

Tuesday, October 22, 2024

**MINUTES OF THE POLICY, PERSONNEL &
CONTRACTS COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT
BOARD OF EDUCATION**, held October 22, 2024, via
Microsoft Teams, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. Present were members Chair Christine Baptiste-Perez and Andre Woodson. Board member Joe Sokolovic was present.

Committee member Tiheba Bain joined the meeting subsequently as noted.

Mr. Woodson moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 18, 2024. The motion was seconded by Ms. Perez and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on the Increasing Educator Diversity plan.

Michael Brosnan, a Bridgeport teacher who works with university partners and beginning educators, said he submitted documents to the committee. He said the state has required each district to present an actionable plan for increasing educator diversity. He said the district already had the most teachers of color of any district in the state.

Mr. Brosnan said the plan is realistic and pretty much all directed towards human resources and public relations. He said the committee has already passed on some of the points of the plan. For recruitment, he said, one of the main things is the commitment to residency programs with the

University of Bridgeport, Sacred Heart University, and UConn to continue to supply us with great teachers in training that we can then hire. He said we are looking to create a more equitable hiring committee and hiring process for teachers. He said we recognize the principals' right and desire to staff their own buildings, but there has been discussion to create a hiring committee through the HR department, who will then refer candidates to individual principals for hire.

Mr. Brosnan said the retention committee that was formed was good, and public relations was needed was to highlight Bridgeport's diverse cohort of educators. He said there were also many tremendous mentors in the district, who provide support and will help to retain teachers.

Mr. Brosnan said creating the plan allowed the district to be introspective and to look back at past practices. He said he viewed the plan as just the starting point and he was enthusiastic about where it could go in the future.

Ms. Bain joined the meeting.

In response to a question, Mr. Brosnan said the committee was formed by the previous HR director, and included five administrators, four teachers, and two people from human resources. CES provided training on the project.

Mr. Woodson said he was concerned about who was doing the picking, particularly if someone else is picking where teachers go. Mr. Brosnan said we have developed a good relationship with multiple universities to bring in student teachers and residents, and those students typically become the first priority in terms of hiring. He said the committee he referenced was more for candidates who had not

experienced Bridgeport. He said we hire about 150 teachers every year, and some are people who learned in other districts.

In response to a question, Mr. Brosnan said he did not have statistical information on the diversity of teachers in the district. Domenic Costello of the HR department said he would provide that information to the board. Mr. Brosnan said it was a point of pride that Bridgeport is representing our community better than most in the state. He said the plan includes pathways for paras to become teachers and teachers to become administrators, which is about increasing diversity.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez said she thought only thirty percent of our teachers are diverse in terms of representing the community.

In response to a question, Mr. Brosnan said he and his colleague have reached out to every HBCU on the Eastern Seaboard, but recruitment is difficult because we don't have a great package to offer applicants to become certified teachers. Due to legislation, it is impossible to create a residency program that crosses interstate boundaries because of certification requirements. He said that we've looked more at pathways for Bridgeport paraprofessionals to get into certification programs.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez said she agreed with that because of the large population of paraprofessionals which reflect the community and live in Bridgeport.

Mr. Brosnan said he hopes to present at the next meeting a new pathway for paras and noncertified staff to become certified to alleviate special education needs.

Mr. Woodson moved *“to refer to the full board the Increasing Educator Diversity plan with the information requested.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Baptiste-Perez and approved by a 2-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Baptiste-Perez and Woodson. Ms. Bain was having technical difficulties and did not vote.

The next agenda item was a continuation of the agreement for the after-school program with Bridgeport Caribe Youth Leaders (BCYL).

John Torres, executive director of BCYL was present. He said he presented to some members of the cabinet our plan for an after-school program in school after school and in the evening, encompassing the afterschool basketball program and in-school tutoring during the day, and workforce development for high school students.

Mr. Torres said the goal is expose students to different opportunities and resources, and to have a plan of action upon graduating from high school. He said he is hoping that this will be our fourth year as a partnership with the district. He said last year there were nearly 1,900 participants. He said the numbers could grow as more students and teachers become aware.

Mr. Torres said cheerleading will also be included, which continues to grow, and helps create school pride.

Mr. Torres described survey results from last year. He said there was 81 percent success rate and an 89 percent attendance rate in Grades 6 to 8. There was a 75 percent completion rate in high school and attendance of 94 percent, along with a program satisfaction of 86 percent.

Mr. Torres said since launching the trade program two and a half years ago, we have five district students that have entered apprenticeship programs in the trades. He said students are held back from the trades by not having a driver's license or a vehicle. He said BCYL in 2025 will augment the trade program with enrollment in a driver's education program and a financial literacy program.

In response to a question, Mr. Torres said BCYL has a strong union connection, in particular IBW Local 48, the electrical union, as well as pipe fitters and carpenters. He said students have participated in onsite training sessions with Turner Construction. He said 90 percent of any applicants that fail an assessment to enter a trade stop the pursuit. He said the BCYL trade program will work on math and reading comprehension to be helpful to those aspiring to take the tests.

Mr. Woodson said he was familiar with some kids who did not pass the test Mr. Torres referenced. Mr. Torres said BCYL is working with some kids who did not pass the test to stay connected and help them.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez said as parent of a child who participates in the program she sees a lot of enthusiasm in the sports opportunities. She said she also observed youth entrepreneurship training at Central High.

Mr. Woodson moved *"to refer to the full board a continuation of the agreement for after-school programming with Bridgeport Caribe Youth Leaders."* The motion was seconded by Ms. Baptiste-Perez and approved by a 2-0 vote. Voting in favor were members Baptiste-Perez and

Woodson. Ms. Bain was having technical difficulties and did not vote.

The next agenda item was a continuation agreement for the after-school programming with Carver, Inc., at Classical Studies Magnet School.

Brian Allert, chief programming officer at the Carver Center, said Carver has partnered with Classical Magnet since 2018 on an after-school program. He said it is an extension of the school day. Staff from the school are hired to work in the program to provide afterschool experience.

Mr. Allert said the program runs Monday to Thursday for two hours a day. Five certified teachers, six program assistants, and a lead coordinator are employed. Enrichment and homework help is provided to students. About 110 students are served.

Tom Cunningham, principal of Classical Studies, was also present.

In response to a question, Mr. Cunningham said the 7th and 8th graders get to be mentors at both campuses for pre-K to 6th grade.

In response to a question, Mr. Cunningham said it was his second year at Classical Studies and he has received many inquiries from parents about the program restarting.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez said the last time this came before the board it was well received by the students and families on campus. Mr. Cunningham said there are at least a half dozen events that bring the families into the afterschool program, including in ELA, math, and science.

Ms. Bain moved “*to refer the continuation of the agreement of the after-school program with Carver, Incorporated, at Classical Studies Magnet School.*” The motion was seconded by Mr. Woodson and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on an afterschool program with the Bridgeport Youth Lacrosse. Ms. Baptiste-Perez said negotiations were still underway; she requested the matter be postponed until the next meeting.

Ms. Bain moved “*to postpone the Bridgeport Youth Lacrosse to the next committee meeting.*” The motion was seconded by Ms. Baptiste-Perez and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was on an amendment to the board’s bylaws, Policy Series 9000, adopted February 13th, 2019.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez said the revision went through legal review by Berchem Moses and the city attorney. She said it was the result of the constant confusion, late posting, that happened from prior leadership, and due to confusion and misinformation with what’s being alleged as a different version of the bylaws. She said the draft presented addressed that confusion and the plethora of issues that have been caused by other board members in saying there’s another version of the bylaws. She said it addresses some critical issues in the district.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez said she can highlight the changes. She said this has come up several times in public comment, so a clean, professional version is needed.

Ms. Bain said, being new on the board, she thought the bylaws need to be clear and concise as to the roles of who

we are, what we do, and as to the roles of what the superintendent and her team does. She said she questioned why some items were even in the bylaws. She said she was learning as she was going on the board, but ironclad bylaws were needed. She said some draconian bylaws do not work for where we are at today.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez said the draft helps clarify FOI and board compliance, and visits by board members to buildings. She said we can't have three-hour unaccompanied visits by board members to buildings, which has occurred this school year. She said difficulties are created when a principal has a parent meeting scheduled, and a board member just pops up. She said it would be better having a staff member accompany a board member due to safety and maintenance issues. She said board members should not disrupt the school day for their own personal initiative.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez said the draft clears up what is a conflict of interest. She said a lot of time and thought was put into the draft. It includes clarification on the posting of meetings. She said this year misinformation was presented to the media. The draft also clarifies who is the spokesperson of the board.

Mr. Woodson noted a provision that says the board shall concern itself with questions of educational policy and not with administrative details of the district's operations.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez said the provision regarding speakers identifying themselves by address has been removed. She said it addresses a lot of concerns presented in public comment. She said she has been asked about this and the address of speakers is required by the current bylaws.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez said the language highlighted by Mr. Woodson was unchanged from the original bylaws.

Ms. Baptiste-Perez noted that the new bylaws would require two reads, unless that rule is waived. She said, if and when the revisions are passed, there would be no delay in putting it on the website, which was a lapse from the prior administration.

Mr. Woodson moved *“to refer to the full board the amendment of the Bridgeport Board of Education bylaws, Policy Series 9000, adopted February 13, 2019.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Baptiste-Perez and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was an administrative hires update.

Mr. Woodson moved *“to go into executive session.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Baptiste-Perez and unanimously approved.

The executive session began at 6:59 p.m.

The committee resumed in public session at 7:10 p.m.

The next agenda item was a Step 3 hearing on Grievance 2878.

Mr. Woodson moved *“to go into executive session.”* The motion was seconded by Ms. Baptiste-Perez and unanimously approved.

The executive session began at 7:10 p.m.

The committee resumed in public session at 7:39 p.m.

Ms. Bain moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Baptiste-Perez and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

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