate Program at Charter Oak Academy and were available to answer questions from the Board.

Update on International Baccalaureate Program at Charter Oak Academy

Mrs. Burke, coordinator for the IB program, gave an overview of the school's perspective, shared highlights of the consultant's visit, and reviewed the timeline for becoming an IB school. She explained what it meant to be an "IB learner," and gave examples of how the community was embracing the IB philosophy. She shared that the IB consultant was very complimentary of the staff's hard work and dedication, and their commitment to being internationally minded.

Mrs. Thompson commented on the significant commitment by the staff, students, and parents of Charter Oak.

Mrs. Burke announced that the new name for Charter Oak Academy would be Charter Oak International Academy.

Mrs. Gwara and Ms Dolan, grade 5 teachers at Charter Oak, gave their perspective on becoming an IB School, and shared what becoming an IB school looked like in the classroom.

Board members asked for a comparison of students - pre and post IB in terms of their thinking, attitudes, and behavior. Questions were asked about assessments, the fit of IB philosophy with the current curriculum and programs and any existing, compelling data and measurements used to support the advantages of the IB program. They inquired about how students entering Charter Oak in the later grades would be able to acclimate to the IB program. Concerns were expressed for kids who were behind in reading.

The teachers felt that their students were now more cognizant of the way they acted. Mrs. Burke said that students were higher on the level of metacognition; they know what they are doing and why they are doing it.

Ms. Thompson said that students were taking responsibility for their behavior and for their learning. She has seen a decrease in discipline issues with students, and an increase in partnering with parents.

Dr. Howley explained that IB was a deepening and expanding of the current curriculum and expectations with a strong component of self-knowledge and self-learning.

Mrs. Thompson explained that the staff was well versed in differentiation and meeting students where they are, and that they had

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a lot of experience and were very comfortable acclimating students entering the school in the later grades.

Dr. Howley stated that the supports to help struggling readers that existed before IB were still in place. Ms. Dolan explained that when students are exposed to information in a number of different ways, they gain a deeper understanding, and when they are familiar with the information, the reading comes easier. She also said that IB was very collaborative. The co-teaching model is already being used at Charter Oak.

Dr. Howley and Mrs. Alubicki gave an update on elementary reading and language arts. They gave an overview of the balanced literacy approach, including a brief summary of materials used to support this approach; reviewed program supports and data on students receiving supports, and highlighted some changes in the programs.

*Elementary Reading and
Language Arts Update*

Board members questioned whether or not cursive should be taught, and inquired about how grammar is taught in the schools. Questions were asked about reading support and whether special education referrals had decreased.

Ms. Alubicki pointed out that there is a section on the SAT where students are required to write in cursive.

Dr. Howley explained that grammar was a significant portion of the Connecticut Mastery Test, and that assessments are used to identify where kids need to be as they move through the grades. She explained that grammar is integrated into writing instruction, as the discrete teaching of grammar isn't favored because it doesn't translate easily into usage.

Ms. Alubicki explained how reading support works in the SRBI model, and explained that changes in Special Education referrals would change over time.

Board members were pleased with the emphasis on helping children with reading before they enter the third grade, including the changes in the early intervention program.

Mr. Ledwith gave the personnel report and was available to answer questions from the Board.

Personnel Report

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Ms. Katz moved, seconded by Mrs. Ma:

THAT the Board of Education approve the minutes of the regular Board meeting of December 15, 2009.

The motion passed unanimously.

Lia Weintraub reported on upcoming events at Hall.

Mr. Schmitt announced the following meeting dates:

1. Board Workshop, Monday, January 11, 2010, 5:30 p.m., room 400
2. Board Awards and Recognitions, Tuesday, January 19, 2010, 6:00 p.m. at Bristow Middle School Auditorium.
3. Next Regular Board meeting, Tuesday, January 19, 2010, 7:00 p.m., Legislative Chamber, room 314

John Joyce, 170 South Main St., addressed the Board regarding the Board's silence about the current allegation of abuse.

Ms. Ma moved, seconded by Ms. Mudge:

THAT the Board adjourn at 9:37 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clare Kindall, Chairman

Bruce Putterman, Secretary

Respectfully Submitted by: Mrs. S. Bassett, substitute Clerk of the Board

Approval of Minutes

Report from Student Representative

Announcement of Meeting Dates

Comments from Visitors

Adjournment