

Monday, July 2, 2018

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held July 2, 2018,  
at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport,  
Connecticut

The meeting was called to order at 6:19 p.m.

Present were Chair John Weldon, Vice President Hernan Illingworth, Joseph Sokolovic, Sybil Allen, and Maria Pereira. Dennis Bradley and Chris Taylor arrived subsequently as noted.

Supt. Aresta Johnson, Ed.D., was present.

The sole agenda item was the annual performance evaluation of the superintendent. Mr. Weldon said this was the continuation of a process that started last week.

Dr. Johnson indicated she was fine with conducting the evaluation in open session.

Mr. Weldon said the board was now at Domain 5.

Dr. Johnson said the domain includes accountability and capacity building. She said a large portion of the domain is the board and the superintendent working together to have goals in place.

Mr. Bradley arrived at the meeting.

Dr. Johnson said the domain talks about having a plan in place to meet the specialized needs of schools. An example of a plan for Wilbur Cross School was included in the documents.

Dr. Johnson said this year the state reversed policies; funds were provided for the district to direct funds to schools. She said \$300,000 will be directed to Cross School, \$70,000 to Dunbar School, \$70,000 to Hooker School, and \$200,000 to Marin School. Roosevelt will receive \$213,000 and Tisdale will get \$200,000. She said the Cross plan was developed by central office in collaboration with teacher feedback. She said technology will be a focus at Cross because of the feedback.

Ms. Pereira expressed concern about the high schools. Dr. Johnson said the schools were chosen by the district from a state list that was provided, which did not include high schools in this round.

Dr. Johnson said attendance teams were established at each school and there is also a districtwide attendance team. Professional development to implement restorative practices is ongoing in the summer.

Dr. Johnson said the graduation rates were moving in the right direction. She said efforts were made to increase awareness about graduation requirements. She said there will be a public relations campaign in conjunction with the city to attract teachers to the community.

Dr. Johnson said a grant from Sprint resulted today in 660 new mobile tablet devices for the district. She said she chose the devices over access points, and they will be deployed in the high schools, particularly to incoming

freshmen.

Dr. Johnson said the \$12,000 donated by Rotary Club was directed to Bassick to help with their literacy engagement. She said they are interested in providing another \$12,000 this year and she will evaluate where the funds will be deployed.

Dr. Johnson said Tab 6 talks about sustaining a culture of continuous improvement and accountability. She noted it includes agendas from administrator meetings, such as information on the School Volunteer Association and planning with Scott Appleby on school and security with the March 14th walkout.

Dr. Johnson said three principals traveled to Finland schools during the spring vacation and they shared strategies that were presented to all of the administrators.

Dr. Johnson said the June meeting included iReady data, plans for the summer and special education data team updates.

Dr. Johnson said the information includes visits by the central office team to schools. She described it as a walk-through for support and conversation. She said they are announced visits.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said the visits are not evaluative of the principals, but the assistant superintendents note the strengths and weaknesses to provide a roadmap for improvement. She said accountability takes place if the principals are not meeting the objectives of the plan.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said she has asked the assistant superintendents for a breakdown of the administrators and the final ranking that they receive. She said she uses that information on evaluations of the assistant superintendents. She said she did not feel it was important for her to have input on the principal evaluations because she's weighed in all year on what her expectations are. She said she will pull some randomly to look at the complete performance evaluations, but not look at all 125.

Dr. Johnson said the assistant superintendents have to be held accountable as the board is going to hold her accountable. She said there has to be a high level of expectation and she felt comfortable she had made her expectations known.

Ms. Pereira said she did not doubt for a second that Dr. Johnson believes in accountability. She said her concern is whether the assistant superintendents believe in it. She said she was a big fan of the staff because they could get more money to work in other districts. She said she was concerned that we see every principal getting a satisfactory evaluation, which is just not possible in any organization.

Mr. Bradley said he did not believe the superintendent would be a lay-down-the-law, dictatorial figure. He said that type of leadership causes people to resent you and leads to an unhappy work environment. He said what we lack is a mission statement as to what our district is. He said he was supportive of heightened expectations.

Mr. Taylor arrived at the meeting.

Dr. Johnson said it was about coaching your team and your new leaders and being supportive; not just about my way or

the highway. She said she is a little more aggressive about her expectations for high school because there is a sense of urgency with four years.

Mr. Bradley said he has noticed from visits to the high schools and his own high school experiences that a lot of people don't realize that those four years may make or break what you might become for the rest of your life.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said there is an evaluation plan for teachers as well as for administrators, with the standards coming from the state.

Mr. Illingworth asked Dr. Johnson to share the ProTraXX electronic template for principals' evaluations with the board.

Dr. Johnson then addressed Domain 7, which addresses the strategic operating plan. She said the information includes professional development planned for 2017-18 and a copy of the minutes from a meeting of the professional development evaluation committee. She said there was feedback from teachers on a wellness day professional development, which will be repeated next year. She said it was a way to celebrate the teachers and to make sure they're well and okay, particularly in light of school violence issues in the country.

Dr. Johnson said Domain 8 was largely about herself. She noted this year the convocation will be done online, not at Harbor Yard. She said she believed she made a great effort to develop relationships with the community and received several awards while in her role.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said she would provide the board with the last five awards she received.

There was a discussion of the grievances filed against the board. Dr. Johnson said she had been able to resolve those that reached her level.

Ms. Pereira said it was telling that she did not know of any grievance that was specifically directed to Dr. Johnson for her treatment of a staff member or a decision that she's made.

Ms. Pereira suggested the board members come up with three priorities that we would like the superintendent to focus on in the upcoming school year. She said the board would meet on July 26 to complete the evaluation. Mr. Weldon said after scoring the superintendent's rubric, hopefully the board would be in alignment on goals.

Mr. Taylor said, for the record, for ethical reasons that he will not disclose, he did not partake in these proceedings.

Ms. Pereira moved the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bradley and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the board on October 22, 2018.