

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENWICH BOARD OF EDUCATION

DATE: November 5, 2009, 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: Havemeyer Building

PRESENT:

Board: Mrs. Nancy Weissler, Chairman
Mrs. Leslie Moriarty, Vice-Chairman
Mr. Michael Bodson, Secretary
Mr. Steven B. Anderson
Mr. Jonathan Cohen
Mrs. Marianna Ponns Cohen
Dr. Susan S. Ellis
Ms. Natalie Queen

Administration:

Dr. Ellen Flanagan, Director of Human Resources
Dr. Susan Wallerstein, Asst. Superintendent, Business Operations
Mr. John Curtin, Asst. Superintendent
Ms. Mary P. Forde, Director, Pupil Personnel Services
Ms. Kim Eves, Director, Communications

Other:

Mrs. Sue Rogers, President- PTA Council, Mrs. Bianca Courtlan Cox, PTA Council; Mrs. Camille Broderick, Mrs. Adriana Ospina, Greenwich High School; Mrs. Paige Davis, Mrs. Julie Faryniarz, Mr. Peter Sherr, Mrs. Nancy Kail Mr. Bill Shaw, New Lebanon, Mrs. Bonny Edwards, North Street; Mrs. Dana Evans, Old Greenwich, Mr. Colin Gustofson, Greenwich Time and Mr. Ken Borsuk, Greenwich Post. . An attendance list is on file in the Board of Education office.

The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Weissler, Chairman at 7:00 p.m.

1. Discussion of Monitoring Report E-003, Reading

Mr. Curtin, Ms. Jennifer Mitchell, Program Coordinator, and Ms. Brigid Barry provided a review of the Reading Monitoring Report and responded to questions the Board provided in advance of the meeting. Mr. Curtin commenced by addressing an issue which has arisen regarding SAT scores. The level of student participation apparently dropped. Upon further research, Mr. Curtin, working with the testing company, determined that for this testing year, students were able to not provide a school name. The company advised that SAT scores do not have to be sent to schools if student elect not to provide them. Analysis done indicates that the number of GHS students who took the test was actually much higher but for a variety of reasons they opted out of reporting them to the school. This opt-out option will be eliminated in the future. In addition, more students are taking the ACT test and colleges are accepting those scores as well. Ms. Mitchell then commenced reporting on the Reading Report and advised, that among other issues, she is looking at Curriculum and Instruction and how it interfaces with student learning, the transition from middle school to high school, the ranking for DRG A and B, and noted that we are moving in the right direction, having experienced a big increase in scores. She explained what specific steps are being taken in schools where scores are down. She also discussed knowledge expectations for children coming into Kindergarten. Questions from the Board related to transition from 5th to 6th grades, the low growth rate in 5th through 8th grade and how are we addressing this, the impact of scores from NCLB. It was noted that we still lag behind DRG A/B; Ms. Mitchell noted that while we were improving our scores so were other districts. She expected that it would take 3-5 years for the impact of all the improvements to be truly noted. Other issues discussed included VSS scores, research methodologies, the use of TEPL, and the impact of various school based initiatives underway. This Monitoring Report will return to the Board for action at the November 19th meeting.

2. Report on Guidance

Ms. Mary Forde, Director of PPS, and Ms. Linda Woods, Director of Guidance, reviewed the Guidance Services in Secondary Schools report. Ms. Woods advised that many other districts are interested in our TEPL program. She advised that the Guidance Department is looking at means of developing higher level thinking skills and then went on to explain the positive impact that Honors and AP courses have on student's capabilities as well as on their GPA. She then discussed the effort and impact of the GHS College Night, which is the biggest such even for all the area schools. She then discussed the counselors efforts in areas such as PPTs, addressing 504 needs, transitional counseling, career counseling, what are the vocational opportunities that are offered for non-college bound students, the AVID program and how do you evaluate guidance counselors, counselors at the high school in the summer, and the Navigance

program. She stated that only 9% of students do not go to college therefore the heavy emphasis is placed on college recruiting and the outreach to schools across the country. Ms. Woods then spoke about college visits for counselors and responded to questions regarding how these trips are financed.

3. Discussion of Inclusion of the Harris Survey in Spring, 2010

Ms. Kim Eves, Director of Communications, spoke regarding the Harris Survey and the reasons why it would be beneficial to send out in the Spring of 2010. Mrs. Ponns Cohen expressed concern about administering the survey to children in third to fifth grade indicating their inability to evaluate teacher performance, among other things. Mr. Boson agreed regarding the 3-5th graders, but said we should do the survey for all other grades and found the survey overall was a worthwhile undertaking, even though it was simply one set of data among many. Mrs. Ponns Cohen stated that she felt better information was received via various outreach programs. Mr. Boson concurred that such outreach programs did provide much insights but it represented an even smaller population that the one Mrs. Ponns Cohen expressed concern over regarding survey response levels. Mrs. Moriarty indicated that Principals use this data and she supports it. Mrs. Weissler and Mr. Anderson also support it. Mr. Cohen agreed with Mrs. Ponns Cohen regarding the validity of the process for Grades 3-, but overall felt that since the cost is low, and the information received is of some use, supported continuing the survey. Ms. Queen also supported it.

4. Discussion of Student Representative on Board of Education

Mrs. Ponns Cohen and Dr. Freund presented the Board with an update on the status of this item. As per previous discussion at Board meetings, a student representative had requested that the BoE review the possibility of putting a GHS representative on the BoE. They advised that both Dr. Freund and Mrs. Ponns Cohen met with the Executive Board of the Student Government and explained the process to the group regarding making changes to the governance process over the school system. The students expressed understanding but also noted their interest in being involved in the process of hiring a new Headmaster. It was recommended that they will be included in the initial interviews of candidates. It was also recommended by Mrs. Ponns Cohen and Dr. Freund that the students be allotted time at the beginning of the regular meeting of the BoE to speak regarding High School issues, similar to the time slots provide to representatives for the GEA and the PTA Council. Recommendations will be brought to the Board at the November 19th meeting for action.

5. Review of 2009-2010 Agenda Plan

The Board added the following items to the Agenda Plan:

- Nov. 19th E-003 Reading Monitoring Report on Action, not on Consent Agenda
- Nov. 19th Action on Student Representation on Board of Education

GHS New Courses:

Noted that as there were no New Courses to be reviewed so this item would be removed from the Agenda Plan

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Cohen and seconded by Mr. Anderson to move to Executive Session for purposes of new Board Member orientation at 8:59 p.m.

VOTE: 8 in favor, none opposed MOTION CARRIED

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Cohen to move back into Public Session at 9.35 p.m.

VOTE: 8 in favor, none opposed MOTION CARRIED

MOTION: It was moved by Mrs. Moriarty and seconded by Ms. Queen to adjourn at 9:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael C. Bodson
Secretary