

Wednesday, September 26, 2018

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held September 26, 2018, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. Present were members Chair Ben Walker, Maria Pereira and Joseph Sokolovic.

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

Mr. Walker said the only agenda item was discussion and possible action on the contract with ABCD for Harding High's early learning center.

Dr. Johnson said the city attorney reviewed the contract over the summer.

Dr. Johnson noted the provision where the first preference for seats in the program will be given to teenaged parents enrolled in Bridgeport Public Schools. She noted this was a change in verbiage from Harding High.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said Dr. Jenkins was not present because she was not involved in the drafting of the document over the summer.

Barbara Baldwin, acting assistant early learning director for ABCD, said slots for early Head Start were allocated to the district. The slots are available to the community if the teen parents can't fill the slots.

Dr. Johnson said ABCD will have complete oversight over the program. She added there will also be infants in the program and Dr. Jenkins as pre-K director does not oversee infants.

Ms. Baldwin said ABCD had an infant and toddler specialist as well as mental health/disability infant and toddler specialists.

Mr. Walker said the committee indicated previously it would like to see a hierarchy tree of who would fill the slots.

Mr. Sokolovic said the discussion indicated first priority should go to Harding students, followed by other district students, and then staff members.

Mr. Walker said he was okay with the phraseology of the paragraph as recounted by Dr. Johnson. He said he was open to adding a provision that any remaining seats will be open to the children of Harding staff.

Ms. Pereira said the drafting of a policy has been referred to the committee. She said the issue of bumping had to be dealt with in the policy.

Mr. Walker said he was asking Dr. Johnson to formulate a proposed policy for presentation to the committee.

Dr. Johnson said this was an agreement to engage in professional services with ABCD. She said there is a committee in place working on a policies regarding entry. She noted the policy would have to cover a situation where a Central student wanted to have a child in the program, but might not want to leave Central to go to Harding, She said the policy will have to delineate details.

Ms. Baldwin said any child, teen parent, community member or staff is required to be in the income guidelines of Head Start. She said ABCD can cover over ten percent over-income throughout all its programs and that is usually used for children with special needs.

Ms. Pereira said a teacher who lives in Trumbull or Fairfield should not get priority over a community member who lives two streets away from Harding. Ms. Baldwin said such a staff member with a special needs child would help ABCD fill the ten percent of what the grant allows. She said they first looked for children of Harding students, then students from other schools, and they are still looking for ten children to enroll by Friday.

Mr. Sokolovic suggested removing a reference to teenaged because some of the district's students go up to age 21. Dr. Johnson noted there were districts students as young as 12 who had given birth.

Ms. Pereira said she did not like the idea of putting Harding staff before others in the community. Mr. Walker said the district's committee would submit a proposed policy on this, which would supersede the contract.

Ms. Pereira said the center was aimed at preventing high school students who are parents from dropping out. She questioned the provision about not providing services until a child is six months old. Ms. Baldwin said she has provided assurances that if there is an opening children as young as six weeks will be taken. She said ABCD can also help parents place a child in another site that has an opening.

Ms. Pereira said if a Harding student wishes to enroll a child in the program the child of a staff member or community member should be bumped out because the program exists to keep students from dropping out.

Dr. Johnson said the district has an idea of the number of students expecting a child. Support systems are in place for that. She said there is a teen pregnancy social worker at Harding High.

In response to a question, Dr. Johnson said the program will be able to be run throughout the summer as well without expense to the board. She said there would be a new contract with ABCD on July 1, 2019.

In response to a question, Dane Brown, principal of Harding, said the contract references the furniture and refrigeration in the child care area. Ms. Baldwin said some equipment was purchased by the board to set up the classroom and ABCD supplemented those with some additional furniture.

In response to a question about a possible third party referenced in the contract, Ms. Baldwin said ABCD would have to provide its own custodial staff and security during the summer. Ms. Pereira said

ABCD would have to come back to the board for approval for that. Dr. Johnson said that would apply to non-ABCD employees.

Ms. Pereira said she found the indemnification provisions problematic. Mr. Walker said the provisions appeared to be reciprocal promises to hold the other party harmless in the event of negligence by the one party. Dr. Johnson said she felt well protected here, noting the city attorney had vetted the contract.

In response to a question, Ms. Baldwin said on half days the facility is not open to 4:30 p.m.

Ms. Pereira said the board usually gives a one-year contract until it sees how the providers are doing and then has the authority to give, without going out to a bid, up to two more years.

Mr. Brown noted the school opens at 7:00 for breakfast, with the first bell at 7:43, and classes start at 7:53.

Ms. Pereira said the equipment that is owned by the district in the area should be marked accordingly.

Dr. Johnson said We Transport has agreed to provide transportation for parents who come across the city with a child for this year.

Mr. Sokolovic moved that "*we present ABCD Harding High School early learning center agreement to the full board for approval with edits.*"

Dr. Johnson said she would provide an edited copy to the committee this weekend.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Pereira and unanimously approved.

Mr. Walker said he was nothing but thrilled that we have the contract with ABCD.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the committee on October 16, 2018*