

Wednesday, January 19, 2022

MINUTES OF THE AD HOC DISTRICTWIDE BRANDING INITIATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held January 19, 2022, at Central High School, 1 Lincoln Boulevard, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. Present were members Chair Bobbi Brown, Erika Castillo, Albert Benejan. Board John Weldon was also present.

Supt. Michael J. Testani was present.

Mr. Benejan moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of November 17, 2021. The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on student submissions of logos for the district.

Sarah-Jane Henry, director of performing and visual arts, was present. She said there have been no submissions from the elementary schools. The submissions provided to the committee were from high school students. She said Blackboard, the district's website redesign vendor, has a graphic designer on staff waiting for the decision on the logo.

The superintendent said the redesign of the website will eliminate some of the wasted space on the sides and because the former site was not user-friendly compared to others. He said the new website would go active once the logo is determined.

Ms. Brown said the committee needed to determine next steps on the logo. Mr. Weldon said he thought the student input was to be used for offshoot campaigns, while the logo would be incorporated into the overall branding. Ms. Brown said that was the contemplated process.

Dr. Henry said the graphic designer could work with the students to incorporate their elements into the logo. She said Blackboard will also help determine if the images are copyrighted or not.

Ms. Castillo said she used to do this type of work with a company and typically there are focus groups prior to designs.

Ms. Brown said the theme of the district, "Every Day, Every Kid," was viewed as preferable to the city logo being used. She said the committee could use elements of the submitted logos and determine next steps.

Mr. Weldon suggested the committee take the process to the end and bring the results of the full board.

Ms. Castillo suggested a process to incorporate revisions. This typically involves design discovery, mockups, and then revisions.

Ms. Castillo said she believed the students submitted excellent logos. She suggested solidifying a style guide of colors and fonts and the like. Mr. Benejan said it was very important for children to be involved in this.

The superintendent said he was proud that "Every Kid, Every Day," which was started almost three years ago, has trickled down to the student body.

Ms. Castillo suggested a questionnaire be created to summarize the committee's thoughts on the logos. There was a discussion of the logos and the best elements.

Ms. Brown said she was attracted to the puzzle pieces, along with the image of a clock and what the student body looks like. Mr. Benejan said he loved all of it and the amazing work of the students. He singled out one of page 14 of the submission which included high school colors. He said he also liked the image of the clock and an image on page 29.

Supt. Testani said he felt strongly about using his slogan, along with the puzzle pieces. He said primary colors stand out and urged images that emphasize diversity. Ms. Castillo and Ms. Brown said they liked the globe image. The superintendent suggested a globe with a graduate's cap on it. Ms. Castillo said her three choices were the globe, something academic such as the cap, and the puzzle pieces.

Ms. Brown said gold and blue were attractive colors, along with green. Mr. Benejan suggested using the colors that are also used in the high schools – red, green, yellow, and blue. The superintendent said there was some orange in the Fairchild Wheeler colors. Mr. Weldon said primary colors were good and any color used had to be easily reproduced, with shades being avoided.

In response to a question, Ms. Castillo said a permanent background may not be possible due to the need for transparency in certain situations.

Ms. Brown said her dream is to see the logo everywhere in the future. When images are blown up they can look

pixilated, so that should be kept in mind. Mr. Weldon said it should be simple enough so that someone knows what it is after a quick glance such as with the IBM logo.

Ms. Castillo suggested the committee members submit buzzwords associated with the branding. Ms. Brown suggested fun, creativity, and future. Mr. Benejan said successful, power, and communication. The superintendent suggested grow, inclusion, and diversity. Mr. Weldon added friendship, foundation, and future. Ms. Castillo suggested diversity, integrity, and success.

Ms. Castillo said she would submit the results of the conversations to Ms. Brown. She said it could be shared with Blackboard, who could hold further focus groups to narrow things down.

Mr. Weldon said a design professional may need to be involved prior to giving the final choice to Blackboard. Dr. Henry said she believed Blackboard was looking for a completed image.

In response to a question, Dr. Henry said there were some teachers well versed in graphic design and they could be asked if they would be willing to help.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said there could be some money allocated for the process. Ms. Castillo suggested hiring a designer. Mr. Weldon suggested some hourly rates be obtained from local graphic people along with an estimate of the amount of time that would be needed. The superintendent said he could do that. Mr. Weldon said the professional will be able to determine whether a given design could be used on a website, a billboard or other format.

Mr. Benejan urged that staff members be involved. Dr. Henry said logo design is a very specific skill, and she was not sure if staff members had specific expertise in logos. Mr. Weldon said a local artist may be willing to cut the district a break on the price.

Ms. Castillo suggested hiring a professional designer and involving the teachers in the first round of revisions. Mr. Benejan said he was glad we could incorporate the amazing staff in the process.

Mr. Weldon suggested the designer selected be on call for whatever direction the committee wants to go. Ms. Castillo said the style guide would likely be developed after meeting with the designer. She suggested the superintendent share up front with the designer that the logo and style guide are needed.

Dr. Henry said she would reach out to the teachers for their possible assistance.

Ms. Brown said the students' work could be highlighted in social-emotional efforts and the annual calendar.

The next agenda item was on the new school billboards on student attendance.

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

Ms. Brown said her discussion on this subject with Ms. Rocha-Reaes and Ms. Stephens led to the conclusion that a

hashtag should be incorporated, along with photos of actual students.

Ms. Stephens distributed images of the current billboard, which is digital and can be changed at any moment. The billboards are running through April 11th. Administrators will be submitting student photos, after obtaining releases, that will become part of the billboards.

Ms. Brown said she suggested displaying numbers of students that have returned to school.

In response to a question, Ms. Stephens said the price varies on the location of the billboard. The price is \$4,000 every six weeks. Supt. Testani said the cost is paid through a grant from the state Department of Education.

Ms. Stephens said the billboard has been translated and will be appearing in Spanish and Portuguese soon. She said the billboards first appeared on November 29th. They began on southbound Route 8 and are currently on northbound 95.

Ms. Castillo suggested the photographs include multiple kids and of different ages and racial backgrounds. Ms. Rocha-Reaes and Ms. Stephens gave their thoughts on the logo discussion.

In response to a question, the superintendent said expenditures through this grant must promote student attendance, not student work. He said great strides on chronic absenteeism were made before the pandemic and there are some success stories such as pre-K.

The next agenda item was on the superintendent's Facebook Live events. The superintendent said there was a

presentation on December 7th. He said Tim Grasty from his office has been fantastic in social marketing campaigning. He said the event did not attract a big audience with 230 views on Facebook.

Supt Testani said in the last 28 days, including the holiday break, there has been a 238 percent increase in people reached through the district's Facebook page. Post-engagements are up 58 percent and page likes are up. There is greatly enhanced engagement of parents through the Parent Square app.

The superintendent said Tim does this as part of his other responsibilities. He said it would be nice to have a part-time marketing person. He said he often collaborates with Rowena White on the city side. He said he would like to see messaging to parents and children, in conjunction with the new city health director, about the dangers of fentanyl.

Ms. Brown said it was important for parents to feel they are being heard on social media. She said the Facebook Live events are important if they only cover Covid because it keeps parents in the loop.

The superintendent said from January 3 to January 9 Parent Square had 280 posts, 1467 direct messages, and two alerts. He said this was a powerful messaging tool in the district, including having teachers communicating with families. In the old-fashioned way, teachers could only do so through twice-a-year parent-teacher conferences or returning phone calls during their free periods.

Mr. Benejan urged there be greater publicity to parents before the Facebook Live events.

Ms. Castillo said she directs the marketing and communications office in King School, a small school. She described her duties. She suggested such a fulltime position in the district be considered.

The superintendent said there once was a position in the district, but it was cut about a decade ago. He said he recognized today it was needed much more than ten years ago.

Ms. Brown said this was on our radar, but it was a matter of finding funds for it. She said she works in a similar role, and it is a lot of work.

In response to a question, the superintendent said Facebook Live events are probably appropriate on a monthly basis. He said parents having difficulty with the Parent Square app should call their school for help. He said board members should ask him about items during his report during Regular Meetings.

Mr. Benejan said parents have asked him why Mr. Testani is using his cellphone during meetings. He said he wanted to be clear he was taking notes on his phone.

Ms. Brown said the meeting had included very effective brainstorming among the committee. Mr. Benejan said we were working well as a team. The superintendent said he had learned a lot about branding and marketing.

Ms. Castillo said she saw student artwork in City Hall and suggested a temporary gallery be created of the students' submissions on the logo.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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