

Wednesday, February 16, 2022

MINUTES OF THE AD HOC DISTRICTWIDE BRANDING INITIATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held February 16, 2022, at Central High School, 1 Lincoln Boulevard, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. Present were members Chair Bobbi Brown, and Albert Benejan. Board members John Weldon and Joe Sokolovic were also present. Member Erika Castillo* joined the meeting subsequently as noted.

(*remote participation)

Supt. Michael J. Testani was present.

Mr. Benejan moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 19, 2022. The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the district logo.

Dr. Sarah-Jane Henry, director of performing and visual arts, said it turned out as part of the redesign of the website the vendor – Blackboard – provides graphic design service. She said she shared the high school designs that were submitted, and the words mentioned by the committee in the minutes of the last meeting with Blackboard. They are now designing some mockups for the district, which Dr. Henry said she will bring to the committee. She said the style guide is also included.

Supt. Testani said the design services are included at no cost in the website redesign.

Dr. Henry said the district's slogan – Every Child, Every Day - was emphasized to Blackboard.

The superintendent said he would like to do a launch of the website simultaneously with the new logo. Dr. Henry said she is collaborating with the IT department on some beautiful images of the city and the schools.

Supt. Testani said the new website will be more user-friendly on mobile devices.

In response to a question, Dr. Henry said she can share the packet she sent to Blackboard to make sure the committee's previous suggestions were covered.

Dr. Henry said she can provide information to the board on the specifics of the style guide.

The next agenda item was an update on the district's billboards on attendance.

Carli Rocha-Reaes, director of school counseling and parent partnerships; and Lynn Stephens, community, family and engagement coordinator; were present.

Ms. Stephens provided copies of all the upcoming billboards. She said they would be translated into Spanish and Portuguese as well. She said a new picture can be uploaded at any time to the electronic billboard.

Ms. Rocha-Reaes said the students will be very excited to see themselves, classmates, and schools represented on the billboards.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said the district had received a lot of positive recognition at the state level. He said the district's chronic absenteeism is 26 percent, despite Covid upticks, compared to a similar district where the figure is 45 percent. He said in the year before the pandemic the district's rate was reduced to 19 percent due to emphasis in his first year.

Ms. Castillo joined the meeting.

In response to a question, Ms. Rocha-Reaes said the last billboard had RYASAP on the billboard because they are partnering with the district on the home-visiting program. The mentoring program is being increased through the Bridgeport Public Education Fund. She said the billboards will include organizations the district partners with.

Ms. Stephens said messaging from the Attendance Works website is used.

Supt. Testani said the one good thing in the governor's proposed budget is the expansion of funds in this area next year.

In response to a question, the superintendent said there are also signage and banners around the schools for students and families. Ms. Stephens said there would also be bus ads and in shelters. Mr. Sokolovic suggested using, "Want to go places? Attendance matters." He noted a lot of families and students use public transportation.

Ms. Stephens said she had received feedback from parents that transportation is a high need. Ms. Brown suggested the use of decals as used by the city downtown.

In response to a question, Ms. Rocha-Reaes said the photo of students on the billboard next week will have about ten students. Ms. Stephens said it was an electronic billboard that can be updated.

Ms. Brown suggested the district's social media accounts highlight the billboards. Supt. Testani said Tim Grasty had been doing an excellent job with that and the social media engagement has really expanded.

Supt. Testani said the board members will be added to Parent Square as well. He said last week there were 4,504 direct messages and over 600 posts.

The next agenda item was on new agenda items for the next meeting. Mr. Benejan said he would e-mail his suggestions.

Mr. Benejan moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the committee on March 16, 2022