

West Hartford Public Schools  
Board of Education  
Regular Board Meeting  
May 7, 2013

Present: Ms. Katz, Mrs. Ma, Dr. Overmyer-Velazquez, Mr. Sarzen, Mr. Schmitt (via phone),  
Mr. Zydanowicz, Superintendent List

Absent: Mr. Putterman, Student Representatives Kendall Teare (Hall), Tyree Seymour  
(Conard)

Regular Meeting – Town Hall – Legislative Chamber

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The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

*Roll Call/Pledge of  
Allegiance*

Ms. Katz chaired the meeting in Mr. Putterman's absence.

Ms. Katz requested the agenda be revised to allow for the recognition  
of the Teacher of the Year finalists.

*Revision to Agenda  
Order*

Mr. Sarzen moved, seconded by Mrs. Ma:

THAT the Board of Education meeting agenda be revised to  
announce the Teacher of the Year Finalists

The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. List reviewed the nomination process and announced the finalists  
for the Teacher of the Year award. She introduced Melissa Behrens,  
science teacher at Smith STEM Elementary School, Jeffrey Billing,  
math teacher at Hall High School and John Mastroianni, music teacher  
at Hall High School. Dr. List extended her appreciation and  
congratulations to all.

Ms. Katz called for a brief recess at 7:10 p.m. to offer congratulations  
to the finalists. The meeting resumed at 7:13 p.m.

*Recess*

Dr. List recognized and honored all forms of teachers throughout the  
district and expressed her gratitude for their efforts and dedication in  
nurturing and ensuring the well-being and safety of all students. Dr.  
List announced that both high schools were ranked in the *Top Ten* in  
Connecticut for the second consecutive year and top 2% nationally by  
U.S. News and World Report. She shared the significant academic  
recognition and achievements received by Hall and Conard seniors  
including, a Gates Millennium Scholar, a Congressional Arts  
Competition winner, and distinguished recognition by the National  
Council of Teachers of English. A reminder was provided about the  
various nightly events scheduled throughout many schools during the  
upcoming weeks.

*Superintendent's Report*

Dr. List introduced the presentation by Dr. Nancy DePalma and Mrs. Kerry Jones to address questions and concerns about homework and provide recommendations. Background was provided on the debate regarding homework and current research and best practices were summarized. The historical context of homework and the work and findings of the committee was presented. Feedback from parents and teachers was summarized and included a focus on the purpose and type of homework assigned and time spent on homework. Recommendations and next step guidelines were presented. Dr. DePalma and Mrs. Jones were available to answer the questions of the Board.

*Review and  
Recommendations  
Regarding Homework*

Board members appreciated the presentation and the opportunity to update the homework policy. The significant role of technology and the shift from homework being an isolated activity to a group endeavor was recognized. Addressing the digital divide and equal access to technological tools, available resources and the role and guidelines for parents were discussed. The correlation between purposeful homework and students developing life skills and assuming ownership of their learning was emphasized.

Dr. List provided an overview of the new standardized testing and federal requirements scheduled for 2015 and reviewed the expectations for implementation of the new assessments. Dr. Nancy DePalma and Mr. Paul Vicinus provided an overview of Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT). Connecticut's role with SBAC and the advantages of CAT and innovative item types to provide better information and more accurate reporting were reviewed. The implications for instruction, the technology infrastructure, anticipated transition 'growing pains' and the potential benefits were highlighted. Dr. DePalma and Mr. Vicinus were available to answer the questions of the Board.

*Next Generation  
Assessment*

Board discussion raised questions about grade specific assessments, the benefits of testing, current trials and pilot programs. The options for managing the tests and computerized versus human scoring were discussed. The value for students to learn basic typing or keyboarding skills was emphasized.

Mr. Sarzen moved, seconded by Mr. Schmitt:

*Financial Statement*

THAT the Board of Education approve the Financial Statement for the period ending March 31, 2013

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Mr. Sarzen provided an oral presentation of the financial report. Mr. Chip Ward was available to answer the questions of the Board.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Mr. Zydanowicz:

*Approval of Minutes*

THAT the Board of Education approve the minutes of the regular Board meeting of April 2, 2013

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Zydanowicz moved, seconded by Mr. Schmitt:

THAT the Board of Education approve the minutes of the regular Board meeting of April 9, 2013

The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Katz announced the following meeting dates:

*Announcement of Meeting Dates*

1. Tuesday, May 21, 2013, Regular Board Meeting, 7:00 p.m., Town Hall, 50 South Main Street, Legislative Chambers, room 314
2. Tuesday, May 28, 2013, Board Awards, 6:00 p.m., King Philip Middle School
3. Tuesday, June 4, 2013, Regular Board of Education Meeting, 7:00 p.m., Town Hall, 50 South Main Street, Legislative Chamber, room 314

Mr. Schmitt moved, seconded by Mr. Sarzen:

*Adjournment*

That the Board adjourn at 9:00 p.m.

The motion passed unanimously.

ATTEST:

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Bruce Putterman, Chairperson      Naogan Ma, Secretary  
*Respectfully submitted by: Ms. K. Lawrence, Clerk of the Board*

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