

Thursday, June 14, 2018 [Corrected]

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STUDENTS AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held June 14, 2018, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. Present were members Chair Joseph Sokolovic and Ben Walker. Board member Hernan Illingworth was in attendance. Member Maria Pereira arrived subsequently as indicated.

Superintendent Aresta L. Johnson, Ed.D., was present.

Mr. Sokolovic moved “*to move the Nutrition Center bids from 4 to number 7.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Walker and unanimously approved.

Mr. Walker moved to approve the committee’s minutes of May 10, 2018. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next item on the agenda was discussion and possible action on magnet school policies.

Asst. Superintendent Janet Brown-Clayton said she made edits to the document in conjunction with the intradistrict magnet school administrators. She said the new language was in red.

Mr. Walker said he and Mr. Sokolovic had a disagreement on what magnet schools should be.

Ms. Brown-Clayton said the administrative staffs are in agreement with the proposed policy. Magnet school administrators in the audience indicated their assent.

Mr. Sokolovic said he knows administrators are not just throwing children out of the school left and right. He said if students and parents are not following through the administrators cannot control that. He noted magnet schools do not have many academic supports and do not even have vice principals. He said children who are removed from magnet schools would go to another school where supports are more likely to be available.

Helen Giles, principal of Classical Studies Magnet, said every school has an SRBI process in place. If the SRBI strategies don't work, the student comes to a team and more strategies are implemented. If a child does not meet the standards at that point due to lack of effort or lack of support from the family, then they go into a special education track for support.

Mr. Sokolovic said in the current budget situation if resources did not have to be stretched out, they would be more strategically placed where needed.

Mr. Walker said the provisions about moving a child during the school year were a good compromise that leaves the ability to make these decisions in the hands of our professionals.

Ms. Pereira arrived at the meeting.

Mr. Sokolovic said it was important to leave the discretion in the hands of the principals because the principals know the students and they know which students are taking

advantage of the interventions that are being offered; they also know which children are trying their hardest to do the work required in a magnet school.

Dr. Johnson said in the February 8, 2017, committee meeting there was discussion about when a child was asked to leave a school 26 days before the end of school. The discussion reflected that after the second marking period, the child would be able to stay in the magnet school. She said consideration should be given to inserting a time frame in the policy as opposed to “a time deemed appropriate.”

Mr. Walker said he saw the vagueness as a good thing because it was case by case. Ms. Pereira said students had repeatedly been kicked out 17 days before the end of the school year. She said High Horizons had kicked out kindergartners 26 days before the school year ended.

Mr. Walker said he believed the proposed language addressed that issue.

Ms. Pereira said this has been a mess and the board has been working on this policy for two years. She said there has been appalling action by magnet school principals who have deselected students, including kindergartners, which needs to be addressed in the policy.

Mr. Sokolovic said he agreed there was an impact on children affected by these actions but he was concerned with the board managing the exceptions rather than the rules.

Ms. Pereira said this is not the policy discussed at the last meeting. She said there was a consensus among the administration and principals that we were going to align

ourselves with the interdistrict magnet policies. She noted students in interdistrict schools cannot be deselected.

Mr. Sokolovic said he recalled policies would be presented aligning the policies similar to the interdistrict schools.

Ms. Pereira said the minutes of the last meeting indicated Ms. Brown-Clayton said the principals wanted the policy to align with chronic absentee requirements and the interdistrict magnet schools, which under federal law cannot have any selection or deselection criteria.

Ms. Brown-Clayton said she misspoke because the intradistrict policies are governed by the board.

Ms. Pereira said she believed this was about the 23rd iteration of the policy – including from the previous administrator, Ms. Morrone – and this is not what we discussed.

Mr. Sokolovic said he may have to take some responsibility for that because he may have given Ms. Brown-Clayton improper information. He said from his recollection he thought the draft looked correct because we were supposed to go with Dr. Johnson's recommendations.

Ms. Pereira said neighborhood schools can't deselect students, so magnet school principals should not be allowed to deselect students. She said this disproportionately affects our most impoverished children in the city, who often don't have access to preschool.

Ms. Pereira described a Tisdale student who had great attendance and great grades and won the lottery to get into Classical Magnet. She said the parent was called by a

secretary and told her the child was deselected for behavioral issues before the first day of school. She said this is not fair to kids who are four, five and six.

Mr. Sokolovic said Ms. Pereira and Mr. Walker were seeing the students being deselected, while he was taking an overview and seeing the ones who can accelerate by reaching their potential by having one curriculum. He said the magnet schools are excelling. He said the goal seems to be to make them exactly the same as our neighborhood schools, with the same criteria and same standards. He said all that will do is drop test scores.

Mr. Sokolovic asked the principals how many students had they deselected over the last two years.

Francine Carbone, principal of High Horizons, said in her four years a total of eight students had been deselected. She said she could clarify the situation regarding the kindergarten student that's been mentioned repeatedly during these meetings.

Ms. Carbone said the kindergarten student had significant learning and behavioral problems throughout the school year. The student received many interventions with his mom on board. His teacher then had to go on emergency leave and was going to be replaced by a unknown substitute. Since previous conversations with the student's mom came to the conclusion that he was going to return to his neighborhood school the next year, she and the mom agreed together it was best for him to transition now rather than deal with the substitute teacher who was going to lack consistency for the last 42 days of school.

Ms. Carbone said she really prides herself on not throwing kids out. She said she doesn't like people to think that we just throw out students.

Ms. Giles said Classical Students became a magnet school in 2014. She said maybe two students had been deselected at the most.

Dr. Luis Planas of Multicultural Magnet said he believed the number was six students in the last four years.

Terese Maguire of Park City Magnet said the number was six in the last four years.

Mr. Walker said the committee had requested an entire new policy, not a cross out of the old policies, that reflected what Ms. Pereira was describing. He said he could see no reason to deselect students from the schools they've been chosen to go to.

Mr. Walker said the magnet schools outperform neighborhood schools because the students want to be there because there is an interest so they are drawn into the school. He said he was not trying to turn magnet schools into neighborhood schools. He said the curriculum will be designed around the magnet or interest draw. He said that will not be changed one bit. He said we teach every child who comes into a public school.

Mr. Walker said issues with very severe discipline problems would still apply to magnet school students. He said if it's a lottery, it's going to be a lottery; it can't be a lottery and then all of these entrance requirements.

Mr. Walker said the magnet schools in New York City are totally different because they have entrance exams and entrance requirements.

Mr. Illingworth said his child tried multiple times to get into magnet schools. He said most parents and students view it being a privilege to attend a magnet school, so kids work for it. He said he perhaps there should be an exception for very young children, but he viewed the magnet schools as raising the bar. He said that was the main difference between magnet schools and neighborhood schools. He said if you raise the bar most of the kids are going to rise to the bar.

Mr. Illingworth said the magnet schools are not like charter schools. The schools should work with the students and have real interventions.

Ms. Pereira said there was not a single study that supports Mr. Illingworth's position. She said it's called creaming, where the vast majority of parents who put their children in charter schools are totally invested in the children's education. Creaming takes the best of the best and it leaves behind other students.

Ms. Pereira noted the majority of magnet students enter in kindergarten. She said kindergarteners are not getting into the school because they have worked hard to gain the slot; they were chosen in a lottery.

Ms. Pereira asked Dr. Johnson if any kindergartener should be deselected from a school 42 days or 26 days before the school year ends. Dr. Johnson said the committee had discussed that no student should be deselected after the second marking period, and in November 2017 it was agreed upon that the child would stay until the close of

marking period. She said a child leaving seven days before the end of a marking period is disrupting to the child and to the teacher closing out grades.

Ms. Pereira said if that happens there should be an appeal process. She said she'll help every single parent file an appeal if they're deselected from a magnet school. She said principals are paid about \$130,000 a year and if they can't handle children who are not achieving a hundred percent behaviorally or academically that's not acceptable. She said all students would learn better when surrounded by students who are excelling.

Ms. Pereira said last year there was a compromise. Originally, the committee decided there would be no requirements to enter a magnet school from K to 3, but there would be for Grades 4 to 8. She said Mr. Sokolovic became chair and that went out the window.

Mr. Walker noted he had not been part of the compromise.

Mr. Sokolovic said in regard to Ms. Pereira's point about students being grouped with their peers who were excelling it is not the children's job to teach other children. He said it is our job to educate children to their full potential.

Mr. Sokolovic noted we've been having these discussions for quite a while, going around circles, and we are not going to change each other's minds. He said the other two committee members had the votes to outvote him. He suggested the other two committee members put forth a motion for what they want to do.

Mr. Walker said he used to play golf and was not very good, but when he was matched with better players he did much

better. He said students being around better students has nothing to do with students teaching students. He said Mr. Illingworth seemed to be describing talent and gifted or prep school, which is not the case because students get in by lottery. He said Ms. Pereira's suggested policy of having a lottery entrance of K to 3 and then an entrance criteria for Grades 4 and on makes perfect sense.

Mr. Illingworth said he was open to a lottery process up until the third grade.

Mr. Walker said the document is really not what we asked for. He said he was not being hard on the executive staff, especially this time of year. He said he believed he and Ms. Pereira want to see the alignment of the policies with the interdistrict magnet schools.

Mr. Sokolovic noted there is no entrance criteria for kindergarten admission. He said he was definitely open to an appeal process if students aren't selected or are deselected. He said the main issue he has is taking the discretion out of the building administrators' hands.

Ms. Pereira asked Mr. Sokolovic if he would accept a policy that had no entrance requirements for K to 3, with entrance requirements for Grades 4 through 8: acceptance in the lottery and then a final grade of C or better in core academic subjects, a conduct effort grade of 1 or 2 across the report card, and attendance in accordance with state policy. There would be no deselection process for any student. Mr. Walker said there are already policies that address students that misbehave and cause danger to other students or disruptions to the learning process.

In response to question, Ms. Pereira said the proposed policy had been vetted with parents and they were fine with the compromise.

Mr. Sokolovic said he was willing to accept a compromise on K to 3 if we can go back to the language of the warning letter to be sent home and leaving the deselection to the principals, who are already doing academic interventions.

Ms. Pereira said Mr. Walker and herself did not agree with deselection. She said the schools receiving federal funds could not deselect.

Ms. Pereira asked about references in the document to pre-K lotteries.

Tina Peloso-Ulreich, director of early childhood, said pre-K at Discovery has a lottery for students age 3 and up.

Ms. Pereira proposed the language refer to no entrance requirements for Grades K to 3. For Grades 4 through 8 at Classical Studies, High Horizons, Multicultural Magnet and Park City, students must meet the following criteria: A final grade of C or better in core academic subjects.

Ms. Pereira asked if any principal had an issue with that. There was no response.

Ms. Pereira suggested the criteria be a conduct/effort grade of 1 or 2 across the report card and student attendance must be aligned with the Bridgeport Public Schools attendance policy.

There was a discussion of attendance policies.

Ms. Carbone said there are procedural benchmarks at ten absences, where there is a parent conference; at twelve absences a home visit is supposed to occur; at fifteen there is a referral to PPT for truancy; twenty leads to the family with service needs referral.

Ms. Pereira discussed Type 3 violations that could lead to a student being removed from a school. Mr. Walker said that applies to all our schools and the policy should be same in the magnet schools. He said there should be no deselection in magnet schools.

Mr. Walker said chronically misbehaving students can be reassigned to other schools for a change of environment.

Dr. Johnson asked the principals about their thoughts on the entire section regarding removal of students.

Dr. Patricia Anekwe of Central Magnet said if students get to 7th and 8th grade or high school in magnet schools and are not taking advantage of the opportunities, they have seats ahead of children who are dying to get in the school. She said this created equity issues. She noted she had been in the system for 21 years. She said the policies should strike a balance among the needs of the students. She said she didn't think it should be a life privilege for the student once they get in the school.

Ms. Pereira said there was a different policy for Central Magnet.

Mr. Sokolovic noted if magnet students are not deselected they will have the right to attend Central Magnet accordance with board policies.

Dr. Johnson said there were safeguards such as a mandatory parent conference before any deselection for Grades 4 to 8. She said she would like to see some of the language kept in.

Ms. Giles and Ms. Carbone said they agreed.

Mr. Walker said magnet schools were developed as a tool of desegregation and there was no other way in or out other than the lottery. He said we do not discriminate because one student is smarter than the other or behaves better than the other. He said some students are hard to teach but that is our challenge as professionals. He said the magnets were not set up to be talented and gifted schools or prep schools.

Mr. Sokolovic said the committee members were well entrenched in their positions. He suggested the other members move forward with the policies they are suggesting.

Mr. Walker said if we had been given what we asked for we would not be in this position now. He said the committee has not seen the criteria that it gave to the administration.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said every lottery seat had not always been filled by October 1. She said if seats aren't filled it is the responsibility of the principals to fill the seats. Ms. Pereira said there were over four thousand students on waiting lists. Dr. Johnson said the situation is being monitored.

In response to a question, Dr. Anekwe said the entrance standards for Central Magnet were lowered in some areas in the proposed policy. She said the intent is trying to create a

balance to meet the minimum threshold for students and then to work with them.

Ms. Carbone said the data from SBAC and iReady indicated there were only about six students that would have gotten into Central Magnet, so the SBAC and district benchmark percentiles were eliminated.

Mr. Illingworth said when his daughter went to Central Magnet it was all about a C average, not CMTs. He said some kids are horrible test-takers.

Dr. Anekwe said she was in favor of provisions that required the SBAC total score of 4, average score above the 25th percentile in reading and math, or the district benchmark assessment administered in Grade 8.

Dr. Anekwe noted teachers write recommendations for some Central Magnet applications.

Ms. Pereira asked why every TAG and magnet school student automatically gets into Central Magnet. Dr. Anekwe said the intent was keep the brightest kids in Bridgeport and discourage them from going to private or Catholic schools. Ms. Pereira noted the policy was created before Fairchild Wheeler opened. Dr. Anekwe said even now we lose a lot of kids to private schools.

Mr. Illingworth said he believed the district would lose a lot of students without this provision.

Mr. Walker suggested the policies refer to an online application should be completed, removing reference to whether the parent or student has to complete it.

Dr. Anekwe said she believed it was critical the criteria to remain in Central Magnet remains the same.

Mr. Walker said it's not a prep school, so he was not in favor of such criteria. Ms. Pereira said at the high school level we're talking about a young adult and somebody who should know better.

Dr. Anekwe said that had been part of the program since 1983 and if it is removed you might as well get rid of Central Magnet.

Dr. Johnson said parents say they keep their children in Central Magnet because of the programs and the same may apply to parents and their children in elementary magnet schools. Dr. Anekwe said she believed it was a privilege to attend a magnet school at the high school level.

A magnet school parent was recognized. He said there should be criteria for students in magnet schools. He said there are students that want to learn and students who don't want to learn and also disrupt the class.

In response to the parent, Mr. Walker said the committee was just trying to get the administration to draft a document so it can be considered.

Ms. Pereira said she did not have a problem with deselection criteria from Central Magnet.

Dr. Johnson said the Bridgeport Military Academy has to follow guidelines. She said the federal grant has ended, but the school was brought in under the grant. She said the district was following the state guidelines for Fairchild

Wheeler and Bridgeport Military Academy, so those schools could not have entrance or deselection criteria.

Dr. Johnson noted students come to BMA from surrounding communities similar to Fairchild Wheeler.

Ms. Pereira asked that a new document be created, be reviewed by Dr. Johnson, and then come to the committee. She said the committee would have to debate the issue of the deselection process on Grades 4 to 8.

Mr. Sokolovic noted until the policy is finished and in place the old policy remains in effect. Ms. Pereira said that was the case.

The next item was a report on bullying for the 2017-18 school year. Ms. Brown-Clayton said the director of social work was away at a conference. She said the committee had received a report from Mr. Young that gives the operating bullying definition. She noted it was a repeated act, which covers cyber-bullying, physical acts and gestures, physical and emotional harm, or creating a hostile environment.

Ms. Brown-Clayton said there was an uptick from last year. The number of bullying allegations this year was 70. She said one reason for the increase is a victims' page was created.

Ms. Pereira noted data on two charter schools. She said the district had to pay for ten social workers to the charter schools that cost over a million dollars, but the district has no authority over those schools. She noted there were 68 district incidents.

Ms. Pereira asked if it was 68 unique individuals or 68 complaints. Mr. Sokolovic noted the heading of the document said it was listing a number of students.

Ms. Pereira said this was the fourth year she has seen a problem with the bullying statistics in this district. She said 14 schools reported not a single instance of bullying; she said that is not possible.

Mr. Illingworth said he knew for a fact that there was at least one incident at Claytor School even though it was not reflected in the statistics. Ms. Pereira said there are bullying incidents every day.

Mr. Illingworth said the numbers are at the discretion of a principal and those incidents they view as bullying. He said there was an incident of bullying involving his daughter that the principal did not view as bullying.

Mr. Sokolovic said even though this was bad, the increased numbers are still a big improvement because incidents previously were not being reported. He said principals may fear reporting bullying incidents.

Crystal Aguirre was recognized. She said she had been bullied multiple times. She said it seemed like teachers and principals ignore bullying incidents.

Mr. Sokolovic urged the students in the audience to speak up: If the teacher doesn't do anything about it, tell the principal. If the principal doesn't do anything about it, e-mail Dr. Johnson.

Mr. Illingworth said he believed the bullying policy had no significant teeth.

Jose of Make the Road Connecticut said studies show that 25 percent of Bridgeport schools are losing because of bullying. He said he had been bullied multiple times and had gone to his teachers and principal, who have done nothing. He said he was in Read School.

Mr. Sokolovic said the trouble we run against is the state definition of bullying is narrow.

Ms. Pereira said only eight bullying incidents were reported in the high schools, including none at Fairchild Wheeler and BMA. Dr. Johnson said she dealt with a parent directly regarding bullying at Geraldine Claytor. She said the reported numbers should be higher. She said she did not know why principals would be afraid to report; if they report it works in their favor.

Mr. Sokolovic said the principals reporting the bullying incidents are doing the right thing. He said principals could get in trouble for not making reports because they are mandated reporters.

Ms. Pereira said there are 14 schools that didn't report a single incident of bullying. She asked if Dr. Johnson believed that. Dr. Johnson said she knew of the incident at Claytor that is not reflected in the report; she agreed incidents are missing.

Dr. Johnson said we had made some headway on reporting bullying, but we have a lot more work to do.

Ms. Pereira said the reports indicated out of 21,000 students there only 15 substantiated bullying incidents.

Mr. Sokolovic said part of problem is with the definition. He noted the governor just vetoed a bill that would put more teeth in the bullying law.

Mr. Sokolovic said the bullying definition includes action which places the student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or others. He said “reasonable” was open to interpretation. Ms. Pereira said the person who’s being bullied decides that.

Mr. Sokolovic asked if the district could put more teeth into the bullying definition. Ms Pereira said that was checked into and it could not be altered because it was taken from state statute. Mr. Walker said we could make better requirements of reporting what’s going on in the schools.

Ms. Pereira said she wanted the report to be used in assistant superintendent and principal evaluations. She said everything that goes well in a school is a reflection on the principal, as does everything that goes bad.

Ms .Pereira said we had never broken twenty complaints of bullying in four years. She said this was not acceptable.

Dr. Johnson said since the year when zero incidents were substantiated, the Power School platform was adjusted to create a victims’ page. Reports now go to the assistant superintendents on a monthly basis. She said this year we’ve made efforts to really monitor it.

Ms. Pereira said the issue had to move to the full board so all the board members could see it.

Mr. Sokolovic said bullying incidents going on in a school does not necessarily mean that the principal is doing

something wrong, but not reporting incidents that happened is wrong. He said like police officers, they can't prevent crime, but the issue is their response to it.

In response to a question from the audience, Mr. Walker noted sexual harassment can be a one-time incident, but for it to be bullying it would have to be repeated.

Ms. Pereira said sexual comments made should be reported to administrators. She said in today's day and age, the complaints should be made in writing by e-mail.

Dr. Johnson said each school has a Title IX officer to whom incidents may be reported.

Mr. Walker asked Mr. Sokolovic to put the item on the next board agenda, with a report by Mr. Young.

The next agenda item was discussion and possible action on creating a more welcoming environment on school entry.

Mr. Sokolovic said he put the item on the agenda after hearing from students at the last meeting who said they felt like they were entering a prison and it was not setting them up properly for the school day.

Ms. Aguirre said things like trophies or pictures of the school in the entry area would create a better environment. She said music that was school-appropriate but for our generation will get us happy in the morning.

Mr. Walker said that would be a good student council project. He said ideas would be more accepted coming from the student body.

Dr. Johnson said there are student councils in high schools as well as the National Honor Society, and there is a junior honor society in elementary schools.

Mr. Sokolovic said the School Governance Councils and the PTSOs could also work on the issue.

Dr. Johnson said she thought it belongs at the building level because there were so many clubs and organizations. She said she knows Harding plays music and the band plays on Friday. She said she observed music being played at Central High.

In response to a question, one of the students said in the security line at Fairchild Wheeler the guards barely check bags. She said some security guards take markers, Sharpies, cans and glass away from students. She said lining people up and straightening the lines leads to students pushing each other. She says she gets real bad anxiety at the lines.

Ms. Aguirre said the security guards take away things and they don't tell us why. The other student said beverages are taken from students in line. She said her principal took away her breakfast in the line because she was eating it.

Dr. Johnson said there have been issues with inappropriate beverages being brought into schools in containers. She said if the bottles are closed, they are allowed to enter. Mr. Walker said it would make sense they would do that.

Asst. Superintendent John Lischner said security was under the direction of building administration. He said open containers are not allowed for the reason indicated by Dr. Johnson. The student said she was told the food could be

brought in from a home container. She said one time the security let her in with a halfway opened bottle of water.

Mr. Sokolovic said he believed we need a consistent policy in place as to what's allowed.

JoAnn Kennedy said since her children were in school in 2011 they were starting to take food away because of one incident at Harding. She noted many schools don't have air-conditioning and need to be able to drink water. She said children were suffering because of the policies.

Ms. Pereira said she did not like it when we set policies because of one thing a student did. She said you should not punish 21,000 students because of the actions of one student.

Mr. Illingworth said some of the students are rushing out of their homes to get to school on time and are eating on the way.

Another student said he did not feel welcome at all at his school. He said the security lines at Fairchild Wheeler can stretch as far as off the premises if you're late. He said he was able to bring his nephew's Nerf gun into the school even though the security guard saw it. Mr. Walker suggested the student not do that again.

In response to a question, Mr. Lischner said each day we're opening up short on security guards. Mr. Sokolovic said it seemed everything that could be done without hiring more security guards was being done. Mr. Lischner said if more security guards were needed at Fairchild Wheeler, they would have to be moved from another school.

In response to a question, Mr. Lischner noted the student said when they are late there are long lines. A Fairchild Wheeler student said the lines aren't always long just when students are late.

Mr. Lischner said he made recommendations to Dr. Otuwa and the school administrators based on input from the guards themselves about opportunities to improve their speed. Dr. Otuwa said the suggestions had been implemented. She said the big issue is when the buses come in.

Ms. Aguirre said it was hard for students to get to school on time and be ready. Mr. Sokolovic said the young people to the extent they're able to have to take responsibility for getting themselves out of bed and into school on time. He said he understood there were extenuating circumstances.

Mr. Sokolovic said he didn't think the issue needed to go to the full board. He said the issue should go first to the student councils.

A student said it was not one hundred percent students' fault when they're late. Mr. Sokolovic said he agreed and remembered being a teenager himself.

The next item was on pre-K and kindergarten parental involvement improvement. Ms. Peloso-Ulreich said she provided information on what the district does to recruit students in pre-K and kindergarten.

Mr. Sokolovic said the committee was trying to build up parental involvement. He said the committee had recommended that PAC presidents be invited to recruit parents and be involved during kindergarten orientations.

Ms. Peloso-Ulreich said the reason the magnet schools had the kindergarten orientation is because the children are accepted by lottery. The awareness days were for other parents to visit the schools and tour the building. She said often parents say they don't want their child to attend a certain school and she urges the parents to visit the school and learn how they really are.

Ms. Peloso-Ulreich said kindergarten awareness days are held at the end of April and early May. Right before school opens, many schools have a meet and greet for parents. She said it would be nice if we could have the same protocol in every school.

Ms. Peloso-Ulreich said the United Way provides a kickoff program in summer with the district, designed for children with no preschool experience. The program is held at Batalla, Blackham, Marin and Tisdale. Preschool teachers teach it over fourteen days. Preschool students who have been struggling are also accepted in the program if there is room.

Ms. Peloso-Ulreich said she also gives transition to kindergarten workshops at some schools.

Ms. Peloso-Ulreich said all preschool slots were filled this year and not a penny lost. Dr. Johnson said we were slated to lose \$70,000, but the office put in a plan to aggressively fill the seats.

Ms. Peloso-Ulreich said in the past the district had never lost any slots, although the community sites have.

Ms. Pereira said from her experience as a manager at Scholastic Book Fairs the parents of the youngest children are the ones most excited and able to be engaged.

Ms. Peloso-Ulreich said for next year one school could not be filled, cross. This was because people did not want to go. The eighteen slots are being transferred to High Horizons with permission.

Ms. Peloso-Ulreich said six schools underwent NYAEC accreditation this year.

The next item was on exploration of additional family involvement ideas.

Delores Mason said she consistently asks administrators in the schools to ask staff to recommend two parents they think would want to be involved. She said many of our parents have had bad experiences in school and they have to be coaxed a little to get involved.

Ms. Mason described how a High Horizons parent, John Wilkins, who became engaged and went on to become the PAC president and involved in city government. She said sometimes it's somebody who just wants to be asked.

Mr. Illingworth said parents have to feel welcomed and if they are not, you lose them right off the bat. He said the first line of defense is the secretary. Ms. Pereira and Mr. Illingworth said the secretaries often greet parents in a negative way.

Ms. Mason said that Dr. George Coleman at the state Department of Education visited his grandchild's Waterbury

school and it led to the welcoming project in the state because he was not greeted in a welcoming manner.

Ms. Pereira asked who was going to be approving all the schools' action plans since Ms. Mason was retiring. She said it was a requirement of the covenant of the grant. Ms. Mason said she reviewed the action plans, although she did not approve them. She said they would be uploaded to the budget site and the expenditures would be approved by Ms. Siegel or the grants office.

Dr. Johnson said she has yet to reorganize everyone's responsibility.

Mr. Sokolovic said it looks like there has been more and more parental involvement at the PACs.

Ms. Pereira said some of the figures on parental engagement spending were pretty disgraceful. There were schools that didn't spend a dollar or waited until the end of the year to encumber funds. She said over \$18,000 was turned back to the district.

Ms. Mason said the parents need to work with teachers to better spend that money. She said teachers know the school improvement plan and can coordinate with parents on events where Title I funds can be spent.

Ms. Pereira said the superintendent needs to use the report on expenditures on principals' evaluations.

Dr. Johnson noted there is support staff in the grants office.

Mr. Sokolovic said the committee was going to request reports quarterly on Title I expenditures to stay on top of it.

Ms. Mason said there is a partnership with Big Y and their Education Express program with all the schools registered. The schools have a type of debit card where the parent leaders can make purchases and get lower prices.

Ms. Mason said the cards stay with the principals who give them to the parent leader when appropriate, and the purchases go into MUNIS for accounting of the funds. Dr. Johnson said the PTSOs work with the principals to collaborate on planning the activities.

Mr. Sokolovic noted Ms. Mason does not supervise the principals and she cannot bring pressure to bear on them. He said the new method of oversight with quarterly reports to the committee would be tried and if that did not work the item could go to the full board.

Ms. Mason said School Governance Councils exist in all the schools and they understand what is going on with parent engagement. They are supposed to receive a monthly update on parent engagement activities.

Assistant Superintendent Christiana Otuwa said in one case there was not clear communication between the principal and the PTSO president. She said she advised him that that has to be a priority.

Mr. Sokolovic said he assumed the microscope had not been used on this issue previously, but now things should move forward

The next agenda item was on nutrition bids.

Vincent Esposito, acting director of the Nutrition Center, said he has been working for the board for the last 43 years. After teaching for a few years, he moved to the nutrition center. He said his mom was very active as a parent in getting the hot lunch program started in Bridgeport.

Mr. Esposito said his fulltime job is the federal claims preparer. Reports are sent to the state in order for the board to receive federal reimbursements.

Mr. Esposito said he was asking for guidance in submitting the bids for food in the school year 2018-19. He said he believed they were futuristic. He said some language is USDA-initiated and aimed at health and safety. He said we need to get the bids rolling so the district can get its place in line with the other major school districts competing for commodity products.

Mr. Esposito said commodity products are federally subsidized. The government buys the food from the farmers, which is first offered by the USDA to the Department of Defense and then the school lunch programs.

Mr. Esposito said the bids that went out previously have been cancelled and he is seeking the board's permission to get the bids out.

In response to a question, Mr. Esposito said the bread and milk bids are done last and haven't been prepared yet.

In response to a question, Mr. Esposito said it was his understanding that the awards would come before the board, not bids, which led to the bids going out previously. He noted bids were not in his area of responsibility and the bid cycle

process was started. Through advice from Dr. Johnson, the bids were cancelled.

Ms. Pereira said Mr. Esposito was at the meeting where Ms. Wong was told that every bid had to come through this committee because of all the problems we had. She said she was really disturbed to see a bid had been posted in April.

Ms. Pereira said there is a tremendous amount of language that had been inserted in the bids that has never been there before. She said this serves as an obstacle to local vendors. She said she checked the New Haven bids and a lot of the language is not present in that district's bids.

Ms. Pereira noted the exact same language was used in every bid so it would not take long to review the bids. She said the language should be edited before it goes to the full board.

Ms. Pereira said the provision to provide flour invoices for two years is not a requirement. She said the Monroe and Stratford districts have the vendors place on letterhead that they are purchasing their flour in the United States. She said a national company would be able to produce this easily, but a smaller or local company might not be able to. Mr. Esposito said he believed the provision was to prove that buy American policies are being followed.

Mr. Esposito said 51 percent of the product must be whole grain and with ingredients processed in the United States. Mr. Sokolovic noted we have no liability if a company lies to us.

Mr. Esposito said there is new language coming down from the USDA that puts more teeth in what they're saying. He said as we undergo audits, we'll get further direction.

Mr. Esposito said the language Ms. Pereira referenced could be taken out. It was decided to insert a provision that "proof of compliance must be provided by the vendor by submitting confirmation on company letterhead."

Ms. Pereira said on page 2 the indemnification clause should add a reference to the Bridgeport Board of Education.

Ms. Pereira said the provision regarding suitability and attractiveness of the packaging is very subjective. Mr. Esposito said that may be for the milk cartons. He said in the past milk vendors have delivered dirty cartons.

Ms. Pereira suggested a reference to cleanliness be added instead.

Ms. Pereira asked why there were provisions about providing health inspection reports. She said we don't ask the bus company for OSHA reports. She said any operating company must be passing its health inspections.

Mr. Sokolovic said it was a reasonable provision. Mr. Walker noted there were varying degrees of health reports. Mr. Sokolovic said he didn't see that as harmful to a small business. He suggested asking for the last two health inspections.

Ms. Pereira said a provision giving the district the right to cancel any further purchases due to a failure to satisfy any requests should require board approval, not the approval of nutrition center. She said there was an instance where the

nutrition center was going to take away a bid and the vendor threatened to sue, before being totally absolved.

Mr. Sokolovic said there could be a time lag between seeing a problem and getting it before the board. He said if a health issue was found we may want to stop accepting orders immediately.

Ms. Pereira said the previous incident was a nightmare, with Dr. Johnson and health inspectors getting involved. She said Dr. Johnson and Ms. Siegel had no knowledge the contract had been taken away. She said the incident had to do with an allegation that a roach was baked into bread. She said we were lucky we didn't get sued. She said she was not giving up on this issue.

Mr. Sokolovic said that seemed to be an outlier and we're managing the exception and not the rule. Ms. Pereira said there were no other contracts that the administration could cancel without board approval. Mr. Sokolovic said these are just individual orders, not an entire contract. He said perhaps there can be a conditional termination.

Mr. Walker said both positions were valid. He said there should be a fail-safe provision with the nutrition center allowing them to stop all orders from a vendor until it is brought to the board's attention.

Ms. Pereira said she was not giving up on this and would bring it to the full board. Mr. Walker asked if Ms. Pereira was saying the nutrition department had to continue to take orders of tainted products.

Mr. Sokolovic said it seemed there was an impasse, with two members opposing Ms. Pereira's suggestion on this item, while agreeing on the others.

Mr. Walker said the nutrition department should have the right to suspend deliveries pending the contract being reviewed by the Board of Education.

Ms. Pereira and Mr. Walker suggested the following language: If the supplier fails to satisfy any request, the food service department has the option of suspending the contract pending notification and approval of the board.

Ms. Pereira said she did not trust the nutrition center at this point.

Mr. Walker said he agreed, but things have to be done on an immediate basis when it comes to food.

Ms. Pereira said the certification listed under R should be removed because only national companies have certifications referenced. She said the certifications give bidders extra points.

Mr. Esposito said that language is for huge national suppliers of processed products such as cheese, turkey, chicken and beef. He said the companies are huge processing houses in the Midwest and there are no companies like them locally or in the state.

In response to a question, Mr. Esposito said usually companies in the state only bid on the bread and milk contracts.

Mr. Esposito said strong language is needed for the national processing houses. He said these are for federally-subsidized commodities such as turkey purchased at three cents a pound.

Mr. Esposito suggested only using the language with the six commodity bids. He said the language was not required today for purchases such as bread and milk, but commodities are USDA-supported and subsidized. He recommended they be taken out of the purchased items.

Ms Pereira asked Mr. Esposito to send her proof the language was required on commodities. Dr. Johnson noted commodities are cheese, vegetables, fruit, soy, sun butter, chicken, turkey, beef and egg products.

In response to a question, Mr. Esposito said the bid is for processed eggs, not whole eggs. He said these are huge volumes of eggs that the government buys from farmers. The same applies to cheese, which is processed and turned into pizza, French toast and toasted cheese sandwiches.

Ms. Pereira said she was fine with using the language with the top six items on the list.

Mr. Esposito said a provision on metal in commodities was needed because occasionally such objects have been found in the food. He said this is a new requirement to provide proof they have metal detectors in their food processing facilities. This provision was needed for commodities.

Mr. Esposito said a provision cited by Ms. Pereira that indicated "any other qualities the Nutrition Department deems necessary for assessment" could be taken out.

Mr. Illingworth said he did not believe the provision was needed because everything else seemed to be covered.

Mr. Esposito said he recalled a vendor who offered food items at very low price and it turned out they were purchasing the products from Amazon.com. Ms Pereira said the provision was too arbitrary.

Ms. Pereira said the provision about requesting samples should be changed from the board to the director of nutrition.

Ms. Pereira said the provision requiring samples within 48 hours might be too stringent. Mr. Sokolovic said overnight mail was possible for large companies with large contracts. Mr. Esposito said the vendors have local representatives. It was agreed to change the time to 72 hours

Ms Pereira said that the reference should be made to the board awarding the contract, not the nutrition center, under the duration of contract section. She pointed out other sections that should be changed from the nutrition department to the Board of Education.

Ms. Pereira said she hoped the bids approved could be brought to the board on Monday.

Dr. Johnson said she would get together with Mr. Esposito and incorporate the changes.

Ms. Pereira asked that Dr. Johnson include a note to board members that the bid language is almost identical in all 13 bids.

Mr. Walker suggested they be sent out separately from the board packet.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

Approved by the committee on August 30, 2018