

Filed subject to approval

EASTON, REDDING AND REGION 9 BOARDS OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

May 25, 2021 – 7:30 p.m.

Held Remotely Pursuant to Executive Order No. 7B

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/96936269392?pwd=aWx2dzZ4MjdOVEROV05CQ0xseXN2QT09>

Minutes

ATTENDANCE

Board members:

Easton: Stinson, Chieda, Hicks, Parker, Wible, Absent: Goldstein

Redding: Parkin, Whaley, Pilato, Hocker, Hoffman, Oulton, Reilly

Region 9: Johnston, Graziano, Berry, D'Agostino, Denny, O'Brien, Pampel, Williams

Administration: Harrison, Pierson Ugol, Zachery, Pin, Del Conte

Others: 164 members of the staff and public, and the recording secretary.

CALL TO ORDER

C. Parkin called the Redding Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

J. Stinson called the Easton Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

T. Johnston called the Redding Board of Education Regular meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

C. Parkin first gave context and framing for the meeting, saying that they are three separate Boards of Education that meet jointly three times per year. He said that while the Boards are public agencies, this meeting does make it a public meeting or a public hearing. C. Parkin said that the agenda was lengthy and that patience and cooperation was needed to get through all of it. He said that the agenda identifies the topics for consideration by the Boards, and that at each topic the appropriate person will introduce the topic and any action if needed. C. Parkin said that the public may speak during the designated Public Comment and that: comments should be germane to the education of Easton and Redding; will be limited to two minutes; and, personal attacks on other public commenters will not be allowed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Michael Keden, Morehouse Road, Easton, asked that, since the survey is optional and questions can be skipped, the Boards please vote yes tonight. He said that the current anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies seem to be inadequate. He urged everyone to listen to the voices and stories of those who have been discriminated against in our towns and schools.

Representative Anne Hughes, North Street, Easton, said that she wanted to affirm the work of the DEI Task Force that has worked so hard to develop an evidence-based survey. She said that it is very important that we have this option.

Juliette Licamele, Walls Hills Road, Easton, said that she wanted to voice her support for the survey and remind the Boards that over 500 current ER9 students and alumni signed a petition, from under a year ago, asking for action and change. She said that this survey and important work are a culmination of a call to action.

Agnes Bebon, Blackrock Turnpike, Easton, urged the Boards to vote yes on the survey. She said that the survey is important so we can identify, without singling out individually, if students are having negative experiences at school. A. Bebon said that the terms regarding gender identity are not inappropriate in the surveys; that the list makes sure all students are included.

Elizabeth Hayman, Fire Hill Road, Redding, voiced her support for the survey, and said that while at Barlow, she saw many instances of discrimination. She said that the survey is an important step so that we can realize that our community and schools have so many strengths, but also have weaknesses and challenges as well.

Jack Bebon, Blackrock Turnpike, Easton said that as a non-binary gay man, he wished this survey was around when he was a student because he was discriminated against. He said that everyone should feel represented in their school and their curriculum.

Mari Rooney, Deer Hill Road, Redding, said that as a bi-racial, trans person and former Barlow student, they support the survey. They said that the survey and the support the survey provides can be life-saving. M. Rooney said that the DEI work, such as the survey, can teach all students how to best support one another. They asked the boards to please support the survey.

Liv Keden, Morehouse Road, Easton, said that she wanted to caution the Boards not to wait until there is not a significant amount of pushback because normalizing queer identities will always receive pushback in our society. She said that the argument of this being a conversation for private spaces is wrong because private spaces are not always safe for queer kids. She said to please vote yes.

Jeff Fligelman, Pocahontas Road, Redding, said that he applauded the work of our DEI committee and briefly gave examples of leadership. He said that our leaders, by way of a thoroughly crafted survey, are looking to us for facts to define our reality. J. Fligelman asked everyone to raise their hands in support of our leaders and communities.

Emma Montoya, April Drive, Easton, said that she heard someone at a recent town meeting talk about wanting their children to be prepared to make money. She cited research about the importance and benefits of diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace. E. Montoya said she's looking forward to the children of Easton being prepared for the future and that she supported the survey.

Tom Kilbourn, Aspinall Street, Redding, said that he urges approval of the DEI Statement and survey. He read aloud what he said were keywords from the JBHS mission statement, and said that these words call for the inclusion and gathering of all information needed to engage issues of racial and gender justice.

Cheryl Cowherd (no address given), Redding, said that she was adding her support to the already eloquently spoken words of former students and that she applauds them. She said a school that is a welcoming environment is shown to reduce negative outcomes for LGBTQ kids. C. Cowherd thanked the committee for their work and urged the Boards to accept it.

Julie Hardridge (no address given), said that she votes to table this decision until more people can be made aware of the survey. She said she thinks that this topic should be at an in-person meeting and not a Zoom meeting. J. Hardridge said that her opinion is that the DEI survey goes too far.

Beatrix Eriksen, Side Cut Road, Redding, said that she is a member of the DEI Task Force and that the survey is an opportunity for those in marginalized communities to be heard. She said that the survey is a safe place for them to voice their concerns and any challenges they are facing in the various communities.

Gale Bellas, Crescent Drive, (no town given), said that as an educator she was thrilled to hear from the students tonight. She said that this conversation has been usurped by the adults and should be much more student orientated.

Dana Benson, Pond Road, Easton, said that he doesn't see the word "survey" in the charge of the DEI Task Force. He said that he sent the Boards a letter that had been signed by 76 people and which included their questions about the survey. D. Benson said that he had been to DEI meetings for months and voiced questions and that his concerns had been ignored until he went public with them. He thanked the Boards and said that he appreciates their service and the work being done.

C. Graziano read aloud a letter from Sarah Ota, Great Meadow Road, Redding in which she voiced her support for the DEI statement, survey and all of the work by the DEI Task Force. Her letter said that this work was needed and long overdue.

Tallulah Whaley, Windy Hill Road, Redding, said that as a Barlow student she fully supports the work being done by the DEI. She said that the statement and survey should not be ignored for fear the students are too innocent or too young. T. Whaley said that these surveys are long overdue and 100% necessary.

Phyllis Rhodes, Gallows Hill Road, Redding, thanked the DEI Task Force for all of the hard work that they've done and urged the Boards to adopt the statement and approve the survey.

Catherine Vecchiarelli, Great Meadow Road, Redding, said that she fully supports this action and that it's imperative that we move forward with the statement and survey. She said that she's surprised to hear that parents don't think this is already on their kids' minds. C. Vecchiarelli said that she wants her children to be in an environment that completely supports this dialogue and conversation, and to not do so we would have a cowardly community.

Kristen Keden, Morehouse Road, Easton, said that she understands that there is concern that the survey will cause confusion or stress on the students, and as parents, we want to protect our children. But she asked why does your child need protection from talking about gender and racism?

Julia Pemberton, Umpawaug Road, Redding said that unless we have an environment where all children feel safe, there's work to be done. She said she commended the Boards of Education for establishing the DEI Task Force and the members, students and staff who have helped shape the discussion of this important work.

Beth Natt, Easton, said that, as a pediatrician, she urges the Board to say yes to the survey. She said that kids who are marginalized and bullied have serious effects on their mental health and their ability to learn. B. Natt said that this survey will not affect the lives of those who are hetero and white, but it could change the lives of those who are not.

Brenda Phelps, Indian Hill Road, Redding, said that she and her husband would like to voice their support of the DEI survey being provided to ER9 students. She said that students should be able to speak their mind about influence and marginalized students should have a way to be heard.

Lew Andrews, High Ridge Road, Redding, said that this survey has become very divisive and if you go ahead with it, you will split the community and that goes against public education.

Stephanie Christie, Austin Drive Ext., Easton, said that she thinks you are doing the right thing, but worries about cadence. She asked if the high school could go first and said that she's not sure why it has to go in this order. S. Christie said that you should give the community more time to get their heads around this.

Emily Alward, Cross Highway, Redding, said that as a former JBHS student, she is in full support of this survey. She said that she's openly transgender and did not feel safe talking about this in high school. E. Alward said that if the survey helps people feel safe, and not bad about themselves, then she is in full support of it.

John Belfardo, Portland Avenue, Redding, said that he is very opposed to the survey and doesn't think it's the school's position or place. He said that he's willing to discuss it, but that he only learned of the survey this morning. J. Belfardo said that he implores the Boards to extend it out and that the community hear more about it.

Ann Manusky, Morning Glory Lane, Easton, said that she's against the DEI survey because we don't know what it is actually composed and comprised of. She said that its part of the Hegelian dialectic dropped on the Town of Easton, and that it goes against the 4th Amendment.

Allison Bonoff, Gregory Farm Road, Easton, thanked the Boards for allowing everyone to speak before they take any further action. She said she is sure that the survey will move forward, but wants to make sure it is moving forward for the right reasons. A. Bonoff asked about the data to be collected: what will be the statistical significance, who is compiling, who is mining, and how long it will take.

Ben Fligelman, Pocahontas Road, Redding said that he is in full support of the work of the committee on DEI. He said that he can only speak for himself, but that he brings his perspective as the President of the Class of 2022. B. Fligelman asked that the Board please support the survey.

Sarah O'Dell, Blackrock Turnpike, Redding, thanked the DEI members for all of their work and all Board members for thoughtfully discussing this. She said it's a great idea to give the survey to middle school students and a great opportunity to service the students. S. O'Dell said that these conversations benefit all students and she encourages you to move ahead with the survey.

Caitlin Colangelo, Wildwood Road, Easton, said that she fully supports the work of the DEI Task Force and the passage of the survey.

Daisy Prokopiuk, Portland Avenue, Redding, said that she doesn't think the survey is appropriate for middle schoolers, but would like to see it done at the high school. She said she'd like the schools to be mask choice in the fall.

Vanessa Alward, Cross Highway, Redding, said that she supports the DEI survey. She said she was at the DEI meeting about the survey questions and was very impressed at the range of questions, especially the ones put in by middle school students. V. Alward said that by incorporating this survey, if we educate early then we can stop the bullying later and have a peaceful society where people feel welcome.

Victoria Diafore, High Ridge Road, Easton, said that she was voicing her enthusiastic support for these surveys. She retold her experience as a queer student at Barlow and said that it seems as if this survey will directly address some of the gaps in response and action that she experienced. V. Diafore thanked the DEI Task Force and Boards of Education and said she begged of them to move forward with this survey.

June Logie, Rockhouse Road, Easton, thanked the BOE and the DEI for their work, but said that she didn't think the survey will resolve a bunch of these issues. She asked: what do we do with the information mined from these surveys, what is the action or remedy, and what is hoped to be gained from the information. J. Logie said that if all of this was really explained, then there would be a different reaction from parents.

Drew Luca, Fire Hill Road, Redding, said that there should be more done on bullying, and that Board members should now table this issue or vote no on it. He asked how this survey was truly anonymous and where the data was going. D. Luca said that teachers' jobs are to educate and not espouse their personal beliefs, and that having a different opinion does not make him narrow-minded or racist.

J. Chieda read a letter from Kristen Queirello, Beards Road, Easton, which said that she supports the LBGTQ community, but that she cannot support the survey questions about gender and sexual orientation. She said that those questions are personal and are no one's business. K. Queirello's letter said that if most families end up opting out of the survey because of the highly personal questions, then what is the point of the survey.

Alexander Eriksen, Side Cut Road, Redding, said that he fully supports this survey and urges the Board to vote yes. He said that communication and knowledge are important and are the purpose of the survey, and that we are not doing this for the adults, but we're doing this for the children.

Stephanie Benton, Redding, said that she supports the efforts of the DEI committee and the survey with the changes that were made. She said that she disagreed with the survey definitions of power and inclusion, and that she disagreed with the timing and availability of the materials. S. Benton asked the Boards if they are prepared to put the policies and processes that result from survey information, into practice.

Alexander Ilie, Rosen Drive, Easton, said that he is a current student at JBHS and that he is in strong opposition to the survey. He said that he has questions about the perimeters of the survey and its content. A. Ilie said that before any changes or a vote, the residents of Easton and Redding should have substantially more time to form their opinions.

Sara Hunsucker, Easton, voiced her support for the survey and the work that DEI is doing. She said that the face of Easton and Redding is changing with more diverse backgrounds and that these faces should be represented fairly. S. Hunsucker said that she fully trusts ER9 that the data will be kept private.

Mary Ann Carmen, Umpawaug Road, Redding, said that she and her husband wanted to express their appreciation for the important work being done by the DEI Task Force. She said they urge the school boards to adopt the ER9 statement which will ensure that all members of the community feel supported. M. Carmen said that they urge the Boards to adopt the DEI survey and encourage families to fully engage with the questions.

David Antonez, Easton, said that he is against the work of the DEI Task Force and against the survey. He said that the role of the BOE and the schools is to teach our children how to think independently. D. Antonez said that the schools do not measure up to other schools in the DRG A and that that is your fault.

Susan Falzone, Easton, said she was voicing her support for the survey. She said that it is disheartening to hear the pushback on a survey that's goal is to help students who may not feel safe or accepted in our schools.

Darrell Bradford (no address), Redding, said that he had heard about the survey four days ago, not from the BOE or administration, but from a mailer he received. He urged the Boards to table a vote on the survey in order to give parents more information on how data will be used and how things will be dealt with.

Pina Jabbari, Wood Road, Redding, recalled her time as a JBHS student when an administrator committed suicide because their sexual orientation was discovered and wanted to acknowledge that this was not a new problem. She said she applauds the efforts of the DEI committee and the Boards to ensure that we can create the most inclusive environment that we can for our children, our teachers, our administration and our town.

Emily Alward, Cross Highway, Redding, said that she did not have resources available to her when, at age 13, she began to have questions about herself. She said that there are students out there who need this help and that this survey might lead to this help.

Jack Bebon, Blackrock Turnpike, Easton, said that the kids who bullied him in school have parents who say their kids are kind. He said this survey will get to the deeper part of the problems of kids who bully.

Lew Andrews, High Ridge Road, Redding, said that there are all kinds of bullying and that there is bullying of kids by teachers. He said to be mindful of the can of worms you open when you introduce the idea of critical race theory and that these ideas are more associated with progressivism.

Gale Belles, Crescent Drive (no town given), said that she wanted to clarify that she is in support of the survey. She said she proposes that at the end of the high school survey, there be an evaluation of the survey.

Agnes Bebond, Blackrock Turnpike, Easton, said that if you care about the lives of students and alumni who have spoken, then you should support this survey. She said that acknowledging the existence of people is not a political view, and that she urges the Boards to approve the survey.

Beatrix Eriksen, Side Cut Road, Redding said that the Task Force will be addressing the concerns of privacy during the meeting.

Kristi Sogofsky, Bayberry Lane, Easton, said that the updated survey was put out today, and that if she, as an Easton Board of Selectman member, was handed something on the day she had to vote on it, she would have serious concerns. She said she encourages the Boards to delay a vote on this.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

J. Parker said that he had received well over 100 emails from the community to either support or not support the survey. He said that he had received the final document at 3:00 p.m. and that it's difficult to think we can have serious consideration for voting on it tonight.

J. Chieda read from a lengthy prepared statement which said, as a Board member she's trying to be sure where our parents are in their journey of firsts and lasts for their children. She said that she had received dozens of emails on the topic and has had many conversations with people advocating for broader acceptance of their children's differences and others who want to keep aspects of their children's lives private. J. Chieda asked the public to give the Boards the grace and space to work the problem; she said engaging in these discussions is what will ensure the long-term success of our goals.

H. Whaley noted that the Zoom meeting was being bombed and asked if disabling the cameras might help the situation.

M. Hoffman said that this is the most controversial issue he's encountered in six years as a BOE member, and that he's received many emails, texts and phone calls from people about the survey. He said that he is concerned that if this is an opt-in survey, and we plan to take action based on the data, that we might have incomplete data. M. Hoffman said that the Board needs to hear from the IT people about security for the survey. He said that it would serve the students of Easton and Redding better if the Board talked about the survey tonight, but tabled the actual decision until the next Tri-Board meeting.

H. Whaley said that all of the people who have spoken out at DEI and Board meetings from marginalized communities have a lot riding on this. To them she said that survey, or not, the DEI work goes on. H. Whaley said that there is no effort that is going to happen that is going to get rid of the mission to make our schools more equitable and more inclusive.

M. D'Agostino said that we should all take a moment to appreciate the wonderful communities that we call home. He said that his hope is that we can put aside the divisive rhetoric and work to unite and support the common values to provide our children with exceptional education. M. D'Agostino said that he appreciates the outpouring of comments that he's received during the past few weeks and that he has great confidence in the abilities of Dr. Harrison to preserve confidentiality and safeguard the data that will be collected from students, staff and parents who choose to participate in the survey.

C. Graziano said that she hopes everyone will stay in the meeting and listen to the dialogue and robust conversation among the Board members, and thanked everyone for the many emails and texts she had recently received. She said that this reminds her of the 500 students and parents who -- almost one year ago -- asked the Boards to take a look at this topic, and that tabling it will only delay the same dialogue that is happening now. C. Graziano said that this effort is for all those students and families who have bravely shared their stories and asked for more knowledge and education and support, and that some of them have waited for years.

M. Williams thanked members of the community who took the time to write to her, and in some cases, attach scholarly articles about gender, human development, religion, and parental choice. She said that she's been thinking about the framework that needs to guide a discussion and decisions, and how her decision will focus on this time and this space.

M. Williams said that she thought about the message that would be sent to students if we don't send out the survey and we can't send the message that we are unwilling to reach them. She said that all of their decisions need to be based on fact.

K. O'Brien said that she has been wrestling with her decision on the survey and that she has read every email she has received from the community. She said she has given the most weight to those students and parents of the most vulnerable students. K. O'Brien said that the hyperbole created by groups in both towns has created a huge division and has been a disservice to our students. She said that she doesn't think the kids are unaware of the terms on the survey and thinks the parents are not ready for the survey.

G. Denny said that she seconds all that M. Williams and K. O'Brien said.

JOINT COMMITTEE REPORTS - None.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Director of Finance & Operations, Clarence Zachery, presented a new financial platform that acts as an add-on to the new eFinance system in order to provide a more user-friendly experience for staff and Board members. The new platform provides a snapshot of monthly spending, and C. Zachery said that access to the system is limited to a person's role within the Districts.

HEALTHY FOOD CERTIFICATION AND EXEMPTION FOR FOOD AND BEVERAGE ITEMS

Food Services Committee Chairperson, J. Parker explained that this certification is something that the Tri-Board does every year and is based on needing to meet the State of Connecticut nutrition standards. He said that the second motion is also reconfirmed every May by the Tri-Board and concerns after school hour events held at the schools.

Motion: move that, for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Easton Board of Education will continue to certify to the Connecticut State Department of Education that all food items offered for sale to students separately from a reimbursable lunch will meet Connecticut Nutrition Standards. Such certification shall include all food offered for sale to students at all times, in all schools, and from all sources including, but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or by non-school organizations and groups. (Wible, Hicks). Approved. 5-0.

Motion: move that, for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Redding Board of Education will continue to certify to the Connecticut State Department of Education that all food items offered for sale to students separately from a reimbursable lunch will meet Connecticut Nutrition Standards. Such certification shall include all food offered for sale to students at all times, in all schools, and from all sources including, but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or by non-school organizations and groups. (Hoffman, Reilly). Approved. 7-0.

Motion: move that, for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Region 9 Board of Education will continue to certify to the Connecticut State Department of Education that all food items offered for sale to students separately from a reimbursable lunch will meet Connecticut Nutrition Standards. Such certification shall include all food offered for sale to students at all times, in all schools, and from all sources including, but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or by non-school organizations and groups. (O'Brien, Graziano). Approved. 8-0.

Motion: move that, for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Easton Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages that do not meet the requirements of state statute (Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes), provided (1) such sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend, (2) such sale is at the location of the event, and (3) such food and/or beverage is not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting or extracurricular activity. The “school day” is the period from midnight to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales. (Hicks, Parker). Approved. 5-0.

Motion: move that, for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Redding Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages that do not meet the requirements of state statute (Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes), provided (1) such sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend, (2) such sale is at the location of the event, and (3) such food and/or beverage is not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting or extracurricular activity. The “school day” is the period from midnight to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales. (Hoffman, Whaley). Approved. 7-0.

Motion: move that, for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Region 9 Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages that do not meet the requirements of state statute (Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes), provided (1) such sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend, (2) such sale is at the location of the event, and (3) such food and/or beverage is not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting or extracurricular activity. The “school day” is the period from midnight to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales. (O’Brien, Pampel). Approved. 8-0.

CHARTWELLS CONTRACT EXTENSION

J. Parker explained that the Federal government is allowing the Districts the courtesy of not having to go out to bid on a food service contract, and so the Districts have the opportunity to continue with Chartwells. He said that next winter the Districts will go out to bid and he hopes that Chartwells will join us in that process. M. D’Agostino asked if there were any increases in administrative fees. J. Parker replied that the cost of meals went up 4.5%, or 0.01, as based on the consumer price index; there will be no cost increase to students.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education exercise its one-year option to renew its contract with Compass Group d/b/a Chartwells for the 2021-2022 school year as permitted by the Family First Coronavirus Response Act. (Wible, Chieda). Approved. 5-0.

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education exercise its one-year option to renew its contract with Compass Group d/b/a Chartwells for the 2021-2022 school year as permitted by the Family First Coronavirus Response Act. (Hocker, Whaley). Approved. 7-0.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education exercise its one-year option to renew its contract with Compass Group d/b/a Chartwells for the 2021-2022 school year as permitted by the Family First Coronavirus Response Act. (O'Brien, Graziano). Approved. 8-0.

FOOD SERVICES ACCOUNT DEFICIT

J. Parker explained that due to the State of Connecticut statute, the Districts need to make up the difference in this account by June 30. He said that currently the amount is \$66,000, which is to be split evenly among the three districts. J. Parker said that the Food Services Committee feels additional funds should be added to cover the cost of repair and replacement of equipment. A brief discussion took place on the topic.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve a transfer of \$37,000 to the Food Service account from unspent funds on or before June 30, 2021. (Hicks, Wible). Approved. 5-0.

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education approve a transfer of \$37,000 to the Food Service account from unspent funds on or before June 30, 2021. (Reilly, Whaley). Approved. 7-0.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education approve a transfer of \$37,000 to the Food Service account from unspent funds on or before June 30, 2021. (O'Brien, Williams). Approved. 7-0-1. (D'Agostino abstained).

TRANSPORTATION CONTRACT AMENDMENT

C. Parkin explained that First Student, Inc. had been sold and that the Districts need to give consent to the sale, with the three Board chairmen signing the letter of consent. A brief discussion took place concerning the usual logistics of a sale of a company and the feasibility of finding a new bus service within the next two months.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education consent to the sale of First Student, Inc. to EQT Infrastructure and authorize the chairperson to execute the appropriate documents to indicate its consent. (Hicks, Parker). Approved. 5-0.

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education consent to the sale of First Student, Inc. to EQT Infrastructure and authorize the chairperson to execute the appropriate documents to indicate its consent. (Reilly, Hoffman). Approved. 7-0.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education consent to the sale of First Student, Inc. to EQT Infrastructure and authorize the chairperson to execute the appropriate documents to indicate its consent. (Williams, Graziano). Approved. 8-0.

CALENDAR FOR 2022-2023

Calendar Committee member M. D'Agostino explained that the Boards were voting on only the 2022-2023 calendar at this meeting. He said that this is because they are trying to align the ER9 calendar more fully with the calendar of other neighboring districts in an effort to help out staff. M. D'Agostino said that they will wait for other districts to release their calendars and they expect them to do so very soon.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Calendar Committee, adopt the calendar for the 2022-2023 school year. (Hicks, Wible). Approved. 4-0-1. (Chieda abstained).

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Calendar Committee, adopt the calendar for the 2022-2023 school year. (Whaley, Hoffman). Approved. 7-0.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Calendar Committee, adopt the calendar for the 2022-2023 school year. (Pampel, O'Brien). Approved. 8-0.

POLICY ON NON-RESIDENT STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND TUITION

J. Stinson said that Central Office has been made aware of a situation concerning ER9 students and families where the families are living in rental properties that have now been sold because of the Connecticut real estate boom, and now these families find themselves unable to secure housing within ER9. Or, their situation is that they have found housing in a different town, but do not have the upfront tuition payments due to ER9. J. Stinson said that they are looking for a temporary suspension of policy in an effort to give administrations more latitude to make decisions about the payment plans. T. Johnston said that Region 9 had just passed a similar Motion at their last meeting. During the clarifying question period, it was confirmed that: this policy was for existing ER9 students only, that the policy referred to payment plans only, and that the October 31 deadline provided the Boards with time to reconsider the policy.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education, on recommendation of the Joint Policy Committee, temporarily suspends policy 5111c and 5111d, effective immediately, and directs the administration to exercise its discretion to resolve residency and non-resident issues related to currently enrolled in E/R/9 and that are unique to the COVID-19 pandemic. This suspension shall expire on October 31, 2021, unless sooner canceled by the Board. (Wible, Chieda). Approved. 5-0.

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education, on recommendation of the Joint Policy Committee, temporarily suspends policy 5111c and 5111d, effective immediately, and directs the administration to exercise its discretion to resolve residency and non-resident issues related to currently enrolled in E/R/9 and that are unique to the COVID-19 pandemic. This suspension shall expire on October 31, 2021, unless sooner canceled by the Board. (Whaley, Hocker). Approved. 7-0.

FRAMEWORK FOR JOINT BOARD GOVERNANCE

C. Parkin reported that the Policy Committee had done a great deal of work and had one or two more questions to get through. He said that there would be a Special Meeting in the coming weeks to present this information and get more feedback. C. Parkin said that since they needed to have a Special Meeting about the Director of Digital Learning and Central Office salaries that he would align topics and meetings.

ER9 EQUITY STATEMENT

H. Whaley explained that the purpose of the DEI Equity statement is not to call people racist, make people feel bad or guilty, or indoctrination. She said that the DEI Equity Statement is about making sure all students, staff and families feel safe, supported and respected. C. Graziano said that the Task Force started working on the statement in March because they felt they needed a mission statement to guide the work that they were doing. She said that a separate working group was formed and that this group: looked at similar statements from school districts in Connecticut, solicited comments from the public and task force

members, edited statements in real time at DEI meetings, and then presented statements to task force, Board members and the public.

C. Graziano said that the statement is a synthesis of a very deliberate process, and that the reasons for the statement are: 1) to provide a guiding light; and, 2) by writing it down, it is a signal that the Boards are going to do something about it.

C. Parkin asked if the DEI Task Force was making the recommendation that ER9 adopt the statement. After H. Whaley and C. Graziano confirmed, C. Parkin asked Board members for clarifying questions in respect to the request.

Dr. Harrison commented on the importance of aspirational statements by saying that they serve as a guiding light that helps to shape the work we are doing on a daily basis, as we work with students and teachers and within the curriculum. He said that he talks about the Districts' "A, B, C's" all the time and that this statement will work in the same way by providing a level of cohesiveness for all three districts. Dr. Harrison said that when you do the work of teaching students correctly, you start to see the guiding principles really translate into the classroom.

Clarifying questions asked included: adding the term "political perspectives" to the list of specifics; the statement being sent out to the students, along with and at the same time, as the surveys; and, if JBHS would be composing their own DEI aspirational statement. D. Wible, H. Whaley and Dr. Harrison provided replies of: no objection to the term "political perspective;" the students will receive the survey only and the statement will be on the website; and, JBHS will not be composing their own DEI aspirational statement.

MOTION: move the Easton, Redding and Region 9 School Districts adopt the draft Equity and Inclusion Statement. (Easton: Wible, Chieda; Redding: Hocker, Reilly; Region 9: O'Brien, Williams)

Opening Statements from BOE members were made on the Motion. In sum, these include: D. Wible reiterated the importance of setting a mission statement around this work so that we have something that we're working towards. R. Hicks said that he proposed the edits of deleting "unconscious," and "equity will" from the statement. J. Chieda said that she would expand the edits and lose "unconscious and conscious," "systemic," and "individuals." M. Hoffman said that he feels like we've jumped ahead and haven't identified where we are right now. C. Pilato said that she really appreciates what is written and sees this aspiration goal as similar to the BOE mission of purpose. C. Parkin said that rejecting this statement will be measurably more destructive than adopting; it will tell our students that being included is not that important. H. Whaley read aloud the Easton and Redding policy 5145, adopted in May 2017, about creating a safe learning environment for all students. M. Pampel said that she liked the statement and would like to see something in the specific list that addressed mental health issues. M. Williams said that this is an aspirational statement; that we have the policy and now we need the aspirational statement.

Open Discussion Period commenced with a thorough and lengthy discussion among all BOE members from all three districts. Discussion issues included: inserting "political perspective;" deciding upon the term "emotional and mental functionality" for mental health issues; keeping or removing the word "systemic," keeping or removing "unconscious and conscious," the many terms in the list of specifics, keeping or removing "equity will;" the definition of equity in an educational context; including the term "immigration status;" concern of watering down the statement; the long-term goals for DEI; the role of

BOE members to model leadership in their decisions on the statement; achieving acceptance and a comfort level for everyone in regard to the wording; and consensus.

MOTION: move the Easton, Redding and Region 9 School Districts amend the original draft Equity and Inclusion Statement. (Easton: Chieda, Wible; Redding: Whaley, Reilly; Region 9: Williams, Pampel)

C. Parker asked for any objections, and hearing none, deemed the Motion approved by unanimous consent.

A discussion followed on the matter of including or not including the word “systemic” in the statement.

MOTION: move the Easton, Redding and Region 9 School Districts amend the original draft Equity and Inclusion Statement. (Easton: Wible, Chieda; Redding: Whaley, Hocker; Region 9: Williams, Pampel)

The question was called on the duly amended Motion.

Motion: move that the Easton, Redding and Region 9 School Districts acknowledge the uniqueness and varied experiences of all students, staff, families, and community members as well as the uniqueness and experiences of people in our state, country, and the world. Our current and future students and staff deserve equitable and inclusive teaching and learning environments that are emotionally, socially, and physically safe, free from intentional or unintentional barriers that are the result of barriers that are the result of bias, prejudice, and discrimination. Creating a sustainable, equitable, and inclusive environment requires an ongoing collaboration of all stakeholders. Our unwavering commitment to meet the unique needs of every student will ensure that regardless of actual or perceived race, class, socioeconomics, gender, sexual identity, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political perspective, cognitive ability, physical ability, diverse language fluency, emotional and mental functionality, physical appearance, immigration status, and religion, all students will grow into culturally competent community members who value and learn from the uniqueness and varied experiences of others and are able to thrive within the global community. (Wible, Chieda). Approved. 5-0.

Motion: move that the Easton, Redding and Region 9 School Districts acknowledge the uniqueness and varied experiences of all students, staff, families, and community members as well as the uniqueness and experiences of people in our state, country, and the world. Our current and future students and staff deserve equitable and inclusive teaching and learning environments that are emotionally, socially, and physically safe, free from intentional or unintentional barriers that are the result of barriers that are the result of bias, prejudice, and discrimination. Creating a sustainable, equitable, and inclusive environment requires an ongoing collaboration of all stakeholders. Our unwavering commitment to meet the unique needs of every student will ensure that regardless of actual or perceived race, class, socioeconomics, gender, sexual identity, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political perspective, cognitive ability, physical ability, diverse language fluency, emotional and mental functionality, physical appearance, immigration status, and religion, all

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students will grow into culturally competent community members who value and learn from the uniqueness and varied experiences of others and are able to thrive within the global community. (Whaley, Hocker). Approved. 6-1.

Motion: move that the Easton, Redding and Region 9 School Districts acknowledge the uniqueness and varied experiences of all students, staff, families, and community members as well as the uniqueness and experiences of people in our state, country, and the world. Our current and future students and staff deserve equitable and inclusive teaching and learning environments that are emotionally, socially, and physically safe, free from intentional or unintentional barriers that are the result of barriers that are the result of bias, prejudice, and discrimination. Creating a sustainable, equitable, and inclusive environment requires an ongoing collaboration of all stakeholders. Our unwavering commitment to meet the unique needs of every student will ensure that regardless of actual or perceived race, class, socioeconomics, gender, sexual identity, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political perspective, cognitive ability, physical ability, diverse language fluency, emotional and mental functionality, physical appearance, immigration status, and religion, all students will grow into culturally competent community members who value and learn from the uniqueness and varied experiences of others and are able to thrive within the global community. (Williams, Pampel). Approved. 7-0.

DEI SURVEYS

C. Parkin said that he was recommending that the floor be opened to H. Whaley for the purpose of explaining the changes made to the DEI surveys, and then the discussion and vote on the topic be tabled to an upcoming meeting.

H. Whaley said that she would like an ER9 BOE meeting this school year to vote on the survey and that it was her intention for the survey to go out this school year. She said that the survey is to assess our strengths and weaknesses, and that in order to move forward we have to have a way to collect data from students, families and staff. H. Whaley presented slides which detailed the changes to the survey. An overview look at the changes included: removed definitions of diversity, equity and inclusion on all four surveys; shifted order of the sections to improve overall flow; moved up extracurricular activities; combined gender and sexual orientation questions into one section; broke apart the uncomfortable/embarrassed/humiliated questions into three separate questions; renamed headers to be more neutral; reworded a few questions to be more neutral; broadened the scope of the questions at the end of the survey to focus on inclusivity; deleted the demographics of “who can I turn to for help” question; deleted the “are you treated differently” question; and, re-phrased the question about sharing views in class. H. Whaley said that the survey was revised four to five times with comments from the public, students and BOE members. C. Parkin said that it is valuable to understand that the Task Force was diligent in incorporating the comments they received. A discussion followed concerning tabling further discussion and vote, some logistics about the surveys and DEI work, some of the wording and a new question about learning in-person or remotely. Several BOE members suggested a format of discussion, public comment and then the vote for the meeting on the survey. C. Graziano said she and anyone else on the DEI Task Force is glad to clarify anything for you.

C. Parkin said that hearing no other objections or comments, the discussion and vote on the surveys is now tabled to a Special ER9 Meeting on Tuesday, June 1, 2021. He said that is also a Redding BOE meeting date, and so the meeting will need to start earlier; he asked all BOE members to adjust their schedules.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Juliette Licamele, Wells Hill Road, Easton, thanked everyone, saying that you are exemplary people, but that the demographic of the Boards be considered.

She said that there are two people of color and that these people said it was important to keep the word “systemic,” and the reasons why. J. Licamele asked why they were not listened to.

Agnes Bebond, Blackrock Turnpike, Easton, said that she echoes Juliette’s comments. She said that she is disappointed to see the words “equity,” and “systemic” taken out. A. Bebond urged the Board to vote yes on the survey.

Ginny, Deer Spring Road, Redding, thanked everyone for trying to have an extremely respectful, thorough and considerate conversation.

Dana Benson, Pond Road, Easton, said thank you very much for all of the work you did tonight, and that’s is remarkable how hard you worked. He said that the group with which he is involved stands up for parents who do not feel comfortable doing so.

Jack Bebond, Blackrock Turnpike, Easton said he wanted to reiterate the points made by J. Licamele and A. Bebond. He urged the Board to vote yes on the survey.

Allison Bonoff, Gregory Farm Road, Easton, asked what happened to the conversation about NWEA scores. She said the public needs to know exactly what the follow-through will be with the survey and when the results will be available.

Beatrix Eriksen, Side Cut Road, Redding, said that maybe at the Tuesday meeting, the Task Force can address what will be done with the data from the surveys. She said that the findings need to be released to the public in their fullest form.

David Antonez, Judd Road, Easton, thanked everyone and said that he wanted to commend everyone. He said that earlier in the evening he was opposed to the DEI Statement and that now it is much more accessible to him and it is something he can get behind. D. Antonez asked what is being done about the bullying and wondered if it would be more cost effective to have the school building generators hooked up to the refrigerators.

Kathy Thompson, Mile Common Road, Easton, suggested that the survey be opt-in instead of opt-out. She said this way would give families more comfort and control.

Morna Crites, Gallows Hill Road, Redding, said that Neuro A-Typical should be added to the specific list in the statement and that it should just say “mental health.” She noted what she thought was a grammatical error: near the word “religion,” there should be “or,” and not “and.”

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

J. Chieda repeated a portion of her prepared statement from earlier in the evening, saying that the public needs to give the Board the grace and the space to work the problem.

D. Wible said that the survey is opt-in.

J. Stinson thanked C. Parkin for his efforts in getting the meeting together, preparing for the meeting and getting the Boards through some difficult and highly-charged topics. He thanked all the participants for their thoughtful comments, and complimented the hard work of DEI, Board members and administrators.

C. Pilato said that she echoes much of J. Stinson's comments. She said that when she hears that people aren't aware of major initiatives going on, she thinks that the Boards may want to consider a mailer since the mailers are getting people's attention. C. Pilato said she wanted to give a shout-out to the School Climate teams and that they do wonderful work.

H. Whaley said that the removal of the word "systemic," does not negate the fact that there is systemic bias in our schools. She said that in a democratic process, often we reach an imperfect result because the alternative is no result. H. Whaley said to the people who are hearing a definition of "equity" on t.v., they should be watching something different; she suggested that people watch "Derry Girls," on Netflix, saying that once you watch "Derry Girls," you'll want more.

J. Reilly thanked the DEI Task Force, and in particular, Heather, Cheryl, Beatrix and Devin, for all of their work, their presentation and the Equity Statement.

C. Graziano thanked everyone for hanging in on the meeting and said that it had been a very respectful dialogue, including the public commenters. She referenced the ER9 website, saying that there are minutes, tool kits and recording of all the meetings. C. Graziano said that if people want facts, they can reach out to us.

M. Pampel thanked the Task Force, and reminded everybody that sometimes students have difficulty learning because of obstacles in their way. She said that we haven't lost sight of the job of schools to help students learn by making their environment safe, inclusive, diverse and equitable.

M. D'Agostino echoed his thanks to the group for a thoughtful discussion tonight. He said he loves hearing from his constituents, and to know that your input is always considered and highly valued.

K. O'Brien thanked everybody and said our public discussion was very respectful and informative. She said that members of the public sometimes forget that the Board members are volunteers and that everyone has nothing but the best intentions for these children.

CYBERSECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE (Executive Session)

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education move to Executive Session and invite Dr. Rydell Harrison, Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol and Clarence Zachery to attend. (Wible, Hicks). Approved. 5-0.

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education move to Executive Session and invite Dr. Rydell Harrison, Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol and Clarence Zachery to attend. (Hoffman, Reilly). Approved. 7-0.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education move to Executive Session and invite Dr. Rydell Harrison, Dr. Stephanie Pierson Ugol and Clarence Zachery to attend. (, O'Brien). Approved. 7-0.

The meeting moved to Executive Session at 1:42 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education Regular meeting be adjourned (M. Hoffman, J. Reilly). Approved. 7-0.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education Regular meeting be adjourned (R. Hicks, D. Wible). Approved. 5-0.

Motion: move that the Region 9 Board of Education Regular meeting be adjourned (M. Pampel, K. O'Brien). Approved. 7-0.

The Easton Board of Education regular meeting was adjourned at 1:52 a.m.

The Region 9 Board of Education regular meeting was adjourned at 1:52 a.m.

The Redding Board of Education regular meeting was adjourned at 1:53 a.m.

Submitted by Colleen Pilato
Secretary, Redding Board of Education

Recorded by
Sarah Ota