

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17
BOARD OF EDUCATION – EDUCATION SESSION
April 22, 2014

A meeting of the Regional School District No. 17 Board of Education was held on April 22, 2014 in the Haddam-Killingworth Middle School Media Center. Board of Education Chair, Sue Twachtman, called the meeting to order at 7:50 PM.

***Members Present:** Amy Jacques-Purdy, Susan Dean, Kathy Brown, Becky Valenti, Joel D'Angelo, Michele Amendola, Brian Gamache, Dan Chase, Jeannie Young, Karen Perry and Sue Twachtman*

***Members Absent:** None*

***Also Present:** Superintendent of Schools, Howard Thiery, Board Clerk, Larissa Johnson*

***Visitors:** 2*

Call to Order/Opening of Meeting

Board of Education Chair, Sue Twachtman called the meeting to order at 7:50 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Board Liaison Reports

A. Curriculum Council Update

Sue Twachtman gave the Curriculum Council Update. She mentioned the proposal of an addition of a UCONN Horticulture class at HIKHS. The class has been successful in the past and will revitalize the greenhouse and students will be able to participate in the local Grow Movement and perform community service projects. Students will also be able to grow and harvest their own gardens and sell goods grown at local farmers' markets. The proposed textbook for the class costs \$130 each and the proposal is to buy 25 at a total cost of \$3,250.

She also reported on the update on the Elementary Reading Coaches and Literacy Coaching in the District. The coaches presented a power-point presentation on coaching, professional development, assessment and Language Arts work in the district. She also reported on the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and School Roundup as presented at the Curriculum Council meeting.

Old Business

None

New Business

A. CABE Presentation

Bob Rader, Executive Director of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education made a presentation to the Board regarding the role and responsibilities of the Board of Education and Board members.

Mr. Rader said that it is the work of the Board to convene the community around critical curriculum issues. He said that this district is one of the best in the state in a lot of ways and that the scores for the district's schools are some of the highest imaginable.

Mr. Rader said that it is important for the Board to maintain a list of best practices and recognizing the best things that district do. He also said that the Board should create a governance statement which outlines the Board's responsibilities and the Superintendent's responsibilities. He also said that the Board's most important job is assessing itself. He said that Boards should be talking about student achievement and concentrating on that, where Boards used to focus more on labor management. He said that it's very important that the Board assess itself before assessing the Superintendent. The Board's assessment of itself should focus on how to work better together and its goals.

Mr. Rader then outlined the Board's three main responsibilities. The first is to hire a Superintendent and evaluate the Superintendent once per year, in addition to its self-assessment. He further explained that the Board has only one employee, the Superintendent and that it is the Superintendent's job to manage the remaining staff. The Board should keep a good line of communication with the Superintendent.

The second responsibility is to work through policies, which are the laws of the district. Working through the policies sets out clear guidelines for the Superintendent and allows the Board to set the direction and tone they want for the district. It also creates legal protection and guidance on issues that may come up.

The third responsibility is to adopt a budget and work on behalf of the budget. He said that it is important to speak with one voice as a Board and for members not to undermine the budget, even if they don't support the budget. He said that the district policies should specify that the Board Chair or Superintendent speaks publicly on behalf of the Board and the Board's budget. He added that if Board members are approached by people from the community with problems relating to the schools or the district, that the Board member should refer complaints through the chain of command. If a Board member should help someone directly with a problem, they may have to recuse themselves from a later discussion or decision relating to that problem. Mr. Rader also said that the Board should delegate administrative work to the Superintendent and to remember that when they are out in the community, people will see them as Board members with super powers, thus it is important to remember to refer them to the chain of command for questions and concerns. He also said that Board members should give notice when they are coming to school as a courtesy and that their job is not to evaluate staff, but to connect the will of the community with the education of students.

Along with the responsibility of adopting a budget, Mr. Rader added that Board should ensure sufficient resources from the budget to support education.

Mr. Rader also outlined the responsibilities of the Board Chair, which he said is more than someone who opens and closes a meeting. The Board Chair should get to know the other members of the Board and find out why they ran for the Board, as their interests drive their actions. He also suggested that the Board go on retreats and go to the CAPSS convention. Additionally, he said that Board members should know about how to get items important to them on the agenda.

He said that it is important that the Board interpret what the District and the Board itself are doing to the community, so that the community understands the Board's initiatives. Thus it is also the responsibility of each Board member to be able to explain the Board's initiatives to members of the community and gain support for those initiatives. He also said that the Board should include student achievement in every agenda.

Susan Dean mentioned to Mr. Rader that the Board is currently working on putting together a handbook based on a model by the Berlin Board of Education. Mr. Rader said that a handbook sets the tone for the Board and the community, instructing climate and an understanding of the expectations of Board members and how the Board wants itself to be perceived. Superintendent

Thiery added that it is a collaboration around what norms and cultures the Board wants to reflect, such as believing in teamwork and helping each other.

Becky Valenti asked, "How do you get the community to come to the meetings?" Mr. Rader suggested that the Board work through PTAs and by having a communications plan and strategy. He also mentioned that he has heard of some districts using a budget committee with community members to try to get more community involvement in the budget process. He also said that advocacy is a crucial part of being a Board member.

In addition, Mr. Rader said that the Board should review its Code of Ethics, which should be in the 9000 series of the policies and bring it out and have everyone sign it. He also mentioned that CAFE works on representing unified advocacy to the state legislature, which has been producing a lot of one-size-fits all legislation as of late.

Board Chair Sue Twachtman thanked Mr. Rader for coming.

Adjournment

Board Chair Sue Twachtman called for the meeting to adjourn at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Larissa B. Johnson
Board Clerk

Approval: Becky Valenti Date: 5-6-14
Becky Valenti, Secretary