

REDDING BOARD OF EDUCATION

Minutes

December 6, 2011

Present:

Redding Board of Education: Ajavananda, D'Agostino, Gaspar, Goldberg, Irwin

Administration: Josefsberg, Sullivan

School administrators: Farrell, Freeston, Martin, Pierson Ugol, Wallin, Wessman Huber

Others: 17 members of the staff and community

Dr. Gaspar called the meeting to order at 7:33 pm in the Community Room of John Read Middle School

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Move to approve the minutes of the November 1, 2011 meeting with one addition – Kathleen Joyce-Kirk also voted in favor of the resolution concerning burden of proof in special education due process hearings to place the burden of proof on the moving party. Goldberg, Gaspar. Approved 2-0-3 Mrs. Ajavananda, Mr. D'Agostino and Dr. Irwin abstained.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Lewis Goldberg and Jess Gaspar welcomed the three new Board members. Mr. Goldberg commented he was misquoted in a recent *Redding Pilot* article regarding the teacher bargaining unit contract agreement. The paper quoted him as saying "... *the board hopes to see health care costs drop by one-third due to the changes.*" In actuality, he meant 1/3 of a percentage point equaling approximately \$30,000.

Mike D'Agostino thanked the public for their support and stated he is eager to serve the schools. He mentioned he would like to continue a process he had begun as a private citizen, in which he sought approval from the town for the schools to be able to use sandwich board signs to promote school-related events and activities. Sandwich board signs do not conform to current Zoning Codes. This signage will comply with existing Zoning requirements as detailed in 5.9.6, pertaining to municipal signs on town properties. Recently, the Selectmen gave their approval, and it will be discussed at an upcoming Zoning Commission meeting.

Dr. Gaspar moved to switch the order of agenda items.

Motion: Move items in Section V of the agenda as follows: Item D (K-8 Math Task Force Update) after item A, and move item C (Report on Professional Teamwork and Building Goals) before item B. Gaspar/Ajavananda. Approved - Unanimous.

ELECTION OF BOARD OFFICERS:

Motion: Move to elect Mike D'Agostino as Secretary. Ajavananda/Irwin. Approved – Unanimous.

Move to elect Jamie Barickman as Vice Chairperson. Ajavananda/Irwin. Approved – Unanimous.

Move to elect Jess Gaspar as Chairperson. Ajavananda/Irwin. Approved – Unanimous.

K-8 MATH TASK FORCE

A presentation on "Continuous Improvement in Math Instruction" at the elementary school level was given by Laura Coates, Math Specialist; Francine Lamonica, Challenge Program teacher; Melissa Svahra, Enrichment teacher; and Brian Dayton, Grade 4 teacher. They gave a historical perspective of math instruction and progress at RES and discussed the goals for students: "To build the strongest foundation in numeracy in a nurturing, engaging environment and to provide focused, differentiated instruction to support individual student learning needs and style." They showed how instruction would be differentiated in the areas of content, process and product and talked about flexible grouping models. Each teacher presented how the 70-minute math schedule works for their respective classes and how instructional groups are created. Data was shared. The work of the Math Review Committee which consists of teachers and administrators across the three districts was also discussed. The committee was convened by Dr. Josefsberg to investigate

“what available steps will increase the number of students entering high school who are prepared for success in high level math courses?” A similar presentation will be given at the January Board meeting to show the work being done at the middle school level.

REPORT ON PROFESSIONAL TEAMWORK AND BUILDING GOALS

Stephanie Pierson Ugol presented the goals set for 2011-12 for RES teams, including support to achieve the goals which include self-reflection, metacognition and active learning/active engagement as well as looking at student work protocols at grade-level professional development meetings and creation of rubrics to inform learning goals and support self-reflection.

Diane Martin presented the goals set by various teams at JRMS, with the focus being on improved writing skills in multiple formats and across disciplines. For example, students will show their understanding of mathematical and science problems/concepts by communicating their knowledge and demonstrating their reasoning in writing. Content-specific rubrics will be developed to measure writing achievement. Common strategies for teaching the writing process (steps and skills) will be created. Results of student writing will be collected and compared. There will be student feedback and self-reflection.

Brian Farrell presented the goal of Special Services which is to continue to provide a comprehensive program of specialized instruction and related services to meet the needs of all students with disabilities within the Redding schools. Also to expand the capacity for students with significant, low incidence disabilities resulting in less reliance on placements out of district.

Cheryl Freeston discussed where the preschool program is in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation process. Six preschool paraprofessionals are completing a course of study toward the Child Development Associate credential. The teaching staff has begun to collect evidence supporting the 437 NAEYC criteria which will be evaluated during an on-site visit in the fall of 2012. The benefit of accreditation means the program has met the highest of standards and it is a program for self-assessment.

SECOND READING OF POLICIES

Motion: Move that the Redding Board of Education accept the following policies for a second and final reading:

2111 Equal Employment Opportunities

4118.1 Prohibition of Discrimination and Harassment

5125 Student Records, Confidentiality

5131.21 Aggressive and Violent Behavior, Bullying

5141.21 Administering Medications

5141.4 Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect

5144.1 Restraint & Seclusion

5145.4 Americans with Disabilities Act/Section 504

Motion by Goldberg, seconded by Ajavananda. Approved. Unanimous.

FIRST READING OF POLICIES

Motion: Move that the Redding Board of Education accept the policies as listed below for a first reading:

1316.1 Community Relations-Conduct on School Property

4112.5 Fingerprinting

6141.321 Acceptable Use in School of the Internet, Networks and Information, and Communications Technologies

Motion by D’Agostino, seconded by Irwin. Approved. Unanimous.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

John Read Middle School: Diane Martin reported that grade 8 students visited Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty on November 18. This field trip begins an interdisciplinary immigration unit which will culminate in late December with the creation of an Ellis Island Museum at the JRMS library. Parents will be invited to view all the immigration projects prior to the winter holiday break. Grade 7 students took part in small, single gender group workshops run by the Danbury Women’s Center. The topic was sexual harassment and

the distinction between flirting and sexual harassment. Through role-playing and activities, there was a strong emphasis on understanding and communicating personal boundaries and interpreting verbal and non-verbal communication. Parents were informed of the program before it took place. Student vs. staff basketball games were held on November 23 – encourages school spirit and builds rapport between staff and students. Outreach sponsored a drive to collect candy, toiletry and hygiene items, video games and sports equipment in conjunction with the “Stuff a Bus” campaign at Joel Barlow High School.

Redding Elementary School: Carrie Wessman Huber reported on Veterans Day activities that were held and thanked Kathy Weiss for organizing the day’s events. She also thanked Kevin Krasiejko, Redding network administrator and a Marine veteran, who differentiated what it means to be a veteran by reading fiction and non-fiction to students and answering their questions.

Stephanie Pierson Ugol reported on the creation of a Professional Development Committee at RES and how the Technology Committee is looking at ways of teaching teachers how to use different types of new technologies/new applications in the classroom. She reported on continuing work with Dr. Hibbard to design curriculum. She also mentioned professional book discussions being held and facilitated by teachers.

Special Services: Brian Farrell discussed ongoing staff training taking place on behavioral techniques and a general understanding of disabilities. Special Services is currently looking at next year’s student placements and is advertising for the 2012-13 pre-kindergarten program with a lottery drawing to follow.

Director of Finance & Operations: Peggy Sullivan reported that health insurance claims are higher than anticipated, exceeding the budget average of \$332,000. She is keeping a close eye on them. Two exceeded the stop loss limits. Contributions to the health care reserve are consistent with past years and in line with the recommended amount. She will keep the Board informed about trending. All other expenditures are as expected. A price for heating oil has not yet been locked in. There will be a Board of Selectman and Board of Finance Committee meeting at 7:30 p.m. on December 14 at the Community Center. Budget drivers and enrollment numbers will be discussed.

Superintendent: Dr. Josefsberg thanked the teachers and administrators for their presentations and expressed that it shows the caliber of their professionalism and gives insight into the quality of our staff and their leadership. He welcomed the new Board members and mentioned a book, which Jess Gaspar had given them (*Boards That Make A Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations* by John Carver). Dr. Josefsberg will be participating in a three-day, Tri-State Consortium visit to examine a K-6 writing program in a school district in Montclair, New Jersey. He attended the recent meeting of the ER9 Structure and Ways of Working Committee of which Jess Gaspar and Kim Ajavananda are members. There is a shared interest in moving toward a K-12 system within the framework of tri-board governance.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Facilities Planning Committee: Mike D’Agostino reported that they are monitoring the new HVAC equipment. The Committee may have found a way to realize significant energy savings at John Read Middle School for considerably less than the \$120,000 estimated cost. Boilers are running. Hot water heating is running. Comfort level in school is adequate.

Curriculum & Instruction Committee: Dr. Gaspar reported that a broader discussion of this evening’s Board presentations was held at the Curriculum & Instruction committee meeting that took place just before the Board meeting. He encouraged the public to attend future meetings.

Structure & Ways of Working Committee: The committee met on December 5th. The committee’s task is to find ways in which the three Boards can function more effectively. All three Boards are getting along. There is a shared commitment to finding ways to address the recommendations in the Pitkoff report. The committee is going through the report item by item. The Tri-Board has agreed to have individual and collective retreats with the goal of self-evaluation, self-improvement and team building.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chris Nolan, Lonetown Road, Redding: Welcomed Mike D’Agostino to the Board and complimented him

on the hard work he did on the capital improvement projects. He expressed that a lot of work has been done on the infrastructures of the schools. 40-year old technologies have been brought up to date. Energy savings are so important to the operating budget. A five-year plan needs to be identified to continue the work that has been done.

Jennifer Broadbin, Easton: Asked for clarification on the support teaching staff in Redding and if Singapore Math is already incorporated in the curriculum.

BOARD COMMENTS

Lewis Goldberg commented on the great pride he has in the schools and in the staff; that the strength of our school system is its staff. He gave kudos to the RES teachers for their presentation.

Mike D'Agostino asked if there were plans to re-examine the school calendar due to the many storm-related cancelations. Dr. Josefsberg commented that the Boards made a decision last June about the calendar and that it would be very difficult to reopen a calendar discussion at this point. Mr. Goldberg, who is a member of the ER9 Calendar Committee, commented that last year the Boards felt it was important to develop a contingency plan for future school years in the event that we experienced many school closings like last winter. The contingency plan on the calendar would be used as a guide by parents and staff, and that people who made plans for April vacation would do so at their own risk. Dr. Gaspar added that Dr. Josefsberg made clear communications to parents and staff earlier this year following the two storms on how the days would be made up.

Dr. Gaspar reported the Board members who would serve on the Redding Board and ER9 Board committees as follows:

Communications Committee – Melinda Irwin and Ed Miller

Resources Committee – Jamie Barickman, Mike D'Agostino and Lewis Goldberg

Curriculum & Instruction Committee – Kim Ajavananda and Jess Gaspar

ER9 Structure & Ways of Working Committee – Kim Ajavananda and Jess Gaspar

ER9 Calendar Committee – Lewis Goldberg

Facilities Planning Committee – Jamie Barickman and Mike D'Agostino

Mike D'Agostino will represent the Board for Education Connection. The representative for the Magnet School is to be determined.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion: Move that the Redding Board of Education recess to executive session for discussion regarding a five-month leave of absence for a non-certified staff member. Dr. Josefsberg was invited to attend.

Motion by Gaspar, seconded by Goldberg. Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting recessed at 9:38 p.m.

RECONVENE

Dr. Gaspar reconvened the meeting in public session at 9:57 p.m.

Motion: Move that the Redding Board of Education grant the request from a non-certified staff member for a five-month unpaid leave of absence, in alignment with the Superintendent's recommendation. (Goldberg, Ajavananda) Approved unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Move that the meeting be adjourned. (Gaspar, Irwin) Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike D'Agostino, Board Secretary

Recorded by Vicki Cram