

SOUTHINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

SOUTHINGTON, CONNECTICUT

REGULAR MEETING

APRIL 23, 2015

The regular meeting of the Southington Board of Education was held on Thursday, April 23, 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 6:36 p.m.

Present from the Board: Mrs. Terri Carmody, Vice-Chairperson, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mrs. Patricia Johnson, Mrs. Terry Lombardi, Mrs. Jill Notar-Francesco, Mr. Zaya Oshana, and Mrs. Patricia Queen.

Present from Administration: Mrs. Karen Smith, Assistant Superintendent.

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

“Move to add a ‘Student Matter’ to the Executive Session.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

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 and Student Matters, and upon conclusion reconvene to public session.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL AND STUDENT MATTERS

Mr. Goralski declared the Executive Session ended at 7:05 p.m.

3. CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE

At 7:09 p.m., in Celebration of Excellence, the Board recognized the following honorees with a Certificate of Excellence:

- The 2015 Girls’ Gymnastics Team that won the CIAC Class L State Championship coached by Ms. Kaitlyn O’Donnell. The team was comprised of Kayla Birmingham, Victoria Castillo, Sarah Dolan, Danielle Jaffer, Sarah Leahy, Erica Masse, Jessica

Kane, Taryn Meenan, Natalie Rickard, Alexandra Rothstein, Katarina Rothstein, Marilyn Sporbert, Megan Walsh, Hannah Weir and Rachel Williams.

- In the sport of Wrestling, Zack Murillo, won the 2015 New England Championship, which was the first time in Southington High School history. He also won the CIAC Open and Class LL Championship in the 106 pound weight class. He was coached by Mr. Derek Dion.
- The partnership between the Southington Public Schools and the New Britain Museum of American Art, Southington Education Foundation, and Community Foundation of Greater New Britain that brought the Artist in Residence program to all third grade students through grants totaling \$24,875. The resident artist, Ms. Rashmi Talpade, along with the Southington elementary art teachers, Lauren Klein, Dana Baldwin, Jessica Leiss, Barbara Szymanski, JoElle Castonguay and Luciana Florio, led the third grade students in creating a collaborative Southington landscape photo collage at each elementary school. The third grade students also took a field trip to the New Britain Art Museum. There were eight murals on display in the Public Assembly Room from each elementary school. Mrs. Jan Verderame, Principal of Derynoski School, was recognized as the administrator in charge of the Elementary School Art Program who made this district-wide collaborative effort in social studies and art possible for the elementary third graders. On behalf of the Southington Education Foundation, Mrs. Jan Galati, President, received a Certificate of Excellence for their donation of \$9,804 toward this project. Mr. Jim Williamson of the Community Foundation of Greater New Britain received a Certificate for their donation of \$15,071.

4. RECONVENE MEETING ~ REGULAR SESSION

The regular session was reconvened at 7:46 p.m. by Mr. Goralski, Chairperson. Board members present were Mrs. Terri Carmody, Mrs. Colleen Clark, Mr. David Derynoski, Mrs. Patricia Johnson, Mrs. Terry Lombardi, Mrs. Jill Notar-Francesco, Mr. Zaya Oshana, and Mrs. Patricia Queen.

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

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

Mr. Goralski explained that Mr. Connellan, Superintendent of Schools, could not attend the meeting due to a family wedding.

5. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

Mr. Goralski called for a moment of silence in honor of Ms. Kathryn Karish Litke, a retired teacher who taught for many years in the Southington Public School district and recently passed away.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES ~ March 26, 2015

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

“Move to approve the regular Board of Education minutes of March 26, 2015, as submitted.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

a. Approval of Special Meeting Minutes ~ April 2, 2015

MOTION: by Mrs. Notar-Francesco, seconded by Mrs. Clark:

“Move to approve the special Board of Education minutes of April 2, 2015, as submitted.”

Motion carried by voice vote with eight in favor, and Mr. Oshana abstaining.

7. COMMUNICATIONS

a. Communications from Audience:

There were no audience communications.

b. Communication from the Board Members:

Mrs. Notar-Francesco updated the Board on the activities of the CREC Executive Director Search Committee. As Board members know, Dr. Bruce Douglas will be leaving the organization as of January 1, 2016. She is one of 11 members on the Search Committee who are in the process of developing a profile for the next Executive Director. They have hired BWP and Associates from Illinois to lead in the search. She has asked Mr. Connellan, Mrs. Smith and Dr. Erardi to provide input in telephone interviews to help develop the profile. She invited all Board members to participate in a CREC online survey regarding CREC's strengths and weaknesses and the qualifications for the next Executive Director. She will forward the link to the Board members when it has been put on the CREC website.

Mrs. Lombardi addressed special education and mandates from the federal and state government effecting the school system's programs and budget. The Board of Finance was invited to tour Hatton School and the Cognitive and Autism Programs and classrooms on April 17, 2015. She noted that Mr. John Leary and Mr. James Coleman from the Board of Finance attended. She stated that Ms. Margaret Walsh, Director of Pupil Services, Mrs. Sandra Kujawski, Special Education Coordinator, and Mrs. Sally Kamerbeek, Hatton Principal, set the agenda and led the discussions and that Finance Chairman Leary would like to move forward and look at the middle school and high school programs.

Mrs. Queen reported on the March 30, 2015 Veterans Committee meeting. She pointed out the following:

- Every school participates in Veterans Day programming in a variety of ways.

- Teachers have organized activities that include breakfasts, assemblies, inviting family members who are veterans to school, veterans' presentations, letter writing and collections of goods for donations. This year, 3,150 students have had presentations from veterans.
- She thanked the veterans for their time and role in educating the students and inspiring them to engage and support the larger veteran community across the state. Mrs. Queen gave a number of examples of how the students were interacting with the veterans.
- The Military Luncheon to honor the graduating seniors who have enlisted in the military is scheduled for Wednesday, June 10, 2015. The veterans tell these students that once they are settled they can reach out to the American Legion for a laptop. To date, six laptops have been donated to our students who graduated in 2013 and 2014.
- Southington leads the state in the veteran partnership and other school districts are requesting us to share our program experiences.
- The committee is working with Mr. Connellan on presenting honorary high school diplomas to Vietnam veterans who dropped out of high school because they enlisted in the military. Now is the perfect time to do this as we are in the middle of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. By Presidential Proclamation, federal, state, and local officials are asked to honor the Vietnam veterans.
- Mrs. Queen noted that Southington has raised \$40,000 collectively for the Fischer House Project from the following events: \$26,000 from the Dancing with Heroes Event sponsored by Brian Durbin, a Southington High School Social Studies teacher and author; \$4,000 from the Apple Harvest Festival and \$1,900 by the Southington High School Marching Band Veterans Day Concert. The Fischer House Foundation will break ground this spring for a new residential facility in West Haven on the campus of the VA Healthcare System.

Mrs. Queen reported that a community dialogue on Behavioral Health with the theme "Substance Abuse across the Lifespan" was held on April 15, 2015. It was part of a series of dialogues across the state on various mental health issues. It was sponsored by the Southington Public Schools, Hospital of Central Connecticut, MidState Medical Center, Rushford, and Southington STEPS. She noted that Ms. Margaret Walsh served as a panelist, and asked Ms. Walsh to share with the Board what was discussed. Ms. Walsh gave a brief overview.

Mr. Goralski stated that the Southington Education Foundation Spelling Bee will be held on Thursday, April 30, 2015 and that he, Mrs. Johnson, and Mrs. Lombardi will comprise the Board of Education team. He encouraged the Board members to contribute to the fundraising goal.

c. Communication from Administration:

Mrs. Smith reported on the following:

1. Letter from Senator Murphy - Music: Mrs. Smith read a letter from United States Senator Christopher Murphy (*Attachment #1*) congratulating the Southington Public Schools for being named one of the nation's Best Communities for Music Education by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation. She asked Mr. Jeff Shaw, Music Director, to

explain the recognition. Mr. Shaw explained that the NAMM Foundation award is a community recognition. It is an involved application process that is completed once a year. It is juried through the University of Illinois. He noted that Southington is one of eight districts in Connecticut that has been recognized.

2. Social Studies: Mrs. Smith reported that a K-12 Social Studies Steering Committee has been formed for next year and the State Department of Education has recently appointed Mr. Steve Armstrong to lead the social studies initiative for the state, with Southington as one of eight districts that is going to be writing K-12 curriculum to be posted online for other districts to see. It will be vetted through the State Department of Education with resources available from Mr. Armstrong and his department. She thanked Ms. Heather Allenback, Chairperson of the Social Studies Department at Southington High School, for pursuing this interest. The Steering Committee has already met three times and will be doing summer work. Mrs. Smith told the Board that they would be getting periodic updates next year through Curriculum and Instruction on the progress of implementing the frameworks throughout the curriculum.

d. Communications from Student Representatives

Miss Veilleux reported on the following:

- The National Honor Society inductions were held for the incoming juniors.
- The World Language National Induction Ceremony will be held on Wednesday for German, Spanish and French. The Italian induction will be held at the UNICO Top 25 Dinner.
- The Drama Club Talent Show, "The Night on Broadway," will be held on Friday, April 14, at 7:00 p.m.
- The Southington High School Virtual Book Club students will be hosting a tour of the high school next week for the Thalberg Virtual Book Club fourth grade students.

Mr. Brino reported on the following:

- The CTE (Career in Technical Education) exam will be taken throughout the month of May in all the departments of Business, Ag-Science, Family and Consumer Science, and Tech Ed.
- The Spring Jazz Concert will be held on May 5, 2015 and the Spring Orchestra Concert will be held on May 7, 2015.
- The "Prom Promise" car will be at the high school on May 4, 2015, which is a wrecked car that is put on the lawn at the high school before the Senior Prom to show what can happen with distracted driving and drunk driving.
- The Robotics Team won the New England State Championships two weeks ago and are currently in St. Louis, Missouri. They placed second overall in their first day of competition today.
- The SAT will be taken the first weekend in May.

Mr. Iverson reported on the following:

- Students at the AP level will be taking their AP exams throughout the month of May.

- In May, the ACT will be taken, which is curriculum-based.
- The high school clubs are preparing to change officer leadership due to the seniors preparing for graduation.
- The Academic Award Ceremony will be held on May 6, 2015 for the outstanding, high performing students at Southington High School.
- On May 4, 2015, the student representatives on the Board of Education will be holding interviews to replace graduating senior Elizabeth Veilleux. On May 28, 2015, they plan to present the new student representative to the Board.
- The Junior Prom was held on March 28, 2015. He noted that Aria was a beautiful venue. He invited the Board members to attend the Senior Prom next year.

8. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

a. Personnel Report

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

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

Motion carried by voice vote with eight in favor, and Mrs. Lombardi abstaining.

9. COMMITTEE REPORT

a. Curriculum & Instruction Committee Meeting ~ April 13, 2015

Mrs. Carmody reported that at their last meeting they met with the Teacher Leaders Charity Baker and Erin Nattrass, who are assigned to the eight elementary schools, and Josie Rogala, who is assigned to the middle schools. They described to the committee their work of providing support to teachers and administrators.

Mrs. Carmody noted that the committee was updated on the ABA Program that is housed at Hatton School. The committee members were introduced to Candace Zakrzewski, BCBA, and Suzanne Remington-Fox, BCaBA. She pointed out that CREC is still providing services for a group of students whose families preferred to remain with CREC.

Mrs. Carmody reported that the committee also received a Preschool Program update by Mrs. Krista Pisano, Director of the Family Resource Center of Southington, who presented a brief overview of the programs offered to preschool-aged children and their families.

Mrs. Carmody reported that the committee also discussed World Language at the middle schools and offering it to sixth graders as well as expanding the World Language Spanish Program offered at South End School to the other elementary schools. The committee would like to see World Language be offered in Grades K through 12. Mrs. Johnson noted that both Spanish and French are offered at the middle schools; however, there are many more students who are choosing to study Spanish. She encouraged students at the middle schools and high school, where more than one language is offered, to study the language of their ancestors.

b. Policy & Personnel Committee Meeting ~ April 20, 2015

Mrs. Clark reported that the committee discussed whether or not vendors are required to conduct background checks on their employees prior to obtaining a job associated with the school district. She stated that Mr. Romano surveyed six surrounding districts, and it was not a requirement within those districts. Several questions remain about the vetting process for vendors, and Mrs. Smith will follow-up and report back to the committee. Mrs. Clark reported that the committee also discussed foreign field trips to Costa Rica and Italy that will take place in April 2016. Mrs. Clark reported that the food service staff would be required to receive professional development in 2015-2016 school year. The next Policy and Personnel Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 18, 2015.

10. OLD BUSINESS**a. Town Government Communications**

Mr. Goralski noted the following dates regarding the 2015-2016 budget:

- Monday, April 27, 2015 – Town Council Budget Public Hearing at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Center.
- Monday, May 11, 2015 - Town Council will adopt the budget at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Center.
- Wednesday, May 13, 2015, the Board of Finance will set the mill rate.
- Thursday, May 14, 2015, the Board of Education will finalize and reallocate their budget.

b. Construction Update

Mr. Romano reported that both middle schools are in Phase 11 of 12 phases. He noted that he spoke to the eighth graders at Kennedy Middle School while they were at lunch about their thoughts on the construction. He shared some of the comments with the Board.

Mrs. Johnson questioned the result of the Strong School parent meeting regarding bees. Mr. Romano explained that they are still monitoring for Digger Bees that fly low to the ground and swarm in a big group, which appeared at Strong School last spring. The scientist from the State of Connecticut that they are working with told them they may not see the Digger Bees until mid or late June due to the prolonged winter this year. The custodians are walking the grounds on a daily basis for any sightings of the bees or their nests, as well as the recess monitors. At other times, he and the maintenance employees also walk the grounds for sightings. If they discover any bees, they will collect a sample of three to ten bees to send to the scientist at the State of Connecticut to identify the bees and then move forward from that point. Mr. Goralski noted that the group is not meeting again until there is a bee sighting.

Mr. Goralski noted that the punch lists for the middle school projects have been ongoing with the lists for Phases 1-10 being addressed now while the crews are still on site instead of waiting until the last phase. He noted that the crews could be off the sites in early August. Mrs. Queen questioned the fields and the grounds at the middle schools. Mr. Goralski explained that many of the exterior features are complete, but athletes and others will not be able to play on the fields for one-year once the grass is planted.

Mrs. Johnson noticed that the backstop at DePaolo Middle School is gone and questioned if they would be getting a new chain link fence and backstop. Mr. Goralski replied that they would be getting a new backstop and handicap access walkways to the fields now. A lot of the external field work will be done at the end of the project.

- c. **Teacher Evaluation Plan Update**
- d. **Administrator Evaluation Plan Update**

Mrs. Smith explained that the plan updates would be presented together. The Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC) is comprised of 20 members; teachers, administrators, coordinators and specialists from all levels. They are currently completing year two of a very intensive change. Annually, they will review what state mandates have occurred, update the Board of Education with any changes, present it to the State Board of Education to have the plan vetted, and then it will return to the Board of Education for official approval.

Mr. Frank Pepe, Principal of DePaolo Middle School, Mr. Bob Brown, Southington Education Association President and teacher, and Mr. Richard Terino, Assistant Principal at Southington High School, gave an overview of the changes inherent within the Teacher Evaluation and Support Plan and the Administrator Evaluation Plan. They gave a Prezi Presentation highlighting the following on the Teacher Evaluation and Support Plan:

- Professional Development
- Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)
- Performance and Practice Goal
- Parent Feedback including surveys
- Student growth and development
- IAGDs (Indicators of Academic Growth and Development) that prompt multiple conversations between departments, colleagues, administrators, directors, specialists.
- Observation of Teacher Performance and Practice (informal and formal) including personal growth goal that the teacher establishes.
- Professional Development for data and practice.
- Evaluation criteria split between 50% dealing with data and 50% in teacher pedagogy.
- The major difference in evaluating effectiveness from the past plan to the current plan is that the current plan is more focused on a teacher's pedagogy.
- Standardized and non-standardized tests results
- Learning environment, planning, instruction, professionalism
- The committee's revision of the matrix from the current plan to the revised plan, raising the bar on the overall practice rating and overall outcomes rating. The stress being much higher on teacher practice.
- Different rubrics for music classroom, music ensemble, speech and language, special education, counselors, social workers and psychologists.
- Improvement in the remediation plan for teachers to ensure consistency across the district.
- An appeals process that is within the plan.

Mr. Brown stated that the committee always reached consensus with more teachers on the committee than administrators. The change will be tougher on them than it was last year.

Mr. Brown introduced Candace Patten, a high school social studies teacher, who is not on the committee, to talk about her experience with the Teacher Evaluation Plan. She explained that she has been teaching for 13 years at the high school and, over the past two years, she had grown as an educator with the new evaluation plan. She has been using student data to track all her students, and the data is guiding her lessons. She noted that literacy specialists and library media specialists are helping her work on things that the students need, based on the data that they collected. She is having more conversation with her administrator and other teachers on what they need to do for students to make sure they are helping them build their skills to be successful at the high school. She is seeing more collaboration because of collecting the student data.

Mr. Pepe stated that they need to use caution on judging performance of students and staff based on a snapshot of information from a test score. He noted that the numbers need to drive what is happening, but they must also focus on instruction and practice.

Mrs. Carmody did not think that teachers felt threatened by the evaluation system because they had so much input into it. She was proud of the work that Southington has done on this, and thanked the PDEC Committee. She thought that coaching and mentoring was wonderful because everyone can always learn new things.

Mrs. Queen was happy to see that the teacher had a voice in it and would buy into the plan because they have a voice and their experience is valued. She questioned the data evaluative piece of 45% and what that component comprises. Mr. Pepe replied that staff members are required to set the indicators of academic growth and development, and those IAGDs are based on test scores. Those evaluative scores are a combination of both standardized and non-standardized assessments. Mr. Terino explained that the assessment that is given at the end of the year to measure against the baseline also has interim assessments in-between where they can watch the student's progress. There are multiple indicators used across the process.

Mrs. Lombardi questioned calibration across different schools and different evaluators. Mr. Brown replied that the committee had talked a lot about that, and he pointed out that was why it was important to train administrators. He felt that with practice they will get better and that was why the conversation piece is so important. Mrs. Lombardi hoped that the Board will keep their focus on class size, as always.

Mr. Terino summarized a couple of minor changes to the Administrator Evaluation Plan. He explained that the substantive change is that they have the same matrix as the teachers. They are not holding the teachers to a separate bar; the administrators are also holding themselves to it. The changes in the body of the document reflect that matrix. One thing that they did with the Teacher Evaluation Plan this past year is eliminate reducing a teacher to a number. They have also done that with the revision of the Administrator Evaluation Plan.

Mr. Goralski asked the committee members in attendance to share the Board's appreciation with the entire committee and for keeping Southington ahead of the curve.

11. NEW BUSINESS

a. Non-renewal of Interim Teachers

Mr. Goralski explained that the motion has no reflection on the quality of these individuals; it is simply on the role they served this year as interim teachers.

MOTION: by Mrs. Carmody, seconded by Mrs. Clark:

“Move that the contracts of Gary Dwyer, Allison Gamzon, Alysia LaMay, Jaime Montagno, Patrick Nobou, Ashley Ruotolo and Linda Witkowski be non-renewed for the 2015-2016 school year.”

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

b. Overnight / Out-of-State Field Trip Approvals

Mrs. Queen commended the work that was done to review the guidelines for the international field trips and to put into place important measures to guarantee that they are a success.

Mr. Goralski asked how the curriculum connection was tied into the Costa Rica trip. Mr. Michael Halloran, Assistant Principal at Southington High School, replied that the Costa Rica curriculum connection was provided to the Board in a handout. He noted that the curriculum connection piece will be incorporated into the procedural guidelines on field trips moving forward, so it will be included in successive trips that will come before the Board.

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

“Move that the Board of Education approves the foreign field trips to Italy and Costa Rica, as presented.”

Mrs. Queen thanked the teachers that take the students on the overnight international field trips and noted that going out of the country is a huge responsibility for them so that the students can experience a global world view.

Mr. Goralski challenged Mrs. Tina Riccio, World Language Department Chair, and Mr. Halloran, to not always take the same chaperones on these trips, which has occurred in past years. Mr. Halloran replied that it was part of the new guidelines that they are putting together. Mrs. Smith noted that a tremendous amount of work has gone into tightening up the guidelines for international field trips. Mrs. Clark and Mr. Oshana thought that following the SHS International Travel Guidelines that has been put into place will make the process of approving the subsequent field trips easier because all the information will be available for the Board.

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

12. 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

United States Senate

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March 24, 2015

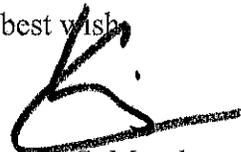
Dear Friends:

I would like to extend warm congratulations to the Southington Public Schools for being named one of the nation's Best Communities for Music Education by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation.

The NAMM Foundation has a long and storied history of recognizing upstanding school districts and communities for their dedication to enriching and empowering musicians of all ages. For the past sixteen years, the NAMM Foundation has celebrated the Best Communities for Music Education for their unyielding commitments to providing a full educational experience, supplemented by a highly supported music education course as part of the core curriculum. This access to music education is invaluable for providing students with a well-rounded and comprehensive educational experience. The profound emphasis the Southington Public Schools have placed on creating individuals who are capable of artistic and creative self-expression serves to establish a generation who not only knows facts and figures but also how to broaden their intellectual pursuits artistically, fostering a complete learner.

I sincerely congratulate the Southington Public Schools for this prestigious honor and for adding to the vibrant musical spirit of Connecticut. I know that consistent commitment to musical education is evidence of a bright and well-educated future for all students in Southington and the State of Connecticut.

Every best wish,



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator