

Thursday, January 28, 2021

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STUDENTS AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held January 28, 2021, by video conference, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m. Present were Chair Albert Benejan, and members of the committee Joe Sokolovic and Bobbi Brown. Board member Sybil Allen was in attendance.

Ms. Brown moved to approve the committee's minutes of November 19, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on a comprehensive bullying report. Herminio Planas, executive director of elementary education, was present. Mr. Benejan said he greatly respected Mr. Planas, but the report was supposed to be by Mr. Young.

Mr. Planas apologized and said Mr. Young had another engagement tonight. He said he spoke with Mr. Young at length about the report, but Mr. Young could be available at the next meeting. Mr. Benejan requested that Mr. Young deliver the report at the next meeting.

Mr. Sokolovic said the data provided did not seem as detailed as requested by the committee.

The next agenda item was on the status of the PACs and PTSOs and whether they exist at all schools.

Carli Rocha-Reaes, director of school counseling & parent partnerships, reported that she provided lists of all of the PAC/PTSOs. She said after the document was sent, information from Bryant and Skane Schools has been received. She said to the best of her knowledge all schools have functioning PAC and PTSOs in place. She commended administrators who had to find unique way to hold elections for officers.

In response to a question, Ms. Rocha-Reaes said the goal at the beginning of the year was to have 90 percent of the parent engagement money spent or encumbered, but we are far behind that goal. She said 50 percent is a realistic goal for right now.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was aware of a certain school where a PAC meeting has not been called in over a year. He asked if the amount of meetings are being tracked. Ms. Rocha-Reaes said she has not tracked that information, but she could collect that data.

In response to a question, Ms. Rocha-Reaes said the pandemic has been making the work challenging. She said she's meets monthly with Supt. Testani, Mr. Benejan, and all the PAC and PTISO leaders. A common theme among the leaders is that they miss being present in the school buildings because it gives them a connection to staff and parents. Ideas have been discussed about improved connections to parents.

Mr. Benejan said he was always available to assist Mr. Testani and Ms. Rocha-Reaes in this.

The next agenda item was on parent engagement spending. Mr. Benejan said he would like to see how we can push

spending money. Ms. Rocha-Reaes said districtwide about 22 percent has been used, with 11 schools close to 50 percent; 15 schools are t zero or very close to zero used.

Ms. Rocha-Reaes said she sent a survey to parent leaders and administrators at schools where greater amounts of money have been spent to learn what is working and what vendors have been used. She said this information is now available for the other schools.

Mr. Benejan said it was important the leaders spend the money properly, which has to be on parents. Mr. Sokolovic said it was up to the PACs and the principals to work to spend the money, with the board having no say. He suggested the committee come up with a template or form for a last-ditch plan to spend money right before the deadline. He said the relatively small amount of parent engagement funds could potentially be some of the impactful dollars spent.

In response to a question, Ms. Rocha-Reaes said she could check with the grants department if it is possible to share resources among schools.

The next agenda item was on the parent convention committee. Mr. Benejan noted there was \$18,000 available between last year and this year. He said for three years he was the chair of the parent convention. He said he believed there were ways the money could be spent, despite the lack of an in-person meeting.

Mr. Benejan said the money had to be spent before April 1st, but it was up to the parents to come up with a plan, which was not easy with the pandemic situation.

Ms. Brown suggested some ideas if the convention is held.

Mr. Benejan said the District PAC bylaws have been approved, and he will report at the next board meeting that it is now official. He said this was great after so many years had gone by.

Mr. Sokolovic said this news was great to hear on his birthday.

Ms.. Brown moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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