

**Special Meeting Minutes
Fairfield BoE, April 21, 2015**

NOTICE: A full meeting recording can be obtained from Fairfield Public Schools. Please call 203-255-8371 for more information and/or see the FPS website (under Board Meeting Minutes) for a link to FAIRTV.

Call to Order of the Special Meeting of the Board of Education and Roll Call

Chairman Philip Dwyer called the meeting to order at 7:39PM. Members present were Mrs. Eileen Liu-McCormack, Ms. Donna Karnal, Mrs. Jessica Gerber, Mr. Philip Dwyer, Mr. John Convertito (arrived 7:51PM), Mr. Paul Fattibene, Mrs. Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly and Mr. John Llewellyn. Mr. Marc Patten was not present.

Business Items

Mr. Dwyer reviewed the outline of the Special Meeting and said public comment on discussion items will be allowed.

Discussion of District Improvement Plan (DIP)

Mr. Dwyer asked the Board to center discussion on (1) what needs clarification (2) what is liked about the plan, and (3) what should be added to the plan. He then asked which data points are considered the most important. Dr. Title said that it is better to look at the summary of data points on pages 16-18; it is a very comprehensive list and many data points are connected; the foundational skills such as the STAR assessments are important, and he is also interested in non-traditional data points as well as the post-high school survey.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked if statistics will be offered by school and was told yes. She said she is concerned with general targets set district-wide that might not be helpful for individual schools, and wondered at differences in achievement from one school to another; are we setting absolute levels. Dr. Title said that all schools set their own targets in their school improvement plans; what we are discussing here is a district improvement plan. We haven't gone through target setting for each school; focusing on district right now. Goal is to have all schools move up from wherever they start. Mrs. Liu-McCormack stated it's important for transparency to understand which schools are achieving higher than others. Dr. Title stated some smaller sub-groups may only make sense on a district level.

Mr. Fattibene asked:

1. Does the graph on page 5 measure improvement over time? Dr. Title explained that we are aiming higher than where we currently are; if we do nothing, we flat-line or go backwards; A to C represents substantial progress.
2. Is it more proper to use the term student performance expectations? Dr. Title responded that the Board set the mission and goals, and those were seen as the expectations; these are translated into the tangible indicators that students will accomplish.
3. What is meant by adult actions? A different term is preferable. Dr. Title responded that the term 'adult actions' refers to the Specific Actions as listed within the document; he further clarified that the adults are within the school district.
4. Page 8 - What is meant by Public Update and how often will the DIP be reviewed? Dr. Title said the Board is welcome to comment on the update which most likely will be given to the Board as a presentation in the early Fall; he would like to see 2 years of implementation with 2 years of baseline data.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked:

1. Page 18 - Which questions in the Climate Survey will be used as data measures? Dr. Title said that will be determined in the baseline data-gathering process and Ms. Leonardi felt that all questions in the Safety and Social/Emotional Domain would be used; but the District Climate Team may review further.
2. Page 24, 1-7 – What is meant by independence? Ms. Leonardi said that refers to the underlying skills to be a life-long learner; our task is to take a look at the whole developmental process.
3. Page 25, 1-23 - What was intended for revising homework? Dr. Title said homework is due for a review; he gave an example of a flipped classroom where students are given the content to learn at home and then practice the content in class with teachers.
4. Page 28, 4-17 - What is the vision behind the academic opportunities? Dr. Title said this is an open concept to be further explored; the focus is on enrichment opportunities at the K-8 levels. There is no pre-determined outcome for any of these.

Mr. Llewellyn asked:

1. In terms of the process, will the DIP be finalized before the targets are known? Dr. Title said the DIP should have both baseline and target information in time for the First Read on May 19, but that some data may not be available such as the post-high school survey.
2. Are there quantifiable measurements now? Dr. Title said yes and gave an example of average daily attendance.
3. How will Town and parent input be obtained? Mr. Dwyer said that it will be on future agendas, and perhaps there will be another public forum similar to the one held in February, but with more focus on DIP.
4. Page 22, last paragraph – Will there be intermediate steps and prioritization for failing schools? Dr. Title said that the DIP implementation is more of an art than a science; the plan's capacity should not be over-taxed; Board comments are welcome on what should be accelerated.
5. Page 24 – What is meant by high school capstone experience? Dr. Title said that it is a valuable experience that crosses over multiple areas; it could be an independent study that is embedded in courses; this has been discussed in high school reform legislation but has been postponed multiple times.
6. Is there a plan to restore levels with the flipped classroom? Dr. Title said that he was only giving an example on the use of the flipped classroom and no assumptions should be made on whether that will happen.
7. Page 26, 2-6 – What are the thoughts on expanding the Walter Fitzgerald Campus? Dr. Title said the WFC has tremendous untapped potential for students who are not successful in traditional high schools; use of technology has enabled students to take courses previously not possible. Ms. Leonardi added that 2-6 translates to educating our students so well that outside districts will be interested; she will enhance this statement in the next draft to further clarify.

Mrs. Gerber asked:

1. Page 25, 1-24 – What will the revised middle school schedule be? Dr. Title said the unified arts rotation will be more closely aligned to high school courses. Middle school principals Dr. Rosato and Ms. Tiley added that they will be looking at (1) adding a business course (2) maximizing instructional time (3) implementing World Language in 6th grade (4) time spent in Homeroom and (5) other needs such as intervention and enrichment time.
2. What is the middle school advisory program? Dr. Rosato explained that every child would work with an adult in a small group setting for things like health activities, social/emotional support, and future career planning. This would be similar to the high school structure.
3. Page 27, 4-3 – Would the new teacher academy be in addition to what is currently offered? Dr. Title explained that this is a retention strategy that builds on what is currently in place.
4. Page 27, 3-3 – Is this already started? Dr. Title said this would be an extension of leadership capacity for teachers that started with instructional rounds.

Mr. Convertito asked:

1. Page 24, 1-6 and 1-8 – Expressed concern that these are not in the assessments, and that Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) is viewed as one group vs. the rest of the population as a whole. Dr. Title said the FRL sub group is part of the whole; some groups are so small they are not listed but are there due to the achievement gap.
2. Page 25, 1-21 – Is this a response to a state mandate? Dr. Title said that is a pending state mandate and added that the high school credits have to be corrected.
3. Could the Capstone experience align with an internship? Dr. Title said yes.
4. Page 25, 1-22 and 1-25, is this similar to what we have done in 6th grade? Dr. Title said not really, it may tie in to 1-21 and said the computer class mastery is one example.
5. Page 26 - Can you explain 2-3? Dr. Title said instructional rounds allows teachers to watch different levels and there is a benefit to that, particularly for transitional levels such as 5th to 6th, but vertical alignment has never been worked on.
6. Page 27, 4-4 and 4-6 – Is this an issue now? Dr. Title said common planning time is very beneficial; at the middle school level it is done but is not content specific.
7. Can Appendix A be organized into what can be done in one year, and what can be done in year 2 or 3? Dr. Title said that some data points might take a few years to show improvement.

Ms. Karnal asked:

1. The document is well done; it seems overwhelming; how can this be prioritized? Dr. Title agreed that it is overwhelming; the district team invested much time and effort.
2. Page 28, 4-12 – What will be developed? How will this and all others be implemented? Dr. Title said the district is currently collecting data on teacher absences and flagging any issues; regarding the broader question implementation won't take place all at once, each specific action will be addressed by an assigned person or department, much the same way initiatives are assigned to a central office administrator; improvement work is being merged with initiatives.
3. What is being done to help the average C student improve, and can something be added to address this? Dr. Title said this plan addresses all students; there are as many different way to learn as there are students; there might be extended learning time or enrichment opportunities; narrative will be added stating that each sub group may not be identified but the goal is to improve each student.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack felt that a large district like ours could benefit from flexible leveling to address the differentiation. Dr. Title said there are a wide variety of ways to meet student needs; he is not in favor of formal tracks – this label can be a self-fulfilling prophecy for students on the lower track; the bar should be raised for all students; this is being done very successfully with AP courses at the high school. No matter how many levels exist, there will always be different levels within the classroom. Mrs. Liu-McCormack said she is not talking about fixed tracks, but flexible tracks -- rather, matching academic ability for students who are ahead and also for those who are behind. She asked if every student has to be excellent at everything. Dr. Title said it's possible to differentiate for each student; other factors are intellectual and social maturity.

Mr. Fattibene said this is an ambitious and open-ended plan; one concern is the middle group that is neither struggling nor high achieving; he is concerned with the balancing of what is provided to each student to achieve academic progress.

Mr. Llewellyn said it would be good to find out more about the post-high school survey; he would also like to see (1) the SAT and PSAT scores tracked (2) a parent survey to discuss the quality of homework and (3) teacher exit-interviews.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said that assessments 6, 11, 13, 15, and 16, target every student. She likes the post-high school survey, the non-traditional measures, and the idea to look at the middle school schedule. She would like to see the policy committee mentioned on page 3 and page 27 in 4-8, allowing for the notion that communication with the policy committee might be needed to move these items forward; she would also like to see responsible citizen and ethical behavior encouraged in the Plan somewhere; she appreciates the scope of work involved.

Ms. Karnal asked what might be done for students that struggle with low scores on mid-terms.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack said not every teacher can teach to multiple levels in the classroom, and asked if teachers could be added to the climate survey. She would like to track the percentage of students that are taking high school math while still in middle school and the growth of students taking the AB and BC tests. Dr. Title said it is important to incentivize the right things; measures are already included for students scoring above grade level; Appendix A is for student indicators not teacher progress.

Mr. Dwyer said the DIP is on the website for feedback and has also been sent to the RTM, the BOF, and the BOS.

Discussion of BOE Handbook

Mr. Dwyer said the BOE Handbook is a guide for old and new members that was last approved in 2012.

Ms. Karnal questioned how long this discussion would take, as there is another significant agenda item to be covered.

Mr. Fattibene asked that the procedure should be explained for what changes are being made and then Board members can read them for themselves.

Mr. Dwyer spoke to the revisions that are in the handbook. This will be on a future agenda for further review and discussion.

Mrs. Karnal asked about page 10 and whether this was new; Mr. Dwyer said no, all changes are marked in red. Ms. Karnal wanted to know the meeting date at which the handbook would be discussed as she has many questions. Mr. Dwyer said perhaps at the second May meeting. Page 4 has a few typos and those will be corrected.

Board Self-Evaluation

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded that the Board of Education hereby moves to enter into Executive Session in accordance with CGS 1-200(6A) to discuss the Board's self-evaluation.

Motion Passed 8-0.

The Board entered into Executive session at 10:17PM.

Mr. Fattibene moved, Mr. Llewellyn seconded to suspend the rules and extend the meeting past 11:00PM.

Motion Passed 8-0

<i>Adjournment</i>

Mr. Llewellyn moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded to adjourn the meeting at 12:45AM.

Motion Passed 7-0 (Mr. Convertito was not present for this vote.)

*Respectfully Submitted,
Jessica Gerber
Fairfield BOE, Secretary*