

The Business Meeting of the New London Board of Education was held on March 25, 2024 in the New London Public Schools' Welcome Center.

1. Call to Order

President Elaine Maynard-Adams called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present for the Board of Education: President – Elaine Maynard-Adams
Secretary – Bryan Doughty

Board Members Present: Alisha Blake
Nathan Caron
Danni Cruz
Susan Hambey

Board Members Absent: Vice-President – Bianca Alexis-Sylvain

Present for the administration: Dr. Jennifer Hills-Papetti, Assistant Superintendent

2. Student of the Month and Employee of the Quarter Recognitions

- Early Childhood Center at B.P. Mission
 - Student of the Month: Jeyzaliz Gandulla
- Winthrop STEM Elementary Magnet School
 - Student of the Month: Leansly Jimenez Chacon
- Nathan Hale Arts Magnet School
 - Student of the Month: Xinran “Tao Tao” Huang
- C.B. Jennings International Elementary Magnet School
 - Student of the Month: Felix Tavaréz
- Bennie Dover Jackson Multi-Magnet Middle School Campus
 - Student of the Month: Benjamine Dulcice
- New London High School Multi-Magnet Campus
 - Student of the Month: Stouvenly Dortelus
- New London Adult & Continuing Education
 - Student of the Month: Charles Abrams

3. Public Comment

Francesca Bazil, New London – Ms. Bazil stated she is a senior at NLHS. She is here on behalf of Hearing Youth Voices regarding the SB50 Bill. The wellness interventionists play a pivotal role in nurturing students' mental health, which is just as crucial as their academic success. Kids today face a ton of pressure from social media to academic expectations, affecting their world. The wellness interventionists teach students how to manage stress, build self esteem and navigate social dynamics which are life skills that

will carry students into adulthood. By addressing these issues early on, interventionists help with chronic anxiety, depression, substance abuse and even external conflicts between students. This isn't just good for the students, but is good for society by reducing health care costs and improving overall community wellbeing. Students with strong emotional health are more likely to excel academically, straying from school to prison pipeline and lead a fulfilling life. The interventionists teach students to be better equipped for the workforce and ups and downs of daily life. Although she appreciates the advocacy for grant funding, it is not sustainable enough for students to consistently progress. By securing these positions in the budget, schools are essentially laying down the foundation for wealthier and more successful communities.

McKaylie Francis, New London – Ms. Francis came forward and shared that she is a student at New London High School. She stated she is here to advocate for the position of wellness interventionists. This position is responsible for maintaining the mental health of students and for the escalation of situations that may arise in school. When thinking of the importance of this position, she thinks of her and her sister's experiences. She has witnessed the effect that these staff have had on the position. Prior to these positions, student mental health was not prioritized and altercations happened daily. Now it is being prioritized and the amount of altercations is reducing. She understands that the Board is looking to find grants which is great for the short term, but will land the district into the same position again. She is advocating for the Board to prioritize for these positions.

Rhianna Pierre, New London – She shared that she is a student in the class of 2025, and that she is here to advocate for the wellness interventionist positions. Their work directly impacts the physical, emotional and mental health contributing to a happier school community. Through their interventions they empower individuals to make positive life style changes and cultivate resilience. In her sophomore year, managing her feelings was hard and felt like her secondary school experience was not a decent one. Around this time is when she met one of the wellness interventionists who gave her a sense of safety and felt like she had someone to talk to. This gave her support with school, during a time when her physiological well being was affecting her. Making these positions permanent will help with the mental wellbeing of students and give them a feeling of safety.

Amaya Outler, New London – Ms. Outler shared she is a student at New London High School. She is a passionate advocate for education reform and student wellbeing, and is here to advocate for wellness interventionists to be included as a permanent position in the budget. These professionals play a pivotal role in positive and supportive environments for students. Having experienced the support of these staff, she can attest to the transformative impact they have had on resolving conflicts and promoting emotional wellbeing. Staff have been a guiding light during challenging times, providing a safe space to confide in and preventing conflicts with fellow students. The approach goes beyond mediation, but to help teach conflict/resolution skills, fostering an environment of empathy and understanding. She has learned the importance of effective communication and empathy. Skills that are valuable both in and out of the classroom. She urges the Board to increasingly prioritize funding for these positions in the budget to permanently keep wellness interventionists in schools, as their impact is undeniable and invaluable.

Zariyah Gibson, New London – Zariyah shared she is a student attending NLHS. As a newcomer, she has personally connected with the wellness program in a short amount of time. She realized that they do a lot for her and her peers and is here to advocate for them as they would do for her. Cutting them off would affect other students and her. They check on mental health and help with problem solving when it comes to certain situations. Coming from a different school and being in a new environment is very overwhelming. The wellness center helped to give ways of how to cope and handle situations. They show they are leaders who care. I hope my voice can change how you feel about cutting this program.

Jadelise Garrett, New London – Ms. Garrett shared that she is a student at NLHS. She is an advocate for more funding towards education to make the positions of the wellness interventionists permanent. In the past few weeks, she and her peers have spoken at Board meetings, and City Council meetings, as well as the State Capitol. Her experience with the interventionists has been nothing but helpful to help with her mindset. In her freshman year there were often many fights. These interventionists help students with a way to deal with altercations. Wellness circles are more commonly used for issues between two parties allowing both sides to be heard, and providing the opportunity for an agreement to be made. This allows students to go back to school in a better headspace allowing them to succeed. These positions being permanent will promote a culture of success with students. If you look at the data from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024, the suspension rate and number of referrals have gone down and attendance has improved. The interventionists help to make a better school climate for students and staff. Having them to allow for students to have a safe space and somewhere to go and reset is helpful. The advice she has received has helped her to have a positive mindset. Making these positions permanent will help students in a positive manner in this district.

Kamaya Willis, New London – Ms. Willis came forward and stated that she is a student at New London High School. She stated that she is here to advocate for the wellness positions and to not cut them from the budget. She does not believe with the cut. She believes that these staff are those that students can talk to when having a bad day. The school counselors do not always have enough time for students because they have meetings and other things to do. If a student is having a hard day, they have to schedule a meeting for another day instead of being able to speak that day. The interventionists are also teaching students with ways of how to improve their physical behaviors and social skills. Without this staff, she feels that students would be struggling more. Without them, Ms. Willis would not feel heard or understood. She believes that these positions are important to the community.

The following community members submitted comments in writing which were read aloud during the meeting by Ms. Kristea Francolino. These comments can be found in their entirety at the end of these minutes.

- Amanda Lianos-Larson
- Nalyce Dudley

4. Reports and Communications

- Board Chairperson's Report

Ms. Maynard-Adams reported that she attended the high school music and it was outstanding. She also reported that She was able to see the current NLPS student art exhibition at the Lyman Allyn featuring Winthrop and Jennings, and recommends that everyone attend who is able. Ms. Maynard-Adams also shared that she continues to dialogue with State Legislators and the House Bill which would provide funding for B.P. If that passes, this will do wonders for the proposed budget. The Board is scheduled to present their budget to the City Council on Wednesday, April 17.

5. Information and Reports

i. Superintendent's Report – Mental Health Supports Update

Ms. Erin McGuire, Assistant Director of Mental Health provide a Mental Health Supports Update to the Board. This presentation included overviews of the following:

- Department Goals
- Focus Areas
- Social-Emotional Learning
- Collaborative for Academic, social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
- Tiered Counseling Supports
- Partnerships
- Staff Supports & Training
- Trauma Informed Practices
- Virtual Learning Sessions
- STRONG Training
- Family Engagement
- Positive Behavioral Approach
- Monitoring Systems
- SHAPE Survey
- DESSA-mini
- Competencies – DESSA/CASEL
- NLPS Support Staff

A copy of this report is available in its entirety upon request.

ii. Board Committee and Representative Updates

- Finance & Audit Committee

Ms. Maynard-Adams reported that the committee reviewed the status of the budget, along with line item transfers which are on the agenda for approval. She noted that there were discussions about

lawncare and groundskeeping, and that those would be discussed more again soon.

- School Maintenance and Building Committee

Mr. Doughty reported that at the high school, there have been issues with the doors which the team has been actively working on. At the South Campus, the new wing will be opened following April Break. Mr. Doughty also noted that the construction of the Community Center at Fort Trumbull is underway.

6. Approval of the Minutes

- March 11, 2024 – Business Meeting

Motion by Ms. Blake, seconded by Ms. Hambey, to approve the March 11, 2024 Business Meeting Minutes.

Motion carried, 5-0-1

Abstaining: Mr. Cruz

7. Approval of the Consent Agenda

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Mr. Cruz, that the following items, as set forth on the Consent Agenda for the Business Meeting of March 11, 2024 be approved unless removed by a Board member or the Superintendent of Schools:

A. Action Items

- I. Approve Line Item Transfers as Recommended by the Finance & Audit Committee
- II. Rescind Policy Series 5000 – Pledge of Allegiance (*Information included in Policy 6115*) for its First Reading as Recommended by the Policy Committee
- III. Rescind Policy Series 6000 – IDEA – Alternative Assessments (*Information included in Policy 6162.3*) for its First Reading as Recommended by the Policy Committee
- IV. Approve Policy 5124 – Reporting to Parents and Guardians for its First Reading as Recommended by the Policy Committee
- V. Approve Policy 5126 – Student Recognition for its First Reading as Recommended by the Policy Committee

Motion carried, 6-0

8. Items Pulled from Consent Agenda

- A. Rescind Policy 6114.81 – Emergency Suspension of Policy During Pandemic for its First Reading as Recommended by the Policy Committee

Motion by Mr. Doughty, seconded by Mr. Caron, to Rescind Policy 6114.81 – Emergency Suspension of Policy During Pandemic for its First Reading as Recommended by the Policy Committee.

Mr. Doughty asked if this policy could be brought back should there be another pandemic, and Ms. Maynard-Adams and Ms. Francolino confirmed that it could be brought back.

Motion carried, 6-0

- B. Approve Policy 5145.53 – Transgender and Gender-Expansive Youth for its First Reading as Recommended by the Policy Committee.

Motion by Mr. Doughty, seconded by Ms. Blake, to approve Policy 5145.53 – Transgender and Gender-Expansive Youth for its First Reading as Recommended by the Policy Committee.

Mr. Doughty referenced the section in the policy that is about transfers. It shares that if there is a need to transfer that parents must also approve. He asked if this would be outing the student. Ms. McGuire, Assistant Director of Mental Health, explained that this is a decision that would not be made without the parent, however, the discussion would be about the harassment and bullying, not about the student being transgender/gender-expansive. It was also explained that this would be the last resort. Ms. Blake asked what a parent and student should do if they felt that a staff member was not being supportive in reference to this policy. Ms. Maynard-Adams responded that if any staff fails to follow policy, administration would follow up with the staff. To report such, the parent or student should go to the administration.

Motion carried, 6-0

9. Board Comments, Questions

Ms. Hambey expressed that she wanted to commend the students who came out to speak. Mr. Caron echoed Ms. Hambey, and shared that he continues to be inspired by them and their willingness to speak. Mr. Doughty shared that the statement that stuck with him is that a student said they are here to advocate for them as they do for the students. He stated that it is important to make that connection and he, too, continues to be proud of the students who speak.

Mr. Cruz thanked the students and also Ms. McGuire for her presentation. Ms. Blake stated that the young people who came out are impressive. Not only are they coming to speak at Board meetings, but also up in Hartford and communicating at the State level about the budget. She continued that this has been remarkable to see, and looks forward to seeing them continue.

Ms. Maynard-Adams expressed that she is always happy to hear from students, whether it is them coming to the meetings, or the Board visiting the school. It is the job of the Board and all to advocate for our students, no matter the role.

Ms. Maynard-Adams requested copies of the job descriptions for the Wellness Interventionists and Behavior Motivators to be sent to the full Board.

10. Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Doughty, seconded by Mr. Cruz, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried, 6-0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan Doughty
Secretary