

**Newtown Board of Education  
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, May 17, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. in the board room at 3 Primrose Street.

W. Hart, Chair	J. Robinson
D. Leidlein, Vice Chair (8:50 p.m.)	L. Gejda
A. Buzzi, Secretary (absent)	R. Bienkowski
D. Nanavaty	10 Staff
L. Bittman (absent)	13 Public
R. Gaines (absent)	2 Press
K. Alexander	

Mr. Hart called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Item 1 – Student Recognition

CAPSS Award:

Dr. Robinson noted that the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents honors students who have contributed to their school. Newtown High School senior Matt Genovese was honored and will be attending Wheaton College in York, Massachusetts.

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education recognizes student leadership with awards for seniors. This year Megan Preis, who will be attending Bennington College and Brian Reed, who will be going to Princeton, received this award.

Mr. Dumais spoke about the two top students in the graduating class who have done better academically during all four years than any other student in their class. The Salutatorian is Brian Reed and the Valedictorian is Drew Robinson.

Item 3 – Public Participation - none

Item 4 – Reports

Sandy Hook School Report:

Dawn Hochsprung, Principal of Sandy Hook School, spoke about the high expectations for students at Sandy Hook and the importance of the students believing in themselves. Language arts is very important with the big focus this year on communication. The Sandy Hook Leadership Council consists of a representative of each grade level and special subject teachers that conduct classroom observations focusing on the components of the instructions. The parents were surveyed last summer and indicated they didn't want to lower the expectations for the students and felt it was important that the students also have fun in school.

Caring is very much a part of the Sandy Hook culture. Community meetings are held which bring students together for discussions. The Sandy Hook staff members attending were Chris Feda, Janet Vollmer, Becky Virgalla, Vicki Kazlauskas, Kelly McLaren, and Jennifer Sinal.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Robinson's reported on a meeting with the Town and Blum and Shapiro regarding staff interviews for their study of combining services.

The Board, parents and teachers were urged to attend the impressive junior and senior projects presentations at the high school on May 31, June 1 and June 2.

Our teacher evaluation committee is working on a teacher growth plan to pilot next year. The Strategic Planning Committee met for two days. The original three objectives have been revised to become five. There will be some tweaking with actions teams before coming to the Board.

For the first time the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at the middle school presented an ongoing review of their trip to Washington, D.C.

Dr. Robinson thanked the teachers who volunteered to call over 900 households to remind them of the budget vote today.

There were no facilities or policy sub committee meetings.

#### Early Release Day Report:

Dr. Gejda said the focus has been on student writing, addressing what good writing looks like and what we do if the students don't keep up with our standards. We have been meeting in small professional learning groups by grade level in the district.

Susan Ruddock, teacher at Head O'Meadow School spoke about the writing rubric for grade three and provided examples of the results in her class this year.

Mrs. Leidlein joined the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Mr. Nanavaty asked what the teachers did in subjects like business and music on the early release days. The response was they are adapting writing strategies to their subjects.

Dr. Gejda said the PLC process is developing at the high school. The other subject areas also include writing. She would provide a listing for the last presentation.

#### Item 2 – Consent Agenda

Mr. Alexander moved to approve the consent agenda. Mrs. Leidlein seconded.

Vote: 4 ayes

Mr. Nanavaty asked to remove the request by Christina Pierce. All were in favor of modifying the motion.

The items approved were the minutes of May 2, 2011 with the change from Mrs. Leidlein on page 3, sixth paragraph to remove "or the social studies position" from paragraph six, third line, the minutes of April 12, 2011, the donations to Newtown High School of \$200 from Taunton Press for the Future Business Leaders of America, a vehicle to the automotive repair classes, and \$200 from the Poetry Foundation to purchase poetry books for the library, the Newtown high School field trip to museums in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the resignation of Sheila Blachman, district Inclusion Facilitator, the resignation for retirement of Julie Birch, teacher at Head O'Meadow School, the resignation of Elisabeth Neeb, teacher at Middle Gate School, and the child rearing leave of absence for Nicole Sieber through the end of this school year. Vote: 4 ayes

#### Item 4 – Financial Report

Mr. Bienkowski said this is our closeout month and there were no transfers. We have an additional \$33,000 for tutoring expenses for special education students and expulsions. Special education placements have gone up with two more students being placed.

The amount from the excess cost grant will be \$365,000.

Mr. Nanavaty was concerned about this year's deficit for unemployment and employee benefits. We are looking at eliminating EAs who may be eligible for unemployment next year.

Mrs. Leidlein pointed out that we transferred \$35,000 out of that account to meet deficits in other accounts. She asked if there was a way to decrease the tutoring costs. Dr. Robinson said the only other option is using teachers which is half the cost. Mr. Hart said we can't guarantee which teachers would be available. We should look at other options besides Excel.

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved to approve the financial report for the month ending April 30, 2011. Mr. Nanavaty seconded. Vote: 4 ayes

Mr. Hart postponed the discussion on the transfer policy. The budget adoption will be at the June 7 meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the special meeting regarding an expulsion on April 4, 2011. Mr. Hart seconded. Vote: 2 ayes, 2 abstained (Mrs. Leidlein, Mr. Nanavaty)

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the special meeting regarding an expulsion on April 26, 2011. Mr. Alexander seconded. Vote: 3 ayes, 1 abstained (Mrs. Leidlein)

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the special meeting regarding an expulsion on May 10, 2011. Mr. Hart seconded. Vote: 2 ayes, 2 abstained (Mrs. Leidlein, Mr. Nanavaty)

#### Item 6 – New Business

##### Educational Technology Curriculum Grades K-8:

Dr. Gejda said this curriculum would be embedded in content area curriculum and is connected to our technology plan.

Bev Bjorklund showed an example of the technology program at Head O'Meadow School. Tina Welsh gave demonstrations of grade 7 and 8 student computer projects.

##### Policy 8-602.1 Section 504 Due Process:

Dr. Robinson said there are some changes because we weren't meeting the current law. We used CABA and our attorney as references.

Dr. Gejda said we want to make sure we are being cognizant of the changes being made. We have had presentations by attorneys to staff to be sure we are meeting the letter of the law.

Dr. Robinson stated that the guidelines don't come before the Board. Mrs. Leidlein asked to see them.

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved that the Board of Education go into executive session regarding student discipline and invited Dr. Robinson. Mr. Nanavaty seconded. Vote: 4 ayes

Item 7 – Executive Session

Item 8 – Motion Regarding Executive Session

MOTION: Mr. Nanavaty moved that the Board of Education accept the Stipulated Statement of Facts and Joint Recommendation dated May 4, 2011 regarding the expulsion of student A05172011. Mr. Alexander seconded. Vote: 4 ayes

MOTION: Mr. Alexander moved to adjourn. Mrs. Leidlein seconded. Vote: 4 ayes

Item 9 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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William Hart  
Chair