

Tuesday, January 21, 2020

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held January 21, 2020, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. Present were members Chair Joseph Sokolovic and Joseph Lombard. Board member Albert Benejan was present.

Mr. Lombard moved to postpone consideration of the minutes of the meeting of November 19, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the committee's goals and directions. Mr. Sokolovic said he would like to see district profile and performance updates. He said a special education report would be a running agenda item. He said he would also like focus on brighter students, which he viewed as an underserved population.

Mr. Lombard said he had an interest in mental health and education. Mr. Sokolovic said he could have the director of social work report to the committee.

Mr. Benejan said he was very glad Mr. Sokolovic would be chairing the committee this year. He said a lot of parents ask him for support in regard to special education.

Robert Arnold, interim director of specialized instruction, said the number of special education students who had errors in their IEPs had been cut in half on October 1 this year compared to last year. He said such errors include

completing IEPs as little as a day late. He said he attributed the improvement to the greater amount of staff in his office. He said the state was quite happy with Bridgeport's low error rate.

Mr. Arnold discussed the data on academic improvement modules (AIM) at high schools. SOAR classes at elementary and middle schools, ASD(a type of autism class), and classes for medically fragile students.

Mr. Arnold said he was working on three new programs to keep special education students in district. The point of the programs would include receiving payments for out-of-district placements from other towns.

Mr. Arnold said his department has gone through the IEPs for out-of-district placements and has removed transportation for those students whose IEPs do not include door-to-door transportation.

Mr. Arnold said since he took this position on October 1 30 out-of-district special education students returned to the district and 15 have been sent out. He described his team as phenomenal for their work in showing parents the programs available within the district.

Mr. Arnold noted that students who attend school in other districts through Project Choice are often put into out-of-district special education placements that Bridgeport has to pay for.

Mr. Arnold said a staff member attends charter school PPTs to ensure only appropriate students receive the services recommended.

Mr. Arnold said he would send information on students in these categories to the committee.

In response to a question, Mr. Arnold said the services being paid for charter schools' special education students are being tracked.

Mr. Arnold noted the figures that the special education population in 2011 was 2,960 and is now 4,379. He said the Bridgeport special education rate was in the middle of its DRG.

Mr. Arnold described some of the accommodations that are provided to students. Often one paraprofessional can serve multiple students.

In response to a question, Mr. Arnold said there is an MOU for each charter school and for every twenty to twenty-five kids they get one special education teacher which Bridgeport Public Schools pays for it. The charter school hires their own employees in this category. The same policy applies to special education paras.

Mr. Arnold noted the 504 policy manual is now on the district's website.

Mr. Benejan urged the board support Mr. Arnold.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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