

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENWICH BOARD OF EDUCATION

DATE: March 8, 2007, 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: Havemeyer Building

PRESENT:

Board: Mrs. Colleen Giambo, Chairman
Mrs. Leslie Moriarty, Vice Chairman
Mrs. Nancy Weissler, Secretary
Mr. Steven B. Anderson
Mr. Michael C. Bodson
Dr. Susan S. Ellis
Ms. Virginia L. Gwynn
Mr. William G. Kelly

Administration:

Dr. Betty J. Sternberg, Superintendent of Schools
Mrs. Kathleen Greider, Deputy Superintendent
Mr. John Curtin, Asst. Superintendent
Ms. Mary P. Forde, Director, Pupil Personnel Services
Ms. Kim Eves, Director, Communications
Dr. Ellen Flanagan, Director, Human Resources
Ms. Marie Jordan-Whitney, Program Coordinator, Reading and Language Arts

Other:

An attendance list is on file in the Superintendent's Office.

The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Giambo, Chairman at 7:03 p.m.

1. **Monitoring Reports**

a. **E-070 Monitoring Reports**

Dr. Sternberg noted that the feedback on the revised format and content of the Monitoring Reports has been uniformly positive. She also indicated that whereas Monitoring Reports had been delayed this year because of turnover in the Administration and revisions to their format, the Administration was committed to their timely distribution in the upcoming year. One Board member questioned whether the sequence of the Monitoring Reports was optimal; the Administration responded that it would revisit it. Another Board member noted that the Policy specifies that Monitoring Reports should include a comparison of results with previously set targets; it was decided to discuss this issue further at the Board retreat in March.

b. **L-010 Timely, Accurate and Complete Information, Assessment and Analysis**

Dr. Sternberg noted the challenge between providing information on a timely basis and the need for adequate time to ensure accuracy. The Administration has instituted a system of multiple checks to ensure and improve the accuracy of the information it provides. One Board member suggested that if pressed for time to provide certain information, the Administration could release it with the appropriate caveats.

c. **E-003 Reading – Assessment Standards**

Ms. Marie Jordan-Whitney, Program Coordinator, Reading and Language Arts, provided an overview of the Reading program and highlighted some of its recent accomplishments and challenges:

Accomplishments:

- **Staff Development:** School year 2005-2006 was the first year in which district wide staff development was offered for a consistent reading curriculum. Staff development for the reading curriculum has now been extended to include both principals and assistant principals. On an ongoing basis, the plan is to offer a more in-depth program for those teachers who now have experience with the new curriculum and to provide a more basic program for new teachers.
- **Focus Walks:** Focus walks, which include Mrs. Jordan Whitney and the building principals, have been used extensively in the implementation of the reading program. These walks typically

focus on one issue. Feedback is provided to the teachers on both strengths and areas for development. One Board member suggested that it would be helpful to share “best practices’ from these walks district wide.

Challenges:

- **Time Allocation:** Adequate instructional time has emerged as a challenge at the elementary level. To address this challenge, elementary schools have incorporated many of the practices into their study of other disciplines, including science and social studies.
- **Implementation of ISIPs:** Implementation of ISIPs has been inconsistent across the district. In response, the reading specialists have been working with the teachers to help them develop a more in-depth understanding of how to use the Direct Reading Assessments (DRAs) to tailor a plan to address a student’s weaknesses. Additional staff development in this area will be offered next year. Best practices in the development of ISIPs are also being shared.

The Board had a number of questions related to the Reading Program. In response to a question about her assessment of the implementation of the balanced literacy program, Mrs. Jordan-Whitney indicated that she was very satisfied with the progress to date and that results should improve with time and more staff development. Several Board members asked about what near-term targets we should be setting for the Reading Program; it was decided to defer consideration of this question until the Board retreat in March. A Board member also asked what the District was doing in response to the gender gap, in which male students score significantly below females in reading. Mrs. Jordan-Whitney responded that there is an effort to include nonfiction and selected fiction that would appeal to male readers. Finally, Mrs. Jordan-Whitney stressed the key role that literacy specialists play in the successful implementation of the Reading Program and that it is important that they devote most of their time at Tier 1 level to ensure that a high-quality, consistent program is being delivered.

2. Teacher Evaluation Plan

Dr. Flanagan made a presentation on the Teacher Evaluation Plan (TEPD). She noted that the TEPD Committee benefited from having teachers, administrators, and program coordinators among its members. She highlighted the following key features of the preliminary plan:

- **Key features:** The new plan will establish clear and specific expectations for student learning and teacher practices and behavior. Unlike the prior plan, in which teacher performance was deemed to be either satisfactory or unsatisfactory, the new plan will evaluate teachers on a continuum of performance. Additionally, it will have specific links to professional development and will include the evaluation of other aspects of a teacher’s responsibilities, including record-keeping.
- **Next steps:** The TEPD Committee is developing rubrics for each indicator and will decide on the evaluation process (e.g., observations, portfolio). The TEPD will be piloted at an elementary school, middle school, and GHS House next year. It was noted that extensive staff training will be necessary to ensure consistency in the evaluation process.

The Board commended Dr. Flanagan and the TEPD Committee for the progress that has been made in the development of the TEPD. It requested that an indicator that would measure growth in students’ academic achievement be included as an indicator.

2. **Success System Arenas:**

a. **Aligning Adults**

Mr. Curtin and Ms. Eves updated the Board on revisions made in response to prior feedback. A new indicator, Reductions to the Operating Budget (% of proposed budget), has been included in this draft. The Board expressed satisfaction with the revised rubric.

b. **Whole Student Development**

Mr. Curtin and Ms. Forde updated the Board on revisions made in response to prior feedback. As a measure of student participation in extracurriculars (other than athletics), the percentage of GHS students’ participating in performing music groups has now been included. An unduplicated student suspension rate has now been included as well as this same rate for both Hispanic and Special Education students. The Board and Administration expressed concern about the disproportionate suspension rates for both Hispanic and Special Education students. Ms. Forde indicated that the Administration is working with Mr. Capasso and the mental health staff to develop short- and long-term solutions to this problem. Ms. Forde indicated that in the future additional information and indicators may become available as school improvement teams evaluate Social Emotional Learning at the school level using the new rubric. The Board expressed general satisfaction with the proposed indicators.

3. 2007-2008 Budget Status Update

As the BOE liaison to the BET, Mrs. Moriarty summarized the recommendations made by the BET Budget Committee regarding the BOE's proposed budget of \$119,787,607. She noted that the BOE's proposed budget, which it approved in December 2006, provided sufficient funding for the BOE to meet its educational objectives. The BET Budget Committee has recommended a reduction of \$500,000, of which \$150,000 is earmarked for electricity costs, which the proviso that the BOE can seek an interim appropriation if these costs exceed budgeted amounts. This adjusted \$350,000 reduction represents less than one half of one percent of the BOE's proposed budget. Whereas the BOE should be able to meet its educational objectives with the funding provided by the revised budget, Mrs. Moriarty cautioned that the budget would be extremely tight and would not provide any leeway for unanticipated increases in enrollment, utility costs, or similar items. She concluded by highlighting the following lessons learned from the budget review process: 1) it is critically important to work closely with the BET as it develops its guidelines; 2) all of the BOE's constituencies should be educated about the need for, and costs implications of, providing high quality education in Greenwich; and 3) the BOE needs to develop a solid understanding of the Town's fiscal demands and constraints.

Mrs. Giambo expressed her appreciation for the 3-1 vote by the BET's Budget Committee in support of the Glenville School renovation without any restrictions. In response to some questions and comments by some community members, she asked Mr. Bodson, a member of the Glenville School Building Committee, to explain why the renovation should be considered a necessity, not a luxury. He noted that the following four factors clearly justify the need for the renovation: 1) the outside shell has deteriorated to the point where it is beyond repair and the windows, which are a critical element in the redesign, can not be installed in this shell; 2) the roof is leaking badly and needs to be replaced; and 3) the operating plant mechanicals no longer function well and need to be replaced; and 4) the open design classrooms are not conducive to educational success and achievement.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Ms. Gwynn, the meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Nancy Weissler
Secretary