

EASTON AND REDDING JOINT BOARDS OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

Held virtually via Zoom:

<https://zoom.us/j/5128278190?pwd=a0NKb00rW1JEQ1g1VUQzNkFjVDFPUT09>

Meeting ID: 512 827 8190, Password: 06896

June 16, 2020

7:30 p.m.

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Easton Board Members: Stinson, Goldstein, Parker, Reed. Absent: Chieda, Hicks

Redding Board members: Parkin, Whaley, Pilato, Hoffman, Reilly. Absent: Oulton

Administration: McMorran, Pierson Ugol, Reiss, Del Conte

Others: 55 members of the staff and public, and the recording secretary

CALL TO ORDER

Jon Stinson called the Easton Board of Education to order at 7:31 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Amy Cabot, Gallows Hill Road, Redding: said that she believes that a comprehensive year-long course on racism should be taught in the Redding and Easton schools.

Deb Shultz, Sullivan Drive, Redding: said that she thinks there should be a full-year inclusion program at the schools and said we can only learn from our history when we know our history.

Vanessa Alward, Cross Highway, Redding, asked that we ask more about what is needed from experts in the field.

T. Whaley, Windy Hill Road, Redding: said that she went to RES and JRMS, and is currently enrolled in JBHS, and that she thinks there definitely needs to be a focus on diversity as it reclassifies to curriculum and hiring practices. More inclusion in what is taught at all three schools.

Sarah O'Dell, Blackrock Turnpike, Redding: said that we should take this opportunity for our kids to address social and emotional health by having a discussion about race. She said that race has taken on the perception of being political and that it is just basic decency.

Devin Allbode, Woodland Drive, Easton: said that she echoes what the other public speakers have said and that she thinks there needs to be more teacher training, especially in how teachers choose their content and make their lesson plans.

Devon McBrayer, Bellows Lane, Easton: said that she is a recent college graduate and that she never realized the white privilege in our community until she went to college, and that we need to consider anti-racism curriculum.



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CHRISTINE HALLORAN
TOWN CLERK EASTON CT

L. Arici, North Park Avenue, Easton: said that she is a minority in the Easton school system and now at JBHS. She said that she has faced racism in her school experience and wants the community to now finally address these issues, specifically by holding students accountable, improving diversity training, and seeking diversity in hiring practices.

Amanda Neville, Blackrock Turnpike, Redding: said that she thinks all ER9 students should participate in Jane Elliot's "Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes Exercise," because the teaching of African American History is lacking in the curriculum.

Heather Stanton, Fairview Farm Road, Redding: said that she had offered to fund speaking/visiting sessions on the Holocaust for the Redding schools and had yet to hear back from anyone within the school district.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

H. Whaley thanked all for showing up to the meeting and for speaking up as well. She said that the graduation Flipgrids were fantastic and congratulated everyone on their moving up ceremonies.

C. Pilato said happy last day of school and congratulations to all of the graduates. She said a special thank you to the RES crew who put together the virtual Stepping Up Ceremony, and to Mr. Amodio for his speech at the ceremony. C. Pilato also thanked Dr. McMorran for his many years of service and guidance to the district. She believes we need to hear from staff and administration regarding racism curriculum, and then move forward.

J. Reilly said thank you to everyone who just spoke up during the public comment, and that he also saw the graduation Flipgrids and thought they were great.

C. Hocker said that he echoes C. Pilato's comments.

C. Parkin said that he wanted to acknowledge and thank Jeff Parker for his leadership as Chairman of the Easton Board of Education for six years. He also welcomed Jon Stinson as the new Chairman of the Easton BOE and said that he looks forward to working with him.

G. Goldstein thanked Jeff Parker for his years of service and thanked Jon Stinson for stepping up. She also said that she was impressed with the public comments.

J. Parker thanked all the people who have spoken up at the meeting, and said that he hoped this is not the last meeting they will attend.

K. Reed thanked all the people who spoke up in the Public Comment, especially the young people.

J. Stinson thanked the young people for showing up and speaking up at tonight's meeting, and said that he hopes they continue to show up. J. Stinson also thanked Jeff Parker for staying on as Chair and shepherding the Board through the budget process.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: DISTANCE LEARNING AND REOPENING PLAN UPDATE

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol, thanked and expressed sincere gratitude to staff, students, and families for finding a way to make distance learning work. Dr. Pierson Ugol said that Central Office had received 777 responses from the second distance learning survey and that these responses indicated a general satisfaction with what had occurred. She said main feedback included the desire for: live, small-group instruction; non-academic connection time; and differentiated instruction. Dr. Pierson Ugol said that also to be considered for the future will be: additional trainings, even for parents; schedule vs. no schedule; and more defined expectations.

Dr. Pierson Ugol then gave a lengthy presentation on the Reopening Planning that included the six areas of: Scheduling, Transportation, Academics, Health & Safety, Facilities and Food Services. She said that Central Office, building administrators, and staff are actively working to plan for a variety of possible directives from the State of Connecticut related to a broad set of reopening challenges. Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Tom McMorran, said that he believes the State will offer suggestions and guidance by the end of June.

C. Pilato inquired about timing of feedback and about adjusting the budget. J. Reilly asked if the state would be allowing exceptions for calendar adjustments or transportation requirements. C. Hocker noted that public opinion seems polarized regarding distance learning. M. Hoffman inquired about what we might know about state requirements/what things might look like come opening. S. Pierson Ugol said planning continues with options so we are ready when the state provide parameters. C. Pilato asked if we are planning to coordinate with other FF county schools. T. McMorran said coordination is happening regionally.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: RELEASE TIME FOR FALL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Dr. McMorran gave a recap of how helpful and beneficial the two release days had been for staff during the spring and he asked that the Boards grant this release time again in the fall, but on a predictable timetable. He said this release time would afford the staff the time and structure to take a pedagogical approach to refining distance learning plans. Dr. McMorran suggested two hours, every two weeks for the release time. There were several favorable comments from Easton and Redding BOE members. C. Parkin asked that Dr. McMorran and Dr. Pierson Ugol to come back to the Boards in July with a more concrete proposal for the release time.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN CURRICULUM

A discussion took place about what would be the best way to establish diversity and inclusion in the current curriculum. Dr. McMorran read a list of people who have come to ER9 schools to speak about diverse life experiences, and said that the ER9 is definitely behind more of this and also in favor of child pedagogy of multi-racial backgrounds. He said that all of this involves an investment. Dr. Pierson Ugol said that this is too important to plan in haste and that we need to include the right voices in it.

H. Whaley stated that we should involve people of color in this discussion now. C. Pilato commented that as we incorporate new literature we need to offer resources/guidance to parents. J. Stinson agreed that parents need resources. H. Whaley asked to develop a task force on diversity and inclusion now. T. McMorran mentioned that funding is needed. Discussion ensued about when and how to budget for needed resources.

Easton Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education establish a joint Easton/Redding BOE task force on diversity and inclusion to be comprised of Educators, Administrators, BOE Members, and Members of the Community to discuss and recommend action to the Boards related to the topics of hiring, curriculum, student demographics and funding for diversity and anti-racism initiatives. (Goldstein, Reed). Approved. Unanimous.

Redding Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education establish a joint Easton/Redding BOE task force on diversity and inclusion to be comprised of Educators, Administrators, BOE Members, and Members of the Community to discuss and recommend action to the Boards related to the topics of hiring, curriculum, student demographics and funding for diversity and anti-racism initiatives. (Whaley, Reilly). Approved. Unanimous.

BUILDING ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Redding Elementary Principal, Natalie Hammond, said that she had submitted a report to the BOE that detailed grade level activity. N. Hammond also commented on the day's 4th Grade Stepping Up Ceremony, saying that it was great and spearheaded by Mr. Amodio. C. Pilato asked about the kindergarten enrollment number. N. Hammond said that the kindergarten enrollment number was close to 100.

John Read Middle School Interim Principal, Dr. Phyllis Amori, said that there were 20 volunteers at the building for the send-off for the 8th graders. She also said for everyone to take a look at the graduation flip-grids.

Director of Special Services, Jennifer Del Conte, said that ESY was starting in July.

Director of Finance & Operations, Scott Reiss, reported that the May health insurance claims were still below average, but were increasing. He said that he believes another \$100,000 still needs to go into the health insurance reserve fund.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Steering Committee: C. Hocker reported that this committee was moving forward with an aggressive schedule that includes: an emailed survey to ER9; advertisements for the superintendent position being posted; and, a community forum to take place July 7-9, 2020.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Stephanie Benton, Wolfe Drive, Redding: said that as a member of the minority community, she can tell you that diversity and inclusion go hand in hand; that you cannot have one without the other. She said that conversations with children on this topic are necessary, but not at the expense of minority children.

Cheryl Graziano, Deacon Abbott Drive, Redding: said that it's a burden in being a person of color when there are only a few. She said that we need to develop metrics and measures to make things happen. C. Graziano also said that diversity in education is everyday education.

L. Arici, North Park Avenue, Easton: asked if she could start a GoFundMe account for the Easton and Redding BOEs Diversity and Inclusion Task Force. (C. Parkin explained that that was not allowed since it there are definitive rules on public funding, but that the task force may reach out in the future).

Katrinka DeLeon, Picketts Ridge Road, Redding: said that she mirrors much of what the other parents have expressed, and that everyone should be aware that exposure and conversations can make other students feel more left out. K. DeLeon said that this issue is about character development and that she hopes the task force will include a broad range of people, that it needs to be a collective.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education meeting be adjourned. (Reed, Parker).
Approved. Unanimous.**

The Easton Board of Education meeting was adjourned at 10:02 p.m.

Submitted by,
Gretchen Goldstein
Easton Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by,
Sarah Ota