

**APPROVED
MINUTES
BOARD OF EDUCATION
May 24, 2016**

PLACE:

Darien Board of Education
Meeting Room
7:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Harman, Chair; Mesdames Hagerty-Ross, Zuro and Stein; and Messrs. Burke, Dineen, and Martens.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mesdames McNamara and Sullivan.

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Dr. Dan Brenner, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Susie DaSilva, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Ms. Shirley Klein, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services; Mr. Michael Feeney, Director of Finance and Operations; Ms. Marjorie Cion, Director of Human Resources.

VISITORS:

Approximately 25.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Harman called the meeting to order at 7:42 p.m. The next Regular BOE meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 14, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. in the Darien Board of Education Meeting Room.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no one present who wished to address the Board at this time.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Tudor Singers

Dr. Brenner said that he would like to congratulate the DHS Tutor Singers, and the Concert Choir, for their recent excellent performance at the Great East Festival in Palmer, Massachusetts. He said that he would like to showcase some of the various things that the Darien students are doing. The Tudor Singers then came forward to perform the National Anthem and a piece based on the poetic work of Christina Rossetti.

Darien High School U.S. Presidential Scholar

Dr. Brenner then said that it was a night to celebrate and he announced that Ms. Katie Tsui, a senior at Darien High School, had been selected as a 2016 U.S. Presidential Scholar. He then read a letter from the United States Department of Education recognizing Ms. Tsui. He added that Ms. Tsui also will be a co-valedictorian at the

upcoming DHS graduation. Dr. Brenner said that Ms. Tsui was in the audience and led those present in a round of applause. He said the U.S. Presidential Scholars were a very select group of students.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

May 10, 2016 Special Meeting and Executive Session

- ** MS. STEIN MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 10, 2016 SPECIAL MEETING AND EXECUTIVE SESSION.**
- ** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 10, 2016 SPECIAL MEETING AND EXECUTIVE SESSION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

May 10, 2016 Regular Meeting

- ** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 10, 2016 REGULAR MEETING.**
- ** MR. DINEEN SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 10, 2016 REGULAR MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

May 16, 2016 Special Meeting and Executive Session

- ** MS. STEIN MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 16, 2016 SPECIAL MEETING AND EXECUTIVE SESSION.**
- ** MS. ZURO SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED WITH SIX IN FAVOR (HARMAN, HAGERTY-ROSS, ZURO, STEIN, DINEEN, AND MARTENS) AND ONE ABSTENTION (BURKE).**

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no Board Committee reports to present at this time.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS

- ** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES IN ORDER TO ADD AN ITEM TO THE AGENDA.**
- ** MR. DINEEN SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- ** MS. STEIN MOVED TO ADD AN AGENDA ITEM REGARDING THE APPOINTMENT OF MR. DEAN KETCHUM AS THE NEW PRINCIPAL OF ROYLE SCHOOL TO THE AGENDA.**
- ** MR. DINEEN SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- ** MR. BURKE MOVED TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF MR. DEAN KETCHUM AS THE NEW PRINCIPAL OF ROYLE SCHOOL.**
- ** MR. MARTENS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Dr. Brenner gave a brief overview of Mr. Ketchum's resume highlighting previous positions. He added that the first round of interviews did not attract an acceptable candidate, so a second search was conducted.

Mr. Dean Ketchum came forward and said that he was thrilled to be part of the Darien School District and eagerly looking forward to working with the Darien students.

A. PRESENTATION: TEACHER'S COLLEGE PRIMER (File #2506)

Dr. Brenner introduced Ms. Cory Gillette, the Literacy and Social Studies Program Director to narrate a PowerPoint presentation about the Highlights of the Implementation of Readers and Writers Workshop. Ms. Gillette and Dr. DaSilva then guided the Board through an exercise that evaluated an essay written by a student.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **What happens when the student cannot work on this level?** (Ms. Gillette explained that when students struggle with various aspects of writing, such as structure or language, it is easier for the teachers because they can go back and work with the students in the areas where there is weakness. The teachers now have more tools. There is a whole book with strategies for the teachers on working with students who have different areas that need attention. Sometimes a student struggles with handling the entire essay, so breaking it up into clumps allows them to manage it more easily.) b) **Do we still do sentence diagramming?** (Ms. Gillette replied it was not done in the same way that we used to do it.) c) **Why is that?** (Ms. Gillette explained that there was significant research on the transfer of sentence diagramming in elementary schools. The common core actually has a language conventions segment dedicated to this. The students study a highly complex sentence and take it apart, but in a contextual way and not in the traditional way. The students who struggle with syntax or grammar will get help with SRBI.) d) **With the SBACs, we have been emphasizing non-fiction texts and formulated writing. What role does creative writing play in the elementary schools?** (I feel that it is in there because of the narrative units. Right now, all the fifth graders are writing narrative fantasy pieces. Over the past ten years, the curriculum has become more balanced with the different types of writing. There are skills and strategy for creative writing.) e) **Would you elaborate on how children with special needs end up getting support after the lessons? How is that analyzed in the text? I would also like to know how it carries over to the middle school because it is a K-8 curriculum and we haven't been informed as to how that is happening other than in the Learning Center.** (Ms. Gillette said that during the practice part of the workshop, when the elementary students are working independently, the student who needs more support receives it. A small group can be working on a different skill which they need to fill in and catch up or they may be working on a more advanced skill. The workshop format allows for that differentiation. The students can also work on different levels of text, which the teachers would be addressing. However, everyone walking into the classroom will see the students working. They have a job to do and the students from the kindergartners up, understand they have a job to do during reading workshop. Ms. Klein said that the general education teacher and the special education teacher collaborate and work on discreet skills. Ms. Gillette said that the overall goal is to have students practice their reading and they have to synthesize their various skills, which is very important.) f) **Would you talk about the gender differences that you see with writing? Are boys struggling with writing? Is this true and if so, what does the District do about that?** (Ms. Gillette said that she had not seen a boys versus girls issue, but was aware that there are units that the boys may like more than girls, such as informational pieces. She said that she had not seen more boys coming up for help than girls. It takes a lot of work to write and some students have struggled with the actual physical aspect of writing so typing is easier for them. Writing is actually a very complex issue. Ms. Gillette added that the staff had gone back to look at penmanship because if it physically hurts for a student

to write, they will not write. For some students, using the Chromebooks has opened a door and they are producing so much more volume. Ms. Gillette said that she would monitor for a disparity between girls and boys, but to date, it is not something that has popped up for her or her team.) g) **Does the range for providing the differentiation of instruction increase as the students get older?** (Yes, there is a large range and a fifth grade teacher may have a reader that is reading only on the level of the end of third grade and another reader at the adult level. The teachers need the PD to help them with the wide range of reading skills that the students may have.)

Dr. Brenner thanked Ms. Gillette and also acknowledged Middlesex Middle School English teacher and coordinator, Mr. Tim Sorenson who was also present.

B. UPDATE ON ONE TO ONE INITIATIVE (File #2507)

Mr. Marc Marin came forward to present a PowerPoint presentation on the One to One Initiative, which involves using digital devices in the classroom.

Dr. Brenner said that he spent part of his day in the classroom. He said that he asked some students how long it would take them to learn how to do the tasks shown in the Google Classroom YouTube clip. He said that for the adults, it might take us a while, but the students have grown up in the digital world. Dr. Brenner said that the reason for the pilot was to identify potential problems such as a stall that happens when the Chromebooks are started up, or moving from the tablet mode to the laptop mode. He said the change inside the classroom was very exciting.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Refresh my memory regarding the roll out. What is the plan for the 8th graders?** (Dr. Brenner said that the 8th graders would not be getting a device because they will change schools the following year and receive a new device. The 7th graders will have the computer for the next two years. He added that the teachers are aware that they will have to give some students help with the new device.) b) **Some students will pick this up intuitively. What about those who don't?** (Dr. Brenner said that the teachers are aware they may have to start from scratch to get all the students up to speed as quickly as possible. That is why the District needs to be sure that the teachers are comfortable with the devices. Some of the staff are very competent in this area, others are not.) c) **Where are we in the process of using iPads in the high school?** (Dr. Brenner said that the pilot for the iPad would take place next year and the students will get the iPads the following year. The staff has decided on the iPad. They will still use the user-friendly Google platform that the middle school students use. The creativity piece justified the use of the iPad. There are quite a few Chromebooks at the high school already, but the staff will be trained on the capabilities of the iPad. Mr. Marin said that there was a major training session on Google Classroom and additional training on Google sites. Dr. Brenner said that one of the major concerns was whether the iPad would integrate well with Google, but they do.) d) **Since the students will be doing more digital submissions now with spell checks, is it a good thing that there won't be spelling corrections?** (Dr. DaSilva said that spelling and grammar will be included. In the draft form, the students often don't bother with spelling and punctuation. Later, they correct errors. Mr. Marin said there is also a speech to text function, which provides the students with additional fluency. He added that he had noticed some students writing text and then putting on headphones and having the computer read the text back to them.) e) **I commend you all and the caliber of the presentations are great. What about Special Education? Can we have a slide or two on how are we approaching Special Education? This is broad and Special Education is such an important component of this.** (Dr. Brenner said that the Special Education students have been given various devices. Not every Special Education student can use the Chromebook, but the device gives the students more tools to work with. Many learning issues are

compensated by the use of a device.) f) **How is the integration with the curriculum? Is it logical? Is it flowing simply? What work needs to be done to make sure that it is incorporated?** (Dr. DaSilva said that the staff meets every week to discuss opportunities to innovate but also to support the work that is already underway. The staff wants to provide the students with the technology tools and they are constantly looking for ways to enhance the curriculum. It is cross grade level and we are able to see the range of how the curriculum can be enhanced by the device. Dr. Brenner said that he had been invited into a class where the history lesson was on the American internment of Japanese residents during World War II. He described his experience and how what the students were posting arrived on a screen rather than having a group with a note taker. The collaboration was much improved. Mr. Marin said that there is a point where it stops becoming about the device and changes to the learning that is underway through the device. Dr. Brenner said that the excitement about the device lasted about two days. Now it's just another tool to use in the lesson.)

C. REPORT ON BARBARA HARRINGTON FUND AWARD (File #2508)

Dr. DaSilva thanked the Darien parents and those involved in the Harrington Fund Award. She then presented a report on the Barbara Harrington Grant awards for the Summer of 2016.

Mr. Dineen left the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

D. DISCUSSION ON INSTALLATION OF LIGHTS AT DHS (File #2509)

Dr. Brenner then presented a PowerPoint program on the Stadium Lights and revision to the Sound System at the High School. This presentation included a history of the lighting discussion from 1980 to the present day. He said that in 2008 the Planning and Zoning Commission had decided that the BOE application for permanent lights was inconsistent with the Town Plan of Conservation and Development. The Board withdrew the application. Since then the High School has used temporary portable lighting, which must receive approval from Planning and Zoning periodically.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Could you speak to whether the lacrosse teams would have a playoff under lights?** (Dr. Brenner said that he had looked at the start time for the games and the lacrosse teams would not have needed lighting. There were home games played with no lights.) b) **Is this plan using the proposed technology?** (Yes.).

At the conclusion of his presentation, Dr. Brenner stated for the record that any proposal would have to be approved by Planning and Zoning.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Is there a local place that has the new LED lights that we could see them?** (Dr. Brenner said that Albertus Magnus College has them. The staff there has been generous about demonstrating the system.) b) **What about the person that has their hand on the light switch? Is it controlled?** (It is password protected.) c) **What about the cost for replacement?** (Dr. Brenner said that the life of an LED bulb is almost three times that of a regular bulb, but said that he did not have the information with him. He said that he would get that information to the Board.) d) **How should we solicit feedback from the community?** (Mr. Harman said that there were public comment times on the agendas and his email is on the website. Dr. Brenner said that he would reach out to the neighbors on this.) e) **As these discussions advance, it would be helpful to have a potential timeline for the future steps.** (Dr. Brenner said that he would get that information to the Board members.) f) **We have the permission to use the current lighting until 2017.** (Correct.) g) **The sound has become much more important to the atmosphere of the**

game. Is there somewhere that we can go to hear the type of system that you are proposing? (Dr. Brenner said that he did not have a location where the system was in use, but would get one to the Board. He said he had been on the field with a sound technician and he was able to produce a diagram showing the sound spillage.) h) **It would be great to have the same kind of sound diagram that you had for the lighting for the Board's application.** (Dr. Brenner said that he would work on this.) i) **The number of games are set because of Title IX to make sure everyone is even?** (Dr. Brenner said that this was so.) j) **We schedule games with other teams.** (Dr. Brenner said that regarding the scheduling, from an athletic perspective, there isn't a problem. Friday nights have become almost a standard game time in southern Fairfield.) k) **Can you tell us how the Conservation and environmental piece fit in?** (Dr. Brenner said that he couldn't say off hand since he had been working off written documents.) l) **If we are supportive of this, it is just the start of the process going to Planning and Zoning?** (Dr. Brenner said that this was so. This would also include the environmental aspect. He added that he thought the lights were far enough away from the wetlands, so that it wouldn't cause a problem.) m) **How tall are the poles?** (There would be four 80 foot poles. However, he said that the Albertus Magnus system is the exact system, so the Board Members could see what the poles actually look like.)

Mr. Harman said that this was uncharted territory and an opportunity to reach out to the community and the neighbors. He added that his email was on the District website and would welcome feedback. This is the first phase for the District. Dr. Brenner agreed and said that the goal was to have the athletes have a chance to play their games and have a community event.

ACTION ITEMS

PERSONNEL ITEMS (File #2510)

Appointments

Resignations/Retirements

Dr. Brenner said that he had received a retirement letter from Dr. Debi Boccanfuso, who is the Middlesex Middle School Principal, at 3:47 p.m. It will be effective June 30th.

**** MR. BURKE MOVED TO APPROVE THE PERSONNEL ACTION REPORT FOR MAY 24, 2016.**

**** MS. ZURO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Jill McCammon, of Old Kings Highway South, was curious to know where the District was in terms of the roll out for the Teacher's College Primer and with the Special Education students. Is this standard for K-8 or are they still in the process of the roll out. How will this be included in the IEPs writing and the targeted goals?

Dr. DaSilva said that TC does have the unit study for Grades 6 through 8. They do not have the units for middle school yet. Those are expected to be out this summer. She continued to give the details of the program and how the teachers were in the stages of approximation.

In terms of understanding the rubrics, all the students will be at different levels in understanding the rubrics. What Ms. Gillette highlighted was one aspect of the program. While there may be a score, what the staff wants the parents to come away with is that the student may have different skill levels on different aspects, such as a strong thesis statement but not as much skill with language.

Ms. McCammon said that it is nice to have clearly articulated goals for the Special Education students in their IEPs. Will the IEPs that are done in the future have this writing component?

Ms. Klein said that they are using TC in the rubrics and looking at bench marks with Ms. Gillette to help students development goals.

Ms. McCammon pointed out that this is a great opportunity for measurability. Does this tie specifically to the assessment? She wished to know how the gathering of data was being done and how it was being used.

Dr. DaSilva said that there are benchmarks done three times a year and gave a brief overview of the assessment that the staff does to determine what level the student is working.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. BURKE MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Schneider Zuro
Secretary