

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
April 13, 2010
Minutes

Filed subject to approval.

Present: Bobroske, Dunsby, Peskay, Underberger
Administration: Cicchetti, Mas, Sullivan, Fox-Santora, LaTorre, Parker, Kaplan, Dekle
Others: more than five staff and community members in the audience

Dr. Underberger called the meeting to order at 7:41 pm. Mr. Dunsby was appointed acting secretary for the meeting.

THE WELLER EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD

Jessica Clark, second grade teacher at Samuel Staples Elementary School, was recognized for the Weller Excellence in Teaching Award. The award is awarded in recognition of the teaching quality and innovation demonstrated by a classroom teacher K-5. Ms. Clark's project, "Giving is Receiving" is a technology based arts integrated project. Ms. Clark provided an overview of the project.

RECOGNITION

Dr. Cicchetti announced that Helen Keller Middle School was recognized by the State Board of Education as among the top-performing schools in the Governor's 2009 Summer Reading Challenge. Mrs. Parker added that the reading challenge is a collaboration with the Easton Library.

Dr. Cicchetti announced that Helen Keller Middle School was a winner in the CAFE Communication Excellence awards for their project "My Three Words".

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move that the minutes of the March 9, 2010 meeting be accepted as submitted. Dunsby, Peskay. Approved. 3-0-1. Mr. Underberger abstained.

Motion: move that the minutes of the March 31, 2010 meeting be accepted as submitted. Dunsby, Peskay. Approved. 3-0-1. Mrs. Bobroske abstained.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Claire Meskers, on behalf of the PTA, presented Dr. Cicchetti with a welcome gift. Dr. Cicchetti thanked the PTA for the gift of a school t-shirt.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Dr. Underberger announced that Carrie LaTorre was taking the position of principal of the Wallingford Elementary School. Board members thanked Mrs. LaTorre for her service to the students, staff and community of Easton, and wished her well in her new position.

Dr. Underberger thanked the PTA members for their assistance with the many coffees held recently to explain the school budget.

WELLNESS REPORT

1. Wellness Committee: Mrs. Mas highlighted her written report on the work of the ER9 Wellness Advisory Committee. The Committee completed a review of the food guidelines for the schools,

including clarification that a) schools may discourage unhealthy foods, but cannot prohibit them; b) birthdays will continue to be recognized at the elementary school without food; c) parent volunteers are not permitted to give students food; d) students are not permitted to share food; e) with the exception of curricular areas where food is written into the curriculum, food will not be used in instruction.

The Committee will move its focus in a new direction to consider the whole person, not just nutrition. The Towns of Easton and Redding would like to administer a survey developed through the “40 Developmental Assets of Adolescents” program to high school and possibly middle school students. The Easton-Redding Community Coalition is involved with this process.

Mrs. Mas reported that a wellness web page on the ER9 web site will be developed to provide additional information for students and parents. The Chartwells Nutrition Grant (\$2,000/year for five years) first year grant was awarded to Samuel Staples Elementary School for their farm to school program. Each school in the district will receive one \$2,000 grant over the five year period. Mrs. Mas also reported on a Lyme disease curriculum, Time for Lyme, which is available at no cost to the district and targets instructional opportunities for grades K, 3, 6 and 9.

2. Chartwells Food Service Update: Mrs. Ann Metcalf provided an update on the changes in food service and acceptance of changes by students. The number of meals served is down this year, something to be expected with the changes, elimination of “favorite” foods and probably also due to the economic conditions.

Tom O’Donnell of Chartwells reported he plans to conduct focus group session, both with parents and students to get feedback on the food service program. Chartwells nutritionist, Meg Whitbeck, also provided information on the menu specifications, the basic menu, the “ideal” menu, and the blended menu (improved but not yet ideal). She included steps underway to move from the blended menu to the “ideal” menu, and the plan to provide nutrition information and improve nutrition literacy.

3. Healthy Food Certification: The State of Connecticut requires annual agreement to participate in the Healthy Foods Program. Districts that participate in the program receive 10 cents per lunch, based on the total number of reimbursable lunches served in the National School Lunch Program in the prior school year.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the continued participation in the State Healthy Food Program for the 2010-2011 school year. Dunsby, Bobroske. Approved. Unanimous.

2009-2010 SCHOOL CALENDAR

Dr. Cicchetti recommended the planned last day of school be changed from a full day to an early dismissal day. Traditionally, the final day of school for students was an early dismissal day and that provided teachers and staff to complete necessary close-out activities for the end of the school year. The current last day of school is June 23, 2010.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the last day of school for the 2009-2010 school year be a minimum day for students. Dunsby, Peskay. Approved. Unanimous.

APPOINTMENTS TO THE ER9 WELLNESS AND CALENDAR COMMITTEES

Dr. Peskay will serve on the ER9 Wellness Committee and Dr. Underberger will serve on the Calendar Committee.

POLICY 0521-NONDISCRIMINATION, FIRST READING

Policy 0521 was accepted for a first reading. The policy will be approved at the May meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Samuel Staples Elementary School: Mrs. Fox Santora reported the current enrollment for Kindergarten is 96, the projected enrollment is 97. Diversity Day, organized and managed by parents, was a huge success. Other activities at the school include the Art Show, ribbon cutting ceremony for the solar panel installation with the Clean Energy Task Force and Arbor Day celebrations. During the school April break, work will be done on the HVAC system to determine if there is a leak in the glycol line leading to the chiller. This is not a safety concern, but extensive digging may be involved.

Helen Keller Middle School: Mrs. Parker reviewed student achievements and awards, and staff recognition. The school play was enjoyable for participants and attendees. Upcoming activities include concerts and a Principal Coffee.

Special Services: Dr. Dekle reported there are two additional students in the Pre-school program and another expected next week. The team is working on transition activities as students move from grade 5 to 6, and on classroom placements for the other grades.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction: Marie Mas highlighted her written report. The report on the Tri-State Consortium's report on the science visitation will be distributed, and the topic will be discussed at the May board meeting. Mrs. Mas participated in a Quinnipiac University mock interview session for graduate students of the Master of Arts Teaching program. The ER9 World Language Curriculum Committee met for a textbook review for a possible pilot and later adoption of new Spanish and French Textbooks. A Textbook Committee is scheduled to review the Grade 6 Science textbooks and online resources. Regarding Project Choice, Mrs. Mas has requested an extension until after the budget is approved to inform CES of the number of available seats for the 2010-2011 school year. Mrs. Mas announced that the Bridgeport Discovery Interdistrict Magnet School would be operational in the fall for Pre-K and Kindergarten. 70% of the seats are allocated to Bridgeport, with the remainder available on a lottery basis.

Director of Finance and Operations: Mrs. Sullivan reported the insurance claims are averaging below the monthly budgeted amount. She has requested information on the impact of the new health plan, but the legislation does not address self-insured plans; information is limited at this time. The year-to-date shows expenditures above the budgeted amount in the accounts for unemployment compensation and substitutes.

Superintendent: Mike Cicchetti commented on the importance of having a presence at various job fairs. Dr. Cicchetti distributed copies of the Connecticut State Boards of Education publication related to bullying and safe learning environments. He also reported he visited classrooms at the Samuel Staples Elementary School, attended a Special Education PTA meeting, the Art Show and DARE 5K run at SSES, and the Helen Keller Middle School play. He also complimented the board and PTA on the successful coffees held to explain the budget.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education recess to executive session for a discussion pertaining to A) Teacher Collective Bargaining and B) Public Municipal Employee, Linda Loud. Dunsby, Bobroske. Approved. Unanimous.

Dr. Cicchetti and Mrs. Sullivan were invited to be present.

The meeting recessed at 9:30 pm.

RECONVENE

The Chair reconvened the meeting in public session at 10:37 pm.

Motion: move to charge the Board Chair to craft and propose an early retirement incentive to the Easton Educational Association. Dunsby, Bobroske. Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move that the superintendent be authorized to finalize the terms of retirement for Linda Loud. Dunsby, Peskay. Approved 3-1.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move to adjourn the meeting. Dunsby, Peskay. Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 10:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Dunsby, Acting Board Secretary

Recorded by Mary Maday