

HARTFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION

MINUTES

Regular Meeting – January 17, 2017

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the Hartford Board of Education (hereinafter “Board”) met on Tuesday, January 17, 2017. The meeting was held at the Journalism and Media Magnet Academy, 150 Tower Avenue, Hartford, CT 06112.

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Roll Call**

Mr. Wareing called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m. There was a quorum present.

<u>Present:</u> Richard Wareing, Chair Tiffany Glanville, Vice-Chair Craig Stallings, Secretary Julio Flores Karen T. Taylor Michael Brescia	<u>Absent:</u> Robert Cotto, Jr.
Superintendent Leslie Torres-Rodriguez	
	Student Representative, Alexa Marotta Student Representative, Giovanni Jones

III. Public Participation

1. Hyacinth Yennie, spoke on Hartford Public High School (HPS), and that she has spoken on the issue of the computer in the library not being connected to a printer for years. She also spoke on the swimming pool, and it not being used as it should be. She spoke on discipline needing to get under control and on the need to get back to community schools. She hears from the community that they don't feel like they are part of a community school, as most are bussed in.
2. Anne Nguyen, parent and staff member of the Sport & Medical Sciences Academy, spoke on a change in the Grade Point Average, and how it is calculated. She stated they were never informed of the change, and cannot receive a straight answer on why it was changed. She also spoke on the budget, and Hartford needing to offer more than sending districts if we are to keep our numbers up.
3. Michelle Newbold, parent, spoke in support of the community schools and the Hartford Partnership for Student Success agenda item. Her children are in the 2nd and 4th grade, and as a working parent, she does not have to worry about what they eat. She spoke on the many benefits, including being able to use their computer, arts and crafts, coffee/tea, finding coats in time of need, taking classes to help with her kids at home, help with laundry, and the dental clinic, among others.
4. Natalie Langlaise, parent of a Martin Luther King School student, wanted to draw to the board's attention the sense of urgency the community is feeling in regards to consolidations and possible school closings. She sees parents moving their kids around because they are not sure if their schools will remain open. We do have to go through consolidation, but she feels the board needs to let them know it will not happen overnight. She also spoke on numerous complaints she has heard about the welcome center when parents are registering

their kids. Complaints included a lack of cultural competency, on parents being told not to register at certain schools and the reasons given not making sense. She urged the matter be looked into. Lastly, she spoke on the Equity 2020 process and the community deserving an update as to what the next steps are.

5. Victoria Ingleton, student at Sport & Medical Sciences Academy, recently learned that the rating system for grade point averages has changed. She has worked hard for her straight A's, and now because of the new system, her GPA says 3.5, and not 4.0 like it used to. She wanted answers as to why the grading system changed.
6. Terry Stringer, resident of East Hartford, has pastored in the city for the past 30 years, and has volunteered at Simpson Waverly for the last 6 years. He had misconceptions about the Hartford children, and was happily proved wrong. They are bright students, and he feels it is the system that needs to change. If you move the schools, you change the community and closing schools in the promise zone, would not be fulfilling the promise.
7. Shellye Davis, President of the Paraprofessional Union, spoke on the dedicated paraprofessionals being united on the non-closure of schools. They hear that options on closing schools are still on the table, but not being made public. If there are plans, they need community input. The schools they are considering closing are all in the north end, in predominantly Black neighborhoods. There are consequences to closing, and urged the board to think about all of the wrap around services the schools provide. There are also plans to cut more teachers, while the administration is bloated. She gave an example of Ferguson, MO, where they closed schools, and the courts ruled that it was a violation of their civil rights. Let the cuts be fair, and keep them involved.
8. Jackie Aviles, paraprofessional, is frustrated with the administration's mismanagement, and stated that making cuts to paraprofessionals and teachers would lead to larger class sizes, and the para/student ratio would change and the district would be out of compliance with many Individualized Education Plans (IEP's). Students would fail, or move to other districts, and she urged the cuts to begin at the top.
9. Mary Russell, lifelong resident of Hartford, paraprofessional, spoke first hand as a parent of children who walked to school, and being an involved parent, the importance of a neighborhood school. They help to develop the child overall and that sense is gone, as many spend hours on the bus. She advocated for paraprofessionals, stating that our students depend on them. She also touched on a rumor she heard, regarding McDonough School closing for lack of enrollment.
10. Andrea Johnson, president of the Hartford Federation of Teachers (HFT), spoke on major concerns regarding the budget crisis and on the Hartford Courant article on the potential 200 plus cuts to staff. She stated that she did speak with the superintendent, and was invited to a meeting, unfortunately she and others were sick, and hopefully they will reschedule. She wanted them to know about the calculations she's been making, in regards to the 215 people working at central office. Twenty of those are HFT members, and more are members of other unions, leaving about 140 others, and their salaries are quite large. She pointed out that the HFT has frozen their salaries for the last 2 years. She wanted to make it clear that in the event they need to save money, the Board must not cut teachers, there are other avenues to consider.
11. Tracy Carter, HPHS staff, was here to again address the issue of the library and the printer not being attached. They have 9 computers now, down from 28.
12. Ted Strelez, paraprofessional at Classical Magnet School, stated that other paras have spoken on what he wanted to speak about, and wanted to add that it would be great if the first cuts are to people who do not work directly with students.

13. Michael Downes, President of the Substitute Federation of Teachers, stated out by stating that rentals and leases are 20% of the budget, and all schools that are renting need to move back into city owned buildings. He feels there is plenty of money in the city, and that we can use the corporations we have in the city for money. We should not to be so quick to close neighborhood schools, especially in the north end, and one way to save money would be transportation. Lastly, he spoke on Clark School, and wanting to see an updated report, as he was not satisfied with what he saw.
14. Damian Morgan, Community Director of Compass at Bellizzi, spoke on the impact of changes in funding, if there were any, to the community schools. If you remove the school, the city dies. They provide dental services, and about 68% of students use this. They don't have to leave the school to receive services, and this helps them to stay in school and learn. These are services that parents need and want.
15. April Goff Brown, representing Catholic Charities as the agency in the community school at Milner, spoke on transforming the school from a neighborhood school to a full service environment that supports student learning. Examples given were leveraging over 500 volunteer hours in services for Milner, full time master level clinician on site providing over 500 hours of therapeutic services to children and families, and when the school's Family Resource Aide was eliminated, they took that job on.
16. Shontá Browdy, parent that has been advocating for over 10 years, stated that this was the worst that she has seen things. She finds it ridiculous that even though Equity 2020 has halted, the board is still shopping ideas on closing to principals, that the choice office steers parents away from enrolling students at schools that were set to close, that the printer is still not set up at HPHS, class sizes are too high, that there is no longer a paraprofessional in every class, that her friends child's needs are not being met after her mom has done everything possible, that schools are still not receiving support from central office, and that we are still contributing to the school to prison pipeline. She stated that school choice is just a segue to school closure. She stated that if the next superintendent continues with this madness, and
17. Jacqueline Santiago, Chief Operating Officer of Compass Youth Collaborative, spoke on why their partnership was so important. Community schools are more of a strategy than a program, and Hartford Public Schools cannot do this work alone. These partnerships are needed since no one can do it alone.

IV. Reports

1. Report of the Chair
No report
2. Report of the Superintendent

Dr. Torres-Rodriguez, spoke on the ongoing budget development process for fiscal year 2017-18, and anticipating having to make tough decisions at many levels. This process will require robust participation of the whole school community; from our Central Office personnel to our students, principals, teachers, support staff, parents, guardian, partners and school neighbors. We are certain that two things need to happen to achieve success during this year's budget development process:

1. We must work together with full engagement from all community stakeholders
2. We must let our highest values guide our investment strategies in education

We recognize the additional and related pressures on schools and the district, such as:

- Many of our schools operate under capacity;
- Enrollment continues to decline;
- Many of our schools have aged facilities that require significant investment; and
- The disparity in student performance across the district.

During the last Finance Committee Meeting, illustrations were used to show the impact of a projected \$20 million gap.

I want to clarify that the “teacher cuts” illustration that came out during last week’s presentation and discussed in the media were meant to visualize the scope of the funding gap when you look at the entire system. The budget process has barely begun, and I assure you that reducing the number of teachers would be a measure of last resort.

This year we are significantly enhancing the budget engagement process, and at the core of that process is an enhanced engagement. They are holding at least 3 community forums on the budget process.

Dr. Torres-Rodriguez also gave an update on the change in leadership at the HPHS campus. Melony Brady-Shanley, principal at the Nursing Academy accepted a position in another district, and the district has decided to maximize the opportunity to further streamline leadership structure and merging of resources. The two remaining Principals, (Jose A. Colon and Michael Maziarz) will continue to lead the campus.

3. Committee Reports

- Finance & Audit Committee

Mr. Stallings echoed the Superintendent’s remarks that only budget cut *scenarios* were discussed at the committee meeting, and that there is nothing in front of the board for a vote. They want to hear from every School Governance Council (SGC) on their priorities, and extended an invitation to union leadership to a future finance committee meeting, to further the dialogue. He also has secured 30 computers for HPHS Library.

- Parent and Community Engagement

Mr. Flores reported on the committee continuing to work on parent policies. Also they have not only met with the group of 10 schools that have been targeted for SGC support, but have met with all of the SGC’s. Teams from the finance department will meet with every SGC to make sure they are prepared and trained to work on their budget. He reported that they are also finalizing the handbook. The academics department has also joined the committee, for input from the teaching and learning perspective.

- Policy Committee

Ms. Taylor reported that the committee was continuing work on the school closing policy, and that it has more safeguards for the parents and community than ever. They are also drafting a volunteer policy and updating the graduation requirement policy.

V. Business Agenda

1. Second Reading and Adoption: Proposed School Calendar for 2017-18

That the Hartford Board of Education accepts the second reading and adopts the proposed 2017-2018 School Calendar.

VOTE

In favor: Wareing, Glanville, Stallings, Brescia, Flores, Taylor

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

Absent: Cotto

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

A. Consent Agenda

2. Payment Approval: Hartford Partnership for Student Success \$95,000 (Supt et al.)

The School Community Partnership was convened in 2007 to act as the planning body for the development of community schools in Hartford. The community schools model was selected for its focus on whole child development and the integration with the school day for purpose of supporting student achievement and the emerging reform efforts at Hartford Public School. The partners, who include The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, The City of Hartford, United Way, Hartford Public Schools, The Hartford and Aetna, voted to expand the scope of the partnership focus and establish the Hartford Partnership for Student Success.

That the Hartford Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent to issue payment in the amount of \$95,000 to the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, as partnership fiscal agent and employer of record, in support of the Hartford Partnership for Student Success.

Ms. Glanville raised concerns on the return on investment, and over Hartford Schools not providing these basic services that the community partner then had to fill. She felt that HPS needs to realign their priorities.

Ms. Deidre Tavera, Chief Communications and Policy Offer, stated they are Title 1 dollars, and the return on investment is academic as well as other components.

Ms. Tauheedah Jackson, Director of Hartford Partnership for Student Success (HPSS) agreed and stated this is a good opportunity that the district be at the table with the funders, to form these priorities and leverage the resources.

Discussion over the overall academic gains and if we are comparing gains to schools that have other after school programs, not in the HPSS. Also discussion over their role in School Governance Councils (SGC's).

Discussion on how the board can be more involved, learn more and have more input on HPSS, and it was decided that the board will hold a workshop on this topic in the near future.

Mr. Stallings invited them and the partners to a finance committee meeting in the near future.

Mr. Flores suggested having all of the services quantified, asking if all of these services went away, how much would we need to fill them?

VOTE

In favor: Wareing, Glanville, Stallings, Brescia, Flores, Taylor

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

Absent: Cotto

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

B. Executive Session (Discussion of the Case Boutillier vs. Hartford Public Schools)

Mr. Wareing moved to go into executive session, Ms. Taylor seconded.

Julia Wilde, Corporation Counsel, and Melinda Kaufmann from Pullman and Comley, joined them.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.