

**Hartford Board of Education
Regular Meeting – Tuesday, October 16, 2007
Hartford Public High School Library – 55 Forest Street
Hartford, Connecticut**

MINUTES

I. Opening – 6:00 p.m.

A. Call to Order

At 6:07 p.m. Mayor Perez called the meeting to order. Nancy Williams, Support Administrator for the Board, administered the roll call, and a quorum was present.

<u>Present:</u> Honorable Mayor Eddie A. Perez, Chair Ms. Ada Miranda, First Vice Chair Mr. David MacDonald, Secretary Mr. Israel Flores Ms. Elizabeth Brad Noel Ms. Sharon Patterson-Stallings Ms. Andrea Comer Mr. Luis Rodriguez-Davila	<u>Absent:</u> Ms. Pamela Richmond
Superintendent Steven Adamowski	

Mayor Perez welcomed the audience with an opening statement regarding the meeting proceedings.

B. Reports

1. Report from the Chair

Mayor Perez stated that the District's Office of School Redesign has been holding public forums regarding the redesign of three schools: Milner, Burns and M.D. Fox. Each school forum includes a presentation by the administration on potential school designs for each school and participation from members of the school community about what is important to them in the redesign of their school.

Milner held its forum on September 27, and Burns' forum was held on October 1. The date for M.D. Fox's forum has been changed from October 11 to October 24 at 6 p.m. Childcare for children ages 2 and up will be available. Mayor Perez encouraged parents, faculty, and community leaders to attend.

Mayor Perez reported that the Hartford Public Schools is one of six districts selected by the Center for Reform of School Systems (CRSS) to participate in Reform Governance in Action (RGA). RGA is a comprehensive two-year training program for school boards and superintendents. The goal of the RGA program is to dramatically improve student achievement and eliminate the achievement gap by cultivating effective reform leadership.

Through a sequence of four off-site training institutes intermixed with ten on-site consulting visits, RGA board/superintendent teams improve governance practices and reform leadership, primarily through policy development. Hartford's team participated in an off-site training this past July and

hosted our first site visit in September. The next site visit will be held tomorrow, October 17 and Thursday, October 18.

At the September site visit, the Board/Superintendent was given the task of developing policies around core beliefs and commitments, board meetings and committees, and constituent service. Committees, made up of Board members and senior administrators, were formed to draft these policies. Over the next two days, the Board/Superintendent will collectively review these draft policies with the RGA consultant, Dr. Julian Trevino.

2. Report from the Superintendent

Superintendent Adamowski announced the formation of the Ingenuity Fund, which will administer privately raised dollars to assist the district with the planning costs of new schools. Over the next 5 years, there will be 22 new schools. Approximately, five hundred thousand dollars will be required for the start-up of each school. Over ten years, it is hoped that \$8 - \$10 million will be raised by this fund to help defer development costs. The idea is that half will be funded by national foundations, and the other half will be raised by regional donors. The goal is to insulate the cost of the development of the new schools from district operating costs. The Phoenix Companies is underwriting the Ingenuity Fund campaign, and has hired two independent fund raisers who will manage this campaign.

Superintendent Adamowski announced that the district will be partnering with the University of Connecticut's School of Nursing in the development of the new nursing school at the HPHS campus. Through this partnership, students will take dual credit courses in their junior and senior years to earn certification as medical assistants, as a step towards a college degree in nursing. Students who graduate from this program will be accepted into the UConn School of Nursing. This will create a seamless transition into a four year college program.

Superintendent Adamowski reported that Hartford Public High School received accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. This provides a solid platform on which HPHS's redesign process can begin.

Superintendent Adamowski proudly announced that the Connecticut Association of Schools has selected Josephine Smith, Principal of the Betances Elementary School, as this year's Outstanding First Year Principal. Superintendent Adamowski congratulated Ms. Smith.

3. Committee Reports

a. Board Meetings and Committees Committee

Ms. Noel, Committee Chair, explained that this Committee was formed as part of the RGA program. She introduced the members of the Committee: David MacDonald, Andrea Comer, Sharon Patterson-Stallings, and LaVerne Terry. Policies and practices are being developed to focus on student achievement.

b. Constituent Service Committee

Ms. Patterson-Stallings, Committee Chair, introduced the members of this Committee: Andrea Comer, Israel Flores, Pamela Richmond, Robyn Belek, Marta Bentham, and Jackie Hardy. The purpose of this Committee is to develop an effective constituent service policy that will eliminate Board micromanaging.

c. Core Beliefs Committee

Mayor Perez explained that Ms. Richmond, Committee Chair, was unable to attend this evening's meeting. He introduced the members of the Committee: Israel Flores, David MacDonald, James Thompson, and Penny MacCormack. Mayor Perez stated that the purpose of the Committee is to draft a clear statement of core beliefs and commitments to guide Board actions.

d. Policy Committee

Ms. Noel, Committee Chair, stated that the Committee reviews the policy manual every two years. One of the goals is to streamline the current policies, so they are more useful and appropriate. Members of the Committee are Andrea Comer, Ada Miranda, Sandy Cruz-Serrano, Ann Bird, and Ebbie Parsons.

e. Finance and Audit Committee

Mr. Flores, Committee Chair, stated that the Committee meets monthly. Membership includes David MacDonald and Luis Rodriguez-Davila. At the last meeting, the Committee approved an updated contract template for agenda items. The template ensures that the contracts are aligned with the District goals. In addition, the Committee is developing a lease policy. Additionally, the Committee is looking to complete a long-term financial plan.

f. Joint School Choice/Facilities Committee

Mr. MacDonald, Committee Chair, stated that membership includes Israel Flores, Ada Miranda, and Sharon Patterson-Stallings. At the last meeting, the Committee reviewed the policy on school redesign. It is a critical policy, which is on the Board agenda tonight. The focus is to improve student achievement over the long term. The Committee tried to account for as many variables as possible.

II. Public Comment on Agenda Items

David Ianno, member of HPHS PTSO, spoke in regards to Agenda Item 1, and expressed his concern with the School Redesign policy. A rigorous academic curriculum needs to be maintained, so students learn to read, write, think, etc. He doesn't want HPHS to become strictly a career-oriented school. Students flourish when there is consistency with staff. Contractual obligations need to be maintained.

Sam Saylor, President of the PTO Presidents' Council, spoke in regards to Agenda Item 3. Mr. Saylor expressed his support and that of other parents for Dr. Cohen and encouraged the Board to renew the contract with Dr. Cohen.

III. Business Agenda

A. Items in Order of Importance

1. Second Reading/Adoption: Policy on School Redesign (Policy Committee)

The purpose of this policy is to define the conditions under which schools will be Redesigned or Repurposed and the Board action that will precede such action.

Mr. MacDonald made a motion; Ms. Miranda seconded the motion.

Mr. MacDonald introduced the agenda item and explained the policy. Superintendent Adamowski stated that the Committee's review significantly improved the policy. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is in the process of setting criteria for the redesign of schools that have not made AYP for five years. The draft HPS policy falls in line with the draft CSDE criteria.

Ms. Noel concurred with the Superintendent's comment regarding the policy review. She is sympathetic to the statements from Mr. Ianno that with the development of career schools academic rigor will no longer exist. Ms. Noel is pleased to hear about the nursing academy; however, she would like to have more information about the possible academies. Superintendent Adamowski suggested that the discussion of the possible academies be discussed at an informational meeting.

Mayor Perez stated that his understanding is that the teachers have been invited to be part of the design team. He concurred with the Superintendent's remarks that the discussion regarding academies should be part of an informational session.

Ms. Noel responded that the Board's involvement does not end with the adoption of policy. The current academies should be considered, along with the newly designed academies. Superintendent Adamowski assured her that they are.

Superintendent Adamowski stated that the policy is for new schools. This is a multi-step process. Prior to design specifications, work has to be done with staff first to determine capacity.

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

2. Acceptance of Funds: Connecticut State Department of Education for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B - \$6,103,758 (Supt. et al)

IDEA Funds are dedicated to programming and services for those students with identified disabilities and include designated personnel, instructional material, parent activities, purchase of equipment for student use, assessment tools, professional development activities, transportation, etc.

Mr. MacDonald made a motion; Ms. Noel seconded the motion.

Ms. Noel stated that the 15% of this funding is set-aside for early prevention.

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

3. Contract Approval: Dr. Eric Cohen - \$126,000 (Supt. et al)

The contract provides psychiatric oversight to Special Education students in need of clinical services at the Hartford Transitional Learning Academy and psychiatric evaluations and consultations for Hartford Public School students who are referred through the Pupil Placement Team process.

Ms. Miranda made a motion; Ms. Noel seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

B. Consent Agenda

Consent Calendar I: Items 4, 5, 6, and 7.

4. Approval of Minutes of the Hartford Board of Education Regular Meeting of September 18, 2007 (Supt. et al) (Pages 81-88)
5. Approval of Minutes of the Hartford Board of Education Special Meeting of September 5, 2007 (Supt. et al) (Pages 78-80)
6. Approval of Minutes of the Hartford Board of Education Special Meeting of September 4, 2007 (Supt. et al) (Pages 76-77)
7. Budget Allocation Approval: July – September 2007 – Monthly Allocation Changes (Supt. et al)

In accordance with Board of Education Policy 3140, Transfer of Funds between Categories – Amendments, the Board of Education receives quarterly reports on monthly allocation changes.

Mr. MacDonald made a motion; Mr. Flores seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Consent Calendar II: Items 8, 9, and 10.

8. Approval: Formal Name Change of Greater Hartford Classical Magnet School (Supt. et al)

The Hartford Board of Education announced the Superintendent's recommendation to modify the name of the school to Classical Magnet School at the April 3, 2007 Board meeting and has abided by the 6 month requirement to allow for public comment. In addition, after referral to the City of Hartford's Public Buildings Dedication Committee, the Court of Common Council has approved a resolution to change the name of the school.

9. Appointment: Attorney Frank Szilagyi as Impartial Hearing Panel for School Accommodations and Transportation Hearings (Assistant Corporation Counsel)

Connecticut law requires boards of education to provide a hearing process for parents who wish to appeal the school system's withdrawal of school accommodations for children who do not reside in Hartford and decisions about transportation services for Hartford's students. In order to provide a speedy, efficient and fair hearing process, while avoiding undue burden for members of the board of education, appointment of a capable and experienced single member impartial hearing panel is appropriate.

10. Nondiscrimination Resolution (Assistant Corporation Counsel)

The State of Connecticut is now required by law to require that all of its contracts include an agreement of the contractor that it adopts very specific nondiscrimination mandates that otherwise apply only to the State of Connecticut. Despite the similarity of existing policies, the State of Connecticut is requiring that the Board of Education expressly adopt and endorse the mandates of Connecticut General Statute Sections 4a-60(a)(1) and 4a60a(a)(1), as a condition to receipt of state grants and contracts that are now in process.

Mr. MacDonald made a motion; Ms. Miranda seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

IV. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Topics

Maria Gomez, parent at Sanchez Elementary School, is concerned that the playground is being vandalized. In addition, the parents would like to have another security officer at the school.

Angelina Ford, parent from Weaver High School, stated that students were given an HIV test without parental consent. Parents were told that students would be tested for sexually transmitted diseases.

Mayor Perez responded that his office has been made aware of the issue. Superintendent Adamowski explained how the testing came about and apologized on behalf of the Weaver High School staff. It should not have occurred, and it is his understanding that there will be a meeting with parents to convey such a message.

Cathy Carpino, President of the HFT, understands that the Pre-K program will be turned over to the City beginning in the 2008-2009 school year. She raised the question of whether the Pre-K program will be provided by certified Hartford Public School teachers. Support staff is concerned that they will not have positions. Ms. Carpino raised concern with the number of social service contracts. The district is working with 13 less social workers than in 2006-2007. There is only one social worker at HTLA for 75 students. Support staff would like to know if they will have positions next year. In addition, 17 health paras will be let go and will be replaced by medical assistants, who are not members of the paraprofessional union. Ms. Carpino stated concern for the Special Education Department and asked who will head this department. She also asked how teachers in redesign schools will be placed and if they will be allowed to apply for a position within the newly designed school. Lastly, Ms. Carpino stated that she is concerned by the recent designation of the Hartford Public Schools as the Hartford System of Schools.

Joanne Tremblay-Jackson, social worker, is concerned that the district will privatize social services. She has done some homework and has found that early diagnosis and intervention are key to the success of students. Social services are provided to students with and without IEPs.

Dave Ianno, member of HPHS PTSO, is concerned with the choice program. He would like some information as to whether PTAs or PTOs will exist in their current form. He concurred with Ms. Carpino's comments regarding the designation of Hartford System of Schools.

Deborah Oaks, nurse's aide, stated that CNAs do much more than has been relayed to the Board. Her commitment to the children remains.

Mathew John, expressed his support of the CNAs. He complained about the mistreatment by the Human Resources personnel.

Andrea Johnson, First Vice President of the HFT, spoke against the name change of the Hartford Public Schools to Hartford, A System of Schools.

Mayor Perez stated that the Hartford, A System of Schools is a slogan for the district, similarly to the city's A Rising Star slogan. The name, Hartford Public Schools, has not been changed.

Betty Gadson, President of the Hartford Paraprofessionals Union, does not like that the CNAs will be eliminated without proper notification. She has attempted to meet with the Superintendent and would like to discuss this issue, along with the issue surrounding training for paras who work with autistic students.

Michael Downes, President of the Hartford Substitute Teachers Union, expressed the need to increase the budget for paraprofessionals. He hopes that the CNAs will be allowed to be paraprofessionals.

Barbara Burke, Co-President of the WHS PTO, stated that parents should know the benchmarks for students in each grade. The expected outcomes for academic success should be widely publicized. She stated that the summer reading list was disrespectful and did not provide suggestions for students in grades 9-12. There are parents willing to assist the district in developing a comprehensive reading list.

Milly Arciniegas stated that parents had been told that the HTLA program was to have a new focus as a literacy academy; however, this is not the case. They are short of staff, and there aren't appropriate supports for the students. The current condition is unacceptable.

Sam Saylor, PTO Presidents' Council, asked the Board of Education to reconsider the placement of the public portion at the end of meetings. He is concerned that applicants for employment with the HPS have to be computer literate to fill out an application. Not all applicants are computer literate.

Stephanie Knutson, Nursing Coordinator for the Hartford Public Schools, stated that a nurse is needed in each school. The level of service has to be increased.

Ebony Land, parent of an M.D. Fox student, stated that parents are not being fully informed of what exactly school redesign entails. More has to be done to inform parents.

Sally Farrell and **Carmen Amaro**, spoke in support of school-based health clinics. CNAs are part of the clinic team and are critical to the success of the clinics. CNAs train medical assistants. The goal of the clinics is to be self-funded. CNAs should be given the same consideration, as was done with paras, to go back to school to become medical assistants,

Ms. Comer stated that the message regarding the new slogan is that the public is not important. She doesn't believe that to be the intention; however, it came across that way.

V. Executive Session

Ms. Noel made a motion to enter into Executive Session; Ms. Miranda seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.