

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO BOARD APPROVAL AT THE Nov. 01, 2018 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. 06, 2018 in the John Winthrop Middle School Library, with the following Board members in attendance:

Jennifer Clark, DG Fitton, Jane Cavanaugh, Mario Gioco (arrived 7:01 p.m.), Trisha Brookhart, Lori Ann Clymas, Rick Daniels, Michelle Grow, Kate Sandmann (arrived 7:02 p.m.), as well as Senior Student Representatives Kate Farrell and Cooper McCormick

Also in attendance:

Administrators: Superintendent Dr. Ruth I. Levy,
Assistant Superintendent Dr. Kristina Martineau
Business Manager Kim Allen;
Valley Regional Principal Mike Barile;
John Winthrop Principal William Duffy
Region 4 Director of Facilities Leigh Rankin

Board Clerk: Jennifer Bryan

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Jennifer Clark called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Chair Clark introduced new Region 4 Board member, DG Fitton, who was recently appointed to fill a vacancy.

CONSENT AGENDA

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board VOTED (5 Yes, 4 abstentions = Gioco, Fitton, Daniels, Sandmann) to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes from the Annual Meeting of May 01, 2018, Minutes from the regular meeting of May 03, 2018, Minutes from the special meeting of June 18, 2018 and the Accounts Payable Report.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Approximately 21 citizens were present.

Sue Strecker of Essex thanked the Board for implementing the new cell phone procedures at the high school which disallow the use of cell phones in the classroom. She did ask that administration consider allowing phones to stay in student backpacks instead of being put into a cell hotel in the classroom.

Kim Uradnick stated that she agreed with not allowing cell phones in the class environment, but she does feel that students should be allowed to have them in the bathrooms and hallways. She also disagreed with the procedures form and way it describes consent.

Julie Ann Divis of Chester mentioned her concern with finding out that there are 61 students in a physical education class at VRHS. She also mentioned that when visiting the English classroom at the recent Back-to-School night she found that the seats were too close to allow easy teacher interaction with students.

Jim Olson of Deep River said it sounds like the new cell phone procedures at VRHS are a good idea, especially given concerns about the past use of phones for cyberbullying during the school day. He also thanked everyone in the District for their support and allowing the use of Valley Regional to hold his Father's memorial service recently.

Loretta McCluskey of Essex thanked the Board and said the teachers are to be commended for the new cell phone procedures.

Theresa McPherson thanked the Board for their quick action on cell phones.

Board members read letters they had received from citizens who were unable to be present but wanted their comments read including: Paula Weglarz, Tim Keyworth, and Melissa Symonds. The three letters voiced their support for the new cell phone procedures. Letters submitted to the clerk for inclusion on the record are attached at the end of these minutes.

An unnamed Deep River resident voiced her concern over what she feels was misinformation regarding changes in the cell phone procedure and said that she doesn't agree with some of the language on the new procedures form.

Chair Clark thanked the public for sharing their views.

Chair Clark stated that the Board would like to publicly recognize and posthumously thank John Olson for his pivotal role in the creation of the manufacturing program at VRHS.

OTHER ITEMS

Principals Mike Barile and Bill Duffy introduced new teachers hired at Valley Regional High School and John Winthrop Middle School for the 2018-19 school year.

Superintendent Levy introduced Leigh Rankin, the newly appointed Director of Facilities for Region 4.

Region 4 Student Representatives Report

Senior Student Representatives Kate Farrell and Cooper McCormick updated the Board on the opening of school last week and on Fall sports activities. The musical this year will be "Newsies".

The agenda item to move into Executive Session to discuss key provisions in the Region 4 Custodians Contract for 2018-21 and a possible vote to ratify the agreement was tabled due to counsel being unexpectedly unable to attend the meeting. It will be placed on the November agenda.

Director of Technology Pam Murphy and Region 4 faculty members Jonathan Corbett and Jill Esernia provided the Board with an update on 1:1 Chromebook use in their classrooms as the Board had requested.

Principal Updates

Valley Regional High School Principal Mike Barile updated the Board on the opening of the 2018-19 school year.

John Winthrop Middle School Principal Bill Duffy updated the Board on the opening of the 2018-19 school year. Principal Duffy reported that Edward Lenz built a pergola at the JWMS “farm” as part of his eagle-scout project.

Region 4 Director of Facilities, Leigh Rankin provided an update on summer projects in Region No. 4 including the driveway paving project at JWMS. Ms. Rankin outlined the purpose and structure of the new Grounds and Buildings Maintenance and Oversight Committee, which includes representation from the towns and I intended to provide regular recommendations to the board.

Board member Daniels voiced his displeasure over the driveway project happening at JWMS without explicit board authorization. A lengthy discussion ensued.

The Board requested that administration provide them with a summary of state statutes regarding expenditures from capital sinking funds at their next Board meeting.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to place the following agenda item on their November regular meeting agenda: Select a date for a BOE Workshop regarding Board policy and state statutes with regards to capital sinking funds.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to remove the Executive Session from the agenda and instead hold a discussion of the possible sale of Falls Landing Road property in public session. The Board then took a 5 minute recess from 9:02 – 9:07 before beginning the discussion.

Director of Facilities Rankin reviewed the appraisal that former Director of Facilities Glowac had prepared at the request of the Board for the Falls Landing Road property owned by Region 4. She told the Board she is prepared to move the process forward, or not, based on how the Board decides to direct her.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to request that Director of Facilities Rankin contact the four real estate agents, as presented, to ask them to prepare information on possible marketing strategies to be shared with the Board as soon as possible.

REPORTS

Financial Status Updates

Business Manager Kim Allen reviewed the financial status reports, as well as highlights of the cafeteria account reports for both year-end and the current fiscal year.

Committee Reports

The Joint BOE Policy Committee and the Joint BOE Curriculum Committee are both scheduled to meet again on Sept. 17th. The Joint BOE Finance Committee is scheduled to meet again on Sept. 25th.

A First Reading and discussion was held on Policy #5131.81 Addendum for VRHS ONLY and on Policy #9132.1 (R4 BOE Bylaw).

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to send Policy #5131.81 back to the Policy Committee and ask that they revise the entire policy to encompass all schools, removing the need for a special addendum that only applies to VRHS.

Policy #9132.1 will come back for a second reading and possible VOTE at the Sept. 12th Region 4 BOE special meeting.

Supervision District Committee Update - The Committee met on August 27th and reviewed the events of the summer and the Superintendent's goals.

Ad hoc Committees Update -

School Security Advisory Committee:

Superintendent Levy updated the Board on the first meeting of the School Security Advisory Committee.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Levy gave a general District update to the Board including the opening day across all of the schools. She also reviewed recent changes in legislation that will affect the schools and/or Board policies for 2018-19.

Dr. Levy asked the Board to appoint a representative to a new Joint BOE Ad Hoc Tuition Committee - the first meeting will be held Oct. 2nd @ 9:00 a.m. in Central Office. Michelle Grow was appointed to be the Region 4 Board representative on this committee.

Assistant Superintendent's Report

Dr. Martineau gave a general update on activities within the districts including new state regulations regarding Next Generation Science Standards.

AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – approximately 8 were present. A few more comments about class size and the cell phone procedure were made and one citizen provided the board with state statute references.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Region 4 BOE Special Meeting at Central Office for BOE Self Evaluation, Sept. 12, 2018 @ 8:00 p.m.

Next Joint BOE meeting is October 04, 2018

Next Region 4 BOE regular BOE meeting is ~~November 04~~, (correction = November 13), 2018

Election of Board officers (*Nov. or after seating of new members*)

BOE and Community input for 2019-20 budget (on-going)

Profile of 2018 Graduation Class (Nov.)

Presentation of Major Budget Drivers for 2019-20 (TBD)

ADJOURNMENT

On motion duly made and seconded the Board unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 10:23 p.m.
Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Clark, BOE Chair

Jennifer Bryan, Clerk

When the new cell phone procedures for Valley were first introduced my first, emotional reaction was disappointment because I love being able to communicate with my daughter while she is at school. Once I got past my feelings and started looking at the facts I realized this new procedure is in the best interest of all students and I whole heartedly support it.

During my research on the subject I learned that schools that ban cell phones see better academic results and the effect of a ban on phones adds up to the equivalent of an extra week of classes per school year (Study done by the Centre for Economic Performance in London).

A 2011 study in Journal of Children and Society found that frequent internet users are more likely to perpetrate acts of cyber bullying. Out of 500 American teens 42% of heavy cell users (defined as sending more than 60 texts per day) have engaged in negative or inappropriate activity on their phones compared to 18% of light users. The same survey found 46% of heavy users experienced cyber bullying on their cells. Before parents can say “not my kid” it’s interesting to note a survey in US News and World Report found that 1/3 of teens admit to using cell phones to cheat in school yet only 3% of the parents of those same kids believe their child would use a phone to cheat.

For anyone still opposed to this new procedure one only has to talk to the teachers. I attended parent night at Valley last night and the teachers all spoke very favorably of the procedure and have noticed a huge difference in less than a week of school. The teachers are no longer competing with snap chat or Netflix and they don’t have to look at the tops of students heads as they not so subtly try to use their phone under their desk during class time. One comment from a teacher that really stood out was that during down time in class kids are actually talking to each other instead of spending it on their phones.

Two other concerns that I’ve heard a small group mention are that this is a change of policy and that in an emergency parents need to get a hold of their child. As to the first one this is not a change in BOE policy but in procedure which Mr. Barile has the authority to do. This new procedure came about due to teacher concerns and I’m very pleased that he listened to and worked with his staff for the betterment of our school community.

For the other concern-emergency situations- for personal issues the school office is more than able to reach students during the day if a parent needs to contact their child. Larger school wide emergencies I have two perspectives. As a parent I completely understand the impulse to make contact and get to my child. However, coming from a law enforcement background and being in a law enforcement family it is best if during a crisis students take direction from an adult and if they are busy on their phones texting their parents or anyone else they may miss potentially life saving instruction. Also students texting parents may encourage parents to rush to the scene thus impeding first responders who should be focused on the crisis at hand.

Again I am in full support of this new procedure.

Thank you for your time

Paula Weglarz
Deep River

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Melissa S** <msymonds12@msn.com>

Date: Thu, Sep 6, 2018 at 1:43 PM

Subject: Cell phone policy support

To: "mgrow@reg4.k12.ct.us" <mgrow@reg4.k12.ct.us>

Cc: "jenclark@reg4.k12.ct.us" <jenclark@reg4.k12.ct.us>

Before I discuss my support of the new cell phone procedures, I would like to point out something that a teacher said at back to school night last night. This teacher said that we are lucky to have this school and it's resources compared to a lot of other schools in our own state. His educator peers see what VRHS has available to it's students and teachers and are blown away by how fortunate we are as a region. We are fortunate to not have to come tonight and ask to update text books or ask for additional technology because we have resources we need to educate our children, we have varied sports and extra curricular and an amazing music, theatre and arts program in addition to a foundation that supports our schools "Extra" needs via the Ref 4 education foundation.

I know some may be here tonight to "debate" and argue the cell phone policy - I would also like share that what I learned really quick in a hospital setting, that when dealing with teams of people in charge of my daughter we are ALL ON THE SAME TEAM. There is no value or positive aspect to the creation of negative rhetoric or rallying up the parental troops against the administration because we are all on the same side. It should not be an atmosphere of parents versus administration and did not feel that way on Back to School night when referring to this cell phone procedure. What it DID feel like was administration listening to teachers when they said that they needed another layer of procedure to support the education process. One teacher indicated that prior to this procedure, cell phone use was out of control and students were doing anything they could to maintain access to their cell phones for non academic purposes. It seemed that teachers are now able to get down to educating our children and not having to navigate monitoring cell phone use and having students attention. This is a good thing for our children. I would like to thank the administration for being proactive and instituting these cell phone rules.

I acknowledge the positive aspects of having access to technology and the information it provides for our students. However, "research supporting the idea that smartphones—specifically—can be used to enhance learning for all students, even underachievers, is hard to find...Stanford University's [2014 study](#) on at-risk students' learning with technology concludes that providing "one-to-one access" to devices in school (students don't have to share) provides the most benefit. The study does not, however, mention smartphones as a choice tool to achieve greater engagement and academic success." We have in place now a one to one situation for access to technology.

In fact it seems banning as a huge benefit "The findings of a recent study on student [phone access and the achievement gap](#) by Louis-Philippe Beland and Richard Murphy for the London School of Economics and Political Science echoed my concerns. "We find that mobile phone bans have very different effects on different types of students," the authors wrote. "Banning mobile phones

improves outcomes for the low-achieving students ... the most, and has no significant impact on high achievers.”

The negatives to having access to cell phones far outweigh the benefits. Cell phones in the hands of the students during class are a distraction. Your student may argue that they have the ability to listen in class, take notes, and check their cell phone. A lot of students tend to think that they are good at multitasking,” or doing more than one thing at a time, says Saraswathi Bellur, a communications researcher at the University of Connecticut (UConn) in Storrs reports that she and her colleagues found, multitasking in class “is likely to harm their academic performance.” “We also have data that show that people who multitask during class or while doing homework have to spend more time studying,” notes UConn coauthor Kristine Nowak. In other words, she argues, students who use mobile devices for something other than research or note-taking during class “are not efficient, and it is costing them time.” Concludes Nowak, “People believe they are better at multitasking than they are and this is leading them to bad study habits.” Her group shared its findings in the December 2015 issue of *Computers in Human Behavior*.

Cell phones put a huge strain on the mental health of our children - putting them at risk actually. Research shows that using a cell phone more than 2 hours a day contributes to anxiety and correlates to a spike in teen depression and an alarming increased rate of attempted and completed suicides, and increased the rates of reported incidents of bullying that rivals the percentage of graduates. As reported by Dr. Micheal Unger PhD, “Maybe it’s time schools created cell-free zones, just as many corporations have done the same so workers are less distracted by the constant interruptions that plague them. Of course, there will be the inevitable parent who complains that he, or she, can’t reach their child at a moment’s notice. Maybe it’s time schools spoke back to these overprotective parents that are literally harming their children and threatening their psychosocial development. On this issue, we know the harm is real.”

I would like conclude that, as much as we want to think that we NEED to be able to communicate to our children while they're in school the negatives to having that capability outweigh that perceived need. This age group is literally forming their prefrontal lobe, and the increased access to “Screen” are negatively impacting this developmental process. They are becoming addicted to the notifications on their apps. And this age group will do and say whatever they need to to get access to their phones. This procedure and potential policy puts in place a tool for educators to enforce and encourage engaging, interacting, communicating, and learning all while protecting the health of the student.

Thank you

Melissa Symonds, LPC

The above information can be found in these articles.

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/nurturing-resilience/201801/teens-and-dangerous-levels-cell-phone-use%3famp>

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.businessinsider.com/undercover-high-smartphones-2018-2>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/04/do-smartphones-have-a-place-in-the-classroom/480231/>

<https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/when-smartphones-go-school>

<https://www.safesearchkids.com/cell-phones-in-school/#.W47u7KQpDDs>

1:1 Technology Environment



Chromebooks & G-Suite

Region 4 Public Schools

The Journey at Region 4 Schools

- In the 2016-17 school year, we began moving to a 1:1 technology environment
- In the 2017-18 school year, we continued to roll out the 1:1 model to all students in grades 4th - 12th
- In the 2018-19 school year, we rolled out the 1:1 model to 3rd grade students

Why the Change

Secure Data and Network

- CT Student Data Privacy Act 16-189
- Reduce the risks of malware, ransomware, keyloggers, rootkits, etc. by restricting personal devices
- School issued devices are managed by the IT department. Updates are done regularly to all devices
- Only district applications are installed

Why the Change

Common Experience

- Research shows:
 - 1:1 computing environment is the most cost effective way to implement technology
 - Continuous access to a computing device for every student leads to increased academic achievement and financial benefits
- We believe:
 - That we can leverage technology to increase student engagement
 - Provide opportunities for students to create, collaborate, communicate effectively and practice critical thinking

Why Chromebooks & G-Suite

- State testing is done through the secure app on the Chromebooks to ensure compliance with testing regulations.
- Eliminate the typical distractions that come with mixed technology in the classroom for the teachers
- Creates a common experience for all students
- Cost-effective instructional device that fits student and staff educational needs

GoGuardian - Instructional Benefits

- The ability to manage and support student's work in progress
- Can communicate privately and in real time with students
- Can streamline delivery of instructional resources
- Maximizes instructional time
- Provides focus for students

GoGuardian - Other Benefits

- Crisis intervention for students by sending smart alerts
- Locating lost or stolen machines
- Security benefits of whitelists and blacklists

Next Steps....

Technology Advisory Committee comprised of educators, board members, students, and community members.

The committee will be charged with:

- Reviewing current policy and procedures;
- Researching, designing, planning, and recommending policy, procedures, and guidelines to the Joint Policy Committee of the Board of Education;
- On going committee meetings for continual review

