

The Regular Meeting of the Regional School District 14 Board of Education was held on Tuesday, February 21, 2012 in the Nonnewaug High School Library, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, Connecticut.

Present: Superintendent Jody Ian Goeler; Board members Sophieazane Bartlett, George Bauer, John Chapman, and Maryanne Van Aken; Director of Finance/Operations James Reese; School Counselors Carol Tomkalski and Pam Sordi; Principals Alice Jones and Andrew O'Brien; and Board Clerk Debra Carlton
Absent: Board members Charles Cosgriff, Gary Suslavich, John Swendsen, and Pamela Zmek

I. Call to Order

Mr. Bauer called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Performance – Region 14 Strings Ensemble

The Board and audience were treated to a performance by elementary school aged strings musicians, under the direction of their teacher, Harris Daigle, who informed the Board that 82 elementary schools students are currently enrolled in the strings program, with 3 additional students participating at the middle school. The group performed two selections, with accompaniment by Lynne Kearney on piano. Mr. Daigle then asked Ms. Van Aken to stand and be recognized on her birthday, and the students played the Happy Birthday song for her. Also present for the performance were Bill Geddes and Marc Kroll of the Woodbury/Bethlehem Community Music Foundation. The Board expressed its gratitude for the funding this group provides for the strings program.

III. Presentation – Student Success Plans

Ms. Tomkalski and Ms. Sordi provided details about Student Success Plans (SSP) at both the middle and high school level. Mandated by the State to be in place in all schools by July 1, 2012, these success plans have been the focus of much work on the part of these counselors for years, and they have shared many of their ideas with school districts around the State. They explained components of SSPs as well as Advisory groups, which have been in place at the middle school for 4 years. The high school began Advisory this year. Components of SSPs at NHS include academic, career, and social/emotional/physical development. The counselors highlighted accomplishments during the 2010-11 school year, and this school year; reviewed the use of Naviance at NHS for the past 7 years and its introduction at the middle school this year; and explained that advisory occurs twice per month at WMS and on 12 dates during the year at NHS. Advisors stay with the same student group for all 3 years at WMS and a similar model will be used at NHS. Challenges were discussed, and technology was identified as a specific need.

Mr. Chapman sees the SSP as the way to “get the most out of people” and likened it to success plans seen in industry, including his own company, geared toward helping employees set and meet professional goals.

Mr. O'Brien sees the evolution of advisory as a way to personalize students' school experiences. Rolling out advisory has not been without growing pains, but it provides a “great return” and the opportunity to connect with staff, he said, is the true value of this model. He is looking for more contact time – a minimum of two times per month. When asked how advisory was used in his previous district, he explained that it was front loaded at the beginning of the school year. Instead of the first day of school being primarily a homeroom event, with distribution of paperwork and schedules, the first several days of school were actually begun with advisory and rapport with staff advisors was established early. Student mentors were already trained over the summer to facilitate, as well. Various methods of grouping students was also discussed, such as alphabetically without regard to grade level, but Mr. O'Brien felt the specific school population here needed to be a determinant of how advisory is structured.

Ms. Jones sees many options available for utilizing SSP and advisory, and stressed that the true value lies in the intrinsic skills developed in students. Advisory and success plans give students skills that will serve them well as adults. Everyone becomes a learner, a mentor, a teacher, an advisor.

Mr. O'Brien sees the goals piece as most exciting, when students realize they can set and reach goals, and realize they can chart their own destiny.

Ms. Sordi added that they set goals, but also plan the steps to reach those goals.

Ms. Van Aken recognizes that, for many students, connections with others are not easily made; this program facilitates connections.

Mr. Bauer appreciated the efforts on the part of school staff to take the requirements of the State and frame a model best suited to our district.

IV. Chairman's Report

Mr. Bauer reported on the CAFE convention he attended last year, which addressed challenges of Boards of Education across the state and included interesting seminars. Topics included policy and legislation, roles and responsibilities of Board members, district goals, BoE self-assessments, and community engagement. Communication with families, it was stressed, keeps them informed and involved. A culture of professionalism for Boards of Education, and connections between Boards and classroom teachers through a systematic approach, was covered. Mr. Bauer shared an example of one district's new Board member handbook which generated interest.

V. Adjournment

Ms. Van Aken entered a *motion to adjourn*, seconded by Ms. Bartlett. The **motion carried 4-0**.
The meeting adjourned at 8:46 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

John Chapman, Secretary
Regional School District 14 Board of Education

Recorded and filed subject to Board of Education approval: Debra W. Carlton, Board Clerk, 2/22/12