

STONINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING MARCH 14, 2013

Gail MacDonald, Chairwoman, called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. in the Stonington High School Commons. Members present were Faith Leitner, Secretary, Alisa Morrison, Frank Todisco, Craig Esposito and Kevin Bornstein. Late Arrival: Deborah Downie – 5:47 p.m.

Also present were Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent of Schools, Ana de Oliveira, Recording Secretary, members of the staff, students and interested citizens.

Comments from Citizens

Jane Hefel commented on the potential elimination of French V at SHS for next year. Ms. Hefel noted that her daughter, who is currently in 11th grade, and other students have worked so hard to be able to attend this class and feels this would be a big loss for the eight students involved and asked that this course be available for one more year.

SEED Approval – First Read

Nikki Gullickson explained the web page available on line for the administrators and teachers that address the guidelines on teacher and administrator evaluations. Hard copy of this document is available. Mrs. Gullickson presented a PowerPoint presentation of the SPS teacher and administrator evaluation plan. This presentation gave an overview of the evaluation process. Mrs. Gullickson thanked the teachers who contributed to the presentation, Kelly Enoch, Jennifer Bausch and Teresa Bonillo. Implementation plans are due no later than April 15th to the State. Mrs. Gullickson answered the following Board questions:

- State funding of SEED
- Is Implementation mandated?
- Mid-year evaluation and goals
- Teacher evaluation related to parent impact
- Customization of database by school district
- Purchase of assessments vs. creating our own
- General attitude of teachers
- Implications of meeting April 15th deadline

Legislator's Updates – Senator Andrew Maynard and State Representative Diana Urban

Diana Urban gave an overview of what is happening in Hartford as it relates to the School Based Health Center funding and implementation in SPS, raising the budget cap, mental health services, absenteeism in relationship to achievement gap and an informative website, www.ctkidsreportcard.org available from the State.

Senator Maynard mentioned that a meeting will take place in Hartford on Friday, March 15, which will focus on elementary and middle school appropriation. Senator Maynard also spoke of transportation funding, School Health Base Center, and the school safety bill, while noting that this is a very challenging year. Senator Maynard, will be sending out an email once a report is available.

Full-day K

Dr. Van Riley gave a short explanation of the Full-day Kindergarten Q&A flyer and noted that it will be sent out to area preschools and available on our website.

Looping Report by Jenn McCurdy and Tim Smith

Dr. Van Riley thanked the two middle school principals, Jenn McCurdy and Tim Smith, for their work on reviewing the looping class issue. Dr. Riley explained that principals support all teachers not just looping teachers and that staff is really concentrated on every student having a good opportunity in their schools. Dr. Riley explained that many meetings were held to discuss this topic and that the decision has been made to eliminate grades 5/6 looping programs.

Tim Smith and Jenn McCurdy addressed the questions that the community and the Board had on the looping program. Ms. McCurdy and Mr. Smith explained the Common Core State Standards as it relates to the looping program and the differences between K-5 and 6-college standards. They also explained the impact of staffing, class sizes and enrollment due to the elimination of the grade 5/6 looping programs.

Looping Report by Jenn McCurdy and Tim Smith - continued

Dr. Riley gave a summary and final comment on the looping issue and noted that the elimination of this program is not due to budgetary issues but the implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

The Board had questions related to the elimination of the program as it relates to which physical building that grade 5 students are placed, middle school vs. elementary school, teacher certification, quality of instruction, area schools and their current configuration of looping programs, current SPS 5/6 standards vs. Common Core State Standards, input from LEARN and how other districts are adjusting.

The Board noted that they support all that the administration has done concerning this issue and believes a lot of thought and consideration has been put into this and agrees with their decision. Gail MacDonald explained that the Boards' responsibility is to provide all students with the same skills. Mrs. MacDonald also explained that this change will allow these amazing opportunities of project based learning, mentorship, leadership to get expanded into more classrooms. Mrs. MacDonald noted that due to the differences in the standards, the current 5/6 looping configuration will not exist but that the 6/7 program will go forward.

Comments from Citizens Relative to Board Action on this Agenda

Lauren McGugan, a teacher of May/Junes program at Mystic Middle School, commented on the program and feels that it is a shame that it will come to an end but believes the transition will be a seamless one. Mrs. McGugan thanked administration for working with the teachers through this process. Mrs. McGugan also thanked all her colleagues, Para MaryAnn Altman, parents, present and past students for sharing this experience.

Bruce Yarnall spoke about excellent teaching and programs at SPS, different activities, classes given in the middle school and feels that there is lots of good learning going on in all classrooms in Stonington schools.

Davnet Schaffer asked the Board to look carefully at the Common Core State Standards and whether we should be putting all our eggs in one basket. Ms. Schaffer also mentioned her concern regarding May/Junes program change and the kindergarten changes as it relates to the cut off age and the standards.

Julie Duba commented on the Crickets program and spoke of her child's experience. Ms. Duba believes looping programs create division in our school and encouraged the Board to look at how schools are being affected socially and emotionally.

Bill Sternberg spoke on the selection process of the Crickets program and believes the only way to achieve fairness is to use a lottery system done in public.

Board Comments/Concerns

No comments at this time.

The following motion was made by Craig Esposito and seconded by Faith Leitner:

Motion 1: To adjourn at 7:38 p.m.

Aye: All


Faith Leitner, Board Secretary