

APPROVED

FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Tuesday, March 13, 2012

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education held Tuesday, March 13, 2012, at 501 Kings Highway East, 2nd Floor Board Conference Room.

1. Chairman Ms. Pamela Iacono called the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education to order at 7:30 p.m. Other Board members present were: Mrs. Sue Brand, Mr. Philip Dwyer, Mr. Paul Fattibene, Mrs. Jessica Gerber, Mr. Tim Kery, Mrs. Jennifer Maxon Kennelly (arrived 7:34 p.m.) and Mr. John Convertito (arrived 7:40 p.m.). Mr. Perry Liu was absent. Also in attendance were Superintendent Dr. David Title, Fairfield Ludlowe High School Student Representatives Emma Sweet and Sara Wiant, Fairfield Warde High School Student Representative Stephanie Teixeira and members of the administrative staff. Approximately 50 people comprised the remainder of the audience.
2. Ms. Iacono led the Board and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. A Moment of Silence was held in memory of Karen Jones, a member of the PTA at Roger Ludlowe Middle School and Osborn Hill Elementary School, who passed away last week.
4. Presentation
 - A. Presentation of the Elementary Math Curriculum, Grades 3-5

Dr. Gary Rosato stated that this represents the culmination of work by many elementary school teachers under the leadership of Walter Wakeman, Curriculum Leader for Elementary Math/Science. All of the elementary schools were involved, and a parent focus group was held on March 1st. Subsequent to the Board receiving the curriculum documents in their Friday packet, questions came forward so an additional packet of documents was put together and is at Board members' places this evening. The packet contains an Executive Summary of a report by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, the two national groups responsible for putting together the Common Core State Standards; an overview of the Common Core State Standards Grades K-12; a Frequently Asked Questions document focused on the Common Core State Standards; and the final four documents are brief comparative studies of the Common Core State Standards.

Mr. Wakeman recognized the teachers who have been working on this curriculum over the past few years and are present at the meeting this evening. He also acknowledged the building principals who were very supportive during this process. Tonight he is bringing forward the revised math curriculum for grades 3, 4 & 5. Over the past few years the teachers looked at the Common Core State Standards and identified what the big concepts are and how to organize them, not only across the grade levels, but how to articulate them through the grade levels so there is a continuum. He briefly highlighted the standards in grades 3, 4 & 5. Each grade level has an overview, a pacing guide, central understandings, essential questions, assessments, content outline and standards. Each unit is described with an overview, the big ideas that are being addressed in that unit along with essential questions that are unit specific and standards that are aligned with the unit. Mr. Wakeman showed several slides of students collaborating and communicating, explaining their thinking to each other and how best to approach the problem solving as they work together. He gave an overview of the curriculum documents and illustrated what mathematical practices look like and how they come alive in the classroom.

Approximately one hour of Board questions and comments followed.

Mrs. Brand commented on the term spiral instruction and asked what we currently use. Mr. Wakeman stated that currently we have more of a spiraling curriculum. An example is in 3rd grade we talk about place value concepts, in 4th grade we re-address those same place value

concepts and in 5th grade they are revisited again. The proposed curriculum moves away from spiraling with a greater emphasis on depth of understanding and mastery at each grade level. Mrs. Brand asked if Mr. Wakeman has had an opportunity to evaluate how this curriculum is going to work relative to what the expectations are. Mr. Wakeman stated that we will be using the Blue Ribbon, we have the Connecticut Mastery Test for the next few of years, the first day of every unit there is a fluency component that captures information on how students are performing over time and a district fluency test is implemented three times year. We will also be looking at how students are performing as they leave the elementary grades and enter middle school. Mrs. Brand asked if there are common assessments that the faculty have agreed on and if they are consistent throughout the district. Mr. Wakeman stated that there are end of unit assessments that involve both skills-based assessments as well performance assessments. Dr. Rosato pointed out that the CMT will be going away, and the Common Core State Standards are going to be measured against a new assessment that will be coming out in 2015. The State is currently piloting new assessment items to measure the effectiveness of the Common Core and Fairfield is part of that.

Mr. Kery asked how the level of rigor is determined when designing a curriculum. Dr. Rosato stated that with this particular curriculum we started with what the Common Core requires us to do, and then we built opportunities into the curriculum for students to go well beyond that. Mr. Kery asked what the big changes are in this curriculum. Mr. Wakeman stated that the focus is to go deeper in understanding concepts at the elementary level. The primary focus is on developing number sense and place value, computation with whole numbers as well as getting into fractions. Mr. Kery stated that he would like to get a better understanding of spiraling. Dr. Title stated that there is less spiraling in the new model than in the current model; in other words, you will go deeper in a concept to mastery and then move on.

Mrs. Gerber asked about the basics such as the multiplication tables and rote memorization. Mr. Wakeman responded that basic facts are critical and very important for problem-solving. They have been included as regular practice in the units as well as in the district-wide assessment that is given three times a year.

Ms. Iacono asked what textbook Fairfield is using. Mr. Wakeman stated that Fairfield is using the Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley textbook. Ms. Iacono expressed some concerns with this textbook and stated that it didn't receive very good reviews from the limited research she did. Mr. Wakeman stated that it isn't the textbook that is our curriculum; the textbook becomes a resource to help implement the curriculum. Ms. Iacono asked if we looked at changing the textbook. Dr. Title stated that the problem is that the textbook publishers have not kept up with the changes in the Common Core State Standards. Right now it would be premature to recommend a new textbook and would not be money well spent. We will use what we can out of the existing textbook, knowing that it is just a piece of the resources available to teachers.

Mrs. Gerber stated that she did an informal poll of elementary school parents and it seems that some schools don't use the textbook at all while others do. Mr. Wakeman stated that as we are moving forward with the implementation of the new instructional model, there are guides and recommendations on the resources to use to help provide structure for teachers that align with the Common Core State Standards.

Mr. Convertito stated that when a new curriculum is presented, he would like to know where the old curriculum falls short and how the new curriculum corrects that. He asked if there is a budget impact in instituting this curriculum next year. Mr. Wakeman stated that there is a budget impact; however, it is already in the current budget. A large amount is in professional development for teachers to help them understand not only the Common Core State Standards but translating them; what does it actually look like in a classroom and the mathematical practices. We will also be purchasing some support resources to address the Common Core State Standards.

Mrs. Kennelly asked if there is research that confirms this method will deepen the understanding and improve performance at the advanced level mathematics. Mr. Wakeman stated that this is the shift that is occurring. It is developing a much deeper sense of understanding of numbers, number relationships, how numbers work, etc. Mrs. Kennelly stated that it can be frustrating for children when they feel they have the answer and are being made to do three other versions of solving the problem. Mr. Wakeman stated that a student may understand the standard algorithm and use it but do they understand why that procedure works. We are encouraging students to look at the numbers first and then decide which strategy would be the best and most efficient to attack the problem.

Mr. Dwyer asked if the middle school teachers were engaged in reviewing this curriculum so they know what students in grades 3-5 will be prepared for. Dr. Rosato stated that the middle school teachers who are currently working on their documents have these Common Core State Standards as their guide so they can see what is expected in K-5 and how it builds into the middle school program. Mr. Dwyer asked if Fairfield is benchmarked well against high achieving school districts around the nation. Mr. Wakeman stated that currently Fairfield does quite well.

5. Approval of Minutes

- A. Mrs. Brand moved, seconded by Mrs. Gerber that the Board of Education approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 28, 2012.

Motion carried: 8:0:0.

6. Student/Committee/Liaison Reports

- Fairfield Ludlowe High School Student Representatives Emma Sweet and Sara Wiant reported that the annual Battle of the Houses will take place next Friday, the sophomore dance will be held next weekend and the PTA Fashion Show was held this past weekend. The combined Warde and Ludlowe Boys' Ski Team won States, the Girls' Ski Team was runner up, the Girls' Gymnastics Team came in 3rd in FCIACs and 4th in States and the Cheerleading Team placed 1st in FCIACs and 2nd in States. The Connecticut Challenge Team competed in the State finals today against Wilton. CAPT testing finishes on Friday. Students in the music program will be performing in Disneyland at the end of March. Tomorrow is PI Day.
- Fairfield Warde High School Student Representative Stephanie Teixeira reported that CAPT testing concludes this Friday; four students were prizewinners at the Ferguson Library Art Show in Stamford; and 14 FWHS band, chorus and orchestra students auditioned and were selected for the All-State Music Festival in April. The Boys' Ski Team captured the State championship, the Girls' Ski Team placed second in States and Harry Warnick placed first in the mile run in the New England Championship and was recently named All-American. The FWHS Math Team finished second in the Fairfield County Math League and qualified for the State and New England competition. The FWHS Dance Team will compete in New England's this month. The annual Interact Club Talent Show, Harmony for Hunger, will take place this Friday. The 9th Grade Forum on Underage Drinking will be held on March 29th for students and parents.
- Mrs. Brand reported that she was not able to attend the Board of Health meeting but received the updates from Sands Cleary. PCB testing was done at Fairfield Ludlowe High School, and the dust wipe came up well below the 10 micrograms that would be considered an issue. Nursing Supervisor Joanne Ryan will be discussing with the State Department of Ed what legally qualifies for extra-curricular activities so they can determine how to delegate and how much latitude they have relative to who can administer medication. The Town Medical Advisor Dr. McDonald reviewed the change in legislation relative to concussions and what the current practice is, and Mrs. Brand will forward his written assessment to Mrs. Kennelly and Dr. Title. CES-Two representatives from the State Board of Ed visited and answered questions regarding the Governor's agenda. There will be an Open House for the Regional Center for the Arts on March 10 & 13. CES revised their discrimination policy to reflect the recent change in legislation. There will be a special program held on April 2 for students who are on boards of education, and the details are on the CES website. Mrs. Brand has been meeting with the CES subcommittee for finance as they prepare their upcoming budget.

- Mr. Convertito reported that the Special Projects Standing Building Committee met last week to approve some change orders. There has been some frustration with the committee dealing with the architect and the contractors as far as scheduling and moving things along. A lot of it has to do with windows and duct work. They have used a portion of the contingency, and the finger pointing is basically who caused this, why do we have to do this, etc.
- ◆ Mr. Dwyer reported that the Building Projects Review Committee met and a recommendation was made to create a calendar for the capital budget that would allow its presentation, review and approval earlier than the operating budget so that it separates these two workloads. If the Board of Education could approve the capital budget at the October meeting, then it could be reviewed by the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and the RTM starting in December. There was also some conversation about what projects should qualify for capital non-recurring and what should just be put in the operating budget. Mrs. Brand asked if it would be possible to back the capital request up even earlier so we wouldn't run into the November/December issue at all. Mr. Dwyer stated that the Board of Ed could move it back as far as they want. Dr. Title stated that he wants to avoid having the RTM consider this during the same month the Board of Ed is meeting on the operating budget. We could get it to the Board in September, with approval in October and then take it from there.
- ◆ Mr. Fattibene reported that the scheduled meeting for the Stratfield Building Committee was postponed, and there have been no referrals to the Transportation Safety Advisory Committee.
- ◆ Mrs. Gerber – No report.
- ◆ Ms. Iacono – No report.
- ◆ Mrs. Kennelly reported that SEPTA will meet tomorrow at 7:30 p.m. at McKinley. The Policy Committee met on March 5, and there was a lot of the discussion about the handbook that Mr. Dwyer is putting together. Mr. Dwyer has been gathering content and providing the source of it. If something has our By-Laws or Board policy as its source, it is simply a matter of taking that information and putting it in the handbook. However, there are other issues such as CABA recommendations, recommended practices from Board Retreats as well as things that are considered standard practice but are not written, and the Policy Committee is looking for direction from the Board regarding if that would be appropriate information to be included in this handbook. Ms. Iacono asked Board members to send their feedback to Mrs. Kennelly. Mrs. Brand stated that her comfort level would be to keep the handbook as an informational guide. We need to be careful what is put in the handbook because it becomes the expectation that it is a mandate. Mr. Dwyer stated that this leads to the question of how much Board discussion this should generate, should the Policy Committee have discussion on this and then bring something forward or should it simply be limited to wording from either the By-Laws or Board policy.
- ◆ Mr. Kery reported that PTA Council met last week and the Brian Fagan grants were presented to six of our teachers: Stephen DeAngelo, Seth Frye, Erica Griffin, Basia Notowitz, Karen Shaughnessy and Lisa Velky. He thanked all our PTAs for their support of our teachers. There was also a discussion of our budget with the Chairs from the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Board of Ed. The Board of Finance/Board of Selectmen held a joint meeting, and all of the Capital Projects put forth were approved with the exception of the Osborn Hill windows. The sense was that they weren't rejecting them outright but wanted to bundle the windows together with the Ludlowe project to achieve an economy of scale. The approved projects move to the RTM on March 26th.

7. Superintendent's Report

A. Strategic School Profile Report

By law the Strategic School Profile must be presented at the first Board meeting after it is received. These reports were due out in November so a lot of the data is old. The Board has already seen all of the student performance data, and in August Dr. Rosato sends out the CMT results. All of the Strategic School Profiles are available on the web. Board members can email Dr. Title if they have specific questions or there is data they don't understand. Mrs. Brand expressed concern with the difference in graduation rates at the two high schools and the reporting of violations of school policy relative to the size of the schools. She is looking for consistency from school to school. She also expressed concern with the testing in grade 3 at Riverfield. Dr. Title stated that the student performance data has been used in the development of

the individual school improvement plans, and the plans are posted on the individual school websites. He will research the other pieces in terms of why there might be variations.

- B. Dr. Title reported that last Friday the lower Fairfield County Superintendents met with the Commissioner of Education. The Commissioner distributed a summary document that gives an overview of the Governor proposal. The areas that are generating the most concern have to do with teacher evaluation, tenure and certification which are part of Senate Bill 24. This is a huge issue and will have major ramifications for every school district in the State. There has not been this kind of activity around education reform at the State level since the mid 80's. Dr. Title will keep the Board informed as he receives updates.

Dr. Title reported that he has been meeting with the First Selectman on how to move forward with the Ludlowe and Osborn Hill window projects. The testing company has said that additional testing is needed on the Ludlowe windows, and until that testing is done we can't move forward with a funding request because we don't know what the abatement costs will be. The First Selectman and Dr. Title have agreed that round two of testing will be handled by the school system. We will work with Sands Cleary and at the same time contract with the testing company to do beginning testing on Osborn Hill. We are going to get a not to exceed figure from the testing company. Mr. Cullen is working on this in conjunction with Sands Cleary and the State and the Federal agencies that are overseeing this so we have sign offs from all of those bodies before moving forward. Board questions followed. Dr. Title stated that Mr. Cullen filed a report with the US Department of Environmental Protection on March 2 and we are waiting for feedback from them. We have met the required timelines so far.

Mr. Dwyer stated that he will be attending CABE's Day on the Hill tomorrow and is sure he will be asked if the Fairfield Board of Education has any viewpoint on Senate Bill 24 and because the Board has not talked about it, he will defer on that.

8. Old Business

- A. Mrs. Brand moved, seconded by Mrs. Kennelly that the Board of Education approve the Elementary Art Curriculum.

Motion carried: 8:0:0.

- B. Mrs. Gerber moved, seconded by Mrs. Kennelly that the Board of Education approve Policy #5119 – Student Discipline.

Mr. Fattibene stated that he has comments and some proposed amendments with respect to this policy that he passed out at the last Policy Committee meeting but since this had already been moved forward to the Board, no action or discussion was taken. Rather than take the time now to go through the changes, he would propose to refer it back to Committee so the Board can have the language changes divided out as far as better wording, more consistent wording and then the proposed amendments.

Mr. Fattibene moved, seconded by Mrs. Brand to remand this back to the Policy Committee. Board comments followed.

Motion carried: 7:0:1. Mrs. Kennelly, Mrs. Gerber, Ms. Iacono, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Fattibene, Mr. Kery and Mrs. Brand voted in favor. Mr. Convertito abstained.

9. New Business

- A. Discussion of Naming the Fairfield Woods Middle School Fitness Center

Mr. Greg Hatzis, Principal at Fairfield Woods Middle School, addressed the Board on the proposal to dedicate and name of the fitness center at Fairfield Woods Middle School in honor of

Mr. Ray Agostino. Mr. Agostino graduated from Roger Ludlowe High School in 1956, was hired by the Fairfield Public Schools in 1962 as an elementary school teacher at North Stratfield and in 1990 became Assistant Principal at Fairfield Woods until his retirement in 2007, spanning a 45 year career in Fairfield. In 2007 he was awarded the Town Employee of the Year award. He was truly a pillar in the community. When he passed away in 2010, it left a huge hole in the hearts of many, especially in the Fairfield Woods community.

Ms. Cindy Metz, PE teacher at Fairfield Woods, shared some personal experiences about Mr. Agostino's influence on her and the community at Woods. She asked the Board to please vote in favor of dedicating the fitness center at Fairfield Woods in honor of Ray Agostino. He was instrumental in getting the fitness program off the ground at Fairfield Woods and wanted the physical education program to consist of activities that students could use for life.

Ms. Iacono stated that clearly Mr. Agostino is an excellent candidate and she has no issue whatsoever adopting this. She asked if there is a Board policy about naming facilities.

Dr. Title stated that the practice has been to bring requests to the Board for approval. He would like to see the Board develop a policy so there are some guidelines. The Policy Committee will work on developing guidelines and parameters.

Ms. Iacono stated that she does not foresee an issue with this request moving forward while a policy is formulated. The Board agreed.

B. Discussion of Educational Specifications for the Osborn Hill Elementary School Window Replacement

Dr. Title stated that this is a State reimbursable project and in order to qualify for State reimbursement, the Board must approve educational specifications.

Board questions and comments followed.

Mr. Convertito commented that if we are going through an abatement issue, why not replace all of the window units now and not have to revisit this issue later. His assumption is that they were all installed using the same caulk that has the same PCB in it. Mr. Cullen stated that he doesn't want the hazardous material to drive the project. He wouldn't remove the units that aren't part of the project just because they might come up positive with PCBs, asbestos or lead paint. There are certain doors that are part of the window wall and they are integral.

Mr. Dwyer commented that he thought there were certain window units that were newer and were not going to be replaced. Mr. Morabito stated that the specific windows slated to stay are from the 1996 addition renovation.

Mrs. Brand commented that it isn't just the presence of PCBs, asbestos and lead paint, it is their condition and risk they pose to the community. Mr. Cullen stated that he has spoken to the State about what to do when we find PCBs. There are options to encapsulate, as simple as re-caulking over PCB related caulk, painting over caulk and then monitoring it. Certainly if it is crumbling and falling all over the floor, which we don't have, we would test to see if it is airborne.

Mr. Fattibene asked if the new windows will have some soundproofing. Mr. Cullen stated that a new window would be more soundproof than an old one. Mr. Dwyer asked if by tinting it means low e glass and should the ed specs be more specific to include that we expect low e glass. Mr. Morabito stated that tinting and low e are not the same. The coating doesn't give you low e; it is the argon gas that is used between the panes of glass. Mr. Cullen stated that when we first started looking at windows, a building envelope consultant was hired to specify windows to be used in the district in the future. We wanted to have a standard that would meet the high insulation values, low e, and the needs of the district as far as how they open, the ease of opening and

getting air into the classrooms. We didn't want a contractor to drive the type of window he wanted to put in; we wanted to give him the specifications.

Ms. Iacono stated that this will be a voting item at the next Board meeting.

C. Discussion of UI Energy Opportunities Program – Proposed Projects at Mill Hill Elementary School and Holland Hill Elementary School

Mr. Morabito stated that this work will be done as soon as we sign for the energy opportunities. He is assuming it will be done prior to the end of this school year. This project takes in direct rebates from UI to offset the cost of \$80,000, which is the net cost for these two lighting upgrade projects at Mill Hill and Holland Hill. The \$80,000 is zero percent financing over four years, and at the expiration of the four year term we will see the full energy savings on our energy bill. Dr. Title stated that a cost is added to our bill on a monthly basis but it is offset by the energy savings that are produced by the upgrade.

Mr. Convertito asked what the alternative would be if this wasn't financed at zero percent. If we want to pay the cost up front what would the \$80,000 go down to? Mr. Morabito stated that he does not know the answer; that is not the program. Mr. Convertito questioned why if this is a State subsidized program we don't have information on the State subsidy for the no interest loan. He asked to have the data before the Board votes on this. If the \$80,000 would be a significantly lower number if we didn't finance it over four years and it is possible to pay it out of this operating budget and incur all of the savings in the subsequent years, then let's do it.

Mr. Kery asked why we are only doing this at two schools. Mr. Morabito stated that we are working to develop similar plans at four other schools and possibly a few more in this calendar year. The UI program runs from January 1 to December 31st. That is when the money that is available runs out for the rebates and financing. It is renewed the following January, and we hope to take advantage of this opportunity next year also. Mr. Kery asked if we have been in consultation with the Town's finance people about this. Mr. Morabito stated Energy Opportunities just did a program with the Town for decorative street lights downtown; the exact program was brought before the Town.

Mr. Fattibene asked if the estimated annual savings that are projected are guaranteed by UI. Mr. Morabito stated that these savings are based on our run time schedule for our lights. If we change it and decide we want to keep the lights on all night, obviously we won't have the same savings. Mr. Fattibene asked to what extent these fixtures and lights can be accommodated in any potential renovation within the next year or so. Mr. Morabito stated that they could be accommodated in a renovation. This particular company is buying these lights; somebody else could buy these lights if we had to match them or replace them. It is something that we could follow through on in a renovation project. Mr. Fattibene asked if the agreement is with UI or is it with LED Lighting Solutions. Mr. Morabito stated that it is with UI, and LED Lighting Solutions is the beneficiary of the rebate check that lowers the projected cost. We are contracting with LED Lighting Solutions.

10. Public Comments and Petitions

Tricia Donovan, a Mill Hill and Tomlinson parent, entered a letter she wrote to the Board into the public record. She strongly urged the Board not to approve the new math curriculum. The curriculum does not satisfy the demands of our students. The standards are not internationally benchmarked. Professor R. James Milgram, the only mathematician on the Common Core validation committee, refused to sign off on these standards for their lack of rigor. The Scott Foresman text has been poorly rated and has been in use here since 2004 despite persistent opposition from parents. Last week's focus group did not give parents sufficient lead time to review these documents. Clearly parents were only convened to review grammatical and formatting errors, the curriculum itself was already a fait accompli. The Board of Ed website states that residents may have input in the development of the new curricula and, while we requested input, it was not granted.

Nadine Nizet, parent of students in elementary, middle and high school, stated that Fairfield is lacking in basic facts and standard algorithms. Parents want higher standards than those of the current core standards. Mastery of facts and standard algorithms should be clearly defined at each grade level. Steve Wilson, professor of mathematics at Johns Hopkins, says that K-6 math education should still be devoted to the mastery of standard paper and pencil arithmetic. We need resources that reflect the same attitude toward foundational skills. Scott Foresman has been described as weak in almost every aspect according to the American Institute for Research. We would like a review process that includes input from parents.

Kelly Dunn, Osborn Hill Budget Rep, thanked the Board of Education, Dr. Title, members of Central Office, especially Tom Cullen, for all of their support for the Osborn Hill window replacement project.

Ken Lee, Board of Ed Rep from Sherman, stated that due to the lateness of the hour he would not ask the Board to consider putting the second phase of the Sherman project on track, he will come back next month and ask for it. He would just like to remind the Board that it does take a little bit of time to get these things going so he thought he might bring it up.

11. Open Board Comment

Mrs. Brand commented on something that came up during the budget process and she thought it was worthwhile mentioning that this was a different kind of year in that after our budget was submitted we found that there were savings in the pension fund and it left the Board of Ed at a disadvantage. She asked if moving forward, when Dr. Title is getting ready for the RTM he could explain what \$100,000 looks like in terms of programs and what \$200,000 looks like because all too often we are looking at dollars but not at what the impact is. This would be very valuable moving forward so people understand when we are taking a hit what those dollars actually mean in terms of programs.

12. Mr. Kery moved, seconded by Mr. Dwyer that this meeting of the Board of Education adjourn at 10:20 p.m.

Motion carried: 8:0:0.

Jessica Gerber
Secretary