

Monday, March 25, 2019      **DRAFT**

MINUTES OF THE (SECOND) SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held March 25, 2019, at Cesar Batalla School, 606 Howard Avenue, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. Present were Chair John Weldon, Vice President Jessica Martinez, Secretary Joseph Sokolovic, Joseph Lombard, Hernan Illingworth, Sybil Allen and Maria Pereira.

Supt. Dr. Aresta L. Johnson was present.

Mr. Weldon said the meeting was called in lieu of the board's Regular Meeting because a recent change in the board's general policies placed the focus on the presentations that would take place. He said the board felt it was doing a disservice by shoehorning this kind of thing into regular business meetings. He said the night was all about the people the board is here to serve, with a spotlight on all of our students and the great things that happen in the schools.

Dr. Johnson said the goal was to entertain and showcase the work underway in the schools.

Alicia Robinson, director of performing and visual arts, introduced performance of the Roosevelt School Drum Line led by music teacher, Gerry Tondi.

Principal Jackie Simmons received a certificate of recognition for the group from Ms. Robinson.

Bridgeport Military Academy student Zaharia Nesmith-Miller reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were the international trip to Ireland planned for 2020, the naturalization ceremony held for new American citizens, a viewing of the movie *Hidden Figures* for Black History Month, and a soccer tournament event.

Julenny Jimenez of Bridgeport Military Academy highlighted the school's change of command ceremony on March 22 for first responders, upcoming placement tests at Housatonic Community College, an assembly for Women's History Month, and other upcoming events. She added there will be an international trip to Italy next month for some students and a ring dance in May.

Dr. Johnson said she would be presenting the high school representatives with certificates for putting in countless hours attending board meetings on the second and fourth Monday of every month.

Elisha Brockenberry of Bassick High reported on her school. She said the National Honor Society recently held an induction society which doubled the amount of members. She also highlighted the boys' basketball team's 19-1 season, which ended in the quarterfinals of the state tournament. Spring sports are now underway. The lieutenant governor visited the school to honor a Bassick graduate, Juliemar Ortiz, who is serving as press secretary. She said the PTSO will host a multicultural night on Thursday and the Males of Color mentoring program is in full swing.

Abud Hennawi of Central High reported on his school. He highlighted the upcoming end of the third marking period, the recent March Madness dance, 275 Central seniors being

admitted to Housatonic Community College, and the award of the Beard Excellence in Teaching Award to Laurinda Rua.

Emily Niveló of the IT School at Fairchild Wheeler reported on her school. Among the items she highlighted were the recognition received by the school from the Magnet Schools of America, the Senior Prom on May 9th, the Junior Ring Dance on April 26th, the activities of the Gaming Club, Exhibition Day on May 8th, and students participating in job shadowing.

Queston Parker of the IT School highlighted the February 22nd multicultural festival, student tours for interested prospective students, donations of unwanted prom dresses, SAT classes, the National Honor Society induction, the blood drive in March, and a kindness awareness event.

Dr. Johnson said translation services were available for anyone who needed them.

Jennifer Martinez of the Aerospace School at Fairchild Wheeler reported on her school. She highlighted the February multicultural fair, the Quarter 2 award ceremony, and a Kindness Day in March.

Ethan We Aobi of the Aerospace School reported on student applications for Sikorsky summer internships, SAT prep classes and the significant growth in test scores, CPR first aid certification courses, and the recognition the school received from Magnet Schools of America.

Anthony Miller of the Biotechnology School at Fairchild Wheeler highlighted the 2nd Quarter assembly, the activities of the Pre-Med Club, two students who placed high in a

HOSA competition, and two seniors who were finalists in the Connecticut state science fair.

Damarys Seda of Harding High reported on her school. She highlighted the excellence of female wrestlers, the start of the spring sports season on the new field and track, scheduling for the 2019-20 school year, new UConn classes for next year, preparations for SAT testing, and an upcoming trip to the Connecticut Science Center.

Dr. Johnson introduced Janelle Newell, winner of the Connecticut State Spelling Bee. Ms. Pereira presented Janelle with flowers. Dr. Planas, principal of Ms. Newell's school, presented her with flowers as well.

Janelle said the winning word was "Spencerian."

Dr. Johnson presented Kalani Rivera, a student who spoke in front of the Judiciary Committee in Hartford advocating to ban ghost guns and in favor of Ethan's Law. Dr. Johnson said she was proud of her for being an advocate.

Dr. Johnson said under the leadership of William Morton the district had increased the number of early college experience courses by 161 percent.

Dr. Johnson recognized Principal Victoria Egri of Bryant School. She said the school earned the Connecticut State School of Distinction for their growth in English Language Arts. Ms. Egri said she was very proud of her students, parents and staff.

Dr. Johnson recognized school counselor Victoria Sebourne of Classical Studies Magnet Academy, who has received national recognition for her work.

Dr. Johnson said one of the committees that has kept the district moving forward is the Chronic Absenteeism Committee, chaired by Michael Testani.

Mr. Testani recognized the members of the committee who have helped to come up with strategies and interventions to help students attend school on a more regular basis. He said chronic absenteeism had been reduced by almost four percent compared to last year. Dane Brown, principal of Harding; Sarhanna Smith, principal of Read School; Luisa Wolf, principal of Johnson School; Jackie Simmons, principal of Roosevelt School; Dee Young, director of social work; and Nikita Hall were members of the committee.

Carrie Ramanauskas, social-emotional learning coordinator, recognized those who have worked on the social-emotional learning campaign and Don't Judge a Book by Its Cover: The Human Library.

Ms. Ramanauskas said the first event of The Human Library was held in March. She recognized participants. She also recognized the kindness captain student from Roosevelt School. She said the Roosevelt group submitted a beautiful and touching video as part of the effort.

Ms. Ramanauskas recognized Ondrea Moore, a parent leader who serves on the social-emotional learning task force. Ms. Moore is a Fairchild Wheeler parent.

Ms. Ramanauskas recognized school-based SEL leaders from Central High, Bridgeport Military Academy, Bassick High, Fairchild Wheeler, Blackham School, Cross School, Dunbar School, Marin School, Read School, Waltersville School, Roosevelt School, Claytor School, Discovery

Magnet School, Curiale School, Geraldine Johnson School, and John Winthrop School.

Ms. Robinson introduced the performance of the modern band from Batalla School, under the direction teacher Michelle Martin.

Ms. Robinson said the annual battle of the bands in the district will take place on May 29th at either Harding High or Central High. She presented a certificate to Principal Hector Sanchez of Batalla School.

Dr. Johnson recognized the Special Education data team co-chairs, Dementred Young and Alyshia Perrin. She said the data team has met on a monthly basis for about two years.

Mr. Tito Planas, director of mathematics, presented certificates of excellence to three classrooms for their efforts during the mathematics competition. The third place winner was Ms. Dugan's third-grade class from Madison School. In second place class was Morgan Hibbert's first grade class at John Winthrop School. The first place winner was Leah Brockenberry's fifth and sixth grade class from Classical Studies Magnet Academy,

Ana Sousa-Martins, director of world languages, presented an award of recognition to teacher Deborah Swirsky from Marin School, who created a multicultural cookbook from her students' families' recipes. She said Ms. Swirsky welcomes her English-learner students with open arms.

Lisette Colon of the human resources department honored new teachers who have been identified as possible future leaders. She described the leadership training they recently received. She also honored John Ramos Jr., assistant

football and assistant wrestling coach at Harding, who helped develop the social-emotional health program entitled Presidential Development, which includes mentoring; Tyrone Elliott, assistant coach at Harding, founder and president of Adversity To Prosperity, which also mentors and provides scholarships to students; and Eddie Santiago, head football and wrestling coach at Harding, who helped raised \$200,000 for Bridgeport athletics. She said money raised has saved the Harding wrestling program for the last three years.

Mr. Testani recognized all the student-athletics throughout the district. He said the kids put in a lot of hard work and effort on the field and in the classroom. He recognized Shanaisha Hankerson, who placed fourth in the state wrestling finals, and Hannah Michel who came in first in her weight class in the state finals. He also honored Coach Eddie Santiago for his work.

Mr. Testani introduces the Bassick boys' basketball team, which finished 19-1 after playing the toughest schedule in the state, before succumbing to Windsor. Coach Lofton and the players were present.

Mr. Testani said the middle school basketball season recently ended. The winning girls' team was Read School. The players and coach were present. He said Coach Green would have been proud of them.

Mr. Testani said the Classical Studies Magnet Academy defeated Hooker School for the boys' championship. The players and coach were introduced.

Dr. Melissa Jenkins said the Ad Hoc Males of Color Committee is a subcommittee of the Board of Education.

She said the committee was created to begin programming and research on how to meet the needs of males of color in the school community. She said this year the committee was able to launch programming at three high schools and in the middle schools. She recognized members of the committee who have committed unpaid hours to the effort: Ricardo Alvelo, John Brockenberry, Dr. Carmen McPherson, John Ramos Jr., Martin Rubin, Terry Walden, Sauda Baraka, Eric Alicea, and Tekanya Monteiro.

Ms. Robinson recognized student Arianny Iglesias from Discovery Magnet for winning a fire prevention poster contest. She recognized Kelly Brown for organizing the contest. She also recognized Virginia Cristani, visual arts teacher at Batalla School, for eighteen years of work with students and families. She also recognized Mark Alvarez for his support for the district's logo contest and George Bella, visual arts teacher at Central High, in recognition for his 32 years of service to the district.

Ms. Robinson also honored Rebecca Gellatly, music teacher at Marin School; Laura Ramirez, music teacher at High Horizons and Multicultural Magnet, and Mika Smith, band teacher at several magnet schools. The three teachers dedicated personal time to chaperone students to participate in the Western Regional music audition.

Ms. Robinson introduced the Harding High choir, under the direction of Sheena Graham, the 2019 Connecticut Teacher of the Year. The choir performed a song.

Ca'Tisha Howard, guidance counselor at Bridgeport Military Academy, a co-chair of the district bullying prevention committee, described the monthly meetings of the



committee, which includes looking at data and looking at how to change school climate.

Dr. Johnson said each month there is an administrative council meeting with all district administrators. She recognized principals for leading this professional development training: Selena Morgan of Winthrop School; Sarhanna Smith of Read School; and Alyshia Perrin of Dunbar School.

Angela Bhushan, director of science, recognized the district science fair winners, who received a \$14,000 scholarship from the University of Bridgeport: Dafne Hernandez, Gabby Zeferini, Jeremiah Brown.

Ms. Bhushan also honored winners of the Connecticut state Science Fair.

Dr. Johnson thanked Assistant Superintendents Janet Brown-Clayton and Dr. Christiana Otuwa, Ms. Robinson, Ms. Bhushan, Mr. Planas, Dr. Jenkins, Mr. Testani, Alice Ortiz, Rita Valle and Tim Grasty for helping to pull tonight's event together.

Dr. Johnson recognized City Council member Christina Smith in the audience.

Mr. Weldon thanked everyone for coming. He said these events would take place four times a year; in June, September, December and March.

Mr. Weldon thanked Mr. Illingworth for coming up with the idea to hold the events.

Ms. Brown-Clayton performed the song "Lean on Me."

Mr. Weldon said the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

ASAP