

**DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2017 – 7:00 PM**  
**Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The chairperson, Ralph Pietrafesa, called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by the Danbury High School ROTC Cadets.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Eileen Alberts, Gladys Cooper, Michael Ferguson, Richard Hawley,  
Patrick Johnston, Frederick Karrat, David Metrena, Ralph Pietrafesa, Holly Robinson

Absent: Richard Jannelli, Kathleen Molinaro

Also Present: Dr. Bill Glass, Kelly Truchsess, Joe Martino, Kim Thompson, Dr. Sal Pascarella

R. Pietrafesa began the meeting by reading the following statement:

At our last Board of Education meeting, we were particularly moved by the number of people who spoke so passionately about the fears and concerns circulating among immigrant families in our community. All Danbury staff will continue to work with students and families to create the best possible learning environment where all students can be successful. Please be assured that the Danbury Public Schools will continue to support learning and growth of the "whole child", while maintaining its commitment to follow the law.

**RECOGNITIONS:**

Mayor Mark Boughton addressed the Board and community members. He presented on behalf of the Danbury Education Foundation. The Danbury Education Foundation was founded roughly ten years ago. The foundation is a non-profit organization that distributes mini grants to those who apply throughout the year. Certain criteria must be met such as enhancement in technology, professional development, classroom management and other areas that the program finds applicable to the core mission of what is done in the Danbury Public School system. Over the last eight years, close to \$400,000 has been awarded in grants. Local businesses who donate to the foundation are continually impressed with what gets accomplished with the grants. Mayor Boughton thanked and congratulated the following recipients of this year's grants:

**Danbury Education Foundation**

**Award Recipients:**

Creative Publishing & Production - Broadview Middle School, **Darren Wittko & Mary Fee** \$1499.96 was awarded. Mr. Wittko and Ms. Fee stated that the grant money will give students the opportunity to be creative and use digital media tools. The grant money will go towards a high speed large format color printer that can print poster projects.

Little Free Library Outreach - Stadley Rough Elementary School, **Debbie Ireland** \$1498.00 was awarded. Ms. Ireland stated that the grant money will go towards the after school program called the Kindness and Compassion Club. In the club the students do kind acts for the community. In the past seven years, they have raised about \$10,000 to give out to many different charities, most geared towards kids with illnesses.

Student Centered Learning - Danbury High School, **Susan DeMattio, M.A.**

\$1439.92 was awarded. Dr. DeMattio stated that the grant money will pay for laptops for the classrooms. Students have a lot of modeling to do this year and the hope is that they can create these models on their laptops.

Hatching Baby Chicks - Morris Street School, **Tracey Scalzo**

\$1349.63 was awarded. Principal Bill Santarsiero stated that the grant money will give students the opportunity to see the developmental stages of chicks as they grow in their eggs. Once the chicks have hatched they will go to a local organic farm in Ridgefield, CT call The Hickories.

Heart Rate Monitoring in Physical Education - Academy of International Studies, King Street Intermediate & Pembroke Schools, **Mark Ottusch & Will Hauser**

\$4833.68 was awarded. Mr. Ottusch stated that the grant money will go to a program where the students will get to use a heart rate monitor during PE classes. They will use the Polar Fit app and students will be able to see their heart rates in class. Parents also have the opportunity to log in through a portal and view their child's progress throughout the year.

Schools of Distinction

Dr. Pascarella stated that for the past few years they have been talking to the state department for recognizing the work that teachers and principals are doing for student's academic growth. The state looked at a number of different characteristics in the schools and Danbury received six nominations. The state recognized three district out of 165 in the entire state which were Ridgefield, Greenwich and Danbury. Dr. Pascarella and the Board recognized and congratulated each of the following school Principals:

Ellsworth Avenue School, Principal Anna Rocco  
Hayestown School, Principal Stephanie Furman  
Mill Ridge Primary, Principal Dr. Mary Cronin  
Park Avenue School, Principal David Krafick  
Morris Street School, Principal William Santarsiero  
South Street School, Principal Heather Pellicone.

DHS Athletic Achievements

Students will attend the next Board meeting on April 5, 2017.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** --

Rachel Chaleski addressed the Board by first commending Dr. Pascarella for initiating the charter school discussion. Ms. Chaleski did a lot of research on charter schools and sought to ensure there would be no negative implications to our schools or city. Ms. Chaleski stated that while a charter school may not solve all of our problems, it will certainly raise the bar for rigor and achievement and infuse much needed state funds into Danbury. DPS would retain at least 93% of the per-pupil funds it would have spent on a child who decides to attend a charter school. The remaining 6% covers transportation and additional services that the district is already providing that student. Ms. Chaleski stated that CT state law sets many parameters around charter school operations and holds charters to high levels of accountability by the State Department of Education. First, the law requires that a Board member serve on the charter governing board, therefore the district will have input into how the charter school would operate. It is illegal for a CT charter school to discriminate on any basis. Admission must be by an open lottery for all Danbury residents. Charter schools are only permitted in those districts designated as low performing, as a result it is expected that a fair percentage of its students will fall into the "at risk"

category. Teachers at a charter have the option of joining the union. Of CT charters, 20% currently have a union. Teachers are required by law to pay into the state pension system. 50% of teachers must be certified with the remaining 50% required to have a state authorization to teach their subject.

Kate Conetta addressed the Board. Ms. Conetta reiterated the request made at the March 8, 2017 meeting of:

- 1) A detailed protocol for schools to follow for situations involving ICE.
- 2) A letter signed by Dr. Pascarella that goes home to students (English, Spanish and Portuguese) which states the district's dedication to creating safe spaces for all and outlines the protocol for ICE requests.
- 3) A brief Know Your Rights info packet to accompany the letter.

Ms. Conetta provided a Safe Zone Resolution draft put together by NEA Senior Counsel Emma Leheny, as well as a guide for educators and school support system which was assembled by the AFT, United We Dream, The National Immigration Law Center and First Focus.

### **CONSENT CALENDAR**

**MOTION** - R. Hawley moved, seconded by P. Johnston that the Board of Education approves the items on the Consent Calendar, Exhibits 17-37 through 17-41, as recommended:

**A. MINUTES**

3/8/17 Board Minutes

**B. PERSONNEL REPORT**

Accept Resignations: Maria Fede-Kammenos, Nicole Frischkorn, Amanda Fuller, Meryl Hertz, Jessica Reyes

New Hires: See Exhibit 17-38

Abstained by F. Karrat, R. Hawley and H. Robinson.

**Motion passed at 7:26 pm**

**EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE** - none

### **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

Deanna Hernandez, student representative for ACE presented the following information to the Board:

- 1) 20 students will be going on a two day overnight trip to Camp Herrlich in Patterson, New York with the purpose of completing daily workshops in poetry, music and arts.
- 2) On April 5, 2017 ACE will meet its testing responsibility for the 11th grade SATs and 10th grade CAPTs. On this day 12th graders will be taking a trip to the Capital and 9th graders will be taking a trip to the Norwalk Maritime Center.
- 3) On March 30th and 31st all graduating seniors will be fulfilling a graduation requirement of completing the CPR course.
- 4) On March 20, 2017 11 students were accepted to Naugatuck Valley Community College with seven others who are in the process of completing their applications.

- 5) On March 28, 2017 13 students will be taking a trip to visit Job Corps to explore alternative graduation options, as well as offerings for post-secondary career paths.
- 6) Earlier in March, 11 ACE students participated in a collaborative effort with Dr. Darla Shaw and her education students at Western Connecticut State University in an effort to celebrate “Read Across America”. Students read to and completed Dr. Seuss activities with elementary students at Ellsworth Elementary School.

## **PRESENTATION**

State Accountability Report presented by Dr. William Glass.

In February 2012, the Connecticut State Department of Education participated in a federal application process for flexibility from certain requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The U.S. Department of Education (USDoED) approved Connecticut’s flexibility request (or waiver), allowing the State to establish a new accountability system to assess school performance. On August 6, 2015, the USDoED approved a three-year renewal for Connecticut.

The plan outlined in Connecticut’s ESEA Flexibility Renewal improves the State’s school and district accountability model. The “next generation” accountability model moves beyond just test scores and graduation rates. Instead, it provides a more holistic, multifactor perspective of district and school performance and incorporates student growth over time. For two years, the CSDE actively sought feedback regarding the accountability system from district and school leaders, Connecticut educators, state and national experts, CSDE staff, and many others. The “next generation” system is a direct result of this extensive consultation process.

Dr. Glass presented the 12 Accountability Indicators:

- 1) Academic achievement. Every school in the state gets a performance index. This recognizes students with high needs.
- 2) Academic growth over time. Enables the evaluation of growth achieved by the same kids over time. Success on this metric is earned by helping all students, whether low or high performing, to achieve adequate growth from one year to the next.
- 3) Assessment participation rate. This indicator will evaluate participation rates on all assessments for ELA, Mathematics, and Science for all students group and the high needs super group. Assessment participation rate now has to be at 95%.
- 4) Chronic absenteeism. A district/school/subgroup chronic absenteeism rate is the percentage of students missing ten percent or greater of the total number of days enrolled in the school year for any reason. It includes both excused and unexcused absences.
- 5) Preparation for postsecondary and career readiness- coursework. This evaluates whether students in grades 11 and 12 have participated in coursework during high school that prepares them for success in college and/or careers.
- 6) Preparation for postsecondary and career readiness - exams. This evaluates whether students in grades 11 and 12 have attained benchmark scores on at least one of the most prevalent college/career readiness exams.
- 7) Graduation - on track in ninth grade. This indicator calculates the percentage of 9th graders earning at least five full-year credits in the year.
- 8) Graduation - four year adjusted cohort for all students. The four year adjusted cohort graduation rate represents the percentage of first time 9th graders who graduate with a

- regular high school diploma in four years or less.
- 9) Graduation - six year adjusted cohort for high needs students. The six-year adjusted cohort graduation rate represents the percentage of first time 9th graders who graduate with a regular high school diploma in six years or less.
  - 10) Postsecondary entrance rate (college enrollment rate). This rate is the percentage of all students in a graduating class who enrolled in a 2 or 4-year postsecondary institution any time during the first year after high school graduation.
  - 11) Physical fitness. The Third Generation CT Physical Fitness Assessment (CTPFA) is focused on health-related fitness. The assessment includes four health-related physical fitness tests designed to assess muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and cardiovascular fitness.
  - 12) Arts access. This evaluates the extent to which students in high school participate in at least one arts course in the school year in dance, theatre, music, or the visual arts.

Dr. Glass then went on to discuss Tier One and Tier Two Schools of Distinction.

1. Tier One (Category One). Top 10% in Performance.
  - Mill Ridge Primary had Highest Performing and Greatest Improvement. This was the only Danbury school to achieve Greatest Improvement.
  - Morris Street had Highest Growth for all students and high needs students.

The Superintendent and BOE Goal One is in full alignment with the new accountability system. All Teacher Evaluation goals are fully aligned through the new accountability systems. All schools are required to have a School Improvement Plan that is aligned to the new accountability systems. Our Alliance District Plan is fully aligned with the new accountability system. This is including academics, talent, culture and climate and operations.

R. Pietrafesa requested a full scope of data from Dr. Glass.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **A. February 2017 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund)**

MOTION: R. Hawley moved, seconded by E. Alberts that the Board of Education accept the February 2017 Operating Results Analysis (General Fund)

**Motion passed at 8:06 pm**

### **B. February 2017 Operating Results Analysis (Grants/Projects)**

MOTION: R. Hawley moved, seconded by M. Ferguson that the Board of Education accept the February 2017 Operating Results Analysis (Grant/Projects)

**Motion passed at 8:08 pm**

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

- Dr. Pascarella stated that he met with Police Chief Ridenhour regarding the January 20, 2017 incident with a parent at Danbury High School. All agreed that communication broke down a bit and they have put a plan on paper that will improve that should it happen again.
- The DHS walkout by students was also discussed at the meeting. Police Chief Ridenhour stated that

unless someone is breaking the law, they will not get involved. Danbury Principal, Dan Donovan, has been speaking to students and the police department is also willing to speak to students regarding demonstrations and turning it into an educational experience.

- Federal Legislation. Dr. Pascarella stated that if in fact the budget that was recommended gets passed, we will lose the title two money of \$200,000. Title two has 3 FTEs. Dr. Pascarella will keep the Board updated as information comes in.
- State Educational Committee Report: Dr. Pascarella testified on March 20, 2017 at the last public Education Committee Hearing. M. Ferguson stated the high school graduation credit requirements were discussed. The committee put out a bill to delay the implementation of raising the graduation requirements. The two year delay has been put out now for the graduating class of 2023 versus the original class of 2021. The previous law had very detailed information on where these credits had to go towards. The bill takes that back. While the credits will remain at 25 credits, there will be more flexibility in terms of what courses can be used to earn those 25 credits. The bill got rid of the senior demonstration project, which is known as the Capstone Project. The bill will eliminate that but it will be replaced with a mastery based diploma assessment which can involve an internship or a project based learning experience. That will also give the district flexibility and will count as one credit. The bill also eliminated the end of year exams. M. Ferguson stated that some towns already have the 25 credit requirement or are moving towards it but they are small towns and not growing districts like Danbury is. Her expressed his concern and asked the Commissioner if she would be supportive of a concept where the school district would decide. The Commissioner stated that she is strongly against that and believes we need to go to 25 credits so we can be in the middle range with other states. The committee voted on the bill on March 22, 2017 without any disagreement and it was unanimous. This current law deals with this year's 8th grade class. M. Ferguson stated that the graduation requirement of 25 credits started back in 2010 when Connecticut applied for the Race to the Top federal money. In order to get that money, we had to increase credits to 25. Unfortunately we increased the credits when we applied for grant, but did not get the grant.
- Dr. Pascarella stated for all to mark their calendars for Danbury Day on May 16, 2017 in Hartford.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **2017/2018 School Calendar**

Dr. Pascarella stated that we have had three snow days since Antonio's presentations on the DHS project and this has put the project on a very tight schedule. Dr. Pascarella asked the Board to consider the possibility of starting school after Labor Day for the 2017 - 2018 school year in order to accommodate the extra days to get work done at DHS. This will put the last day of school into late June of 2018. If we have bad weather in the school year, we will have to take days off spring vacation because we can't go into July for school.

As of right now, the tentative last day for the 2016 - 2017 school year is June 19, 2017 for the high school graduation. June 20, 2017 for the moving up ceremony for middle schools. Mill Ridge Primary will have to go an extra day on the 21st due to their emergency closing this school year.

## **INFORMATION**

John Webber will be the Interim Principal at ACE for the rest of the 2016 - 2017 school year.

## **BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

R. Pietrafesa stated that the City Council Budget Committee will be meeting at 6 pm on both April 6, 2017 and April 18, 2017. He will ask Debbie Warner to send out reminder with dates.

## **BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS**

M. Ferguson stated that two students are holding a Unified Prom on April 7, 2017 at the Portuguese Cultural Center. M. Ferguson handed out copies of the letter that the students made. The students are looking for business support and have a Go Fund Me page.

E. Alberts stated that she was present for the Elementary Invention Convention and the students were marvelous. E. Alberts stated that you can view the student presentations on Hatters TV on YouTube.

G. Copper requested a meeting for the Superintendent Evaluation Committee on March 27, 2017 at 6 pm. The committee is made up of G. Cooper, M. Ferguson, R. Jannelli, P. Johnston and F. Karrat. M. Ferguson will not be able to attend. R. Pietrafesa will ask Deb Warner to send the meeting information and G. Cooper inform R. Jannelli as he was not present.

G. Cooper stated that on March 25, 2017 at 8 am the police chief is having an open community forum at New Hope Baptist Church. She requested representation from the Board Members.

K. Thompson requested volunteers for interviews for the Shelter Rock Elementary Principal position. R. Pietrafesa requested anyone interested to notify him.

### **PUBLIC SESSION**

K. Thompson stated that the tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Board of Education and the CSEA/SEIU Local 2001 (Paraeducators) was not passed and they are regrouping.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

G. Cooper moved, seconded by P. Johnston, that the Board of Education adjourn its meeting of March 22, 2017 and the meeting adjourned at 8:37 pm.

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Kathy Molinaro, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)