

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION

May 8, 2023

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

Attendance: Julia Dennis
Melissa Gibbons – Absent
Jaymee Miller – Absent
Gina Nappi
Adam Salina – via Zoom; arrived in-person at 6:50 p.m.
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.
Tracy Sisti
Matthew Tencza – Absent
Peter Zarabozo – Absent
Student Representatives: Samantha Negrao
Ian Saunders

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Brian J. Benigni; Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno; Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian; Supervisor of Special Education – Elementary Michelle Zeuschner; Supervisor of Special Education – Secondary Cindy Martin; Director of Human Resources Denise Parsons; Co-Directors of Curriculum Laurie Gjerpen and Kara Watson; Principal of Berlin High School Eileen Eustis; Principal of McGee Middle School Salvatore Urso; Principal of Griswold School Jonathan Campbell; Principal of Willard School Megan Sirois; Principal of Hubbard School Alfred Souza; and K-12 Fine Arts Supervisor Tyler Boyle.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Dennis called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. in the Board of Education (“the Board”) meeting room at 238 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Ms. Nappi, to switch Items III. and II. on tonight’s agenda.

Ms. Dennis stated the reason for moving these items is Lydia Tedone from the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) just arrived.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 5:0; including President Dennis

III. STUDENT PRESENTATION – RICHARD D. HUBBARD SCHOOL

Grade 1 students at Hubbard School have evidenced wonderful growth as readers since the onset of this school year. Students’ initial focus prioritized decoding and sounding out words. At this point in the year, the focus has shifted to fluency and expression. Elephant and Piggie books, authored by Mo Willems, have served as excellent instructional tools/resources in teaching this objective. Staff has also effectively integrated the skills and understandings of RULER by having students label the books’ characters’ emotions which, in turn, impact and inform student reading expression. Hubbard’s first grade staff, Melissa Cohen and Becky Lorch, and students, Eray Aydin, Eren Aydin, Amelia Blouin, Emilia Castelhana, Quinn Lefort, and Kyra Sofianos, shared their work and progress with the Board.

II. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education – Bonnie B. Carney Award of Excellence

Lydia Tedone, from CABE, congratulated the district on winning a Bonnie B. Carney Award of Excellence for Education Communications for 1) BHS Report – Fire Safety Program and 2) Redcoat Review. Ms. Tedone presented the Board with a plaque.

IV. SPECIAL RECOGNITION – CELEBRATION OF THE ARTS 2023

K-12 Fine Arts Supervisor Tyler Boyle, Superintendent Benigni, Co-Directors of Curriculum Laurie Gjerpen and Kara Watson and Building Principals Eustis, Urso, Sirois, Souza and Campbell recognized the following students:

Superintendent’s Choice Award: Lyla Fowler – *Wolf*

Curriculum Director’s Choice Awards: (Gjerpen) – Magdalena Szok – *Strawberry*

(Watson) – Marni Heeps, Josh Ahlquist, Grace Alger –
Calaca

BHS Principal’s Choice Awards: 2D – Faithe Barkoski-LaPosta – *Blooming Flowers*

3D – Chloe Constantine – *Vine Pendant*

McGee Principal’s Choice Award – Aaron Guo – *Self Portrait*

Griswold Principal’s Choice Award – Maya Adhikari – *Untitled*

Hubbard Principal’s Choice Award – Grace Maio – *Untitled*

Willard Principal’s Choice Award – Maisey Hopkins – *Snowy Day*

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

A. Report of Student Representatives

Miss Negrao reported invited Berlin High School students will receive academic performance awards at the Academic Awards Night on Wednesday, May 24, 2023; the Berlin High School unified sports team, in collaboration with the Chase Anderson Scholarship Fund, is selling tie dyed tee shirts and sweatshirts, with all proceeds going directly to the Chase Anderson Scholarship Fund; and the Broadcasting Club was recognized with the Best School Run Broadcast Program and Broadcast MVP awards. Miss Negrao shared photographs highlighting Spirit Week.

Mr. Saunders reported the Berlin High School spring choral concert will be held on Tuesday, May 16, 2023; the annual Upbeat town-wide picnic will be held on Thursday, May 25, 2023; the AP Art/ECE UCONN Drawing Exhibition Reception will be held on Tuesday, May 23, 2023; and the music department will present Jazz with Pizzazz on Friday, June 2, 2023.

B. Committee Reports

Dr. Sassu reported the Curriculum Committee met prior to tonight’s meeting with Co-Directors of Curriculum Laurie Gjerpen and Kara Watson and discussed the textbook, *Introduction to Business Law and Ethics*, which appears later in the agenda for adoption.

Ms. Sisti reported, at the last Community Engagement Committee meeting, the Committee discussed creating a calendar for *Berlin Citizen* articles through the end of the year.

Mr. Salina reported, at the last Finance & Operations Committee meeting, the Committee discussed committee goals and objectives. Mr. Salina stated the Committee will meet again Wednesday morning.

C. CREC Report

There was no report this evening.

D. Correspondence to the Board

There was no correspondence to the Board this evening.

VI. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

William Kirschner, 219 Lamentation Drive, Berlin, Connecticut, thanked Ruth Lerro, Brenda Dzwil, Superintendent Benigni and the Board of Education for their efforts to keep children, employees and visitors of the schools safe by encouraging secure storage of firearms.

Mr. Kirschner addressed the Board regarding the district providing transportation for all students enrolled in the Pre-K program. He stated his son is enrolled in the program as a community model representative and is not eligible for transportation. He questioned if the Board could impose an additional fee, giving parents the opportunity, to cover the cost for transportation.

Superintendent Benigni stated community model representatives, enrolled in the Pre-K program, are not eligible for transportation and providing transportation would be an additional expense for the district. The district is required to transport students eligible for Pre-K. Superintendent Benigni stated he will put together a list of students and the potential cost and will discuss with the Board after which he will follow up with Mr. Kirschner.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes
 - 1. Regular Meeting of April 24, 2023
 - 2. Special Meeting of April 10, 2023
- B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending April 30, 2023
- C. Facilities Update

Director of Operations Jeffrey Cugno provided an update that has been posted in Schoology.

D. Overnight Field Trip Request – BHS – April 11-18, 2025 – Puerto Rico

Berlin High School Principal Eileen Eustis requested permission for 25 students to travel to Puerto Rico, on April 11-18, 2025, to explore the landscapes, landmarks, and language they have learned about in the classroom and through peer and teacher interactions. The trip not only includes cultural value but also provides tours to many of the biologically diverse landscapes in the U.S. territory.

Moved by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Mr. Salina commented that the overnight field trip request for students to travel to Puerto Rico is unique and a great opportunity for students to see different parts of the country.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 5:0; including President Dennis

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Multiple Language Learners Presentation

Jean Borrup, K-12 ESOL Coordinator, presented to the Board and responded to the Board's questions, concerning the district's English language program for multilingual students identified as English learners (EL). Ms. Borrup shared data about current enrollment and program growth. Ms. Borrup's presentation included responsibilities of the program; languages of multilingual students identified as English learners; grade distribution; stages of rate of progress; services; engaging instructional materials for home-school connection; language instruction, language support and ongoing consultation, collaboration and support for teachers; Berlin's program growth comparable to state and national trends; and considerations looking ahead for the program. Board members were provided with a copy of the presentation.

B. Extended School Year Programs

Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian, Supervisor of Special Education – Elementary Michelle Zeuschner and Supervisor of Special Education – Secondary Cindy Martin updated the Board regarding the extended school year (ESY) programs for students with special needs. Ms. Holian reported, to date, approximately 430 students have been identified and 148 students have been recommended for summer programs. There will be two sessions: a five week program that runs from June 26 to July 28 for students with most intense needs; and a four week program that runs from July 5 to July 27 for preschool through Grade 12 students. Approximately twenty teachers; thirty-nine paraprofessionals; one occupational therapist; three speech and language pathologists; one physical therapist; one psychologist; and one teacher for movement at the elementary level will be needed for the summer program.

In addition to the ESY programs, the extended summer school (ESS) program will take place after ESY is completed and will run two days a week for two hours the month of July for approximately fifteen students.

C. Textbook Adoption

Co-Directors of Curriculum and Instruction Laurie Gjerpen and Kara Watson presented the following textbook, recommended for adoption, to the members of the Board of Education:

Introduction to Business Law and Ethics, by Kauther S. Badr & Robert A. Smith and published by Kendall Hunt Publishing Company. This is a new textbook to be used in the SCSU EC Business Law course in Grades 10-12.

This textbook has been reviewed and recommended for adoption by the Textbook Selection Committee. The Curriculum Committee reviewed the recommendation at its meeting on May 8, 2023. The recommended textbook is available for viewing by contacting Laurie Gjerpen or Kara Watson. The textbook recommendation form has been posted in Schoology.

Moved by Dr. Sassu, seconded by Ms. Nappi, to adopt the textbook, *Introduction to Business Law and Ethics*, by Kauther S. Badr & Robert A. Smith and published by Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.

FAVOR: ALL
MOTION CARRIED: 5:0; including President Dennis

D. Committee Objectives for 2023-2024

Committee Chairs Sassu and Sisti, and Committee member Salina shared their Committees' Objectives for the 2023-2024 school year and how the objectives will help the Board reach its long-term goals.

Committee Chair Tracy Sisti stated the Community Engagement Committee's Objectives for the 2023-2024 school year are 1) submit columns to the *Berlin Citizen* and other relevant sources on a regular basis; and 2) work with the district media director to develop digital content of events that showcase many aspects of the Berlin Public Schools to be posted on social media on a consistent basis.

Committee Chair Kari Sassu stated the Curriculum Committee's Objectives for the 2023-2024 school year, in collaboration with Co-Directors of Curriculum Laurie Gjerpen and Kara Watson, are 1) commit to building an organization that focuses on the learning of all members, resulting in the optimal growth of each student; 2) integrate the vision of the graduate competences into daily learning experiences as outlined in the district curriculum; and 3) support the development of the social emotional well-being of all members of the school community.

Committee member Adam Salina stated the Finance & Operations Committee's Objectives for the 2023-2024 school year are: 1) review current budget process, including ongoing discussion with stakeholders and make recommendations for changes/improvements as necessary; and 2) coordinate with the Town on capital, building and site budgeting to support effective long-range planning.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

At 7:51 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Salina, seconded by Dr. Sassu, to adjourn.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 5:0; including President Dennis

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Sisti, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education