

**THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE Nov 03, 2016 MEETING
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4 Board of Education**

A regular meeting of the Regional School District No. 4 Board of Education was held on Thursday, Sept. 01, 2016 in the John Winthrop Middle School Library, with the following Board members in attendance:

Chris Riley, Leigh Rankin, Elaine Fitzgibbons, Jim Olson, Jennifer Clark, and Susan Hollister as well as Senior Student Representatives Maleena Frazier and Matthew O'Keefe

Also in attendance:

Administrators: Superintendent Dr. Ruth I. Levy,
Assistant Superintendent Kristina Martineau
Valley Regional Principal Mike Barile;
John Winthrop Principal William Duffy

Board Clerk: Jennifer Bryan

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chris Riley called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

CONSENT AGENDA

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 05, 2016, the Special Meeting of July 18th, and the Accounts Payable Report.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Fourteen citizens were present. Dan Morrissey of Deep River spoke regarding the use of a block schedule at Valley. He stated that he thought it would already have been phased out, but was disappointed to learn it has not. He is very concerned about it and spoke as to his experiences teaching a graduate course and the decrease in performance of students who had a year off from a particular subject matter. He's concerned that students in the block schedule at Valley are going a year without seeing some subject matters, and he feels that is too long, and that it sets them up for failure, especially in math and science courses.

Mike Spanner of Deep River said that he was shocked when he saw his daughter's freshman schedule for this year. He feels that she will be not seeing anything she considers challenging

until 2017. He feels the schedule is not rigorous, cohesive, or challenging which is in contrast to the district's mission statement. He also does not like the huge gaps in academic courses that he feels the block schedule creates.

Paula Weglarz of Deep River mirrored Mr. Spanner's comments. She also feels that the Fall schedules are non-challenging.

A parent of a Region 4 student said that her child has special needs, and that there are aspects of the block schedule that she feels would be detrimental to a number of students with similar issues.

A parent from Essex echoed previous comments that course material needs repetition for retention. She stated that she hopes it will be changed to a different schedule soon.

A parent from Deep River stated that for the first time ever, her son is concerned about getting through his current math class because he didn't have any math courses for the entire half of last year.

A parent of future Valley students stated that she was concerned that with the concentrated manner in which material is presented when following a block schedule, a student missing a few days is much more detrimental than it would initially seem, with respect to the amount of material the student would miss.

Kathy from Deep River asked for more information with regards to the one-to-one Chromebook initiative this year. She said that she was wondering about the background for the initiative and she was concerned that 10th, 11th, and 12th graders were not getting them this year. She wondered why it was being done from the bottom up? She said that she sent an e-mail previously, but hasn't heard back from anyone. She wondered who she should speak with. Dr. Levy asked her to call her office to set up a time to meet.

Senior BOE representative Matthew O'Keefe stated that there is overwhelming support from Valley students in favor of block scheduling, and in fact last year he collected over 100 student signatures in favor of keeping the block schedule. He noted that he has not personally gone a semester without math or science since beginning his sophomore year and he's a senior now. He likes that block scheduling allows for extended labs and extended discussion, particularly in AP courses. He also noted that students are able to double up in their areas of interest.

Senior BOE representative Maleena Frazier stated that she also supports the block schedule. She said it enabled her to take math classes all the way through Calculus 2 and she will be able to complete Calculus 3 by the end of the school year, something that would have been impossible with a traditional schedule. She also agreed that there were lots of benefits to the extended blocks, especially for higher level courses, and that for the large majority of students, block scheduling is a very good experience. It also helps in the transition to higher education.

Mr. Riley thanked everyone for their comments. He noted that block scheduling has been in place at Valley for about 10 years. The administration and the Board already has plans to review it and compare it with other options currently in use. Additionally, they will be considering how it fits in with Valley's goal of becoming an International Baccalaureate school. He said that he did receive an e-mail regarding the issue. already seen by many there that evening. He would be sharing it with all of the Board members to take under consideration in the coming months.

John Winthrop Middle School Principal William Duffy introduced his two new teachers for this year including David Miller for Spanish and Chelsea Bristol, a speech and language pathologist.

Valley Regional High School Principal Michael Barile introduced Kyle Fitch, a .5 social studies teacher, and Carolyn Gbunblee the new Associate Principal.

Director of Food Services Thomas Peterlik reported on the Superintendent's recommendation to renew the certification for 2016-17 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. There was a brief discussion. Some Board members expressed concern that adhering to the healthy food standards hampers the cafeteria's ability to sell items that may make more money for the cafeteria. Mr. Peterlik acknowledged that all school cafeterias, in general, struggle to increase revenues, but he doesn't believe selling more junk food is the answer to making more money in the cafeteria.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board VOTED (Yes - Clark, Olson, Hollister, Fitzgibbons / No - Riley, Rankin = Motion PASSED) to renew certification for 2016-17 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.

OTHER ITEMS

Region 4 Student Representatives Report

Senior Student Representative Maleena Frazier reported that eleven student council members recently helped with giving tours and assisting at orientation for incoming freshman. She also said that the Valley Musical production this year will be *Aida* with music by Elton John. The homecoming dance and spirit week are coming up soon as well.

Senior Student Representative Matthew O'Keefe reported that Valley is now one of the top 500 schools as rated by Newsweek. He said that the students are very proud of that award, and that they can make note of it on their college applications. He is also proud that 75% of seniors

have earned AP credit. He reported that the Valley CORE program (done instead of home room when scheduled) has been re-named Class Advisory and has been given a big overhaul, and students are excited about that. Upper and lower classmen will also get together once a month. Fall sports have started practicing and many students have begun work on their Senior Capstone projects.

Dr. Levy personally thanked the representatives for being an integral part of the Associate Principal Search Committee. She said they added so much to discussions.

The Board moved into Executive Session at 7:34 p.m. and invited Michael Barile, Kristina Martineau and Kevin Roy to join them to discuss the following:

- **Negotiations** – review of key provisions in Region 4 Custodians contract for 2015-18
- **Personnel** – update on personnel matter related to teacher grievance

The Board moved out of executive session at 8:04 p.m.

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to ratify the Agreement between the Region 4 Board of Education, and Local 1303-086 of Council No. 4 American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO (R4 custodians) for July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2018

Director of Technology Pam Murphy, Principal Barile, and Principal Duffy updated the Board on the new one-to-one Chromebook Initiative. They presented a review of the program. From all indications the physical rollout was a success and 895 Chromebooks were distributed across all 5 schools. Mrs. Murphy thanked the Board for their support of this program and helping to bridge technical gaps for students between home and school, and providing individualized learning and access to digital resources. She reported that the kids are very excited and they understand there is no privacy on these accounts. Each Chromebook also has locator and lockdown software installed on it.

Principal Barile discussed the rollout and use of Chromebooks within the high school classrooms and how it relates to the District's core values and beliefs including 21st century learning expectations and instruction in digital citizenship. Principal Duffy discussed implementation in the middle school classrooms. He discussed the concept of the SAMR model for technology implementation (SAMR stands for Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition of tasks). He reported that Professional Development will continue throughout the year to assist teachers in this new initiative and will work to advance all comfort levels from novice to intermediate, and all the way through expert level teachers.

Dr. Levy voiced her thanks to the Board for their support of this forward thinking initiative. She said it was a beautiful sight walking into classrooms on the first day of school and seeing students already busy at work with Chromebooks.

Mr. Riley asked that the administrators please share the Board's appreciation to teachers for their implementation of this initiative. He also asked that Dr. Levy and the Principals to continue to provide updates throughout the year, with a year long overview summary at the last meeting of the year.

There was a brief discussion. Elaine Fitzgibbons voiced her concern about the rollout of the initiative itself, and stated that she doesn't feel it wasn't done properly. Dr. Levy disagreed and stated that based on parent feedback, she feels it was a great success and is one of the most positive initiatives undertaken by the District. Leigh Rankin voiced her concern for the possibly unregulated internet access the Chromebooks may provide to students when they are at home with their Chromebooks. Mrs. Murphy discussed the software installed and steps taken to provide students a regulated and responsible access environment both in school and at home.

Principal Updates

Principal Barile shared an update on the opening of school at VRHS. He discussed Valley Regional High School's recognition as a top 500 public high school across the nation. It was one of only 16 chosen from CT and this is the second time in 6 years that Valley has received such an honor. Dr. Levy noted that plaques recognizing this achievement have been purchased to be hung at Valley, Central Office, and each of the three Town Halls.

Mr. Barile announced that he will be developing a study committee to evaluate the current block schedule and to investigate other possible schedules, noting the importance of considering possible future IB school curriculum requirements. He reported that the start of school went very well. Valley currently has 610 students enrolled. The NEASC accreditation committee visits November 13-16th. The committee is comprised of sixteen professionals who will evaluate Valley on specific standards. The staff is currently spending a lot of time preparing for that visit. There will be a kickoff and panel presentations to begin their visit. The committee will interview students, staff and attend classes with students before writing their final reports and recommendation.

John Winthrop Middle School Principal, Bill Duffy reported on the opening of school at JWMS. There are 331 students enrolled (182 of those are in the 7th grade class) He said it all went very smoothly and he feels that holding multiple 6th grade orientation activities really paid off and allowed students to enter with less trepidation and much enthusiasm. He also reported that sharing student schedules on-line earlier than they normally had in the past helped to make for a smoother start as well. Additionally he noted that the custodians did a great job prepping the building and classrooms and the teachers were ready to go. He announced the addition of a new athletic website with information, schedules, and forms which will help with communication.

John Winthrop will hold their back to school open house on Wed 14th. Additionally JWMS continues to be recognized by NELMS as a spotlight school through 2017.

REPORTS

Financial Status Updates

Superintendent Ruth Levy reviewed the financial status report, as well as the cafeteria account report in the absence of Business Manager Garth Sawyer. She said the projected surplus is currently over \$85,000. This surplus is mostly due to the ability to bring students back into the district and save on Special Education outplacement costs, as well as the mild winter which meant less spending on snow plowing and heating oil.

There was a general discussion regarding the Board's concern over the low cafeteria revenue which results in a significant Board subsidy every year. Some felt the block schedule might be part of the problem as it only provides a total of 25 minutes for lunch time, which makes students not want to waste any of their lunch time standing in line to buy lunch. The Board said they are open to discussion and possible solutions. It was requested that this be put as a future agenda presentation for Garth Sawyer and Thomas Peterlik.

Committee Reports

No reports were given

Supervision District Committee Update - Dr. Levy noted that there will be a discussion regarding the cost sharing formula used for certain shared service items at the next Supervision District Committee meeting based on a request by R4 Board Member and Supervision District Committee member Jane Cavanaugh. Dr. Levy said the Supervision District agreement does allow for this to be considered.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Levy updated the Board on the following District activities:

The Districts as a whole are off to a wonderful start of the new school year. She said it was a busy summer with a lot of curriculum writing and the recent release of the new science standards.

Dr. Levy shared and reviewed comments she gathered during her exit interviews with the 2016 graduating seniors. She said their input helps every year to improve and make some positive changes.

She announced that next Friday, Sept. 9th is the community barbeque held at 5:00 p.m. at JWMS, rain or shine, for all of the school communities.

Dr. Levy reviewed pertinent legislative updates for 2016-17, and handed out a complete packet of new language. She highlighted legislation regarding contract provisions that must be followed with regards to the access of student data as of Oct. 1, 2016 - all aimed at student data and privacy. She stated that she and Mr. Sawyer will need to go through every contract we have to make sure that it is in compliance with this new legislation.

Lastly, Dr. Levy discussed her convocation speech recently delivered to staff. She noted that it was a continuation of her graduation speech with regards to civility and modeling of appropriate behavior. She asked that everyone focus on deeds done well, express gratitude, acknowledge things that need improving, but spend less time on negativity and more on solving issues as a community and to be appreciative and proud.

Assistant Superintendent's Report

Ms. Martineau had to leave the meeting early due to illness so her report was held until the next meeting.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS - none present

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Next Joint BOE meeting is October 06, 2016
- Presentation on Cafeteria Finances at Oct. 6 Joint BOE mtg.
- Next Region 4 BOE meeting is November 03, 2016
- Election of Board officers (Nov. or after seating of new members)
- BOE and Community input for 2017-18 budget (on-going)
- Presentation of Major Budget Drivers for 2017-18 (TBD)
- Profile of 2016 Graduation Class (Nov.)
- NWEA Update (Nov.)
- BOE Self-evaluation (TBD)

ADJOURNMENT

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 9:37 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Clark, BOE Secretary
Jennifer Bryan, Clerk