

Thursday, April 11, 2019 [Corrected]

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held April 11, 2019, at Bridgeport City Hall, 45 Lyon Terrace, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 5:55 p.m. Present were members Chair Joseph Sokolovic and Joseph Lombard. Board member Maria Pereira was present.

Mr. Sokolovic moved approval of the minutes of March 19, 2019. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard. A correction was noted. The motion was approved by a 1-0 vote. Mr. Lombard voted in favor. Mr. Sokolovic abstained.

Mr. Sokolovic moved to switch items 4 and 2 on the agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the RFP for translation and interpretation services.

Ana Sousa-Martins, director of world languages and bilingual education, said the document was revised after the last committee meeting.

Ms. Pereira suggested clarifying the provision that deals with the situation where the translation of documents by the vendor is provided late. She suggested another clarification to indicate that when the district cancels a request for services 24 hours in advance there will be no charge to the board.

Ms. Pereira said there should be a provision that if the vendor fails to provide a translator or interpreter that they will then provide the services at the rescheduled time for free or a significant discount.

In response to a question, Ms. Sousa-Martins said the document was reviewed by the Tony Pires.

Ms. Pereira said the RFP was really well done.

Mr. Sokolovic moved that “*we present to the board with edits the RFP for interpretation and translation services with the Bridgeport Board of Education.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

John DiDonato, director of specialized education reform, reported that again this month there were no outstanding state Department of Education complaints.

Mr. DiDonato said he was providing monthly data on special education referrals and the numbers found ineligible and eligible. He said while it is interesting to look at the data the critical piece will be towards the end of May when many IEP meetings are concluded.

Ms. Pereira asked how many of the out-of-district placements were students in charter schools. Mr. DiDonato said he did not think there were any students in that category. He said special education students in charter schools are primarily moderate students, and when they move towards a more severe status the school finds a way of deselecting them.

The next agenda item was on RFP for expelled students mandated instruction.

Assistant City Attorney Mark Anastasi was present.

Asst. Superintendent Dr. Christiana Otuwa said the main area of revisions to the document was in the deliverables.

Ms. Pereira said the May 17th deadline would mean the RFP would not be on BidSync for even thirty days. Atty. Anastasi said the time limits were not unusual. He said there is no prohibition against direct notice to particular vendors that you would want to see respond.

Dr. Otuwa suggested May 24th be used. Ms. Pereira was in agreement.

Ms. Pereira suggested the responding bidders provide nine copies of their responses for all the board members. Atty. Anastasi said additional copies would be needed for the committee rating the responses.

Mr. Sokolovic said most board members would be happy with electronic copies.

Ms. Pereira said the number one thing the committee had talked about was criminal backgrounds. She said at the last meeting Atty. Anastasi said the board could bar people who committed specific crimes. Ms. Pereira said offenses sexual in nature, distribution of illicit substances and assault were discussed.

Atty. Anastasi there were different sections on the proposer and its principals, and another for screening and evaluation of the proposer's employees. He said the latter would deal with the people who would come in contact with students.

Ms. Pereira said in a small setting like this the principals of the company are running the school day-to-day. She said the likely provider would be a small, local business, not a major entity.

Atty. Anastasi said prospective employees to the board are entitled to individualized assessment under the board's human resources rules and regulations, and nobody is absolutely barred. Ms. Pereira said the board does not hire anyone who has committed a sexual offense.

Mr. Sokolovic said it seemed the catch-all of "morally unfit" leads to the exclusion of such employees, but they are individualized assessed.

Mr. Sokolovic said the provider would likely be a small business with up to twenty children in the program.

Ms. Pereira noted the children would be at a site off board property and the people would possess all their records, without a board employee supervising on a day-to-day basis.

Atty. Anastasi said he would revise the paragraph and provide a draft to the committee via e-mail. He said he would include distribution of illegal substances.

Atty. Anastasi noted the vendor would be choosing their employees, not the board's human resources department. Ms. Pereira said she wanted the provision applicable to the proposer and its principals, not just the employees.

Ms. Pereira said the term of contract should be changed to three years. She said usually the board gives a one-year contract, with a possible extension, to see how they

performed the first year. Atty. Anastasi said he would change it to one year and two one-year options.

In response to a question, Dr. Otuwa said the rating system was created the way RFPs are always done. Ms. Pereira questioned the weight given to organizational structure as opposed to quality of past success and experience and qualifications. She said the work plan also was more important than organizational structure.

Mr. Lombard said the qualifications and quality of past success are kind of combined and it covers both of those. Mr. Sokolovic said he agreed with Dr. Otuwa that the structure is important due to the need for a strong leader at the helm.

Ms. Pereira suggested a representative of the special education department be on the selection committee. Dr. Otuwa said the principal of Fairchild Wheeler was selected because of his diverse experience, including working in schools with high expulsion rates. She said she would add a representative from special education.

Ms. Pereira said the contract should not be attached to the RFP. Dr. Otuwa said she agreed. Atty. Anastasi said sometimes Atty. Pacacha does that because it gets the vendors working off our contract.

Atty. Anastasi said qualifications and quality of past success should be broken out in the RFP.

Atty., Anastasi said he would send the revised qualifications Dr. Otuwa. Dr. Otuwa said she would send it to the superintendent for distribution to the board members.

Mr. Sokolovic moved “*to approve the RFP, with the edits discussed, for the administration for programs for expelled students to the full board for approval at the next regular board meeting.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

Ms. Pereira asked Dr. Otuwa forward the document as soon as possible so it can be looked at well before the April 22nd meeting.

Mr. Sokolovic moved “*to postpone the update on science programming and incorporating gardening programming into the science curriculum until the next meeting.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was discussion and possible action on the literacy curriculum.

Dr. Melissa Jenkins, director of literary and early childhood, presented on the recommended program and the process that led to the recommendation. She said the instructional program to support ELA and literacy will be purchased subject to available funding.

Dr. Jenkins said the digital licenses for textbooks for Grades K to 12 will expire in June 2019. She said the rationale is buy an improved program to support students’ literacy achievement based on best practices. A program that addressed the Smarter Balance Assessment more effectively is needed.

Dr. Jenkins said there is not a specific grant that can be used to purchase ELA materials.

Dr. Jenkins said a variety of programs have been reviewed over two to three years. Open sourced or free materials were looked at. She said the important factors to the selection were continuity across the district; support for English language learners; provision of ample practice materials; materials aligned to reading research and also support students who struggle with reading; and support for tiered instruction and SRBI.

Dr. Jenkins said the review process included a cross-section of teachers, including ESL and special education teachers, and administrators reviewed. The two programs: McGraw-Hill (Reading Wonders) and HMH (Into Reading). She said teachers reviewed both print and digital materials, and rated the programs.

Dr. Jenkins said the costs and professional development proposals were also reviewed by district leaders.

Teacher input, cost and professional development were the three major factors in making the selection.

Dr. Jenkins said it was required to have both literature and informational texts due to Common Core criteria. Other factors looked at were vocabulary, speaking and listening skills, and scaffolds to make abstract concepts concrete.

Dr. Jenkins said the two programs were rated very closely by the team. She said they had similar strengths. She demonstrated the cost proposals on a PowerPoint slide.

Dr. Jenkins said the professional development proposals were somewhat different.

Dr. Jenkins said the committee's recommendation was Reading Wonders by McGraw-Hill, primarily because they include an anthology for every child. She said the current program being used is almost eight years old, and the anthologies will allow reading instruction to take place without a digital component.

Dr. Jenkins said Reading Wonders would be first implemented for Grades K to 3, the foundational grades. Grades 4 to 6 would use the current program for one more year. She said Ms. Siegel is striving to gather accruals to make the purchase next year for Grades 4 to 6. Grades 7 to 12 would use the current print version for two more years and transition in 2021.

Dr. Jenkins said fortunately the teachers' program for high school is not antiquated; it just needs to be enhanced with texts that relate to children.

In response to a question, Dr. Jenkins said because about fifty to sixty percent of the texts are informational, about twenty-five percent are culturally relevant, which is higher than the national average. She said the anthologies are culturally relevant.

Ms. Pereira said she wanted to be sure that it connects with our children and is relevant to their lives.

Dr. Jenkins described some of the culturally relevant texts in the anthology. She said while she is in her role she will always be a proponent of culturally diverse and culturally rich texts. She said the one gap is that she has not seen texts that mirror all types of family structures.



Ms. Pereira asked about material relevant to Brazil and Haitian Creole.

In response to a question, Dr. Jenkins said consumables will be provided in all six years of the program and children can write in them.

Ms. Pereira said the previous textbook purchases under Supt. Vallas was a crazy expenditure and payment plans had to be extended and consumables were cut from the program.

Mr. Sokolovic noted his son often does not have access to consumables, so questions in math or science have to be copied.

Dr. Jenkins said at every meeting the committee asked about the ability to write in consumables, and she assured them that would be the case.

In response to a question about licenses expiring, Dr. Jenkins said most of the high school teachers are not using the digital component anymore. The greatest concern and support will need to be for Grades 4 to 6. She said Ms. Siegel asked her to request quotes to see what the cost of licenses would be for one year. Another option would be to make copies of texts for students in advance.

Dr. Jenkins said all the material in the digital licenses are available on paper.

Ms. Pereira noted under state law textbooks have to be approved by boards of education.

Dr. Jenkins said there will be some curriculum revision that will come afterwards. She said both the texts and the curriculum have performance tasks. She said a program was chosen to support the written curriculum.

Mr. Sokolovic moved *“to approve the K to 3 textbook recommended by Dr. Jenkins by McGraw Hill for the full board for approval at he next regular meeting.”*

The motion was seconded by Mr. Lombard and unanimously approved.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the committee on April 24, 2019*