

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
Regular Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2017

ATTENDANCE

Board of Education: Bindelglass, Chieda, Hicks, Parker, Reed and Shortt
Administration: McMorran, Pierson Ugol, Reiss, Brownstein, Fox Santora, Kaplan and Mohr
Others: Karen O'Brien (ELF) and approximately five members of the public

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Parker called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Helen Keller Middle School Learning Commons.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the October 10, 2017 Easton Board of Education regular meeting as submitted, noting the following corrections to the minutes:

Page 1 of 4, Attendees for Board of Education:

Strike Randy Hicks' name, as he was not in attendance.

Page 2 of 4, under Discussion:

2017-2018 PLAN OF ACTION AND SCHOOL-WEIDE GOALS to read:
2017-2018 PLAN OF ACTION AND SCHOOL-WIDE GOALS

Page 2 of 4, under Discussion:

2017 STUDENT PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS: SMARTER BLACE, AND OTHER
STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENTS to read:
2017 STUDENT PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS: SMARTER BALANCE, AND OTHER
STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENTS

Shortt, Bindelglass. Approved. R. Hicks abstained.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve the minutes of the October 24, 2017 Easton, Redding and Region 9 Joint Boards of Education regular meeting as submitted. Bindelglass, Shortt. Approved. R. Hicks abstained.

PUBLIC COMMENT

David Bussolotta, Sunset Rd. - voiced his concern over an issue that transpired at HKMS last week. As a parent, he is very concerned over security at the school. Requested the Board consider installing a Resource Officer at both Samuel Staples Elementary and Helen Keller Middle schools.
Heidi Hanson, Wilson Rd. - spoke on behalf of Claire Wilkes who could not attend the meeting.
Wanted to mention their work with JBHS on the 'Angst' documentary to be held on December 4 at Joel Barlow High School. Interested people should contact the school's PTAs for further information.

Dr. McMorran welcomed the Sacred Heart University students in attendance as part of their homework assignment.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None.

BUILDING ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS

Helen Keller Middle School: Mrs. Kaplan provided an update on recent events held at HKMS. In honor of Veteran's Day, one of their students, Tyler Harris, played Taps at the celebration, which hosted a handful of veterans. Both Mrs. Kaplan and Mrs. Mohr participated in the Polar Plunge, sponsored by the PTA. The seventh grade Social Studies classes will celebrate global Awareness Week in the coming week. A Gratitude Ceremony will be held prior to the Thanksgiving break. Mrs. Kaplan also spoke of a high school mentoring program which students can take part in. She shared some success in an after school program called the Cyber Patriot Program through the Air Force Association sponsored by Jon Stinson. Students were given certain challenges of security breaches, etc. and they won the six-hour qualifying competition. These students will now continue on to the next round of the competition.

Samuel Staples Elementary School: Mrs. Fox Santora thanked three long-term substitutes, Carrie Hamm, Amelia DeLise and Christina Schlupp, who took over for teachers who were out on maternity leave. Mrs. Fox Santora explained the Shadow Puppet Artist who worked collaboratively with 4th grade teachers and their students. A brief presentation on the student intervention numbers was handed out and reviewed per Dr. Bindelglass' request at the October Board meeting. Discussion ensued. Dr. Bindelglass thanked Mrs. Fox Santora for her extra work on providing the numbers on the student interventions.

AGENDA CHANGE

Motion: made to move Item E. 'ELF Relationship Moving Forward' up to Item B. on the agenda under Discussion and Possible Action. J. Parker, C. Shortt. Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

DISCUSSION: NOMINEES FOR BOARD CHAIR (2-YEAR TERM)

Mr. Parker announced that November 2017 would be the end of his term as Board Chairman. He then opened the floor for nominations for the next chairman. Dr. Bindelglass nominated Mr. Parker. Mrs. Shortt seconded the nomination. Mr. Parker accepted the nomination.

Motion: move to appoint Jeffrey Parker as Chairman of the Easton Board of Education. Bindelglass, Shortt. Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION: ELF RELATIONSHIP MOVING FORWARD

Mrs. O'Brien, spoke on behalf of the Easton Learning Foundation (ELF) and their relationship with the Easton schools, as well as with Joel Barlow High School. Main goal was to provide the funds to support innovation and programs that were outside the scope of the school budget. Briefly reviewed the grant approval process.

Mrs. O'Brien advised that while each grant request must be reviewed and approved by the principals, ELF should not have to engage in a grant of \$25.00 due to time constraints, as they only meet on a monthly basis. Discussion ensued on the current process.

Dr. Bindelglass questioned if there was a policy currently in place. Dr. McMorran advised that we do have a grant policy in place that needs to be reviewed and updated. The Board must have two readings of the policy before the policy revisions can be approved. It was agreed to place this on the December meeting agenda.

DISCUSSION: 2018 EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING DATES

The Board briefly reviewed the 2018 Easton Board of Education calendar. Mr. Parker questioned if the February 7 date was correct as it was on a Wednesday and meetings are usually on Tuesdays. Further clarification is needed to understand date discrepancies. All three districts calendars will be reviewed and approved at the December board meetings.

DISCUSSION: DONATIONS

LCD Writing Tablets – Mrs. Fox Santora advised that parent who donated the 50 LCD writing tablets last month would like to donate another 50 more.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education accept, with gratitude, the donation of the LCD writing tablets with a cost up to approximately \$500.00. Bindelglass, Shortt. Approved. Unanimous.

ELF had presented Samuel Staples Elementary School with a grant in the amount of \$2,500 for the Invention Convention. Mrs. Fox Santora advised that the entire \$2,500 would go towards the registration fees for all students who advance in the competition.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education accept, with gratitude, an ELF Grant for Invention Convention costs in the amount of \$2,500. Shortt, Hicks. Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION: NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS UPDATE

Dr. Pierson Ugol and Mr. Brownstein provided an overview of the Next Generation Science Standards that included content and instructional shifts related to these standards. They shared a multi-year plan for implementation.

DISCUSSION: REVIEW OF SECOND STEP PROGRAM

Mrs. Fox Santora provided an update on the Second Step Program and distributed some handouts. Currently, holding one thirty-minute session once a week and it seems to be enjoyable and beneficial to the children. She has received all good reviews on this program. Mrs. Shortt commented that she feels it is important to give children the skills to understand and be able to label their emotions. It only helps them later in life to know how to react and who to reach out to when they need help.

DISCUSSION: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO STUDENT AND STAFF STRESS

Mr. Parker asked Mrs. Kaplan to speak to the articles that were emailed out to the HKMS community. Dr. McMorran commented on the way teachers and students react in the classroom today. He stated part of the conversation we need to have is how do we handle the gift and the curse of immediate access to information 24/7. Mrs. Kaplan spoke on the material she shared which revealed evidence of scientific medical research and the link between excessive screen times with children at this age group. Their excessive use of technology seems to be causing a higher rate of depression and sadly, even suicide in some older teens.

Mrs. Kaplan further commented on a *New York Times* article, which shared similar statistics, that connectedness created further angst. She opened the school year by sharing this data with the parents.

Mrs. Shortt commended Mrs. Kaplan for her call to action and on taking the initiative to understand the link between technology and shared her thoughts. She has been a therapist in the school system for 15+ years and in working with children, she has watched the disintegration of a child due to their obsessive use of technology. She feels the issue of 24/7 access to information is at the core of the problem. Our youth need to know how to cope and how to manage on their own.

Dr. McMorran stressed the fact that technology is not bad. It is the way we use or abuse it. Dr. McMorran extended an invitation to the Board members to join him in visiting the schools starting at the elementary level, through the middle school and eventually ending at the high school. Further discussion ensued on this subject.

DISCUSSION: POLICY REVIEW PLANNING

Dr. McMorran provided some information on the current policy work taking place and advised that we are governed by state statutes, which is translated into policies the Board maintains. We are currently using policies drafted by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) but have undertaken a project to compare Shipman & Goodwin policy language with our current CABE policy language. Dr. McMorran noted that a comprehensive, long-term walkthrough of the policies is overdue. In the future, revised policies will be brought to the Board's attention for review and approval. Mr. Parker requested that a first round be presented at the December meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Special Services: Mrs. Torre reviewed the Special Services reports, noting the growing need for detecting dyslexia at a very young age. Research shows if not detected early enough, students are unable to have the desired results. The school needs to demonstrate due diligence in making sure the students get the proper attention needed.

Finance & Operations: Mr. Reiss reviewed the financials. No significant changes on the Budget Object Summary. Some lines show an overage but that is expected to change upon receipt of grant funding which will zero out these items as they come through. Only four items on the Transfers Report, which were all below required prior approval. Health Insurance Account is at a deficit of \$194,279 (\$13,000 lower than previous month).

Curriculum & Instruction: Dr. Pierson Ugol briefly spoke on the Health and Wellness curriculum and provided handouts of the Scope and Sequence of Second Step lessons at the elementary and middle school levels. Grades 6-8 will trial the Second Step resource as part of the existing Health curriculum.

Superintendent: Dr. McMorran spoke about the upcoming Veteran's Day celebrations taking place at the various schools. Our duty is to make sure our students are educated and understand the impact of those that serve on our behalf.

BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mrs. Shortt will contact Central Office to review the 2018 Board Calendar to see if there is any way to change the dates of discrepancies.

Mr. Parker would like an update on Chartwells initiatives and improvement in food services next month.

Mr. Parker mentioned that while the teacher contract has not been finalized as of yet, they are very close. Final agreements need to be signed and then voted on by the union.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Beverly Dacey mentioned that she is involved with workforce development at the state level. Found it interesting to hear that when employers were asked what was more important, soft skills vs. technical, most chose soft skills. A skill like initiative is what they look for. Wanted to pass along as she felt it unexpected but very enlightening. Also noted that the stress element cannot be dismissed. It is part of our lives.

Keri English echoed what Mrs. Fox Santora said about Staples Elementary School. It is a wonderful place for children to be and she had a great experience visiting there recently. She also felt the same about Helen Keller Middle School, up until the recent events. Her main concern is the lack of communication to the parents. She does not want to hear of these events from her child but would rather hear from the Administration so that she will know how to react and discuss with her children.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Dr. Bindelglass commented on the Next Generation Science Standards. Felt it is important to redesign the way we teach Science and educate our children in the critical thinking piece of it.

Mrs. Chieda would also like to see better communication with parents when an issue arises in the schools or on the buses. Understanding that privacy must be maintained at the same time.

Mr. Parker noted that while he understands the concern for notification, there is also a fine line to protect everyone's privacy. This is an issue that needs to be discussed further that the Board does take seriously. While an answer or comment may not be made to the public immediately, it is important for the public to understand that the Board is discussing it and will respond at an appropriate time.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education adjourn the meeting. Bindelglass, Shortt. Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 9:48 pm.

Submitted by Jenny Chieda, Easton Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by Sharon Luciano