

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION

May 28, 2019

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

Attendance: Richard Aroian – Arrived at 7:47 p.m.
Julia Dennis – Absent
Jake Fisher
Jaymee Miller
Timothy Oakes
Adam Salina – Absent
Kari Sassu, Ph.D. – Absent
Tracy Sisti
Matthew Tencza
Student Representatives: Alexander Halkias – Departed at 8:59 p.m.
Jenna Smalley – Departed at 8:59 p.m.

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Brian J. Benigni; Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Erin McGurk; Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian; Supervisor of Special Education – Secondary Cindy Martin; Director of Literacy and Social Studies Laurie Gjerpen; Director of Mathematics and Science Kara Watson; Principal of Berlin High School Eileen Eustis; Principal of McGee Middle School Salvatore Urso; Principal of Griswold School David Kitzman; Principal of Hubbard School Alfred Souza; Principal of Willard School Matthew Correia; and Willard Lead Teacher Megan Sirois.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Tencza called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Emma Hart Willard School Library at 1088 Norton Road, Berlin, Connecticut. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. STUDENT PRESENTATION – EMMA HART WILLARD SCHOOL

Classroom teachers in grades four and five have participated in targeted training in mathematics instruction for the past two years. Math Studios training was selected to support teachers as it is professional development that is written and targeted to meet the needs of Berlin educators. Trainers from Math Studios have worked alongside teachers in grades four and five and have helped them to better understand how to incorporate explicit Mathematical Habits of Mind and teaching routines into their daily practice with students. As a result of Math Studios training, staff has observed and recognized an increase in student discourse, conceptual understanding, and confidence in mathematics. Fifth grade students Aiden Arcilla, Norah Bellisle, Emma Federowicz, Mya Lamoureux, Matteo Modifica, Romeo Perez, Matthew Santoro, and Nina Welch worked with members of the Board of Education to examine a math problem aligned with Math Studios training.

III. SPECIAL RECOGNITION – ART AWARDS

The district recently held their annual art show at The New Britain Museum of American Art. Many pieces of student artwork were on display. The following artists were recognized for their award winning artwork: Superintendent's Choice – "A Berry Good Time" by Ishanee Patel, Grade 12; Griswold Principal's Choice – "Rainbow Blossom" by Gretchen Perreault, Grade 5; Hubbard Principal's Choice – "Self Portrait" by Addison Howes, Grade 4; Willard Principal's Choice – "The Blue and Red Flower" by Khloe Kuckel, Grade 2; McGee Principal's Choice – (*Untitled*) by Alex Poloszczak, Grade

7; Berlin High School Principal's Choice in 2D category – "The New Guardian" by Connor Gagnon, Grade 9; and Berlin High School Principal's Choice in 3D category – "Free and Sophisticated" by Juliana Garcia, Grade 9.

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

A. Report of Student Representatives

Mr. Halkias reported the Capstone Expo was held last week; the Senior Prom is Saturday, June 1, 2019; Berlin High School Awards Night is tomorrow evening; and the spring sports season is winding down with the Redcoats winning seven division titles.

Miss Smalley reported the Eighth Grade Up Day will be June 4, 2019 at Berlin High School; Berlin High School will host Scholarship Night on June 5, 2019; and Jazz with Pizzazz will be held on June 7, 2019.

B. Committee Report – Student Achievement Committee

Mr. Oakes reported the Student Achievement Committee met earlier today and discussed a new Geometry textbook, which will be recommended later in the agenda for adoption.

C. Correspondence to the Board

There was no correspondence this evening.

Mr. Tencza thanked parents and concerned citizens for the multiple emails and support received during the budget process.

A short recess was taken from 7:44 p.m. until 7:51 p.m.

V. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Nothing to report.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting of May 13, 2019

B. Interim Budget Report

Board members were provided with a copy of the interim budget report as of May 23, 2019.

Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Ms. Miller, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 6:0; including President Tencza

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Upbeat – Potential Service Trip to the Dominican Republic

Upbeat Director Jack Rudy gave a presentation and responded to the Board's questions concerning a potential opportunity for students to travel to the Dominican Republic, through Educational Tours, a company that has been providing these types of trips for 50 years. Mr. Rudy's presentation consisted of shared student and teacher quotes about their experiences; why participate in an international service trip; partnership with Educational Tours; where and when the service trip will occur; safety; group travel; educational resources; service learning; tour itinerary; a look at a day on the tour; cost for the trip, including what is and what is not included in that cost; and payment plans.

B. Summer Instructional Program

Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian and Supervisor Cindy Martin reviewed the extended school-year programs for students with disabilities. These programs are based on PPT recommendations for specific students. They provide students with an opportunity to maintain their learning over the summer vacation. Board members were provided with a handout concerning their presentation.

Ms. Holian reported there will be two sessions: a five-week program that runs from June 24–July 26 for preschool–Grade 5; and a four-week program that runs from July 2–July 25 for preschool–Grade 12. The purpose of the special education summer school is for students to maintain skills over the course of the summer. The criteria considered for special education summer school was provided on the handout.

Ms. Holian provided a tentative breakdown of the number of student services and staff for the Summer School Program.

C. Summer Reading Program

Director of Literacy and Social Studies Laurie Gjerpen provided an overview of the 2019 summer reading program. Together with the Berlin-Peck Memorial Library, the Berlin Public Schools are once again encouraging students to read throughout the summer to expand their knowledge and vocabulary while continuing to practice the reading habits, which have been a big part of their literacy instruction all year. Ms. Gjerpen reported that students who do not read during the summer can take part in that 'summer slide' - losing up to three months of reading growth. Board members were provided with a handout containing the expectations, school support and summer support for the 2019 summer reading program.

Elementary:

Students entering kindergarten through Grade 5 are encouraged to read (or be read to) for 30 minutes a day during the summer. There will be special summer reading kick-offs at each of the schools and librarians from the Berlin-Peck Memorial Library will be invited.

To support summer reading:

- students will work on a summer reading plan with their librarians and classroom teachers to help them think about how they will meet their personal goals.
- students will be reminded how to access online resources during the summer.
- students at each school will go home with self-selected books to read during the summer.

- Berlin-Peck Memorial Library staff will give students beads for a necklace or keychain as they ‘read and bead’ during the summer.
- Schools will celebrate summer reading in the fall as students wear their necklaces to school.

There is no expectation for logging books or minutes this summer. The hope is to have students and families focus on the reading.

McGee Middle School:

Students entering Grades 6-8 are expected to read at least two books this summer. They have the option of completing a Google form to be entered in a special drawing.

To support summer reading:

- students will be encouraged to take part in the Teen Summer Challenge where they may earn scratch tickets at the Berlin-Peck Memorial Library.
- students will be encouraged to take two books from the school’s library for reading this summer.
- there was a special summer reading kick-off with author Paul Volponi, on May 24, at McGee School. Teachers have been sharing parts of his books with students, and there have been book talks about his other books. Grade 5 students also attended this special reading kick-off and teachers read them his books.

Berlin High School:

Berlin High School students are expected to read at least one book and participate in a learning experience or read at least two books. Learning experiences may include watching a Ted Talk, listening to a podcast, visiting a museum, visiting a college, and other similar ideas. Students will fill out a Google form for both summer reading and summer learning.

To support summer reading:

- students and staff will tweet out about reading using the #BerlinReads and #BerlinLearns.
- during advisory in September, students will celebrate their reading with some special activities.

District-Wide:

- In all schools, students will be encouraged to use #BerlinReads on Twitter and Instagram. Parents of students under 13 years old would have to tweet out for their children, but older students can do it independently.
- The programs will be explained on the schools’ websites this summer so families will have quick access from home or the library.

D. Textbook Adoption

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Erin McGurk presented the textbook, *Big Ideas Math: A Common Core Curriculum Geometry 1st Edition*, by Larson and published by Cengage Learning, copyright 2019, recommended for adoption, to members of the Board of Education. This textbook will be used in Grade 9 Honors Geometry.

The textbook has been reviewed by the Textbook Adoption Committee and by the Curriculum Council. The recommended textbook is available for viewing by contacting Dr. McGurk.

Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Ms. Miller, to adopt the textbook, *Big Ideas Math: A Common Core Curriculum Geometry 1st Edition*, by Larson and published by Cengage Learning, copyright 2019.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 6:0; including President Tencza

E. Healthy Foods Discussion

As a follow-up to the May 13 Board meeting, Superintendent Benigni provided two sample policies to Board members for review and discussion. Sample #1 provides that all PK-5 classrooms must be peanut/tree nut free, including special areas. Sample #2 provides for a limited peanut/tree nut policy. After further discussion, it was the consensus of the Board that the district move forward with Sample #1 and to include clarification of the severity of the other eight allergens and that they be addressed in the policy.

Ellen Lalicata, 1275 Worthington Ridge, Berlin, Connecticut, thanked the Board for moving forward with Sample #1.

F. Choice Student Update

Superintendent of Schools Brian Benigni provided an update on the current CHOICE students, including the number of students, grade levels, number and percentage of students receiving Special Education services and the costs for those services. Superintendent Benigni reported that Special Education expenses and services in-district that exceed \$8,000 are reimbursed 100% by Hartford. Superintendent Benigni reported that 50 of the 127 CHOICE students receive Special Education services, which are three times the students that reside in Berlin. Superintendent Benigni anticipates, moving forward, with only 14 CHOICE students moving into the district next school year, these ratios will be different.

G. Budget Discussion

Mr. Tencza summarized the Town Council meeting he, along with Superintendent Benigni, attended on May 21, 2019. Mr. Tencza reported that, prior to the Town Council meeting, Mayor Kaczynski requested approval to reduce the Board's Operating Budget by \$500,000. Mr. Tencza reported there have been conversations taking place concerning the Board's ability to pay for the ESS Program out of this year's current budget or the year in which the services reside. Mr. Tencza reported past practice has been the ESS Program is paid out of the previous year's surplus for the forthcoming year. Mr. Tencza shared the uncertainties concerning this practice. Mr. Tencza explained to Mayor Kaczynski that unless he can put in writing that next year's services can be paid with the end of the year surplus, he will not direct the Board's Business Manager to allow for that. The Town Council did restore the \$500,000 that was cut from the Board's budget, which will be used for the ESS Program and athletics; unfortunately, no positions will be reinstated. Mr. Tencza agreed to remove \$95,000 from the Town's Budget to fund the phone system replacement at the elementary schools as the Board will finance this item with end of the year funds. Mr. Tencza reported the Board's security plan was reduced to \$200,000, which will include the Director of School Security, Safety and Residency and three security guards. The Board of Education will finance the firearms, vests, radios, uniforms and any other equipment with end of the year funds. The Board of Education Operating Budget that moved to referendum is \$44,977,844.

Mr. Tencza reported the Town and Board Budgets passed at the second referendum, and he thanked the voters of Berlin for supporting and passing the Board of Education Budget.

H. Personnel Matter

At 9:20 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Ms. Miller, to go into Executive Session to discuss a matter of personnel and to invite Superintendent Benigni.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 6:0; including President Tencza

In attendance for Executive Session were Board members Aroian, Fisher, Miller, Oakes, Sisti and Tencza. In addition, Superintendent Benigni was present.

At 10:08 p.m., the Board returned to Open Session.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 10:10 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Ms. Miller, to adjourn.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 6:0; including President Tencza

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Tencza, President, Berlin Board of Education