

Tuesday, June 16, 2020

MINUTES OF THE TEACHING & LEARNING COMMITTEE
OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held
June 16, 2020, by video and audio conference call,
Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. Present were members Sybil Allen and Joseph Lombard. Board member Albert Benejan was present. Committee chair Joseph Sokolovic joined subsequently as noted.

Acting Superintendent Michael J. Testani was present

Ms. Allen moved to approve the minutes of May 6, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was the special education update. Robert Arnold, executive director of specialized education, said recently 36 students have returned to the district and 30 students have been sent out of district as of the current date.

Mr. Arnold said the special education count as of late December 2019 is 4,385. It said it was concerning that ten years ago the total was about 2,960. He said he believed we are identifying too many students due to a lot of reasons. He described a recent due process matter which the district had to settle due to a lack of data at the school level.

Mr. Testani said training was provided before the start of the school year to principal and assistant principals on improving on the implementation and monitoring of special education

students. He said holding teachers accountable is not consistent across the district.

In response to a question, Mr. Arnold said IEP Direct tracks out-of-district placement of special education students. Mr. Testani said this year Mr. Arnold and the team did an amazing job holding out-of-district providers accountable, including uncovering payments for students that were not attending.

Mr. Arnold noted The University School has 34 district students; the Disability Resource Network has 35 students; and there are 60 or 70 schools other schools that out-of-district students are sent to.

The next agenda item was on was a partnership with Tango Flight, Incorporated.

Mr. Testani said he was approached with an opportunity by the Commissioner of Education to explore a program where a high school would work to build an airplane. All funding would be provided by an outside source. He said this will expose students to careers associated with aviation, which is a booming industry. He said the principal of Bassick, Dr. Raiola, and the auto-shop teacher, Mr. Blum, are both in favor.

Mr. Testani said when the airplane is completed at the end of the year the company will sell it and the proceeds will fund the program for the next year.

In response to a question, Dr. Raiola said the training is oriented towards technical aspects because it will open the eyes of the students to aviation career opportunities, including flying. He said the program could begin in the fall

in the auto shop area at Bassick. He said the airplane to be built is a two-seater. Mr. Blum will direct the students and there will be quality-control inspectors who will monitor the process.

In response to a question, Dr. Raiola said about twelve to fourteen students in higher-level auto and manufacturing courses would be able to do this. The idea is to keep the class size small. Mentors with experience in industry will also interact with students.

Mr. Benejan said Dr. Raiola was doing an amazing job at Bassick. Dr. Raiola thanked Supt. Testani for bringing the opportunity to Bassick.

Ms. Allen moved *“to move this to the full board.”* The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was the summer math program and the impacts of COVID. Mr. Testani said the district was concerned about the loss of instructional time since March 12th. He said the district would be prepared to provide instructional support, intervention, and enhancement across the meeting.

Mr. Sokolovic joined the meeting.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said he was informed by Mr. Planas that the math packets are posted online.

In response to Mr. Sokolovic’s suggestion, Mr. Testani said he would discuss this and other topics on his Facebook Live events. Mr. Sokolovic said he believed the math agenda item was placed on the agenda in error.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said he believed teachers would be inclined to give students breaks in grading due to the pandemic. He said the biggest challenge has been with instruction in lower grades through distance learning. He said he believed the district had been successful by widely distributing printed materials to a greater extent than other districts.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod