

**COVENTRY BOARD OF EDUCATION
APPROVED MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2007**

Members Present: Milton S. Natusch, Chairman
Richard Williams, Vice-Chairman
Kathleen Ryan, Secretary
Craig Couture (arrived 7:40 p.m.)
Larry Pietrantonio
Cheryl Trudon

Members Absent: Jennifer Beausoleil

Also Present: Kelley Smart, Student BOE Representative

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

Also present were Judith Richard, PSSS Director; Paul Noel, Physical Plant and Facilities Director; Raymond Grasso, CGS Principal; David Petrone, GHR Principal; Michele Mullaly, CNH Interim Principal; Troy Hopkins, CHS Principal; Ned Smith, CHS Band Director; Erin Holub, CHS Art Teacher; two Contemporary Issues students; and a few citizens. The Journal Inquirer newspaper was represented. All motions are directed to the Coventry Board of Education.

I. CALL TO ORDER

By: Chairman Milton S. Natusch Time: 7:33 p.m.
Place: Administration Building Meeting Room

II. SALUTE THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Natusch. Chairman Natusch asked the Board for any requests to add to the Agenda. There were none.

III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

There were none.

IV. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

A. Information: "Program Highlights" – Student Test Results Summary (CMT, CAPT, SAT) – D. Petrone, T. Hopkins, and M. Mullaly

Dr. Bernard introduced Mr. Petrone the District Testing Coordinator. Mr. Petrone began his PowerPoint presentation and indicated that he would be covering a lot of data in three different phases. He started with the CMT results looking at grades 3 – 8. He focused on a few highlights: Reading scores in Grade 5 went up in the "Advanced" column; Writing scores in the "Below Basic" column went down; Grade 6 saw a reduction in "Below Basic" in math and reading; there was a significant increase in the writing "Advanced" column; Grade 7 showed that "Below Basic" scores in reading and writing had gone down; the Grade 7 "Goal" range increased in all three academics; Grade 8 scores maintained consistency.

Mr. Petrone then spoke to the issue of comparing CMT results by teams at the middle school level. He said he took every 7th or 8th student test result, from all three grades, and compared them strand by strand. Mr. Petrone noted the areas that will receive curricular focus in each grade at the middle school. He indicated we are continuing to make progress and it is a slow and steady growth.

Mr. Petrone then talked specifically about the G. H. Robertson School. He stated that they are continuing with programs that work such as, the Reading at Home Program, DRA testing, Expanding Horizons, and using the test score data at the beginning of the year to drive the objectives in teaching. He said there are new initiatives too, such as the Rising Star Program, which is a before school reading program. He noted that all of these items give students more opportunities.

Mr. Petrone introduced Ms. Mullaly who said she was very enthusiastic about the direction the middle school is going. She stated that ABC is a great resource, as it allows teachers to collaborate together producing curriculum. She also noted that it reduces disparity in curriculum because everyone is on the “same page.” She continued that it is excellent for pacing and can ensure that the scheduled curriculum is completed by the end of the school year. Ms. Mullaly also said that they began vertical teaming on math and had the first joint meeting this week with high school teachers. In addition, she said she hopes to use student portfolios in the near future to look at student skill development. She stated that teachers will be talking about personal connection in reading with the students.

Mr. Petrone added that in looking at the test results for each student in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade and comparing the teams there is no significant difference in the academic results.

Mr. Petrone next addressed the Grade 10 CAPT results. Mr. Petrone said 92.2% of the students are at, or above, “Proficient” in mathematics. He continued that 95.1% of the students are at, or above, “Proficient” in science and 89% are at or above in reading. Mr. Petrone also said that 91.2% are at, or above, “Proficient” in writing.

Mr. Hopkins was introduced to discuss the SAT scores. He stated that 76% of the 2007 graduates took the SATs. He said that they are always looking for new initiatives to improve test cores. He continued that the departments are analyzing the CAPT scores and tweaking curriculum as appropriate. He said one of the priorities is watching freshmen closely before they fail a course and a study seminar will be added temporarily for extra help to those students. He next noted that the PSATs will be taken by all sophomores this year for the first time in addition to the juniors. Dr. Bernard commented about the grant we have applied for from the Connecticut Business Industry Association (CBIA), which will focus on improving student achievement with the use of advanced placement courses. In closing, Mr. Hopkins spoke to a partnership has been created with the Booth & Dimock Library to make online SAT preparations available.

C. Trudon asked about the quantity of the student results in grades 6 – 8 that were studied. She said she was concerned about addressing issues at lower grades. D. Petrone stated that all teachers in all grades are looking at the strand results to see where the students are academically. He said we continue to analyze and work on it at all levels. He added that the ABC program is the primary tool we need to use to make adjustments. Dr. Bernard talked about the Curriculum Resource Team and how they are helping teachers to work as teams to look at their curriculum and make progress.

R. Williams stated that it was great to hear that we are moving forward with the ABC program and progress is being made.

C. Trudon asked about looking at the results of a cohort of students as they progress through the years. Mr. Petrone answered that it is very hard to look at the same cohort due to the changes in the tests. He said that this “generation” of the state tests is too young to be able to do that. Dr. Bernard added that educators want to look at a three year pattern, at least, and we hope to present that information next year.

L. Pietrantonio said it is very hard to explain to the layperson the specifics of the testing scores. He stated most people want to know how we match up to the surrounding towns in “Goal” and “Above Goal” and according to per pupil expenditures, especially because that is all that the papers show.

Dr. Bernard answered that we can’t compare to the towns “around” Coventry because they are different demographically. She said the cultural context is just one reason, but it is the State that categorizes towns into the groups that are comparable and the groups are called District Reference Groups (DRGs). She stated that the community demographics matter considerably.

A discussion ensued about the DRGs and Connecticut’s economic disparity issues.

K. Ryan said there are new terms all of the time and wanted to know what it means to be proficient. D. Petrone says “Proficient” is the term recognized by NCLB. He added that “Proficient” is “where students should be.” The discussion continued about “Proficient.”

K. Ryan asked if the Board could see a P/SAT preparation report. She said she would like to see how many students are pursuing the free online preparation assistance.

C. Trudon asked if our DRG test results could be put on the website.

The conversation continued about testing strand results.

Dr. Bernard finished by saying that the staff is working hard in their study of test results and their efforts are appreciated.

B. Information: School/Department Goals for 2007-2008

1. Raymond Grasso, Coventry Grammar School

Mr. Grasso handed out his goals for the 2007-08 school year. Under the heading of Educational Achievement he mentioned A Balanced Curriculum (ABC) program and that there is a specific focus on science and social studies. He said curriculum night activities have been scheduled and one has already happened. He then reviewed the goals surrounding school readiness and how support would continue in the efforts of transition into Kindergarten.

In the area of Community Relations, Mr. Grasso stated they would continue community outreach by maintaining a welcoming school environment and informing parents and families about school initiatives.

Mr. Grasso next discussed the heading Management of Resources. He said his goals surround the development of an Instructional Materials budget proposal, seeking grant funding for a literacy summer program, and continuing with overseeing of the water project issues at his site.

2. David Petrone, G.H. Robertson School

Mr. Petrone handed out his goals for the 2007-2008 school year. Under the subject of Educational Achievement he said they would continue to analyzing data related to student performance on standardized tests. He said the end result would be to develop and implement a special education program improvement plan to address concerns surrounding Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). In addition he noted that he will continue to facilitate curriculum alignment using the ABC program, with a focus on writing and mathematics. He added that science was just about wrapped up.

In the area of Community Relations, Mr. Petrone talked about fostering and enhancing school climate initiatives and continuing to strengthen productive community partnerships.

Mr. Petrone next discussed the heading Management of Resources. He said they would continue to focus on technology for management instruction and assessment. He stated that the Expanding Horizons afterschool reading program will continue for students in grades 3-6. He said that even though the grant ran out they were able to charge a small fee to parents and with the support of the district the program will be able to continue.

3. Sherry Holmes, Fiscal Services

Ms. Holmes handed out her goals for the 2007-2008 school year. Under Educational Achievement she said she will continue to improve technology infrastructure and equipment and e-mail systems in collaboration with the new technology team. She mentioned that she will continue to work on the state requirements related to the asbestos abatement and water projects. She added that she will collaborate with the Food Services Director in regards to the Wellness Program.

In the area of Community Relations, Ms. Holmes talked about her role in the Connecticut Association of School Business Officials (CASBO). In addition she said she would continue to provide information for the Business Office webpage. She stated she plans to keep collaborating with the Town's Finance Director to improve technical operations.

Concerning her goals in the area of Management of Resources, Ms. Holmes said she will manage unanticipated costs placed on the district by federal and state mandates. She noted she will also work in partnership with Webster Insurance to promote Health Savings Accounts and to develop a wellness program for our employees. She added that she will coach the new administrators on budget and contract responsibilities.

4. Paul Noel, Physical Plant and Facilities

Mr. Noel handed out his goals for the 2007-2008 school year. Under the subject of Educational Achievement he said he will use training resources to refine technical skills and meet regulatory compliance. To further his goals in Community Relations, Mr. Noel noted his plans to continue developing a welcoming atmosphere at each facility and this will promote community pride and user friendly access. He said he will also use technology to improve availability of facility information. Mr. Noel talked about his goals under Management of Resources and that he will collaborate with the town departments and volunteer groups to provide for district needs. He added he will continue to assist the building committee with information and access needs for the water project.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approve/Ratify CNH Team 8B October 11 Field Experience to Harvard, MA
- B. Approve CNH Team 8A October 23 Field Experience to Harvard, MA
- C. Approve PSSS Child Find Procedures

MOTION: To approve the items on the Consent Agenda.

By: K. Ryan

Seconded: R. Williams

Result: Motion passes unanimously.

VI. REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN

Information: Great Path Academy Groundbreaking

Chairman Natusch mentioned that he attended the groundbreaking on Friday at Great Path Academy. He added that the State Department of Education was well represented, the facility will be “state of the art”, and that the program itself is an exceptional opportunity for students.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS

Chairman Natusch noted that there is one more meeting before all members could change. He said, unfortunately he will not be able to be at the next meeting. He thanked the members publicly for their efforts on the board during the past two years. He added that the group has worked together well and has done what is best for the students of Coventry.

K. Ryan questioned a copy of a State Department of Education memo that the members received in their *Board Bulletin*. She asked for clarification on the first paragraph where it mentions the new magnet school legislation, which mandates that districts will have to pay tuition for student attendance in some situations. She asked if she was correct that the district would lose Educational Cost Sharing funding if we have students attend magnet schools. Dr. Bernard confirmed it was true and added that she hopes to have much more information about these mandates in the near future.

VIII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

VOTE: Approve Minutes of September 11, 2007

Chairman Natusch asked if anyone had any comments or suggestions for the minutes.

Hearing no others, Chairman Natusch commented that the Student Board of Education Representative should be noted at the beginning of the minutes if s/he is present.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of September 11, 2007 as amended.

By: K. Ryan

Seconded: C. Trudon

Result: Motion passes 4-0 (Williams and Couture abstained).

IX. OLD BUSINESS

None.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. VOTE: Approve CHS May 2008 Field Experience to Baltimore, MD
Ned Smith, the CHS Band Director, was present to answer questions. C. Trudon asked about the online credits. Mr. Smith explained that was a possibility offered to the students by the Music Festival organizers. L. Pietrantonio asked what weekdays the trip involved. Mr. Smith answered that it was Thursday – Sunday.

MOTION: To Approve the CHS May 2008 Field Experience to Baltimore, MD
By: C. Trudon Seconded: K. Ryan
Result: Motion passes unanimously.

B. VOTE: Approve CHS June 2008 Field Experience to Italy/Greece
Erin Holub, a CHS Art Teacher, was present to answer questions. K. Ryan asked what experience Ms. Holub had with international trips. Ms. Holub replied that she had once gone on a “nine different countries tour” with students.

A discussion ensued about what they will see and what types of students (academically) will be going.

MOTION: To Approve the CHS June 2008 Field Experience to Italy/Greece
By: L. Pietrantonio Seconded: R. Williams
Result: Motion passes unanimously.

XI. REPORT OF BOARD MEMBERS

Information: School Building Committee Report – L. Pietrantonio

L. Pietrantonio relayed information from the meeting that was held just before the Board meeting. He said the main focus was the water project. He added that the asbestos abatement project is down to a “punch-list” at GHR and almost complete. He talked about the water project going out to bid for the third time and that the State would not allow the use of an engineering study that was done, and if the project was not done to State specifications they would not cover the cost. He said the Committee has gone back to the drawing board to make those necessary changes. He stated that the logistics at the Grammar School are the most challenging. Dr. Bernard asked if there was a “timing” issue with state deadlines. L. Pietrantonio and S. Holmes answered that as long as the project is underway by June 30, 2008 we are “okay.” L. Pietrantonio finished by saying he hoped to have another project update at the end of October or beginning of November.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to CGS-1-200(c)(6)(A), the Board of Education will go into Executive Session for discussion related to the negotiations for the Teachers’ Agreement, Cafeteria Workers’ Agreement, and Nurses’ Agreement.

MOTION: Pursuant to CGS-1-200(c)(6)(A), the Board of Education will go into Executive Session at 9:50 p.m. for discussion related to the negotiations for the Teachers’ Agreement, Cafeteria Workers’ Agreement, and Nurses’ Agreement with the Superintendent and Fiscal Services Director present.
By: K. Ryan Seconded: C. Trudon
Result: Motion passes unanimously.

XIII. OPEN SESSION

The Board returned to Open Session at 10:25 p.m.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn the Board meeting at 10:25 p.m.

By: K. Ryan

Seconded: C. Couture

Result: Motion passes unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberlee Michaud
Board Clerk

October 25, 2007

Approved