

**CCOVENTRY BOARD OF EDUCATION
APPROVED MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2006**

Members Present: Milton S. Natusch, Chairman
Richard Williams, Vice-Chairman
Kathleen Ryan, Secretary
Jennifer Beausoleil
Craig Couture
Larry Pietrantonio
Cheryl Trudon

Administrators Present: Dr. Donna Bernard, Superintendent
Sherry Holmes, Fiscal Services Director
Judith Richard, PSSS Director

Also Present: Jean Lundquist, Student Representative

Also present were Charles Britton, CHS Principal; Marie Castle-Good, CNHS Principal; Troy Hopkins, CNHS Assistant Principal; David Petrone, Principal of GHR; Raymond Grasso, CGS Principal; and a couple of people in the audience of citizens. No newspapers were represented. All motions are directed to the Coventry Board of Education.

I. CALL TO ORDER

By: Chairman M. Natusch Time: 7:32 p.m.
Place: Administration Building Meeting Room

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman M. Natusch.

Chairman M. Natusch asked if Board members had any agenda items to add; there were none.

III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

No one came forward; the Audience of Citizens was closed.

IV. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

A. Information: "Program Highlights" – Student Test Results Summary

Dr. Bernard noted that the program highlights were being videotaped for Munivision. She said that testing results have provided us with "moments of great happiness," but also "moments of

chagrin.” This is the first year for testing all grades 3-8 for the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT).

Mr. Petrone went over information in the Board packet. He said that now school districts are grouped according to “District Reference Groups,” and that we’re in “E.” He said that we “ended up pretty much in the middle” of our DRG. Test scores are “pretty much up a little and down a little” each year. He said it is important to break down the results and see where we are strong and where we are weak. We need to sit down with staff and have “meaningful conversations.” Mr. Petrone said we have a lot to do with the balanced curriculum project, recently discussed.

Concerning CAPT results, Mr. Petrone said there are “real positive” things happening. Students have to be proficient or above to meet graduation requirements. Concerning SAT scores, he said we are “pretty much maintaining the same scores.” He said that one area of note is the writing component to the SAT.

In response to a question by J. Beausoleil about areas of the sixth grade math results, Mr. Petrone said he has been talking to teachers and discussing particular trends. Dr. Bernard then went into some detail concerning the work that is being done in the newly introduced curriculum alignment program. She noted that this is a different generation of CMT exams. She said that, generally speaking, we are seeing better scores in 4th grade than we do in middle school, something that is “pretty much consistent throughout the state.” The middle school years are especially difficult for children.

J. Beausoleil asked if there is a similar percentage of at-risk students now that the CAPT tests are a graduation requirement as there was before. Mr. Britton gave information as to what has happened during the last several years. He said that this district allows us to modify the CAPT for/or exempt special education students from the CAPT requirement.

R. Williams asked about the values placed on different sections of the 6th grade CMT, and Mr. Petrone replied that there are a different number of questions for each strand but each strand is given equal value. He said we need to see “incremental growth.”

Dr. Bernard said that some other grades and other strands are much better than the strand for math applications. Mr. Petrone noted that math applications is one of the last questions on the test, and that maybe students are either out of time or tired at that point.

Chairman M. Natusch said that assessments are stressful for students. He asked if there are strategies in place to alleviate the stress. Mr. Petrone said yes, and gave a number of examples. At the high school, breakfast is served in the morning when the CAPT test is given. Dr. Bernard commented that children who come from an “educationally nurturing environment” naturally guess better. She said they are working with parents to help them provide such an environment.

L. Pietrantonio asked if performance on the CAPT was better after it became a graduation requirement, and Mr. Petrone said an exact comparison can’t be made because it’s a different

test, but that he thought the requirement is making a “little bit” of a difference. L. Pietrantonio said that parents are probably stressing the importance of the CAPT at home.

R. Williams said that appeared to him that at the high school the curriculum is a “complete mess” and the other schools are not aligned, which is reflected in the scores. He said that priority #1 should be curriculum.

J. Beausoleil said that we have tried to accomplish curriculum alignment several times. We had a curriculum coordinator in the past, but the position was cut.

R. Williams said he was “not saying we’re doing anything bad, just that the curriculum needs to be aligned.”

K. Ryan asked for clarification on the term “proficient” in the CAPT, and if it was different than “goal.” Mr. Britton replied that it would probably be better to show the rubrics for proficient, at goal, or advanced. He said that the public can go to www.CTReports.com to get information.

Dr. Bernard said that she “can’t talk enough” about the value of teams of teachers working on aligning the curriculum to state standards across departments and grade levels. She said she is seeing “wonderful, wonderful” work on this. She cautioned that the work will take time. She said she appreciated all the staff is doing, and that we need to value teachers in this country “across the board,” no matter their District Reference Group.

B. Information: School/Department Goals for 2006-2007

1. Business Office

Under “Educational Achievement,” Sherry Holmes, Fiscal Services Director, addressed the goal of “Assist in promoting consistent refinement of district subsystems.” She said she would do this several ways. One is by collaborating with Coventry High School’s principal to improve food services in the school. The second way is to improve technology infrastructure, personnel, equipment, and e-mail systems. She said that some of that is going on right now. She said they are taking a look at upgrading some of the equipment. The third way is to continue to file state paperwork for asbestos abatement/flooring project and begin filing the application for the water compliance project. She said they had just finished up with CGS and CNH this summer. The third school, GHR, will be done next summer. The final close-out paperwork is being done now. We are in the early stages of the application process for the water compliance project.

Under “Community Relations,” Mrs. Holmes’ first goal is “Continue budget seminars with Superintendent for use on Munivision Channel 13 and educational access Channel 17.” She said she will launch a Question and Answer Forum with the Superintendent and the PSSS Director to inform the public about special education and grants. Mrs. Holmes said this is new this year.

Mrs. Holmes’ second goal is “Serve on the CASBO Board of Directors as a liaison.” She said that she will improve the public perception of Coventry Public Schools. She said that “the

perception is that there are many problems, and I want to focus on the good things, the positive things.” She also said that she will increase efficiencies in the way we operate a school district.

Mrs. Holmes’ third goal is to “Provide clear, concise budget documents on Coventry’s website.” She said that during the upcoming budget process, more financial documents will be placed on Coventry Public Schools’ website for the public to review. She said she will try to “beef up” the information she provides for the website. There are lot of initiatives on both the school side and the business office side.

Under “Management of Resources,” Mrs. Holmes’ goal is “Continue collaboration with outside agencies and organizations to improve Coventry’s resources.” She said she will study and review with Webster Insurance Co. potential cost savings in health insurance, and increase systemic efficiencies in the use of resources, especially in telecommunications. She said she will be taking a look at the telephone bill across the district. Some trunk lines are not needed anymore. She said that cell phones, or anything else needed for safety concerns, would be moved over.

2. Coventry Grammar School

Mr. Grasso went over three goals under “Educational Achievement.” The first is to “Oversee first phase of primary school curriculum alignment with state standards and frameworks using the A Balanced Curriculum (ABC) model, with initial focus on Science and Social Studies. He will initiate grade-level discussions on curriculum matters, and provide school year and summer opportunities for grade-level representatives to work with ABC formats. Mr. Grasso said that CGS is “about a year behind” on this, in part because CGS teachers were overwhelmed by the asbestos abatement projects. He said they will be working on this throughout the year, with faculty meetings focusing on science for the rest of the year.

The second is to “Investigate quality components of the IDEA mandate Response to Intervention (RTI) at the primary level.” He said he will do this two ways. The first is to work collaboratively with the Director of Pupil Services in providing and overview of RTI to faculty and staff. He said that this is a child-friendly way of supporting young children in school. The second is to develop an integrated approach to service delivery that encompasses both regular education and special education teachers and support staff prior to special education referral (an objective to be shared with the Director).

The third goal under “Educational Achievement” is to “Take a leadership role in issues and actions related to Transition to Kindergarten efforts, as per School Readiness Grant mandates.” He said he can’t do this without Mrs. Richard’s support. He will serve as a member of the School Readiness Council (SRC) and on all appropriate subcommittees. He will also plan and present an evening workshop in January of 2007 for parents and families of students in School Readiness programs that will focus on affective and cognitive readiness skills appropriate for three- and four-year-olds. He said he hopes that people seeing him, the principal, present and supporting this “will make an impact.” He said this is “most exciting.” Mr. Grasso said he will also continue to update and refine Kindergarten registration and orientation programs. He said

that they “went tech” this past year. They had a video of what Kindergarten was like from September through June, which was “extremely well received.”

Under “Community Relations,” Mr. Grasso has one goal, to “Continue effective outreach by maintaining a welcoming school environment, informing parents and families about school initiatives, and advocating home support and collaboration.” He said that the first impression parents get of Coventry schools is CGS, and “we want to make it good.” Mr. Grasso said he will accomplish this goal three ways. The first is to prepare the monthly PTO newsletter columns as well as appropriate memos, flyers, and other communications to parents informing them of school initiatives, procedures, and/or concerns. The second is to evaluate the success of the January 2007 presentation to School Readiness program families for possible expansion and extension to the entire Coventry community. He said he would do a “post-mortem” on it and invite day care providers and pre-school teachers later in the winter. The third is to enhance the school website by including greater detail about the program and grade level offerings, by encouraging the development of teacher web pages, and by posting timely photos and “bulletin board” entries of special school activities and events .

Under “Management of Resources,” Mr. Grasso said he has two goals. The first is to “Take a leadership role in planning and presenting an appropriate professional development workshop for the district’s para-educators in January 2007, using in-district resources.” Mr. Grasso said he didn’t do this at the beginning of the school year because of the asbestos abatement. He said he will work cooperatively with central office administrators, Staff Development Committee members, and the para-educator leadership in determining appropriate workshop topics. He will also attend a regional or state-wide conference to align our district’s efforts with the state’s training and support guidelines for paraprofessionals drafted in May 2004. Mr. Grasso noted that Mrs. Richard is doing a para-educator handbook as well.

Mr. Grasso’s second goal is to “Supervise a comprehensive school maintenance plan to ensure progress in the areas of cleanliness, safety, security, and facility improvement.” He will collaborate with Paul Noel, the PTO, and SPEC regarding additions to and maintenance of the playscape and playground areas. Mr. Grasso said that \$4,000 in PTO funds is earmarked for the second grade playground area. The project can’t be done until we find out about the water project. He said he will coordinate efforts within the plan and schedule for the installation of new water tanks on school grounds.

Dr. Bernard said that teachers have been identified as web masters, one for each school. School information is now uploaded regularly.

3. G. H. Robertson School

Mr. Petrone said there are two goals under “Educational Achievement.” The first is to “Analyze data related to student performance on standardized tests to develop and implement a *special education* program improvement plan to address concerns surrounding Adequate Yearly progress (AYP).” He said that although a lot of work was done on this, more progress needs to be made. One-half of a recent in-service day was spent on this. There are strategies for this goal. The first is to convene a committee that would include the Director of Pupil Services to review individual

student performance profiles on CMT tests. The second is to compare student performance on individual diagnostic achievement tests versus state standardized tests. The third is to plan and make available professional development activities related to student performance on standardized tests. The fourth is to make recommendations regarding deployment of personnel to address instructional practices.

The second goal is to “Facilitate curriculum alignment between classroom offerings and state standards, through A Balanced Curriculum program, with a focus on science. Mr. Petrone said that science will appear as a category on the 2008 CMT test. He said he wants to make sure that every child gets the same hands-on experience in science. He wants to continue the partnership with CGS and with the middle school as well. There are four strategies for this goal. The first is to convene grade level focus groups to begin the initial stages of aligning the curriculum. The second is to facilitate small group curriculum workshops to increase knowledge of A Balanced Curriculum program. The third is, via in-house resources, provide opportunities for staff to develop and input appropriate data on the A Balanced Curriculum website. The fourth is to increase communication with CGS and CNHMS to ensure vertical alignment of curriculum.

Under the category of “Community Relations,” Mr. Petrone has the goal of “Continue to strengthen productive community partnerships.” There are four strategies. The first is to facilitate the process of advancing our school’s website to provide a more information and user-friendly site. The second is to facilitate the process of providing the students with culturally enriched programs throughout the school year, including the establishment of partnerships between the students of GHR and surrounding schools. The third is to increase and continue the development of after-school programs that will meet the needs of students. He said that after-school programs were started last year. The fourth is to support parent groups in school enrichment projects and programs. Mr. Petrone said that he wants to make sure the new computer lab is utilized.

Under “Management of Resources,” Mr. Petrone has two goals. The first is “Continue to focus on increasing staff knowledge and use of technology for management, instruction, and assessment.” There are four strategies. The first is to continue to facilitate small group instruction to staff related to technology via in-house resources. The second strategy is to facilitate grade level and cross-grade focus groups to analyze standardized test data to drive instruction. The third is to develop after-school programs to increase the frequency of computer lab instruction. The fourth strategy is to continue to support parent fund-raising activities focused on purchasing computers and computer software.

The second goal is “Advance level of support for the Expanding Horizons program. Mr. Petrone said this program is in its second year. We now have a fall as well as spring session. There are three strategies under this goal. The first is to maintain consistent communication with Dr. Catherine Little at the University of Connecticut. Mr. Petrone said we will be extending this relationship beyond next year. Tutors from UCONN are proving helpful. The second strategy is to maintain open lines of communication with parents and staff involved in the Expanding Horizons program. The third is to address and resolve student and/or staff issues associated with the program.

4. Capt. Nathan Hale School

Mrs. Castle-Good presented two goals under “Educational Achievement.” The first is to “Oversee alignment of curriculum to enhance learning.” The first strategy is to have more options with Professional Growth plans. The second concerns the A Balanced Curriculum Program. She said she wants teachers to take units and align them with state standards. This is really about teacher’s ownership, and they are excited about this. The third strategy is to diagnose CMT strand results and use to modify classroom practices. Mrs. Castle-Good said that we need to teach the students how to take the test. She said that posters are in classrooms to teach students how to write short answers. They are emphasizing writing prompts.

The second goal is “Develop and support new initiatives in mathematics.” Mrs. Castle-Good said that “Smart Boards” were just loaded into the computers. EASTCONN will give us training. The first strategy is to create math portfolios in all grade levels, not just 7th grade. The second is to utilize RM Frameworks as a standard based software program. The third is to implement Math Curriculum work.

Under “Community Relations,” Mrs. Castle-Good said there are two goals. The first is “Support community outreach programs.” This will include supporting the PTO in their goals, developing and supporting a school-based wellness committee, and maintaining a welcoming school atmosphere. She said that banners have been up since last summer.

The second goal is “Increase use of the district-wide website.” This will be done through the school newsletter posted on the CNH website, through PTO minutes posted on the CNH website, and the field trip form and medical forms posted on the CNH website. There will be Renzulli-linked items as well.

Under “Management of Resources,” Mrs. Castle-Good has two goals. The first is “Use outside resources to expand learning opportunities for our students” by being involved in EASTCONN grants, and searching for additional grants to improve learning.

The second goal is “Use outside resources and materials to improve student achievement.” This will be done by utilizing the Renzulli Learning System/Project Maker (a new piece). Seventh-grade students will be spending one day out of six in the computer lab. Learning style profiles will be created or updated on all CNH students. Smart Boards will be utilized.

C. VOTE: Consent Agenda

1. Approve CHS November 2006 Field Experience to Boston, MA
2. Accept Resignation of Nancy Wallace, CHS Guidance Secretary
3. Accept Resignation of Eleanor Rhoades, Library Media Specialist

L. Pietrantonio requested that #3 be moved to New Business; J. Beausoleil requested that #1 be moved as well.

X. REPORT OF BOARD MEMBERS

Information: School Building Committee – L. Pietrantonio

L. Pietrantonio said there was a meeting tonight concerning the water project. The engineer’s price has now come down to within \$3,658 of the referendum amount. The principals will meet to discuss some of the options. We will be meeting again with the engineer on November 9 to make sure we can come in under \$1.2 million. The bid spec will come in soon for drilling. There are concerns about location. Revised drawings will also be presented at the November 9 meeting.

Chairman M. Natusch asked the student representative, Jean Lundquist, how things were going. She said she was thinking of making a suggestion box for the students and making an announcement about it.

C. Trudon asked why Channel 17 has been black for months. Dr. Bernard replied that we tend to use Munivision, Channel 13. Perhaps we should use Channel 17 only for announcements and use Munivision for other information. C. Trudon said that people who spoke to her thought that education was on Channel 17 and town events were on Channel 13. Dr. Bernard said that this is “still in design.” She said she will be speaking to the town manager about this.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn the Board Meeting at 9:08 p.m.

By: C. Trudon

Seconded: C. Couture

Result: Motion passes unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan S. Nimerowski
Board Clerk

October 26, 2006
Approved