

HARTFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION

Minutes

Regular Meeting – October 18, 2011

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the Hartford Board of Education (hereinafter “Board”) met on Tuesday, October 18, 2011. The meeting was held at McDonough Expeditionary Learning School, 111 Hillside Avenue, Hartford, Connecticut 06105.

I. Call to Order

Mr. MacDonald called the meeting to order at 5:52 p.m. A quorum was present.

<p><u>Present:</u> Mr. David MacDonald, Chair Ms. Pamela Richmond, Vice Chair Ms. Lori L. Hudson, Second Vice Chair Ms. Sharon Patterson-Stallings, Secretary Ms. Elizabeth Brad Noel Mr. Luis Rodríguez-Dávila Mr. Robert Cotto, Jr.</p>	<p><u>Absent:</u> Ms. Ada Miranda Mr. Israel Flores</p>
Superintendent Christina Kishimoto	

II. Public Participation

1. Hyacinth Yennie, Advocate for Children, spoke to the Board regarding the principal at the Green Technology Academy at Hartford High have made a difference in the school. She stated that he is always available to parents and students. Ms. Yennie also spoke regarding transportation, the choice process and bell times. She suggested going back to the neighborhood school. Ms. Yennie commented about the media center at Hartford High. She stated that having the media center after schools hours is positive for the students.
2. Cheryl Perry, PTO at Rawson, addressed the Board with her concerns on PTO's. She stated that there are principals that try to interfere with PTO's and also with the formation of school governance councils. She recommended working in collaboration with the schools and the administration.

Dr. Kishimoto stated that the Board adopted the design specifications for a separate Rawson Middle Grades Academy; there are two schools within one. She stated that it is important that both schools work collaboratively in an environment that is consistent across the entire school building; that parent leaders, school councils and the administration meet to discuss the issues and set the expectations for Rawson School.

3. Milly Arciniegas, HPOC President, stated that the first HPOC meeting took place last month. The District's goals were presented; they are simple and parents understand the goals. Parents are engaged and onboard. Ms. Arciniegas spoke regarding the Parent and Community committee; she stated that parents are members of the committee. One of the charges is to review the policy on parental engagement. She stated that principals need to understand the importance of PTO's and school governance councils and how the two entities need to work together in order to have parental engagement. She asked Dr. Kishimoto to send a message to principals so they adhere to policies.

Dr. Kishimoto stated that the District and the PTO Council have worked together to organize parents to have them involved. She spoke regarding the School Governance Councils policy. She stated that the District is now a model in the State. This is the second phase of the implementation of the policy.

The schools that need more support will have to be identified, so those principals get the help needed to implement the policy.

4. Paul Holzer, Achieve Hartford!, spoke to the Board regarding the Choice process. He stated the commitment of his organization to partner with the school system to communicate the process to parents. Achieve Hartford will assist parents with the application process and communicate the choices available. Mr. Holzer announced the Spelling Bee Competition which is scheduled for Friday, October 21st. He stated that this is the first year that there are 40 teams registered to participate.
5. Andrea Johnson, Hartford Federation of Teachers President, referred to the book "The Death and Life of the Great American School System" by Dr. Dianne Ravitch. She invited the Board and Superintendent to attend Dr. Ravitch's visit to Hartford scheduled for November 22. She stated that teachers, PTO presidents, City officials and Governor Malloy have been invited.

Dr. Kishimoto stated that she is holding meetings with building reps to discuss their concerns and also received their feedback about the strategic operating plan.

III. Reports

1. Report of the Chair

Mr. MacDonald reported that HPS had a good start with some common issues in transportation and school assignments, but overall it has been a good start. There is a new framework for the strategic operating plan (SOP), the school governance councils are convening and the revised policy is being presented for first reading. The reform is moving forward. Mr. MacDonald stated that he attended the Jump Start for reading on October 6. The event highlighted one of the mayor goals in the SOP which is the third grade promise. He thanked the staff for organizing the event.

2. Report of the Superintendent

Dr. Kishimoto stated that four schools were recognized as America's Best High Schools:

- Capital Preparatory Magnet School
 - Pathways to Technology Magnet School
 - Sport and Medical Sciences Academy
 - University High School of Science and Engineering
- CSDE Special Education Letter

Dr. Kishimoto informed that the District received a report from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). The district was subject to a special education compliance visit in December 2010, the report received on October 6, is the report related to the compliance visit. The CSDE has reported that Hartford is noncompliant in three areas of special education: (1) operating procedures that include the management of the files at central office, administrative procedures and staffing levels being lower than they recommend; (2) the quality of IEP's and the special education programming. This is specific for the continuum of services approach; they have recognized that Hartford is doing very well at sites like Milner, MLK, and Betances. The third area is the student based budgeting and the timeline for efficient transfer of funds when the child is going from one school to another.

Hartford is required to develop an action plan in response to the report; the action plan is due on November 15. The CSDE will provide a report to the action plan by December 16. A meeting of

Hartford's Special Education team and the State Department of Special Education will take place in January.

An internal Ad-Hoc committee on Special Education was created to look at the alignment of systems. Hiring services were contracted to help filling two key positions: the Executive Director of Special Education and the director of special education services. A consultant was hired, who is an expert on special education, to evaluate our system and to help us put things in place.

A letter to acknowledge the receipt of the report was sent to the State Department of Education indicating the agreement with most components of the report. A correction was also submitted regarding misinformation contained in the report. The ad-Hoc committee is working on the action plan and interviews are being conducted for the two positions that are vacant. More training on special education will be conducted; a meeting with principals took place to go over the report and to discuss quality and expectations.

Dr. Kishimoto stated that this is a priority for the District and will respond in a timely manner with a quality plan of action. Hartford will no longer be sighted for noncompliance.

Mr. MacDonald stated that the task force spent a fair amount of time developing the procedures for IEP's and special education. He requested a report to look at the State findings and compare them with the task force recommendations. Any additional work needed at the policy level, will help to address the shortcomings.

Dr. Kishimoto stated that there has been progress in some areas, but not to the scale that is needed.

- Intra-District and Inter-District Time Alignment

The intra-district choice application was moved to start at the same time with the Regional Choice application. Last year, the application process began in January, but the Regional choice application started three months earlier. This change will create a consistent timeline for families and will allow making placement decisions in a way that will align better with the budget process. The information will be disseminated at the school level, the choice fairs will be aligned with the regional choice, and the media campaign will start as soon as possible.

- Renzulli Gifted and Talented Academy

The academy will be moving from its temporary space at Simpson Waverly to its permanent space at the former Mt. Laurel School. The building has been cleaned up and painted in partnership with the staff at Renzulli academy. The open house will take place on November 4 and the ribbon cutting on November 9.

Ms. Noel asked for the number of students enrolled in the school.

Mr. De La Paz stated that there are currently one hundred students.

- Weaver Campus Construction Project

Dr. Kishimoto stated that an application to the State has been submitted which is due on June 30, 2012. The plan will have to be completed at the District level to later bring it to the City Council. The Blue Hills Civic Association and community leaders have worked hard to develop a proposal for three to four potential designs. The plan will be presented to the Board in December.

3. Committee Report

- o School Choice and Facilities Committee

Ms. Patterson-Stallings reported that the choice application and fairs have been moved to start earlier. The kickoff was on Saturday. She stated that there will be a change of leadership in the Choice Department; the Choice office will be moved under the direction of the Chief Operating Officer.

- o Parent and Community Engagement Committee

Ms. Patterson-Stallings stated that the committee reviewed the School Governance Councils policy to align it with the State Law. All schools will have SGC's and their members will be elected in a fair election. Elections will be conducted with the collaboration of the PTO's, principals and the schools. The council will follow a timeline that has been established in the policy and all functions will be followed.

- o Policy Committee

Ms. Noel stated that the Board is presented with the second reading of the policy on Security Check and Fingerprinting. The revision was made to be in compliance with State Law. The change is that all candidates for employment, including independent contractors, should be checked with the register sex offenders.

IV. Business Agenda

A. Items in Order of Importance

1. Interim Administrative Appointment (Supt. et al)

The Hartford Board of Education approves the Superintendent's recommendation to appoint Leslyee Frederick as Interim Chief Academic Officer, for the period of October 3, 2011 through December 31, 2011.

Ms. Richmond moved; Ms. Hudson seconded.

The item passed unanimously by voice vote.

2. First Reading: Revised Policy 1211 – School Governance Councils (Parent and Community Engagement Committee)

The state education reform law, An Act Concerning Education Reform in Connecticut, Public Act 10-111, Section 21(g), includes provisions for School Governance Councils. Those provisions were incorporated into the District's School Governance Councils Policy 1211.

Ms. Richmond moved; Ms. Noel seconded.

Mr. Cotto stated that there is a recent article that highlighted Connecticut as a model for parent-administrator collaboration in the schools.

Mr. Cotto raised questions regarding the membership and selection process. The State law for School Governance Council does not mention the PTO, it calls for an election. He also requested more

information about the three years of service. He raised concerns for the language regarding reconstituting schools that are not meeting AYP.

Ms. Patterson-Stallings stated that the State law refers to low performing schools; there is a number of towns that have raised the same question. She stated that the language contained in the policy can be revisited and clarified.

Mr. MacDonald stated that the election process specifies the constituent groups. The election process needs to be coordinated in collaboration with the principal and the parent organization. An election is required by the policy.

Ms. Noel requested a list of the names of the schools' council members.

Mr. MacDonald stated that Board members can reach to individual members to learn if they allow providing their contact information, but their names and information should not be made public.

Dr. Kishimoto stated that a position was created to support the School Governance Councils. This person works under the direction of the office of Talent management. This position was created to support the councils and to assist with the implementation of the policy.

Mr. Richmond stated that the function of the governance council is a matter of local governance at the school level. Providing the names to Board members does not prove the efficiency or level of accomplishment; the Board has the opportunity to work with the principals. Earlier this year, a session was conducted with the school councils. The representatives from each school spoke and they were extremely well represented.

Mr. Rodríguez-Dávila stated that parents are happy and satisfied with the end result of this process.

3. Second Reading and Adoption: Policy 4112.5 Security Check / Fingerprinting (Policy Committee)

Each person hired by Hartford Public Schools shall be required to submit to state and national criminal record checks. A check of sex offender registries must be conducted on all final candidates for employment, including independent contractors.

Ms. Richmond moved; Ms. Noel seconded.

The item passed unanimously by voice vote.

4. Contract Continuation Approval: Creative Interventions, LLC \$196,400 per year / 2 years (Supt. et al)

Creative Interventions, LLC provides direct and in-direct services to students with autism spectrum disorders. Services include the development of an Applied Behavior Analysis program, a research-based methodology that provides specific strategies for students with autism who exhibit severe behavioral, communication, social, and cognitive difficulties. Creative Interventions also provides job-embedded professional development and training.

Ms. Richmond moved; Ms. Noel seconded.

The item passed unanimously by voice vote.

5. Contract Continuation Approval: Bauzá & Associates \$183,500 (Supt. et al)

Hartford Public Schools will contract with Bauzá & Associates to design and execute an informational campaign that promotes Hartford families' choice of an intra-district school. Bauzá & Associates will provide media, marketing, advertising and public relations services and materials for the school system's intra-district Choice schools and the School Choice application and selection process through the period ending June 30, 2012.

Ms. Richmond moved; Ms. Hudson seconded.

Dr. Kishimoto stated that Bauzá will support the marketing and information campaign for the Intra-District Choice process. The focus of the campaign is to promote the portfolio of high performing schools and that will be the primary message of the campaign. The graduation rates and test scores will be emphasized so families can see the information on the choice options available.

Dr. Kishimoto stated that Bauzá conducted research last year and they have the data available. Bauza is a state approved vendor, approved through 2013.

Mr. MacDonald asked if all the schools will be highlighted as part of the campaign.

Dr. Kishimoto stated that these are media clips, so not all the schools will be included.

Mr. MacDonald stated that the schools should provide data to parents so parents can make informed decisions.

Ms. Noel raised concerns for using the same company that made the marketing campaign last year. She stated that the campaign was deceiving and negative.

Dr. Kishimoto stated that the regional choice campaign talks about regional choice options, but not about any of the schools in Hartford. We need to provide families with information concerning Hartford schools. She stated that the administration controls the message; Bauza does not make decisions. The campaign used last year was a message directed by the leadership then. The message approach this year will be different. The accountability of the campaign lays in the new leadership and how the message is delivered.

Mr. Cotto raised concerns for the contract being sole source. He stated that the last campaign was very problematic. He expressed his disapproval for the campaign held last year. He stated that the problem is not about Bauzá, is about the communication between the administration and Bauzá.

Mr. Rodríguez-Dávila stated that the company developed the campaign based on contractual obligations. The responsibility falls on the leadership that runs the school system.

Dr. Kishimoto stated that the campaign will be a marketing approach that is meant to increase the information for parents. It is not about being negative in the message. The goal is to get this information quickly to parents.

Mr. Hudson agreed with Mr. Rodríguez-Dávila in that Bauza followed a directive. She stated that Hartford needs to promote Hartford Schools and the achievement accomplished. Dr. Kishimoto can be entrusted to take that message to develop a campaign that is positive and that provides the information to parents to choose our schools.

Mr. Rodríguez-Dávila stated his support for Dr. Kishimoto's judgment on the next campaign and requested that the concerns raised are taken into account.

Ms. Noel requested an amendment to the item. Ms. Noel requested that the Board has the opportunity to see the campaign before it goes out.

Ms. Richmond stated that the Board cannot micromanage the Superintendent. She expressed her disagreement with the motion.

Ms. Patterson-Stallings concurred with Ms. Richmond.

Mr. Rodríguez-Dávila requested that the theme and the slogan are shared with the Board to give an opportunity to provide feedback.

The amendment failed.

Mr. MacDonald recalled the original motion. Mr. Cotto, Mr. Rodríguez-Dávila and Ms. Noel opposed.

The item passed by voice vote.

B. Consent Agenda

6. Contract Approval: The Village for Families and Children \$75,000 per year; Compass Youth Collaborative \$62,000 per year; Catholic Charities, Inc. \$50,000 per year – High School Graduation Initiative Grant (Supt. et al)

The High School Graduation Initiative Grant and the Memorandum of Understanding with five organizations were approved by the Board of Education on December 2010. The project's goal is to increase the graduation rate at the academies housed on the campuses of Hartford Public High School, Weaver High School, and Bulkeley High School by 6 percent per year, beginning with the class of 2011. In order to reach the goal, Hartford Public Schools has partnered with The Village for Families and Children, Compass Youth Collaborative, and Catholic Charities, Inc.

7. Contract Approval: Connecticut Pediatric Neuropsychology Associates \$36,000 (Supt. et al)

CT Pediatric Neuropsychology Associates is providing Neuropsychological Consultation to the Hartford Public Schools students. A small contract in the amount of \$24,500 has been approved to complete neuropsychological evaluations requested in PPTs during the summer. We are increasing this contract for an additional \$36,000.00 to continue providing neuropsychological evaluations requested at PPTs during the school year.

8. Resolution: Appointment of School Building Committee Member (The Board)

The Hartford Board of Education appoints Victor De La Paz to serve on the Hartford School Building Committee for a term of two years, effective October 19, 2011. The Superintendent of schools holds a permanent seat on the School Building Committee. Alexander Nardone is appointed to serve as alternate for the Superintendent as necessary.

9. Approval of School Construction Plans and ED042 Submittal (Supt. et al)

The State Department of Education, Bureau of School Facilities (BSF) requires that School Building Committees and Boards of Education certify that they have approved the final construction documents for school construction projects prior to BSF review of the plans. The Hartford Board of Education approves the final plans and authorizes the architects to submit the documents for the Playground project at Mary M. Hooker Environmental Sciences Magnet, State Project # 064-0293 (Phase 2).

Ms. Patterson-Stallings made a motion; Ms. Hudson seconded.

Mr. Cotto and Ms. Noel opposed. Mr. Rodríguez-Dávila abstained.

The motion passed by voice vote.

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.