

Easton, Redding & Region 9 Boards of Education  
Tri-Board Special Meeting  
February 7, 2011  
Minutes

Attendance:

Easton Board of Education: Allan, Bobroske, Dunsby, Maiorano (7:45 pm), Peskay (7:47 pm (absent: Underberger)

Redding Board of Education: Barickman, Brey, Gaspar, Goldberg, Miller, Joyce-Kirk, Lewson.

Region 9 Board of Education: Abrams, Gombos, Hocker, Karvelis, Lewis, Logie, Macchio (absent: Shapiro)

Administration: Cicchetti, Mas, Sullivan and school administrative staff from the five schools

Others: more than 50 members of the community and staff, and representatives of the Redding Pilot/Easton, Patch.com & Channel 12

Chairman of the Region 9 Board of Education, Mark Lewis, opened the meeting of the Tri-board meeting in the gym of the John Read Middle School

Mr. Lewis called the Region 9 Board of Education meeting to order at 7:40 pm

Dr. Gaspar called the Redding Board of Education meeting to order at 7:40 pm

Dr. Dunsby reported the Easton Board of Education did not have a quorum present. (The Easton Board had a quorum at 7:45 pm and was called to order at that time)

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON SCHOOL CALENDAR 2010-2011

The three boards met to discuss and act on possible changes to the 2010-2011 school calendar because of the number of snow days and their impact on the schools & education. Dr. Cicchetti reported the eight snow days have resulted in current last day of school for students: Region 9, Thursday, June 23; Redding, Friday, June 24; Easton, Monday, June 27. He provided options for consideration that could change those dates.

Option 1, cancel February break (four days)

Option 2, cancel April break (four days)

Option 3, a combination of days from February & April breaks

Option 4, allow the breaks to remain as scheduled

Dr. Cicchetti provided pros and cons of each option. He added that the CMT/CAPT testing schedule will remain unchanged.

Each board member was asked to comment on the options and their preference.

Region 9 Board of Education members:

Mr. Hocker asked the administration to comment on which of the options would be the least disruptive.

Mr. Macchio was concerned about what would happen if there were additional snow days.

Mrs. Abrams commented that the late ending in June creates problems for students/parents with June commitments, and suggested taking a little from both the February & April breaks.

Mr. Logie preferred Option 4, the Region 9 board has an agreement with the staff that the February break is a given and the April break is at risk. He has concerns that changing the February break would be more of a burden to staff than students. He suggested using Memorial Day as a school day, and taking days from the April break as needed. He also noted the importance of the February break to break the flu/illness cycle which is the primary reason for the February break.

Mr. Karvelis preferred Option 1, but is primarily concerned about the continuity of education.

Mrs. Gombos commented that past practice and a verbal agreement related to the current JBEA contract with Region 9 assured staff that the February break would not be touched, and the April break would be subject to change due to snow days. She was concerned that there is no guarantee there will be any snow during the Feb. break week, and that changes will create problems for the staff who have set plans for the week.

Easton Board of Education members:

Dr. Peskay expressed her concern about the continuity of education and her preference for taking some days from both the February and April breaks.

Mr. Maiorano's preference was for Option 1, canceling the February break.

Mr. Allan preferred Option 3, taking two days from the February and April breaks, and was concerned that there could be more snow days. He added that the potential for hot weather in June could result in uncomfortable classrooms and early dismissals.

Mrs. Bobroske added that there still is a risk of additional snow days, was concerned about the potential heat issues in June, and suggested taking days from the April break or a combination of February and April.

Dr. Dunsby favored Option 1, canceling the February break.

Redding Board of Education members

Dr. Gaspar commented on the public turnout for the discussion and wished that would happen when the board discussed curriculum issues.

Mr. Goldberg commented that he hoped the three boards could come to a unanimous decision; was concerned about the hot weather in June and the graduation/summer plans of families.

Mr. Brey commented that Option 1 is the only viable option educationally as it allows additional teaching time prior to the CMT/CAPT testing. He added, as a board of education member in Redding, he would not allow the Redding students' interests to be subordinated to a gentlemen's agreement between the teachers' association and Region 9 Board. Each board has a statutory right to set the calendar. Promises may have been made to go into April instead of February, but Redding has their students as a priority.

Mr. Barickman questioned whether the goal was to move the closing date to an earlier date or to prevent additional dates at the end of the year. He expressed concern about the financial implications, both for staff and their plans, and the potential need for additional substitute teaching staff. He added the boards should act to remediate the effects of the numerous snow days on education, and suggested the boards plan for the future by providing educational opportunities for students on snow days.

Mr. Lewson suggested the Calendar Committee research and propose a policy for consideration to cover this type of situation.

Mrs. Joyce-Kirk commented that the top priority was education. She was concerned about the heat in June and favored Option 1, as this could move the closing date up.

Joel Barlow Education Association (JBEA): Mr. Lewis read a statement from the JBEA suggesting that there would be some support for taking some of the February break.

Non-certified staff at Barlow: Barbara Bloom commented that some staff members are committed to non-refundable vacation/trips in February and April.

Easton Education Association: Nicole Solis commented that there will be impact on staff, but more prefer taking days from the February break. There will be an impact as a result of staff not being available due to previous commitments.

Redding Education Association: Cindy Rohr stated that the staff was surveyed and the results from those who responded, 28 have set plans for February and 13 for April. She added that in previous years, the school calendar included a statement that inclement weather and school closing days would impact the April vacation, that statement was not included with the current calendar. She noted that the statement that is included on this year's calendar says that days will added as necessary up to June 30<sup>th</sup> as necessary. She suggested consideration be given to Memorial Day as the State allows that day to be a school day.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Members of the public were given the opportunity to comment.

Christina Kearney, Redding: her primary concern was that if the February break is eliminated, that the students and staff not penalized if they are not in attendance. She was bothered by Mr. Brey's comment, stating that

Redding partners with the teachers, and if the teachers are not in school there will be an impact on education. If February break is taken away, the staff should allow ample time for students to make up the work.

Nancy Cohen, Easton: she favors taking days from the February break and commented on one Barlow teacher who, on snow days, consistently sent emails to students with assignments/homework that would be handed in, reviewed and graded on the next day of school.

Liz Shaban, Redding: suggested adding 15 minutes to the school day as a creative option.

Pam Sherman, Redding: commented that the students and staff have been impacted by both the snow days and the death of a student. She suggested taking days from the April break.

Jennifer Carello, Redding: commented that the Redding board members do not have their email addresses posted online so parents are unable to express their opinions and thoughts via email. She asked that they make those email addresses available to the public (both the Easton & Region 9 boards have email addresses listed). She stated that parents want to become involved in the decision on how make-up days will be handled. Teachers have been surveyed, but the parents have not. She asked that the boards consider setting up an online format so that taxpayers can voice their opinions in the future. She also encouraged the use of digital online classroom education and challenged the board to make this happen. She noted, and repeated for emphasis, that the boards had a responsibility to prepare students to compete in a global economy.

Rose Baldwin, Redding: suggested that when the next calendar is set, that a long February break be considered rather than a full week of vacation.

Sharon Stemme, Easton: asked that the boards make a decision so that administrator and teacher time can be spent educating our children.

Kathy Weiss, Redding: concerned that there may be more snow days; suggested not making a change at this time.

K C Senie, Redding: favored Option 3 and suggested having school on Memorial Day. She also suggested consideration in the future of a March break instead of the February and April breaks.

Chris Nolan, Redding: concerned about the loss on continuity of education. He complimented one Redding teacher who provided plans for students during snow days and early dismissal days.

Tina Tennant, Redding: understands the concern about continuity, but the children are out of school for eight weeks during the summer. She suggested using the February & April days as minimum days, and suggested negotiating with the teachers for extra personal days.

Mike D'Agostino, Redding: support for Option 2, but only if necessary, or a part of the April break. He added that it is a little late to be considering the February days, that break is needed for the children and buildings to "de-germ". He added that Redding has capital projects to be completed during the summer break.

Public comment was closed.

Mr. Brey responded to the comments of Mrs. Kearney. He agrees that students and teachers with non-refundable deposits/payments should not be punished, that will be worked out through negotiations. His comments were intended to convey the complication of the three boards working together. It is difficult when one board makes a gentlemen's agreement that the other two boards do not have. Redding must consider their concerns.

Mr. Lewis asked for a 10 minute recess to allow board members an opportunity to caucus.

The recess began at 8:50 pm

Mr. Lewis reconvened the meeting at 9:00 pm.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education take two days from the February vacation schedule. Macchio, Karvelis.

The Region 9 motion was intended to allow discussion of a shortened February break, before moving directly to consider elimination of the entire February break. However, the Easton and Redding boards did not make the same motion. As a result, Mr. Macchio withdrew the Region 9 motion.

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education adjust the school calendar to remove the four days of vacation in February. Maiorano, Dunsby.**

**Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education adjust the school calendar to remove the four days of vacation in February. Brey, Goldberg.**

**Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education adjust the school calendar to remove the four days of vacation in February. Hocker, Karvelis.**

Board members addressed the motion.

Mr. Lewis commented that he would prefer taking one day from February and one day from April and extend the school year as needed.

Mr. Barickman commented that the intent of the action is to remediate what has happened to date, to help restore the educational process that has been missed.

Mr. Logie expressed concern that the Region 9 board (which serves as its own board of finance) had no information regarding the financial impact the cancellation of the February break will have on the staff, any trip cancellation cost they might face and whether such costs would be reimbursed, how staff allowed excused absences would be paid (or allowed to use personal days or asked to pay for substitute costs), and what if any net incremental costs there would be for the Region 9 budget and its taxpayers.

Mrs. Bobroske clarified that the impact of the motion to eliminate the February break would push the school ending date back four days, pending further school closing days.

**Vote on motion:**

**Redding Board of Education: Approved. Unanimous.**

**Easton Board of Education: Approved. Unanimous**

**Region 9 Board of Education: Not Approved: vote 4 -3. Voting for: Karvelis, Hocker, Macchio. Voting against: Lewis, Gombos, Logie, Abrams.**

**The calendar change was approved for Easton and Redding, but not Region 9.**

Mr. Lewis called for a brief recess to caucus, 9:25 pm

The meeting reconvened, 9:27 pm

Region 9 moved to reconsider the motion: Abrams, Karvelis.

**Vote on initial motion: Approved. 4-3. Voting for: Karvelis, Hocker, Macchio, Abrams. Voting against the motion: Lewis, Gombos, Logie.**

**The calendar change was approved for Region 9.**

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education adjourn the meeting. Goldberg, Brey. Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education adjourn the meeting. Dunsby, Bobroske. Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education adjourn the meeting. Logie, Gombos. Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Logie, Region 9 Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by Mary Maday