

SOUTHINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

SOUTHINGTON, CONNECTICUT

REGULAR MEETING

JANUARY 8, 2015

The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education was held on Thursday, January 8, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. in the Municipal Center Public Assembly Room, 200 North Main Street, Southington, Connecticut with Executive Session scheduled for 6:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Brian Goralski, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

Present from the Board: Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mrs. Colleen Clark (*arrived 6:45 p.m.*), Mr. David Derynoski, Mr. Brian Goralski, Mrs. Patricia Johnson, Mrs. Jill Notar-Francesco, Mr. Zaya Oshana and Mrs. Patricia Queen. Absent: Mrs. Terry Lombardi.

Present from Administration: Mr. Timothy Connellan, Superintendent of Schools and Mrs. Karen Smith, Assistant Superintendent.

MOTION: by Mr. Derynoski, seconded by Mrs. Carmody:

"Move to go into Executive Session, excluding the public and the press, for the purpose of discussing Personnel Matters, and upon conclusion reconvene to public session."

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL MATTERS

Mr. Goralski declared the Executive Session ended at 7:06 p.m.

3. CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE

At 7:11 p.m., in Celebration of Excellence, the Board recognized the 2014-2015 Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendent's (CAPSS) recipients of the Superintendent/Student Award. The honored students were Jessica Goralski, a senior at Southington High School, Benjamin Palladino and Julia Semmel, Grade 8 students at Joseph A. DePaolo Middle School. The recognition award was for leadership service to the school, academic prowess relative to ability, and service to others in the community. The students were presented a plaque by the Board of Education and a special citation from State Senator Joseph Markley sponsored by the entire Southington delegation.

4. RECONVENE MEETING ~ REGULAR SESSION

The regular session was reconvened at 7:33 p.m. by Mr. Brian Goralski, Chairperson. Board members present were Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mrs. Patricia Johnson, Mrs. Jill Notar-Francesco, Mr. Zaya Oshana and Mrs. Patricia Queen. Absent: Mrs. Terry Lombardi.

Present from the administration were Mr. Timothy Connellan, Superintendent of Schools; Mrs. Karen Smith, Assistant Superintendent; Mrs. Sherri DiNello, Director of Business and Finance; Mr. Peter Romano, Director of Operations, and Ms. Meg Walsh, Director of Pupil Personnel Services.

Student representatives present were James Brino, Christopher Iverson and Elizabeth Veilleux.

There were approximately 20 people in the audience.

5. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by the student representatives.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Regular Meeting ~ December 11, 2014

MOTION: by Mrs. Notar-Francesco, seconded by Mr. Carmody:

“Move to approve the regular Board of Education minutes of December 11, 2014, as submitted.”

Motion carried by voice vote with Mr. Derynoski and Mrs. Johnson abstaining.

7. COMMUNICATIONS

a. Communications from Audience

Art Cyr, 103 Berlin Avenue, discussed school bus safety. On December 18, he witnessed a Jeep pass a stopped Derynoski school bus on Berlin Avenue. The next day, he and his neighbor obtained the New Jersey vehicle license plate when the vehicle came down the street again. He noted that this is the second time a driver has been given a written warning instead of a ticket for passing a stopped school bus. He believed that bus drivers are told to not fill out a report if they cannot get a license plate number. Mr. Cyr felt that the camera program apparently does not work because, if there was a camera on that bus, it was not operational. Mr. Cyr thought that part of the bus and vehicle traffic jams at the two middle schools is because parents do not want their children walking one and one-half miles and, therefore, drive the children to school. He thought that the Board of Education policy of the distances that students walk to school should be revisited. He noted that students who live within sight of South End School are bused to school because many years ago the South End School Principal requested it as there was no crossing guard.

Erik Semmel, 58 Valley View Court, President of the SHS Band Backers, requested that the Board of Education consider paying the Marching Band league fees on an annual basis when they work on their budget for next year. He noted that the Marching Band is part of a competitive league and earned a state championship this year. They compete every weekend in the fall season culminating with a state championship in New Britain and a national championship in New Jersey. The Marching Band students pay \$4,000 to \$5,000 per year to be a member of the USBand League. He pointed out that this is the only league at the high school that receives a grade in class. Mr. Semmel also noted that the Southington High School upgrades for the auditorium have been on the Board of Education's budget for the past few years. He pointed out that outside groups are charged to use the auditorium in the form of facilities fees. He hoped that these fees have been set aside over the years and that the improvements to the auditorium occur soon. He asked the Board to use the Band Backers as an ally to help raise money to make this happen. He thanked the Board for their support of music education in Southington.

Dawn Stomsky, 218 Summit Street, spoke about bus issues and concerns that Plantsville area parents have regarding students who have to walk through the downtown area of Plantsville and the hazardous conditions to walk to Kennedy Middle School. She noted that on December 30, 2014, a group of parents met with Mr. Connellan and Mr. Romano to discuss steps on how to move forward in order to express their concerns. On Wednesday morning, January 7, 2015 at 7:15 a.m., she walked the route with Mr. Romano and another concerned parent of Kennedy Middle School. A major concern during the walk was a traffic light in downtown Plantsville that does not have a "No Right Turn on Red" sign. As they were standing at the crosswalk by the pharmacy and pushed the button to cross with the crossing signal lights flashing and beeping, a car heading down Route 10 South, which had a red traffic light, turned right on red into their path on the crosswalk. Another concern that she had was with the Torrey Crane Company loading trucks that are still blocking the sidewalk that the children are expected to walk across to and from school. The group was told by Mr. Romano and Mr. Connellan that it was illegal for the trucks to park there. She noted that the trucks are still parking illegally and questioned why something has not been done to stop it. She understood that the job of the Southington Public Schools Transportation Department was to make sure that the regulations are being followed and that the walking routes to schools are safe for the students. She pointed out that the Southington Board of Education mantra is "Safety First." She pointed out that the group has been asking for a solution to this problem since September of 2014. She felt that, if the walking route continues to be violated by Torrey Crane Company trucks blocking the sidewalk for the students, transportation needs to be provided for the children until this matter was resolved.

Bob Brown, 587 Burritt Street, President of the Southington Education Association, spoke in favor of keeping the half-day Wednesdays in next year's school calendar for Professional Development. He noted that he spoke about this at the last Board meeting in December and gave the Board a letter at that time (*Attachment #1*). He pointed out that two years ago, when they were in contract negotiations, they surveyed teachers and their biggest concern was that they needed more time because of the new initiatives, and to collaborate and do assessments together. There was not enough time in the schedule that they had in the past to do it all. The meetings on Tuesdays are very full meetings. Mr. Brown felt that the new calendar with the half-day Wednesdays was the most cost efficient way to do it, otherwise they would need to add time to the school day or go in on a Saturday, which would be costly. He noted that instructional time has been added in small increments in the teachers' contracts over the last five years. They actually have more instructional time with the students now than they did five years

ago. As part of the last negotiations, they agreed to have release time for elementary teachers if they got substitutes; however, they cannot find the substitutes and, consequently, have not been doing that for the last two years. He noted that half-day Wednesdays would help accomplish that goal without having to do battle over that, which they do not want to do. He noted that many other towns have these days in their calendars now with many of them having more days than in Southington's calendar. He asked the Board to leave the half-day Wednesdays in the calendar for 2015-2016.

Richard Terino, President of the Southington Administrators Association, remarked that the standard length of a commercial in 1967 was one minute and cost \$558,000 during that year's Super Bowl. In 2014, the standard length of a commercial was 30 seconds and cost \$4,000,000 during that year's Super Bowl. He pointed out that advertisers realized it was all about audience and contact time, and the structure and quality of that contact time. Mr. Terino noted that educators realize the same with their audience, the students. He pointed out that the inclusion of early release days for the purpose of Professional Development could not be overstated and felt that it was imperative to make the instituted pilot permanent on the 2015-2016 calendar. These days increase the amount of learning for the teachers, learning that would otherwise be postponed. Countless activities have increased the teachers' skillsets and have resulted in cohorts of professional learning communities among them. These days have yielded an unequivocal return of certified staff progressing forward as dynamic learners along with their students. Mr. Terino felt that these early release days should not be viewed as lost contact time; they should be viewed in terms of "improved" contact time.

Audrey Ordstat, 51 Greystone Drive, South End School PTO Officer, addressed her concerns with the school calendar for 2015-2016. She noted that the start date of September 3 did not align with start dates in surrounding towns, which were August 26 or 27. She noted that from a parent's perspective, if the current 2014-2015 school schedule ends with six or less snow days then it would require 10½ weeks of summer child care, which is a true financial hardship for many working families. A typical summer break is nine weeks, which aligns with many local camps and summer programs already put forth by local community partners. She felt that the length of time between the ending of the previous school year and start of the next school year should be the Board's decision-making gauge, rather than when Labor Day falls on the calendar. Another reason for starting the school year a week earlier would be to push up the weeks for Parent-Teacher Conferences for all levels. Ms. Ordstat felt that a mid-June last day, before adding snow days, is very late for students when it could be easily avoided. She did not think that the elementary students would be enthusiastic to learn in the middle of June without air-conditioning in the classroom. She recognized that it is hot in August; however, the students are eager to start a new school year and more attentive. Ms. Ordstat addressed the half-day Professional Development sessions on Wednesday's every month and felt they also created a hardship for working parents. She questioned if anyone making calendar decisions thought about who is caring for these children on these days when there are two-hours of non-academic time throughout the month. There are many families that have two working parents or a single parent with no alternative child care or support system in their lives. This causes families to scramble to find child care or take time off from work causing them to lose money or time off slotted for vacations. She thought that it was extremely unrealistic for the Southington Board of Education and the central office administration to believe that every family can conform to the calendar. It is her belief that the 2015-2016 school calendar significantly compromises student safety as the individuals making this decision have offered no alternative to parents regarding child care. She noted that she did not find any documented conversation in the Board of

Education meeting minutes with community partners to determine how these agencies could assist parents in need of care. In an informal survey of approximately 20 Southington parents, each one of them expressed very similar concerns. She thanked the administration for sharing the proposed calendar and being able to communicate her concerns to the Board.

b. Communications from Board Members and Administration

Communication from the Board Members:

Mrs. Carmody reported that the Facility Naming Committee met on December 16, 2014 to discuss naming the walkway to the football field in honor of Dominic D'Angelo. They will meet again on January 21, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. to finalize the plans to propose a recommendation to the entire Board. A presentation by the committee will be given to the Board in February.

Mrs. Notar-Francesco reported that the CREC / Hartford Area Superintendents Association (HASA) legislative breakfast will be held at the State Capitol on Thursday, January 22, 2015 at 8:00 a.m. (*Attachment #2*). Board members and administration are welcome to attend to speak to legislators. Mrs. Notar-Francesco will notify Southington's delegation to ensure that they will be attending. She noted that CABA has been advertising this as their area legislative breakfast for the districts in the Hartford region. She requested that anyone interested in attending could contact her to register. Mrs. Notar-Francesco reported that the CREC Council had established a Legislative Committee, which she serves on, and they designed the legislative agenda to bring with them on January 22 to the breakfast. From year to year, the agenda has remained the same except this year there is a new agenda item under "Closing the Achievement Gap." They are going to speak with representatives about reducing the burden on local school districts by increasing magnet school funding annually through a sustainable funding formula. The agenda is a draft that will be voted on by the CREC Council on January 21.

Mr. Derynoski asked if the Board of Education will be holding their annual Legislative Breakfast with the local legislators like they have been doing for the past few years. Mr. Goralski replied that, after the Board wraps up the budget, he will have Mrs. Abaitis work on availability in February for Board members and legislators to meet to address the Board's key concerns.

Mr. Goralski reported that the YMCA Camp Sloper Polar Plunge will be held next Saturday and that Mr. Connellan would be joining him this year. He thanked Mrs. Passamano for coordinating the district-wide fundraising effort for this. Mr. Goralski stated that Mr. Connellan sent an email to every school challenging them to send at least one participant to join them. Mr. Goralski reminded the Board members to contribute to that cause.

Mr. Goralski thanked Ms. Meg Walsh for her representation of the Board of Education during the MORE Commission hearing at the Municipal Center. He reminded the Board members about an invitation they received from Board Attorney Rich Mills of Shipman & Goodwin regarding a law seminar for Board of Education members that will be held at Shipman & Goodwin in Hartford on the evening of January 14, 2015.

Mr. Goralski thanked the high school administration and staff and the Southington Police and Fire Departments for the way they handled a safety concern that occurred before the holiday

break. He felt that it showed the collaboration that exists in Southington between the town departments regarding student safety.

Communication from Administration:

Mr. Connellan reported on the following:

1. Director of Technology Start Date: The new Director of Technology, Jamie Olander, will be starting on January 13, 2015. The technology staff is planning a special welcome.
2. Update – Balancing the Middle School Enrollment:
Mrs. Betty Lutz [retired Kelley School Principal] and Mrs. Pamela Aldi [retired Kennedy Middle School Assistant Principal] have been working diligently on this project. Also, Mrs. Michelle Passamano [Registrar] and Mrs. Karen Smith have been assisting. They will give a presentation to the Board in February.
3. Hartford Area Superintendents Association Legislative Breakfast:
Mrs. Notar-Francesco had already addressed this topic.
4. MORE Commission Special Education Work Group:
The MORE Commission held a meeting in the Norwalk community on January 8, 2015. There will be meetings of this working group on Thursday, January 15, 22, and 29 in the morning at the Legislative Office Building. He will be attending all three of those meetings. Mr. Connellan will report to the Board on January 22 with a brief update.

Mr. Connellan publicly thanked Mr. Dean Barnes and his staff from New Britain Transportation for their work starting buses every couple of hours due to freezing temperatures during the night of January 7 to ensure that all the buses would be able to run on January 8, 2015.

Mr. Goralski asked Mr. Connellan to share the information on balancing the middle school enrollment with the Board members ahead of the February presentation so the Board could review it before the meeting. He asked Mr. Connellan to thank all participants for their work on this.

c. Communications from Student Representatives

Mr. Brino reported on the following:

- On January 3, 2015, the FIRST Robotics Team 195 learned that the new game for the 2015 season is called “Recycle Rush.” They have six weeks to design and build the robot for competitions.
- Five members of the Southington High School Marching Band performed holiday music on the Town Green on December 23 and raised over \$300 for the Mr. Holland Opus Foundation and the Wounded Warriors Project.
- This year, the Student Council Think Tank is a group of 85 students from all grades who are nominated by staff members and represent the overall student body. The two advisors are Mr. McAloon and Mrs. Steinberg. The group meets monthly for one period during the day. The groups are divided into subcommittees: Advisory, Block Scheduling, Committee Services, Fun Committee and the Anti-Bullying Committee.

Miss Veilleux reported on the following:

- Mid-terms will be starting in a couple of weeks.
- The Book Club at the high school will start skyping the fourth grade students on Monday, January 12. They are inputting questions on a Google doc that they are sharing with a fourth grade class to which they are assigned. Most of the students have finished the book. The purpose behind the Book Club is to share their love of reading with the younger generation. The high school students get the satisfaction of helping the younger students comprehend and enjoy reading.
- College Basics 101 was held this week where college freshmen came to the high school to talk about their first semester and the differences and transition between high school and college.

Mr. Iverson reported on the following:

- On Tuesday, January 6, the JV Girls Basketball game went into double overtime with Northwest Catholic. Sarah Minkiewicz threw a three-point shot at the last second of double overtime which allowed Southington to win the game by one point. He stated that it was an astonishing game.
- DECA is getting ready for their competition in Orlando, Florida. The members participate and compete in business and marketing related events.
- College Basics 101 took place between periods 2 and 3 for one and one-half hours at the high school. There were approximately 15 college freshmen who came to speak from diverse backgrounds including some who took time off between high school and college and others that took double majors, which he found informative. He found it interesting about class selection and about speaking to college advisors because, unlike in high school, the college students have to go to the advisors; the advisors do not seek out the students.

8. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

a. Personnel Report

MOTION: By Mrs. Notar-Francesco seconded by Mr. Derynoski:

“Move to approve the Personnel Report, as submitted.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

9. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting ~ January 5, 2015

Mrs. Carmody reported that four AP German V students (Jordan Murchison, Niels Peschel, Christina Trovato and Dominic Zmarlicki) presented the idea of Southington becoming a “sister town” to a similar community in the town of Leer, Germany, which is where Niels Peschel’s family is from. This partnership would require a commitment from the Town Council as well as the Board of Education. These students gave an overview of what they thought would be many of the benefits of this partnership such as cultural, social, economic, historical and geographic. The students felt that this could be done with any of the foreign languages at the

high school. She noted that the German Teacher, Ms. Ringstad, felt that there were no schools in Connecticut that had a sister town. Mrs. Carmody stated that the students did this on their own, and the next step would be to develop a plan of action and bring it to the Curriculum and Instruction Committee and then to the full Board for approval. The students would then approach the Town Council and the Chamber of Commerce. The students had the idea of having a booth during the Apple Harvest Festival along with the sister town to display some of the cultural differences.

Mrs. Carmody reported that Mrs. Riccio [Spanish Teacher] presented a plan to redesign the current Spanish V curriculum to focus on Latin American studies. Students would study the history, culture, literature, and languages of Latin American countries. This class would be taught in Spanish and concentrate on the history of Latin America with the United States. Mrs. Carmody thought that this would be a great opportunity for an interdisciplinary approach. She remarked that she asked Dr. Semmel if she could be a guest speaker as a retired Social Studies teacher.

10. OLD BUSINESS

a. Town Government Communications

Mr. Goralski reminded the Board that the budget process begins on Tuesday, January 13, with Mr. Connellan presenting the budget at the first workshop followed by another budget workshop on Thursday, January 15. The Board of Education will adopt the budget at their Thursday, January 22, 2015 meeting. He noted that the Town Council and Board of Finance have been invited to all of these meetings.

b. Construction Update

Mr. Romano reported that there was an abundance of activity on the middle school projects over the holiday break. Phase 9 was turned over during that break and work has begun on Phase 10. There was a lot of furniture brought in for 14 classrooms and 11 offices. There were some issues with Fletcher Thompson and the lack of communication with the receipt of furniture that created some issues for those deliveries. Fletcher Thompson took responsibility for those issues and everybody is continuing to move forward as a team. Fortunately, the school system has great employees in the Maintenance Department, who, along with the custodians, picked up a lot of the heavy load and resolved those issues with our own manpower. He felt that Phase 10 will be turned over earlier than anticipated.

Mr. Goralski noted that to save money the maintenance staff and custodians came from across the district during vacation week to Kennedy Middle School. They moved all the furniture into our own storage, moved all the furniture that had been already put away by the moving company back into the building, cleaned it, got it into the classrooms, and made the classrooms fully functional. They ran out of time for DePaolo Middle School and the Building Committee picked up the responsibility of bringing the movers back to do it. He noted that without the maintenance staff it would have been increased cost for the building projects. He asked Mr. Romano to thank the maintenance employees and custodians and let them know how valuable their efforts were. Mr. Goralski pointed out that Newfield Construction was moving these projects along and that the Building Committee was happy with the progress. He noted that the committee is doing punch list items now because it is being turned over in phases. He

encouraged the Board members to visit the middle schools to observe the progress that was being made.

c. Proposed 2015-2016 School Calendar ~ Second Reading

Mr. Goralski asked Mr. Connellan if his office had received any other concerns regarding the 2015-2016 calendar besides Mrs. Ordstat's email. Mr. Connellan replied that some staff members pointed out to him that Yom Kippur begins at sundown on September 22 and there is a Professional Development Day on September 23, which some staff members would not be able to attend. He asked the Board if that could be moved to September 30 instead.

Mrs. Notar-Francesco stated that she had a conversation that morning with Mrs. Lombardi who could not attend the Board meeting. She noted that Mrs. Lombardi had two concerns with the calendar. One issue was regarding the Professional Development days on December 16 and on April 20. Mrs. Lombardi wanted to point out that those two months were already shortened months with the holidays and days off. She would like those revisited or eliminated. Mrs. Notar-Francesco noted that Mrs. Lombardi also had an issue with the start date and believed that winters could be rough and that it would lengthen the end of the year going farther out into June.

Mrs. Notar-Francesco shared that she was in support of the Professional Development days as they are planned, and the only issue that she had was the start date. She thought that it should be moved to the last week of August as in the past years. The winter weather and school cancellations were one factor, but also that it better aligns with the uniform common calendar that will be mandated within the next few years. She also felt that the calendar as presented would present difficulty for families of students who attend magnet schools in the half-day programs because they will be starting the last week of August at the magnets and a week later in Southington.

Mrs. Clark thought that the Board voted for an early start date for the past few years because of the middle school construction. It has worked in the Board's favor with the winter weather to have an earlier start date because of all the snow days. Mrs. Clark was in favor of an August start date. She felt that there was great value for the Professional Development days because she attended one with new teachers from throughout the district regarding classroom management that was facilitated by Ms. Rita Stearns, a master teacher. She was amazed at the level and the depth of information that they were sharing with each other. Mrs. Clark was in favor of the Professional Development days as they are on the 2015-2016 calendar.

Mr. Derynoski agreed with Mrs. Lombardi because December and April are shortened months. He still advocates for classroom time with teachers in front of students. He noted that he has not seen any positive results for all of the Professional Development days that took place last year. There are no tangible results for all the time away from the students and whether they benefited scholastically from it with test scores. He could not see continuing the Professional Development days without seeing some documentation. Mr. Derynoski felt that there were too many Professional Development days on the calendar that results in time away from students.

Mrs. Carmody took exception to Mr. Derynoski's comments about not seeing something tangible. She thought that the collaboration between the teachers discussing, learning, and implementing all the new initiatives that have been mandated has been invaluable. She felt that

Professional Development was very important so teachers can go back to the classroom and deliver quality education to the students. She noted that no one will have first-hand knowledge of test results until the test window begins March through May. Mrs. Carmody thought that even that would not tell the whole story because this year they are beginning Smarter Balanced Tests that will be very different from previous testing. She thought that it was a good idea for all Board members to attend Professional Development on the half-days to see what the teachers were sharing and learning, which was invaluable. Mrs. Carmody would leave the Professional Development days in the calendar as they are presented in the 2015-2016 calendar. She did not have a problem with the start date of September 3. She noted that absenteeism before Labor Day was a problem every year because of vacations.

Mrs. Queen supported the Professional Development early release time of two-hours before the end of the normal school day. She thought that it was important to note the distinction that it is not a half-day; it is two-hour early release. Mrs. Queen felt that they have to give the teachers this valuable time and felt that it was an immeasurable resource. She did not think that they would have tangible results for a long time, and did not think that test results would be the answer any time soon. She noted that with Common Core there were major changes happening that will take a lot of time. She believed that this time was important for the teachers.

Mrs. Johnson noted that her son, Matthew, is a middle school science teacher in New Hampshire and, when they have Professional Development, it is on a Friday that wraps around the weekend where there is a holiday. She thought that Southington could keep that in mind when choosing days for Professional Development. She was in favor of maintaining the August beginning of school. There are three elementary schools that have two floors and the second floors in the old elementary schools get really hot in June. She thought that, even though it gets hot in August, it is more manageable because there is so much motivation and enthusiasm on the part of the students to start school. She noted that the Board always aims for June 10 to end the school year and that they never hit that mark. She felt that the community was used to going back to school the last week of August and that it was a better fit.

Mrs. Johnson continued that she was concerned with the Professional Development release time that is proposed for next year. She remembered that last year the Board was very concerned with what appeared to be low morale on the part of the staff because so much was demanded of them with new mandated programs and expectations. It was mentioned to pilot the early release Wednesdays for one year. She was not sold on continuing that, and questioned if this was perceived to be an open-ended process, and that they will always have this. She was concerned that they would be losing so many minutes from the school year. Mrs. Johnson could not endorse continued diminished contact time without seeing some kind of assessment. She wanted to see additional proof that taking this time for Professional Development is a good trade-off for the students losing 1,200 minutes of contact time. She noted that she has been on this Board for a very long time and they have been working very hard to increase contact time. She believed that the teacher in the classroom was one of the most important components for the students' education.

Mr. Oshana was in favor of moving the start date back to August, which would give the Board more control over the school year and when it ends. He felt that it was not a child care issue, but an issue on how to manage the school year. Mr. Oshana thought that time out of the classroom was a big deal and that the Board has talked about that on many occasions with information provided on it. He questioned the Professional Development that was provided a

year ago versus the new half-day year schedule and if there was actually less time out of the classroom for Professional Development than there used to be. Mrs. Smith replied that it was. She explained that the number of days that teachers were out of their classroom during a two-week period of time was measured one year to the next year and had decreased considerably. Mr. Oshana thought that was important and one of the things they had talked about was making sure they expanded that timeframe; however, they stayed at a short two-week time period. He thought that they needed to expand that timeframe. They needed to have something to make sure that this was working and providing tangible results. He thought that they may not see tangible results until students start going through the process. Mr. Oshana's biggest issue was that he wanted to see more time for the teacher in front of the student and not being pulled out of the classroom arbitrarily. He noted that is the information that he is looking for. He wanted to make sure the point was made that the Professional Development time actually went down. He thought that the Professional Development was important and that teachers continue to develop themselves so that the students can develop themselves. Mr. Oshana thought that they needed to figure out what the metric is and how they would track it, which he thought would be tough to do. He thought that providing a program and giving it enough time to mature was important.

Mrs. Johnson asked if they could vote on facets of the calendar because so many issues had been raised. Mr. Goralski asked for the student representatives opinions on the Professional Development days and the start date. The student representatives felt that when they start on a Thursday and Friday as full days and then have a long Labor Day weekend it gives a nice and easy start to the school year so they do not have a full five-day week of classes, which makes for a good transition. It is a big change for students going from middle school to the high school and elementary school to the middle school and entering Kindergarten. Mr. Brino felt that Professional Development helped the teachers. Miss Veilleux noted that she enjoyed the three-day weekend with Labor Day and thought that it was good to keep, especially when they want to end earlier rather than later in the school year. She thought that starting earlier would be better. Miss Veilleux stated that she never had a problem or issue in getting time with teachers if she needed help with something. She understood that they get out earlier with the early release days, but, in terms of less contact time with students, she has never felt that. Mr. Iverson did not feel that the Professional Development days, presently, hinder his ability to learn at Southington High School. Overall, he believed that Professional Development days hold the same value as a full-day of school. He agreed that it was good to have a short week before they jump in to a five-day week because going from no school and sleeping in to getting up at 6:00 a.m., five days in a row, would affect a lot of students in a negative way. He felt that the start of school is always going to be a groggy time for students to get up early so, if it is a five-day week or a three-day week, it is still going to be the start of school. Therefore, he felt it was truly at the Board's discretion.

Mr. Goralski liked the calendar exactly the way it is presented. He supports Professional Development days and did not look at it as a pilot. He works in a school district that has an early release day every Thursday and he felt that, when used right, it was the absolute direction of the future. Mr. Goralski liked the way Mrs. Ordstat wrote her email and acknowledged that there were other people who thought the same way as she, but the Board's job is not the business of child care because that is a parent's responsibility. He had that responsibility as a parent. He pointed out that the Board's responsibility is education. They present the calendar ahead of time so it gives the parents the opportunity to plan. He noted that the length of the summer was not a concern for the Board; their concern is the start of the year and end of the year. He thought that starting in August was best, and the late Labor Day has thrown a huge curveball for them this year. Mr. Goralski proposed that the Board take a consensus about the start of school date and

Professional Development days. He felt that because they would be making changes to the calendar he wanted to give teachers, administrators, and parents a two-week opportunity for input through email, and he recommended tabling the vote on the calendar until the next meeting.

Mrs. Queen asked the administration to respond about the students who are in the magnet schools' half-day and how two different calendars would affect them. Mr. Connellan responded that he could not respond because it was actually something that administration did not discuss. Mr. Connellan pointed out that, if the start date is moved to August 27, they are not going to get the progression of two-days, four-days, and five-days. He noted that was a significant concern for administration for the Kindergarten student's phase-in, not so much for sleepy high school students. He agreed that the late Labor Day was the curveball on the calendar this year.

Mr. Goralski encouraged administration to send to the schools and PTOs whatever changes the Board makes to the calendar tonight, and encouraged people to share their thoughts electronically.

Mr. Goralski took a consensus by a show of hands on the following calendar items:

Consensus: Change the start date to August 27, 2015:

YES ~ 6 No ~ 2

Consensus: Leave the Professional Development Days as presented with the exception of moving the September 23 Professional Development Day to September 16 due to Yom Kippur:

YES ~ 6 NO ~ 2

Mr. Derynoski would like to take the September 16 and April 20 Professional Development days out of the calendar.

Mr. Oshana asked for some feedback on how the Professional Development days are helping with data collection and test results. Mrs. Smith believed that data had been sent to the Board. It took a long time to gather the data that the Board received, although it was not ranking data, which will be coming in mid-year. The end of January, teachers are going to be asked to rank their Professional Development on the Likert scale. The important thing administration needed to know is how the time was being used and was it aligned with the district vision and mission. Mr. Oshana felt that compiling that data and looking for trends would be much more helpful. Mrs. Smith noted that many teachers commented about the hard work that they are learning to do, and one full day of Professional Development in the course of the year will not accomplish it. Mr. Oshana stated that one of the things it was supposed to do was make sure that it provided more time for the teacher in the classroom. He would like to see how many minutes were added back into the classroom and asked that it be part of the data collection if they have it. If they don't have it, then they need to get it. Mr. Goralski added that this is going to take time to gather all the data that the Board is looking for. Mr. Oshana noted that it will take a lot of work, but the analytics that go around that would show if it added more time back into the classroom. If it did not, he would not be in favor of going back to this; if it did, then he would keep it going. Mrs. Smith noted that it makes sense from a business perspective and they can develop a system to try their best to collect that data; however, it is hard to backtrack accurately, especially when you don't have confidence that each school collected their data the same way.

She stated that going forward they will create something new. If teachers are only using those two-hours to do assessment work, then they are missing the purpose of Professional Development, and that was the sensitivity of collecting what they are really doing and how they are using the time. The assessment work should be clearly part of the teacher's work day. Mrs. Smith wanted to make sure the Board is informed of the definition of how that assessment is being looked at. Mr. Oshana agreed that if they are spending their time just doing analytics, they are wasting their time. Mr. Oshana was looking for how they handle and integrate in all of the new initiatives.

Mrs. Queen pointed out that the new Director of Technology with an expertise in data will be starting next week and could help with this data collection. She thought that they should be cautious in expecting test results to be used as a metric, as the country will be faced with a very different test. They do not know what the results are going to be with the new Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test that is coming. By all accounts, it is an incredibly challenging test. It will take time to bring the teachers up to speed to change their instructional practices to meet the new challenges and demands on students to be 21st century ready with critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. She saw a piece on PBS News Hour about the GED test. The majority of students that are taking the GED, which has been reconfigured to reflect the Common Core expectations of high school students, are failing the test. She noted that big changes are coming with the new testing. They have to be careful that they don't use the new test results as a marker or reflection of what they are actually accomplishing in the classroom. It is going to take time to catch up with the test.

Mr. Derynoski asked if the two-hour Professional Development days counted towards the Professional Development requirements that the teachers have to do for the year. Mrs. Smith replied that it did. They are required to offer Professional Development, not how many hours. Mr. Derynoski noted that they have always provided Professional Development. Mrs. Smith added that the difference is that they do not have to report and collect the CEU's as in the past. The Teacher Evaluation Committee is technically called the Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development Committee. There has to be a comprehensive Professional Development plan that matches the needs of teachers, and those are individual and differentiated based on a teacher's assessment. She noted that it ties in with the Foundations of Reading Tests that all Grades K-3 teachers have to take now. The test is three hours long, and they will be using a Professional Development half-day for the Grades K-3 teachers taking the FORT (Foundations of Reading Test), which is a new requirement. Based on the results, they have to offer Professional Development in the areas of weakness, and they will do that on half-day Wednesdays.

Mr. Goralski summarized that the revised calendar that will be shared with the district, schools, parents, PTO and in the minutes will show August 27, 2015 as the start date, September 16, 2015 will be the Professional Development Day for September, and the other Professional Development days will remain as is. He noted that this should have been a discussion at the last meeting, and he took responsibility that they did not do the first reading in depth like they should have.

MOTION: by Mrs. Notar-Francesco, seconded by Mr. Oshana:

“Move to table this agenda item until the next Board of Education meeting.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

11. NEW BUSINESS

a. Transportation Contract

MOTION: By Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mrs. Notar-Francesco:

“Move to approve the contract between the Southington Board of Education and the New Britain Transportation Company for 2015-2020.”

Mr. Derynoski noted the amount of hard work and effort to put the contract together with the business office, administration, the Board of Education and New Britain Transportation. Mrs. Johnson concurred and thought that they all should be proud of the transportation contract, which was a very professional piece of work. She was very happy with it.

Mr. Goralski noted that after this meeting the contract will become a public document. He thanked the New Britain Transportation officials and Mrs. DiNello. The Board funded work and research to be put into this contract and they found that the long-term relationship that they had with New Britain Transportation was serving them best. Mrs. DiNello worked with them on coming up with a document that is relevant to the present time, not the document that they started with many years ago. He was excited to move the partnership forward. Mrs. DiNello added that Mr. Peter Agostini, Mr. Richard Spencer, and Mr. Dean Barnes from New Britain Transportation were fabulous to work with through the process because they had a number of recommendations to work into the contract language and they were very open throughout the entire discussion process.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YES – Mr. Oshana, Mrs. Queen, Mrs. Carmody, Mrs. Clark, Mr. Derynoski, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Notar-Francesco, Mr. Goralski. **Motion carried unanimously.**

11. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: By Mr. Derynoski, seconded by Mrs. Clark:

“Move to adjourn.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Blanchard
Recording Secretary

Bd of Ed—Half Day Wednesdays

Hello. Good to see you all again!! My name is Bob Brown, 587 Burritt St in Plantsville, and president of the SEA.

I am here to speak in favor of keeping the half day Wednesdays in next year's calendar.

Two years ago, when we surveyed teachers for their biggest concerns and wishes in contract negotiations, by FAR the biggest issue we heard was time. Teachers need more time.

What for? There are so many new initiatives being thrown at teachers. Common Core, SRBI, differentiated instruction, a new evaluation system which relies on data collection, IEP, the new SBAC testing, and much more. For teachers to master and become adept in these new initiatives, to create new assessments and collect data, and to collaborate with other teachers, they need time. More time than ever before. Time outside the classroom.

These half day Wednesdays are by far the most efficient way to provide teachers with time. It would cost taxpayers more money to pay teachers to come back on Saturdays or after school hours, and collaboration is an essential part of these initiatives. Collaboration cannot be accomplished "on teachers own time."

In fact, in our last contract negotiation, the Board of Ed heard our plea for more time. If you recall, we signed a MOU to provide subs for elementary teachers to have release time of two hours when assessments were due. However, because of the difficulty of finding enough subs, this simply hasn't happened. We are willing to accept that as long as we still get these half day Wednesdays.

Additionally, we have actually increased our educational contact time with students over our last two contracts, covering six years. We cut

down on the wrap around time before and after students are in school in the 2007-2010 contract, by ten minutes a day (we worked the same hours but added contact time with students). That actually took AWAY from time teachers had to do work and collaborate outside the classroom. Then, we added 5 minutes to the overall school day in the 2012-13 contract. That adds up to an increase of over 30 hours educational contact time, but less time for teachers to work outside the classroom. The nine half days Wednesdays cut contact by less than 18 hours total (wrap time must be subtracted, so it is really about 13 hours for the year). Next year, the November half day is eliminated, so that is even less time lost, but less time to collaborate. In addition, the high school also eliminated home room, which added even more contact time with students. So, even with these half days, we have increased educational contact time with students over the last six years.

So, I would strongly urge you to keep these half day Wednesdays. Teachers put them to very valuable use, and they are the most efficient way to accomplish all that we have to do.

Let me conclude by sharing my personal experience with these days. A few of them are "design your own". I decided, with Candy Patten, another high school teacher, to design future PD for teachers on substance abuse and dealing with students with mental illness challenges. We would have never found time to do that, with contacting speakers and sources, with all the OTHER things we have to work on. This is, indeed, valuable time!!

Thank you.

Capitol Region Education Council (CREC)
Hartford Area Superintendents Association (HASA)

Thursday, January 22, 2015

Attachment #2

SAVE THE DATE

Legislative Breakfast

State Capitol, Hartford, CT
8 a.m.

Join us to discuss legislative priorities
and educational issues for the 2015
Session of the General Assembly

RSVP

CREC's Department of Communications, Julia Winer
Assistant Director and Coordinator of Legislative Affairs
860-509-3666, or jwiner@crec.org

 **CREC**
Excellence in Education

CREC Council Legislative Agenda

2015 Session of the Connecticut General Assembly

Priority: Predictability for School Districts

Good decision making at the district level, particularly during challenging financial times, is dependent on predictable resources and on manageable timelines and expectations for major reforms. Predictability allows school districts to focus on serving the best interests of students. The CREC Council supports:

- A formula for the special education excess cost grant that offers predictable reimbursement to school districts;
- Predictable expectations for school districts regarding the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR);
- Voluntary programs that promote regional cost efficiencies and/or program enhancements;
- Allowing the payment of reimbursable special education expenses to pass directly to the school district, rather than going into the municipality's general fund; and
- Revised timelines for the implementation of new initiatives, including Educator Evaluation, Common Core State Standards, and Secondary School Reform.

Priority: Closing the Achievement Gap

Data show that children attending racially and economically integrated regional magnet schools and Hartford children attending suburban schools through the Hartford Region Open Choice Program are closing Connecticut's racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps. In order to continue this progress and advance a plan to reduce racial, social, and economic isolation statewide, the CREC Council supports:

- Providing sufficient funding to achieve the school integration benchmarks stipulated in the Sheff Settlement Agreement;
- Further investment in Open Choice as a more fiscally prudent and responsible way to invest Sheff funds;
- Reducing the relative burden of funding magnet schools that falls on local school districts by increasing magnet school funding annually through a sustainable funding formula
- Increasing the per student tuition for districts enrolling more than 6% Open Choice students to \$9,000 and providing school infrastructure incentives; and
- No additional magnet schools that require tuition from sending school districts;
- Developing additional early childhood opportunities for children.

CREC's Vision:

Every student can and shall learn at high levels and, therefore, must have access to all educational resources within the region through the system of public schools served by CREC.

CREC's Mission:

To work with boards of education of the Capitol Region to improve the quality of public education for all learners.