

**Regular Meeting Minutes
Fairfield BoE, April 7, 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 Regular Meeting of the Board of Education and Roll Call

Chairman Philip Dwyer called the meeting to order at 7:35PM. Board members present were Mrs. Eileen Liu-McCormack (arrived 8:45PM), Mr. Marc Patten, Ms. Donna Karnal, Mrs. Jessica Gerber, Mr. Philip Dwyer, Mr. Paul Fattibene, Mrs. Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly and Mr. John Llewellyn. Mr. John Convertito was absent. Also present were Superintendent Dr. David Title, members of Central Office Administrative Staff and approximately 75 members of the public.

Athlete/Team Recognition

Athletic Directors Mr. Schulz and Mr. Fry recognized high school athletes for state-wide championship awards received for both individual and team events. Students recognized: Gabrielle Rotar-Crowe (Fencing), Charlie Kane, Tim Kane, Chase Lind (Wrestling), Stephanie Sheehan, Emma Koether, Jake Duncan (Indoor Track), Nina Martucci (Cheerleading). Teams recognized: Co-op Fencing, Co-op Girls Skiing, and FWHS Dance Team, Hip-Hop Division.

Student Reports

Mr. Schuster reported for Warde: The 4th Marking Period and spring sports have begun, AP testing begins the week of May 4; 2 culinary students took first place in the state culinary competition; music students had a successful performance trip to Disney and Latin students will travel to Italy for spring break; the spring musical "Once Upon a Mattress" will take place; the Badminton tournament and the Battle of the Houses takes place on Friday.

Ms. Finnerty and Mr. Kutsch reported for Ludlowe: Spring sports have begun, the Young Democrats and Young Republicans Clubs held a voter registration drive; International Day took place last week; the AFS Club spoke about hunger and homelessness; the Paris and London Trip begins on Thursday; the Key Club is holding a shoe drive; the spring musical is "Grease," and the Battle of the Houses was won by Webster House.

Public Comment

Brian Haberly, Fairfield Resident: FOI Request

Sue Miska, Ryegate Road: School Climate, District Improvement Plan, Invoice

Status Update and Review of K-12 Art Curriculum

Ms. Chase, Ms. Cimina, Ms. Abraham, and Dr. Boice presented a status update on the Art Curriculum. Content standards, assessments, curriculum changes, course enrollment and revision considerations were discussed.

Mr. Patten asked about changes that worked, adjustments needed, and the drop in enrollments at the secondary level. Ms. Chase said skill alignment among schools worked well. Dr. Boice added that in order to allow for flexibility at the secondary level, Foundations of Art will be divided into 2 semesters.

Mr. Llewellyn liked the rubrics and asked why a fundamentals course is needed. Ms. Chase responded that it gauges a student's ability and provides elements of principles and design.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked about elementary curriculum changes, inter-discipline studies, and the Marzano reference. Ms. Chase responded that the teacher assessment was considered in the development of the rubrics; inter-discipline studies are meaningful but time constraints exist when matching art with other curriculum.

Mr. Kutsch liked the idea of the 2 semester Foundations in Art course.

Mr. Fattibene questioned declining enrollment. Dr. Boice said there is a very strong interest in Art, but ultimately students have to fit electives in after required courses; providing flexibility with the Foundations course will help that issue, without degrading the program. The rigor still exists, and it is still the same curriculum.

Ms. Karnal asked about AP exams, the difference between 2D and 3D art, and incorporating technology; Ms. Chase explained how the courses align with AP testing, and said she is looking to incorporate technology at all levels.

Mr. Patten asked about the addition of another senior course and Ms. Chase said it would not be an AP course.

<i>Old Business</i>

Approval of Policy 5330 – Students – Code of Behavior – Bullying/Teen Dating Violence

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded that the Board of Education approve Policy 5330 – Students – Code of Behavior – Bullying/Teen Dating Violence.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly noticed a few typos and will ensure those get corrected.

Mrs. Gerber asked for examples of behaviors that may not meet the definition of bullying as noted on page 8. Ms. Leonardi stated it could be or a drawing or writing that causes concern, but does not involve specific students.

Mr. Llewellyn proposed replacing the word “promptly” on page 4, point number 4, with a more tangible time, such as “not later than 48 hours”, to ensure that parents receive notice of the investigation as soon as possible. Ms. Leonardi explained that issues are all dealt with promptly and thoroughly; a complex case may require more time to be thorough.

Mr. Dwyer added that the process may determine that no follow-up is needed.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Mr. Fattibene, and Mr. Patten agreed with Mr. Llewellyn. Mrs. Liu-McCormack stated that people should receive forewarning that there’s something potentially going on, and she feels that “prompt” is not specific enough. Mr. Fattibene said that because we are talking about a minor, it is proper to notify the parent. Mr. Patten said that he was in agreement with Mr. Fattibene, but would like to hear more from Ms. Leonardi. Ms. Leonardi added that ‘promptly’ is the word used in the statute; conducting an investigation with 2 sets of parents, time for camera footage review, and deciphering vague reports can be difficult.

Mr. Llewellyn said that he was concerned that he heard that there were concerns about parent involvement. Ms. Leonardi clarified that she did not say she was opposed to parent involvement, but rather the impact that parent intervention might have on the investigation.

Mr. Dwyer asked for the repercussions of enforcing a 48 hour rule. Ms. Leonardi stated that it would be difficult; the short time frame might result in parent involvement prior to a verification of claims.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly was comfortable with the word ‘prompt.’

Mr. Fattibene moved, Mr. Llewellyn seconded to amend the policy by changing the language on Page 4, section 4 to read, “Requires the safe school climate specialist to investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and/or teen dating violence and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written report made under this section and that the parents or guardians of the student alleged to have committed an act or acts of bullying and the parent or guardians of the student against whom such alleged act or acts were directed receive notice, no later than three school days, that such investigation has commenced.”

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked what would happen if the act occurred on the last day of school.

Mr. Dwyer was comfortable with the word ‘prompt’

Mrs. Liu-McCormack viewed the amendment as a preventative measure, suggested changing the language to ‘within 72 hours’.

Mrs. Gerber asked what would happen if the district was unable to comply with the 72 hour notice. Ms. Leonardi stated the policy would be violated, the staff is not on call 24x7, and there are school breaks that would not allow for a 72 hour notice.

Public Comment:

Tricia Donovan, Fairfield Resident: Supports the amendment.

Mr. Patten appreciates the sentiment of Mr. Fattibene, but will not support the motion.

Motion Failed: 4-4

Favor: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Ms. Karnal, Mr. Fattibene, Mr. Llewellyn

Oppose: Mr. Patten, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

Mr. Llewellyn said that notices should include a phone call as well as a mailing.

Mr. Dwyer asked what was contained in the notice; Ms. Leonardi stated that the written notice is a form letter which is an invitation but often includes phone calls; the legislative intent is to ensure that both sides get the information at the same time.

Mr. Llewellyn made a friendly amendment to amend the policy and change the language on page 6, section 17 to read "Requires, at the beginning of each school year, for each school to provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the district's Safe School Climate Plan". The Board approved this by unanimous consent.

Mr. Llewellyn made a friendly amendment to amend the policy by moving the last paragraph on page 6 to the end of the "preamble", just before "Definitions." The Board approved this by unanimous consent.

Motion as Amended Passed: 8-0

Approval of the Safe School Climate Plan – Creating and Sustaining Supportive and Engaging Schools – Version 2.0

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Mrs. Gerber seconded that the Board of Education approve the Safe School Climate Plan – Creating and Sustaining Supportive and Engaging Schools – Version 2.0.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly wanted to make sure that any of the amendments just made on the policy would change this motion. Ms. Leonardi said that since nothing substantive had changed there was no need to change this. Mr. Llewellyn stated that there was no need to change the current motion.

Motion Passed 8-0

<i>New Business</i>

Establish Date and Time of Fairfield Ludlowe High School and Fairfield Warde High School Graduation

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mr. Patten seconded that the Board of Education establish June 17 at 6:00PM as the date and time of graduation for Fairfield Ludlowe High School and Fairfield Warde High School.

Mr. Fattibene confirmed that that this is the last day of school.

Motion Passed 8-0

Presentation and Submission Approval of the Teacher Evaluation Plan

Mrs. Gerber moved, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly seconded that the Board of Education approve the submission of the Fairfield teacher Evaluation Plan to the CT State Department of Education.

Mr. Dwyer confirmed that if approved for submission, the state will review and send back to the Board for final approval.

Mrs. Gerber asked about the use of student survey responses on page 8. Mrs. Leffert said the Board showed a strong interest in the use of student surveys, and so those have been incorporated into this plan. Another major component is that the State Plan for non-traditional educators, such as Deans, was chosen. The shorter document in the enclosure shows all the changes.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked if student surveys were related to the student's teacher; Mrs. Leffert said yes.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly asked about 'parent engagement' on page 25; Blue Ribbon; data points being factored into the evaluation, and unannounced classroom visits. Mrs. Leffert said a sample parent survey can be found in appendix B; she will strike out Blue Ribbon as that is no longer being done; and there are ways to bring data points into the plan. Dr. Title added that the district is trying to create alignment from the District Improvement Plan to the School and Department-Level Plans, and to teacher goals.

Mr. Llewellyn asked about page 19, the school climate plan, and asked several questions about the use of student surveys and subjectivity in teacher evaluations. Mrs. Leffert explained that new hires are put with 1st and 2nd year teachers; the school climate plan was stricken because that company is no longer used, but the district one is used and can be added back in to the appendix; student surveys are used to look at the impact of teacher practice in the classroom; the wording regarding teacher evaluations was refined. Mr. Llewellyn felt that some questions on the parent survey appeared to be counterproductive and should be removed, such as the question on the highest level of education attained. He also felt that the glossary should be updated with newer tests.

Dr. Title said there is still time to make changes prior to submitting to the state.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack asked about page 32 and if the targets were consistent; Mrs. Leffert said they were; flexibility and negotiation are allowed when setting targets. Dr. Title added that there is an inter-play with supervisor agreement on teacher goals, but agrees there is work to be done in setting consistent goals. Mrs. Liu-McCormack expressed her concern with individually negotiated targets, and wants to see goals individual growth for each student; she feels it is important for the district vision. Mrs. Leffert explained that this negotiation on this is a requirement in the Plan. Mrs. Liu-McCormack wants to see specificity of vision and goals for individual growth for each student.

Ms. Karnal asked about the evaluators and how they themselves are evaluated; she also asked if additional changes could be made after the plan is returned from the state. Mrs. Leffert responded that the administrators are the evaluators and explained the observations and goal setting processes as outlined in the enclosure; if the Board makes any changes after returned from the state, the plan would then have to be re-submitted. The deadline to submit the plan to the state is May 15, and is expected to be returned by the end of June. Dr. Title added that the organizational chart that is included in the policy manual as a regulation, shows the supervisory levels; this plan has added a significant amount of work for administrators.

Mr. Patten asked if teachers would be considered 'new' after making a significant transition and was told no.

Mrs. Liu-McCormack expressed concern about the Marzano frameworks and protocol possibly penalizing unconventional and exemplary teachers. She said from reading on the web, she hears that many teachers learn through years of practice, and is concerned that Marzano might be too restrictive. Mrs. Leffert said there is much flexibility with teacher evaluation; the data system records and ensures that all teachers are assessed properly. Mrs. Liu-McCormack wants to make sure that exemplary teachers aren't penalized through the Marzano parameters. She wants to make sure that unconventional teaching methods aren't "squashed". She said that some children have come to her and said

that they haven't seen their teachers being evaluated – is every teacher evaluated? Who makes sure that this happens? Mrs. Leffert said that evaluations can't take place without the observations.

Ms. Karnal asked what happens when teacher ratings fall below acceptable levels. Mrs. Leffert explained the steps that are taken and said the process to aid teachers when this happens is outlined in the plan.

Public Comment:

Tricia Donovan, Fairfield Resident: Bottom-up evaluation.

Suzanne Miska, Ryegate Road: Parent and student surveys.

Dr. Title and Mrs. Leffert said that there is also an administrator evaluation plan where teachers are asked to rate their evaluators and parents are asked to evaluate the administrative team in their building.

Ms. Karnal asked if this survey goes to all parents and Mrs. Leffert said it will go out to all through Infinite Campus.

Motion Passed 6-2

Favor: Mr. Patten, Ms. Karnal, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. Fattibene, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

Opposed: Mrs. Liu-McCormack and Mr. Llewellyn

District Improvement Plan

Mr. Dwyer introduced the draft District Improvement Plan and asked the Board to structure the conversation in the following order (1) What is not clear, (2) What the Board likes about the Plan, and (3) What could be improved in the Plan.

Dr. Title explained the evolution of the draft Plan and spoke to the 3 sections; the work focused on ways to meet the Mission as approved by the Board. Page 10 shows the basis of the Plan; it may take multiple years as other work continues to take place such as the Long-Range Facilities Plan. It is important to note that the Plan merges existing work with new ideas. Student Performance Indicators were reviewed; including the addition of a Board-requested indicator for students scoring 4 and above on AP tests. New measureable assessments were added. The baseline data and targets are yet to be added; the goal is to have those ready for the May 19 First Reading of this document. In the meantime, copies have been sent to Town officials to solicit comments; the Plan is also posted to the website with a comment form.

Mr. Fattibene moved, Mr. Llewellyn seconded to postpone discussion of the District Improvement Plan to the next Board meeting on 4/21/15.

Mr. Fattibene felt this topic deserved its own meeting.

Mr. Dwyer added that a public session could be dedicated to the topic, and April 21 is already a special meeting; this is a very impressive document that should be a good model.

Ms. Karnal felt the Board evaluation on 4/21 could be a lengthy process.

Motion Passed 8-0

At 10:59PM, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Ms. Karnal seconded to suspend the rules and extend the meeting to 11:20PM.

Motion Passed 8-0

First Reading of Policy 4220 – Personnel – Rights Responsibilities and Duties – Smoking by School Employees

First Reading of Policy 5314 – Students – Code of Behavior - Smoking

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly introduced both policies.

Mr. Dwyer asked for any questions to be forwarded to Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly ahead of the next regular meeting.

Mr. Patten questioned whether smoking in a personal car was allowed on school property; Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said this was not specifically discussed.

Mr. Fattibene asked about language regarding other smoking products. Mrs. Parks mentioned that smoking in cars on school property is not allowed; the language on smoking products came from CABE.

Discussion and Possible Action on Mr. Llewellyn’s Information Request for Internal Check Registers for Each School for the Last 2 Years

Mr. Llewellyn explained that his request is about transparency and not a single event in maintaining public trust; a single event raised the issue again. As a Board member he would like to get a better handle on the disbursement, use and source of discretionary funds at the school level; he is particularly concerned about an investigation over an invoice that used a tax-exempt status. The Board needs to look at more detail. His request was to look at all of the check registers of all the schools. He disputed the notion that redaction would be necessary, due to his experience sitting in front of the FOI commission in Hartford previously with Mrs. Munsell. He said he would select schools and go and visit them to look at their checkbook registers. He also asked if the district auditor Cohn-Reznick looked at this incident specifically and asked if they’d done their own investigation. He wants to see transparency.

Dr. Title said the request is not being denied; if the Board feels it is worth it, it will be done.

Mrs. Munsell stated that she did the investigation and there were no findings and therefore there was no written report. Additionally, in the course of the normal audit, the student activity accounts were audited, but not this situation specifically. In order to comply with this request, data from 2 years ago would have to be retrieved. This data would then have to be reviewed and redacted to ensure compliance with FERPA.

Mr. Llewellyn hoped that Ms. Munsell had somehow documented the fact that the tax-exempt status was not used; Mrs. Munsell said she believed it was used; an email reminder about the use of tax exempt status may have been sent.

Mr. Dwyer said the invoice was then later corrected.

Mr. Llewellyn said that if the tax exempt status was used then he would like to see the ledgers.

Mr. Fattibene said there is an obligation to do something about this possible improper invoicing within the district, Board members have a right and a duty to review public records, and so he would make a motion to access records; this should not require an undue burden on staff.

Mr. Fattibene moved “that any Board of Education member may access and inspect public records of the School District upon request and reasonable notice and by making arrangements for access and inspection during regular school hours with the Superintendent or his designee or upon other acceptable arrangements, and that the Superintendent shall notify all Board of Education members of all such requests.”

Mr. Dwyer ruled that Mr. Fattibene’s motion was out of order because it violated the Board’s By-laws.

Mr. Fattibene made a motion to challenge the ruling of the Chair.

Mrs. Gerber said she was unsure how this relates to Mr. Llewellyn’s request, as Mrs. Munsell has stated that this data is not easily accessible.

Approved by BOE 7/9/2015

Motion Failed 4-4

Favor: Mrs. Liu-McCormack, Ms. Karnal, Mr. Fattibene, Mr. Llewellyn

Oppose: Mr. Patten, Mrs. Gerber, Mr. Dwyer, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

Mr. Llewellyn stated he will draft a motion that addresses his request properly.

<i>Adjournment</i>

The meeting ended at 11:20PM

*Respectfully Submitted,
Jessica Gerber
Fairfield Board of Education, Secretary*