

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE
June 06, 2013 MEETING
Joint Board of Education Committee**

April 04, 2013

A regular meeting of the Joint Board of Education Committee was held on Thursday, April 04, 2013 in the John Winthrop Middle School Library, with the following Board Members present:

CHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION:	Lianne Rutty, Peg Reyer, Nicole Sypher, David Fitzgibbons, Shaun Savoie
DEEP RIVER BOARD OF EDUCATION:	Christine Daniels, Mark Malcarne, Kc Nelson-Oliveria, Dave Berardis, Julia Grabowski, Miriam Morrissey, Liz Tracy arrived at 7:20 p.m.
ESSEX BOARD OF EDUCATION:	Lon Seidman, Adam Conrad arrived at 7:15 p.m., DG Fitton, Loretta McCluskey, Judie McCann, Jeff Burzin arrived at 9:00 p.m.
REGION 4 BOARD OF EDUCATION:	Jennifer Clark, Chris Riley, Ann Monaghan, Elaine Fitzgibbons, Mario Gioco arrived at 7:15 p.m., Linda Hall arrived at 8:25 p.m.

Also in attendance: Dr. Ruth Levy, Superintendent; Joanne Beekley, Assistant Superintendent; Garth Sawyer, Business Manager & Jennifer Bryan, Board Clerk.

Audience of Citizens: 22

CALL TO ORDER

Supervision District Committee Vice-Chair Christine Daniels called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

The Chairs of the Chester & Deep River Boards of Education called their respective Boards to order at 7:08 p.m. The Region 4 and Essex Boards of Education gained a quorum at 7:15 p.m. and were called to order.

CONSENT AGENDA

On motion duly made and seconded, the Chester and Deep River Boards of Education unanimously VOTED to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the February 28, 2013 regular meeting of the Joint Board of Education. Once a quorum was reached, on motion duly made and seconded the Region 4 and Essex Boards of Education unanimously VOTED to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the February 28, 2013 regular meeting of the Joint Board of Education.

PUBLIC COMMENT – no comments were made

OTHER ITEMS –

Dr. Levy introduced Michelle Connelly, the State HEARTSafe Coordinator, who was there to present the towns of Chester, Deep River, and Essex with their designations as HEARTSafe Communities. Ms. Connelly gave a brief background of the program which was developed in the Spring of 2006 by the CT Dept. of Health, to improve survival rate for people who experience a sudden cardiac event. Ms. Connelly stated that these designations were a result of a joint effort coordinated by Superintendent Levy. Chester First Selectman Edmund Meehan, and Essex First Selectman Norman Needleman were present to accept the awards on behalf of their towns. Ms. Connelly noted that Chester, Deep River and Essex are joining 96 other communities across CT in sharing this designation.

There was a discussion regarding the Superintendent's recommendation to renew the cafeterias' Healthy Food Certification. Mr. Peterlik reviewed the guidelines for the certification which the schools have participated in the last three years. This would simply be a renewal of that certification in which the Boards have approved the guidelines with the allowed fundraiser exemption. Compliance with the program provides for 10 cents back from the State on every meal sold at the schools. For the 2010-11 school year a combined total of \$11,143 was reimbursed by the State across all 5 schools. For 2011-12 that total was \$10,439. Chris Riley stated that he always votes against this certification due to what he believes is inconsistency of message, by allowing the waiver for after school hour sales. Nevertheless, he said that although that is the case, he also wanted to thank Mr. Peterlik for all he has done and is doing for our food services program and feels the districts are lucky to have him.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Chester, Deep River, and Essex Boards unanimously VOTED to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to renew certification that all food items sold to students during school hours other than those covered by exemption, will meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards to qualify for CSDE's Healthy Food Certification and monetary compensation from the State.

The Region 4 Board VOTED (4 yes, 1 no, Chris Riley = Passed) to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to renew certification that all food items sold to students during school hours other than those covered by exemption, will meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards to qualify for CSDE's Healthy Food Certification and monetary compensation from the State

The Joint BOE Preschool Study Committee presented their findings. Dr. Levy introduced the Committee who has, over the past 6 months, looked at the existing collaborative preschool structure and considered what features would comprise the ideal location, set-up, structure, etc... for the preschool program, in order to determine the best possible model to educate young students and get them ready to be successful students in kindergarten and beyond.

Committee members Joanne Carter and Peg Reyer presented a PowerPoint summary of the findings of the 18 people, from a variety of backgrounds, who participated on the committee. The Committee divided into 5 different sub-committees. The presentation briefly highlighted each sub-committees findings. They looked at current and past program in the districts. Our school system gets actively involved at age 2 ½ because the day children turn 3 they enter our district if they have an identified need. This means the enrollment numbers build throughout the

year as each child reaches their third birthday, meaning that the program ends up with ballooning student numbers by the end of a school year. The Collaborative Preschool Program is currently housed at Essex Elementary School, which means that Chester and Deep River students have to transition back into their hometown's school.

One subcommittee looked at best practice research. The entire Committee heard a presentation from two experts from the State about best practices in preschool education and the fact that there will be universal preschool expectations in the future.

Another subcommittee also looked at the advantages and disadvantages of housing the program at one site vs. multiple sites. It was determined that there are great advantages in housing all preschool staff on site, in one location. There are transportation issues to consider as well, and it would be much more costly if students were spread out among three separate sites. However, transition between preschool and kindergarten is harder for students of the two off-site towns when there is only one preschool location. Multiple preschool sites would require more town monetary support including appropriate classroom accommodations, staffing, and the construction of age and ability compliant playgrounds at Chester and Deep River, to name a few.

The Committee determined that if the elementary schools added a transitional kindergarten program in each of their buildings, students would be able to move into kindergarten when developmentally ready, and that would ease the transition into their home community school.

In summary, the Committee determined that it would be cost prohibitive to house the preschool program at multiple sites. However, there was unanimous Committee support for a hybrid model whereby the districts would leave the Collaborative Preschool Program unchanged but each elementary school would add a transitional kindergarten classroom to aid in student transitions. This type of hybrid program would meet State Department of Education and Common Core State Standards full day expectations. It would also support a rolling enrollment theme and support at risk populations, as well as supporting family transitions. In general identified students would enter the Collaborative Program at age 3 and then at age 5 or whenever they are developmentally and academically ready, they would move into the transitional kindergarten program in their hometown school. The Committee recognized that there are still more issues to explore and would like the support of the Boards to continue researching and looking more closely at the following areas: delivery of education, family experience, rolling admission, and staffing requirements.

Dr. Levy further further discussed the issues raised in the presentation. She stated that the program is currently finding that students are coming into our programs who have needs that could have been addressed earlier, which would help to minimize academic problems down the road. Director of Pupil Services, Tracy Johnston, further spoke to the collaborative nature of the diverse make-up of the committee and their backgrounds and specialties.

It was noted that the transitional kindergarten program would be full day and would mirror the expectations of kindergarten. Tracy Johnston noted that the transitional classes would be considered general education, not special education. The transitional class size would grow throughout the year as children come of appropriate age or develop to kindergarten readiness. It would be expected that the transitional class would be smaller, especially starting out at the beginning of a school year, but by the end of the year, they would anticipate a fairly full classroom. Seats would also be filled part time by ones not ready for full day, but ready for more than just preschool.

Miriam Morrissey asked a question about peer pairing and how the split between students may happen. Mrs. Johnston said they are definitely sensitive to that topic and it will be further investigated as to the best way to ease that split. Adam Conrad asked if any other municipalities have already done this successfully? Dr. Levy said that a State Department of Education representative said that some of the priority districts are already doing this with State funding, but Dr. Levy noted that our districts will need to look at how we can do it without extra State funding.

Christine Daniels thanked the Committee for their work thus far and their continued work in the future.

The 6th Grade Study Committee presented their recommendations. JWMS Principal William Duffy presented their PowerPoint summary regarding whether or not it would be recommended to move 6th graders to JWMS. The Committee, made up of 22 members from many backgrounds started meeting in October, and have met at least monthly over the last 6 months. They formed six subcommittees to focus on the major themes. Their main conclusion was that given the changes and expectations of the Common Core State Standards, which groups curriculum standards on a grades 6-8 basis, pedagogically it makes sense to bring the 6th graders to JWMS.

He noted that a move of 6th graders to JWMS may require some recertification of staffing since most teachers are normally certified K-6 or 7-12, however some teachers are K-8 certified. Dr. Beekley noted that other teachers who are currently K-6 certified, are also interested in taking the 1 or 2 courses that would be required to have the proper certification. Additionally, there is a process offered by the State that allows schools to show that teachers are highly qualified to teach what they're teaching without additional certification.

The issue of transportation was also studied. It was determined by looking at capacity vs. ridership numbers that the extra ridership to JWMS can be absorbed without increasing the number of buses and therefore without incurring an additional cost.

In terms of facility needs, the current JWMS building can accommodate students without new construction.

Mr. Duffy reported that the Committee was at a near unanimous consensus, with only one member not wholly convinced, that it was the best thing academically for the students. Regardless, all members recognized that there are still many questions to be answered such as the delivery of instruction, what if any needs exist for internal facility changes, the best timing of the move, staffing adjustments and of course, cost feasibility. Also, governance structure changes would need to occur by formally adding 6th grade to Region 4 via referendum.

Mr. Duffy reported that he and Assistant Principal Foxen had informally surveyed 7th and 8th grade students on their thoughts about it and the students said they would have been interested in making the change to JWMS in 6th grade. A Committee member who is the mother of 6th grader, and a middle school teacher at JWMS, said that in looking at her son and knowing the JWMS environment she feels it would be appropriate both academically and socially for 6th graders to move to JWMS. She feels it would provide more fluidity of instruction, and would also provide much better coordination of curriculum. Furthermore, she feels that the TEAM model that JWMS uses would provide a safe and protected environment for 6th graders at JWMS. She feels the students are really ready for it.

Dr. Levy thanked all participants of both the 6th Grade Study Committee and the Preschool Study Committee for their hard work thus far. Both committees will continue their work next year. They will return to present further results and more specific recommendations towards the end of the 2013-14 school year.

Chester Board member and psychologist David Fitzgibbons gave a presentation regarding asset development as a means of combating substance abuse in students. He noted that he was not speaking on behalf of any BOE, but rather on behalf of the Tri Town Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition; a coalition made up of 12 representatives from various community centers.

He spoke specifically to the goal of enhancing educational achievement accomplished by increasing assets and reducing risks; “as assets increase, risks go down...in other words, the more strengths you have, the less you engage or feel the need to engage in risky behavior”.

He said he was not talking solely about CMT, CAPT, SAT or other test scores, noting that they are only checkpoints along a wider path. Other important benchmarks include Invention conventions, school bands, athletic events, academic teams, musicals, and art shows, all of which are indications of how our students are doing. He noted that the schools are helping to raise these students to become grown-ups (not-simply adults) and growing up is hard work. He said children become grown-ups by meeting and mastering developmental challenges (risks) which require adult support and must be developmentally appropriate. They need to master qualities far beyond academic excellence.

One of the major risks facing children is alcohol and other drugs. He spoke about efforts to reduce underage drinking, tobacco, and marijuana use. He said it is important to work through external assets, such as social norming, e.g. freshman transition events and social development programs, to try to develop assets in children. External assets, like those mentioned, are supported by the Boards through the school budgets, helping students gain a commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies and positive identities. External assets develop internal assets.

Dr. Levy thanked Mr. Fitzgibbons for reminding Board members of the importance of more than just curricular or academic needs. She praised the fact that our districts have a very strong belief in the social development programs that are infused into the K-12 curriculum.

REPORTS

Financial Status Update

Mr. Sawyer gave a brief, high level financial update for each district. More detail will be given at the individual board meetings in March.

Dr. Levy read letter notifying her that the collaboratively written application for a cooperative agreement grant was accepted and \$23,750 has been awarded to Region #4 to use to work on the cooperative agreement. It must be expended before June 30, 2013. Previously, the Joint BOE had appointed the Supervision District Committee to spearhead this effort. They will be using this award to pay for having the district attorneys draft a cooperative agreement. Lon Seidman gave a brief synopsis of the general effort to work together more efficiently which began in earnest back in 2005. He noted that with this grant and the possibility of a cooperative agreement, the districts have a real opportunity to design something that really works for the

three towns, allowing them to narrow things down to one responsible entity. With a cooperative agreement it can be adjusted, turned off, modified, etc... and would be much more flexible than a full regionalization of the three towns. He noted that although Supervision District had already been appointed to oversee this effort, all Board members involvement will be crucial. Christine Daniels thanked all of those involved in the successful writing of the grant application.

Dr. Levy reminded the Boards that due to the excessive cancellation of school on 9 days due to extreme weather this year, 3 days were removed from spring break this year per the board approved calendar. She was happy to say however, that the calendar already approved for next year (2013-14) should help to improve some of the calendar woes experienced this year.

Dr. Levy reported on the work of the District Security Committee over the past several months. The Committee has already conducted security audits/walk-thrus of all 5 schools and Central Office. They are looking at “where we are and where we will need to be”. The Committee has been working closely with the towns and troop F to have an increased law enforcement presence throughout the day near the schools. On April 23rd, there will be a workshop to provide specialized security training for all front office school staff, as they are on the front lines of school defense.

In budget news, Dr. Levy reported that as of this week, she has been to all 3 towns’ boards of finance and boards of selectmen, and she was happy to report that all are in support of the budgets put forward by all of the Boards.

Committee Reports

The Policy Committee met on March 27th. As a result there are several policies on for the Boards’ consideration this evening including the following:

First Reading on the following policies:

- #4218.11 Sexual Harassment – Personnel
- #4118.11 Non-Discrimination – Personnel
- #5145.4 Non-Discrimination – Students
- #5113 Attendance
- #5113.21 Truancy
- #6113.11 Class Size Guidelines

Second Reading and possible VOTE on the following policies:

- #5145.51 Peer Sexual Harassment (students)

Committee Chair Elaine Fitzgibbons noted that any questions need to be submitted to Dr. Levy or one of the committee members prior to the next meeting. Dr. Levy reviewed each policy and noted that many of them required changes to be in legal compliance. Policies may be discussed in more depth at individual meetings if needed.

Ann Monaghan voiced her concern that Policy 5145.51 regarding Peer Sexual Harassment was still not expansive enough. Dr. Levy stated that the policy came directly from the district’s legal counsel, however she would send it back to them for a third review. Therefore the planned vote on Policy 5145.51 was tabled until the June meeting.

Garth Sawyer reported that the Joint BOE Finance Committee last met on March 11th. That meeting focused around the presentations for a health insurance provider. The Committee has instructed agent Joe Spurgeon to go back to Anthem with certain requests, and if they agree to said requests, then the district will likely renew with them.

Joint BOE Curriculum Committee - the planned March meeting was canceled due to weather. They will meet again on May 21st.

Assistant Superintendent's Report

Dr. Beekley said she will be starting to look at scheduling Professional Development for next year soon. She has been meeting with all curriculum committees and some will be doing curriculum work over the summer as needed, in support of the implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

Dr. Beekley discussed the upcoming submission of the Teacher/Administrator Evaluation Plan to the State Dept. of Education. She said that the Board just needs to approve the submission of a document, not the plan itself, as the State Department of Education will be reviewing the plan for compliance and making any necessary changes prior to implementation. The State itself is still working on their recommended framework. Therefore, if the Board approved submission, she will send it to the State and then wait for State feedback before amending and resubmitting if necessary. The plan is approximately 80 pages in length.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Chester, Deep River, Essex and Region 4 Boards unanimously VOTED to approve submission of the Teacher/Administrator Evaluation Plan to the State Department of Education.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Amy Petrone stated that she was the one member of the 6th Grade Study Committee who was not necessarily in favor of moving the 6th grade to JWMS because a study she looked at didn't show increased academics, but did show an increase in disciplinary issues. She also questioned the effect it would have on the elementary schools.

On motion duly made and seconded the Chester, Deep River, Essex, and Region 4 Boards unanimously VOTED to move into Executive Session for a Personnel Matter, (the Superintendent's self-evaluation) at 9:25 p.m.

The Boards moved out of Executive Session at 10:18 p.m.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Next regular Joint BOE meeting is June 06, 2013.

Date Fair (June)

Executive Session – BOE Evaluation of Superintendent/contract negotiation (June)

Vote on recommendation to appoint legal counsel for 2013-14 (June)

ADJOURNMENT:

On Motion duly made and seconded, the Chester, Deep River, Essex and Region 4 Boards of Education unanimously VOTED to adjourn 10:20 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE:

The Supervision District Committee had a quorum present by the end of the Joint BOE meeting. Therefore, a Supervision District Committee meeting was convened to take care of business that had been tabled earlier in the evening until such time as a quorum could be reached. The minutes for that meeting may be found below:

RECONVENING OF SUPERVISION DISTRICT COMMITTEE

Supervision District Committee Vice-Chair, Christine Daniels, called a meeting of the Committee to order at 10:20 p.m. to take care of business that was tabled earlier in the evening due to the lack of a quorum. Present were:

- CHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION: Peg Reyer
- DEEP RIVER BOARD OF EDUCATION: Christine Daniels, Kc Nelson-Oliveria
- ESSEX BOARD OF EDUCATION: Lon Seidman, DG Fitton, Loretta McCluskey
- REGION 4 BOARD OF EDUCATION: Elaine Fitzgibbons, Linda Hall

On motion duly made and seconded the Committee unanimously VOTED to approve the consent agenda consisting of the Minutes from the regular meeting of February 28, 2013, Minutes from budget workshop IV of February 25th, and the Accounts Payable Report.

Dr. Levy reviewed the recommended budget transfers for 2012-13 based on current projections reflected in the latest budget status report.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Supervision District Committee unanimously VOTED to approve the following recommended budget transfers for the Supervision District 2012-13 budget:

Object 100: Salaries	Budget Increase of	(\$3,203)
Object 200: Fringe Benefits	Budget Increase of	(\$8,218)
Object 300: Purchased Services	Budget Increase of	\$5,795
Object 400: Rentals and Repairs	Budget Decrease of	\$5,566
Object 800: Other Objects	Budget Decrease of	<u>\$ 60</u>

Net Amount of Increases versus (Decreases) \$0

Dr. Levy reviewed Mr. Sawyers earlier presentation of the 2011-12 Supervision District audit report, which shows an ending fund balance of \$2,098, as anticipated.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Committee unanimously VOTED to accept the audit report as presented.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Committee unanimously VOTED to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to return to the participating towns of Regional No. 4 Supervision District the end of year surplus for FY2011-12. The amount of reimbursement is for \$2,098 to be returned as follows according to FY2011-12 ADM formula:

Town of Chester \$520
Town of Deep River \$632
Town of Essex \$946

There was a discussion concerning Mr. Sawyer's earlier presentation on the option to exercise a 1 year renewal option on current contract with Grant Thornton, LLP (formerly Carlin, Charron, & Rosen, LLP) to re-appoint them as auditors of the Supervision District Financial Statements for a 1 year period to audit the financial records for the 2012-13 school year. The price will be \$10,000 (which is an increase of \$500 over last year's cost), a fee which, as Mr. Sawyer noted earlier in the evening, was still less than the price bid by other firms' during the last Request for Proposals.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Committee unanimously VOTED to exercise their 1 year renewal option on their current contract with Grant Thornton, LLP (formerly Carlin, Charron, & Rosen, LLP) to re-appoint them as auditors of the Supervision District Financial Statements for a 1 year period to audit the financial records for the 2012-13 school year at a cost of \$10,000.

ADJOURNMENT:

On motion duly made and seconded, the Committee unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Bryan, Clerk