

# The Board of Education

Town of Brooklyn  
119 Gorman Road  
Brooklyn, CT 06234

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Mae Lyons, Board Chair  
Justin Phaiah, Secretary  
Isaias Sostre

Melissa Perkins-Banas, Vice-Chair  
Kayla Burgess  
Rick Ives

**Mission:** The Brooklyn Schools will foster a drive for learning within each student to reach his/her greatest potential. To achieve this mission, the school will continually improve its educational programs and services to meet this community's expectations for a quality education for all.

The Brooklyn Board of Education held their monthly meeting in the Brooklyn Middle School Auditorium and virtually on February 23, 2022 via Zoom. In attendance were Mrs. Lyons, Mrs. Perkins-Banas, Mr. Phaiah, Mrs. Burgess, Mr. Sostre, and Mr. Ives. Mrs. Buell, Superintendent, was also present.

To support public participation the documents will be posted on the Town of Brooklyn Website as well as the Brooklyn Public Schools Website. You are encouraged to send questions or comments to [buell@brooklynschools.org](mailto:buell@brooklynschools.org) prior to the meeting.

1. Attendance, Establishment of a Quorum, Call to Order

Mrs. Lyons stated that all Board members were present. Quorum established.  
Mrs. Lyons called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Public Comment

None

3. Approval of Minutes

a. January 26, 2022 BOE Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes for January 26, 2022.  
(Perkins-Banas/Burgess)

No Discussion

**Vote Count:** 6, 0

Unanimous vote to approve

4. Correspondence and Communication

a. Killingly Agriculture Education Program by Sydney Rosen

Mrs. Buell stated that there is a guest speaker via Zoom, Sydney Rosen. Ms. Rosen, a former student of Killingly High School, shared her experience in the Killingly Agriculture Education Program with the Board and the Brooklyn community. She stated that she was in the Killingly Agriculture Program for all four years while she was a student at Killingly High School. Freshman year consists of rotating through all of the majors learning about Animal Science, Plant Science, Environmental Science Agriculture, Mechanics and Small Animal Science. Ms. Rosen chose Mechanics and was in Mechanics classes for the remaining three years of high school. She learned about welding, plumbing, electrical, wood working, and driving tractors. She stated that students would do a lot of the maintenance and work on the school farm, which consisted of planting the school farm every year. In her senior year, they had a project building chicken coops where students were given a budget to pick out and purchase materials at Lowes. Ms. Rosen stated when a student is in the agriculture program, you are automatically part of the National FFA Organization which is a youth program that focuses on leadership and agricultural education. She stated that FFA has over 700,000 members nationwide and the Killingly Chapter has approximately 140 students. Ms. Rosen stated that she was a member of an Officer Team, which helped her develop her leadership and speaking skills. She stated she attended conferences with students from other Chapters across Connecticut. Students participated in the Livestock Evaluation CCE, which is a Career Development Event and if you win the state competition, you have the opportunity to compete nationally.

Mrs. Buell asked Ms. Rosen what her favorite experience was of her four years of being in the program. Ms. Rosen stated if she can only choose one, it would be the FFA week activities, which is done nationally. She stated that the Killingly Chapter does activities in each of the classes and grades, and Chapter wide, which every year is the Pancake Breakfast. In the classes, some activities consist of team building and leadership activities or doing something fun. An example of working as a team was being blindfolded and another person directing the blindfolded person on how to make a peanut butter sandwich. Ms. Rosen stated it was really fun and messy!

Mrs. Buell asked Ms. Rosen what would you say to an 8th grade student or 7th grade student thinking about going into the Ag program? What would be the best advice you would give them to learn more about the program? Ms. Rosen stated she would tell the students to shadow and get a feeling for what the classes are like. It is not just for farmers. She went into Mechanics and now is studying Marine Biology at Roger Williams University. She stated that she would also tell them that it is a lot of fun and both the students and teachers are amazing. She loved all the teachers.

Mr. Tanner wanted to add that Killingly has a great program. He stated that twenty percent of the students are in the Ag program and are part of the

curriculum. He stated that they learn skills that they will use for the rest of their lives.

Mrs. Rosen stated that Sydney was conflicted when choosing her major due to knowing she wanted to study Marine Biology, but the Environmental Science and Aquaculture did not focus on Marine Biology. Mrs. Rosen had suggested Mechanics to her due to learning so many different things that she would be able to bring with her to Marine Biology and have those skills for the rest of her life.

Ms. Rosen added that she was a class officer, was in the school band, and played sports. She stated that the Ag Program does take a lot of your time, but the music department and coaches are willing to work with Ag students. It is not that you cannot be doing other things.

Mrs. Buell thanked Ms. Rosen for joining the Board meeting by Zoom from college. She stated it is wonderful to hear from a student that has been through the program and that she coached her sisters going through the program as well. Mrs. Buell stated that it is a valuable program that is available to Brooklyn students.

b. Killingly Agriculture Education Program - Appointment of Tiffany Rosen

Mrs. Buell stated she received a letter from the Killingly Agricultural Education Program requesting the Brooklyn Board of Education to appoint Tiffany Rosen as a representative from the town of Brooklyn to the Killingly Regional Agricultural Education Center's Consulting Committee for a three-year term. Mrs. Buell stated that Mrs. Rosen is a proud mom of Sydney and two other daughters, and an employee of the Brooklyn Schools, a valued member of the Brooklyn town and the community. She recommended that the Board appoint Tiffany Rosen as a representative from the town of Brooklyn to the Killingly Regional Agricultural Education Center's Consulting Committee for a three-year term.

Mr. Phaiah made a motion to appoint Tiffany Rosen as a representative from Brooklyn to the Killingly Regional Agricultural Education Center's Consulting Committee for a three-year term.

(Phaiah/Ives)

No Discussion

**Vote Count:** 6, 0

Unanimous vote to approve

Mr. Ives asked why there are two members. Mrs. Rosen stated that there are two members from every town.

c. Thank you - Danielson Lions Club

Mrs. Buell stated she sent a thank you letter to Danielson Lions Club for their generous donation of three-thousand dollars (\$3,000) to be used for the

Community Fitness Course. Mrs. Buell provided an update on the Fitness Course, the first few stations are being ordered and construction will begin in the spring.

d. Retirement - Cynthia McCallum

Mrs. Buell stated she received a letter of retirement from Cynthia McCallum, Secretary at the Brooklyn Elementary School. Mrs. McCallum will be retiring on June 30, 2022 after twenty-two years. Mrs. Buell thanks her for many years of service and wishes her well.

e. Retirement - Lori-Ann Gibb

Mrs. Buell stated that she received a letter of retirement from Lori-Ann Gibb, Speech and Language Pathologist. Mrs. Gibb has worked in the Brooklyn Public Schools for over 27 years and will be retiring at the end of this school year. Mrs. Buell thanks her for many years of service and wishes her well.

f. Letter from Representative Patrick S. Boyd

Mrs. Buell stated that she received a letter from Representative Patrick S. Boyd stating that the Connecticut General Assembly will be entering into the “short” Session and runs for approximately twelve weeks concluding in May. She stated that he would be available to answer any questions the Board of Education may have and included his email and phone number if he needs to be reached. Mrs. Buell stated that if the Board would like to have a discussion as a full Board, it can be added to an agenda.

5. Administrative Reports

a. Brooklyn Enrollment

Mrs. Buell discussed the January enrollment report. She stated that there were no major changes in enrollment. The total enrollment changed by 1.

b. FY22 Financial Reports

Mrs. Buell shared the expenditure report. She continues to work with the Director of Finance to monitor the budget. The budget is tight and there is a spending freeze. They are watching and monitoring it carefully.

c. January Data Dashboard

Mrs. Buell discussed the Data Dashboard for January with the Board. They have gone through the SRBI models and looking at the tiered interventions She stated there has been some changes in intervention. There has been some growth in intervention as well as students that need some changes in intervention. The

pacing guide is being monitored and adjustments are being made. Instructional Coaches and Interventionists are supporting the teachers.

Mrs. Lyons asked about attendance, if students needed to stay home for being quarantined would it affect the attendance number, not all absence? Mrs. Buell stated it includes quarantined students, all students that have not gone to school. She stated it is the same for staff attendance, excluding staff on FMLA.

Brooklyn Elementary School Data for the month of January:

- Assessment completed on time: 100%
- At or above expectations: NA
- % of students in intervention Tier II: 62; 11.48%
- % of students in intervention Tier III: 80; 14.81%
- Observations reviewed: 6
- Instructional pacing on track: 88.33%
- Learning objectives: 100.00%

Brooklyn Middle School Data for the month of January:

- Assessment completed on time: 100.00%
- At or above expectations: Math - 29%; ELA - 55%
- % of students in intervention Tier II: 125; 36%
- Student intervention Tier III: 49; 14.12%
- observations reviewed: 6
- Instructional pacing on track: 83.30%
- Learning objectives: 80.00%

District Attendance for the month of January:

- BES student attendance: 541 ; 86.22%
- BES staff attendance: 88; full day - 89.47%; partial day - 94.26%
- BMS student attendance: 349 - 88.50%
- BMS staff attendance: 64; full day - 93.67%; partial day - 95.97%

d. Brooklyn's Best

**BES**

- This week we are holding our SRBI data team meetings. Teachers are grouping children based on individual needs and working together to ensure that all students are being provided support to ensure success. This is due to a lot of the behind the scenes work of the SRBI Committee.
- Our Kindergarten students received their superhero capes as a celebration of being Super Readers. They completed their reading unit in which they gained various reading powers such as pointer powers to help them read. We all joined in the fun by cheering on our newest readers during their Super Reader parade around the school.

- Some of our 4th Grade students became mentors to their 3rd Grade peers in writing. These students came to Ms. Duquette's classroom to confer during writing time.
- BMS and BES office staff have been participating in weekly Zoom meetings to ensure a smooth transition into next year's management system.

### **BMS**

- Good Cookie January 2022:  
**Grade 5:** King/DS: Lexi Young  
Carson/Nault: Isabella Noel  
**Grade 6:** Brynn Choruzek  
**Grade 7:** Cora Hefner, Edward Purcell  
**Grade 8:** Kiley Eiott, Camden Mercer
- Successful Reading Challenge:
  - 6th Grade won with over 250 books read
  - As a school over 800 books were read
  - Whole School Read Underway - The Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus
- Winter Benchmark Data celebration:
  - In all grade levels, there was at least a 7% increase in the projected proficiency on the SBAC in math with the highest jump in 7th with a 12% growth. Additionally, the student growth percentile was strong in all grade levels, again with 7th grade having 81% of students growing at the expected rate based on our bar of 35 SGP.

## 6. Board of Education Committee Reports

None to Report

## 7. Board Representatives to Other Committees

Dr. Perkins-Banas stated that the Brooklyn Parks and Recreation will be having Pickleball. She also stated that there will be an Easter event on April 9, 2022, which will be a drive-through again this year. Also, summer camp registration starts a week earlier and will end a week earlier.

Mrs. Lyons stated that she has assignments for the new Board members and will hand them out at the end of the Board meeting.

## 8. Old Business

### a. Discussion Regarding Masks

Mrs. Buell stated that there have been changes from the Governor's office. She sent out surveys to staff and parents. She stated as of February 28, 2022, masks

will no longer be required. Districts can allow families to make a choice. She stated that what should be considered when making decisions are positivity rates, vaccination rates, and the comfort level of allowing families to make the choice of removing masks. Mrs. Buell stated that she continues to consult with the medical advisors, local Department of Health, State Department of Health and the State Department of Education. The results of the survey she sent out: 75% believe they are ready to take masks off, and school staff are about 50% ready to remove masks. In consultation with others, she believes it is time to allow families to make the choice. She did meet with members of the Brooklyn's Continuity of Services Plan, which consists of administrators, staff, school nurses, community members, and parents. Every district needed to come up with a Continuity of Services Plan, which is posted on the Brooklyn Schools' website at [www.brooklynschools.org](http://www.brooklynschools.org). Mrs. Buell proposed the following:  
In summary, as of February 28, 2022 Brooklyn Schools will follow these guidelines:

1. Students and staff should stay home if they feel sick.
2. Face coverings are encouraged and permitted by anyone who wishes to wear one but is not required. Staff are not expected to enforce mask wearing.
3. Face coverings are required under federal guidelines on buses at least until March 15, 2022. Face masks will be offered to students as they board the bus but drivers will not be able to safely enforce this and drive.
4. Social distancing should still be considered a mitigation strategy and individuals should consider their risk when determining distance from others.
5. Students and staff will use additional distancing when eating in school.
6. Students and staff are required to follow good hand hygiene by washing or disinfecting hands frequently.
7. Anyone with symptoms will contact the school nurse and may be asked to wear a mask if they display active symptoms when being assessed by the nurse. They will be sent home if they have COVID symptoms as determined by the school nurse.
8. Daily notifications will be made about COVID cases until March 15, 2022 and if cases continue to decline, we will limit communication to outbreaks if necessary.
9. Students who wear masks all day long may request or be offered a mask break.
10. If COVID positive, individuals must quarantine 5 days, may return once fever free 24 hours, symptoms are substantially better, and must wear a mask through day 10.

Mrs. Lyons stated that we do not need to make a vote on this due to the Board allowing Mrs. Buell to make these decisions.

Mr. Ives stated it is premature to be doing this. Brooklyn continues to be one of the highest positivity rates and the vaccination rate is very low, especially between ages 5 to 12 year olds. His family, as well as many other families, has an

immunocompromised family member and he is worried about unvaccinated exposure. He stated that masks do help and help with preventing transmission. He would like to wait a little longer until windows and doors can be opened easier, possibly one more month. He is not sure if this is doing the right thing, not much has really changed in Brooklyn to change the policy.

Mrs. Lyons stated her concern is the acceptance of students, parents and disruption in education due to something being offered and then taken back. She stated it was easier when it was a State mandate. They had proper canvassing through surveys and the majority of the people are ready to give them up. Mrs. Lyons stated that she does not know what kind of atmosphere schools would have if they extend the wearing of masks.

Mr. Ives stated he is not worried about opinion compared to safety.

Dr. Perkins-Banas agrees that the vaccination rate is low and the positivity rate is high. She also stated that being elected officials, we need to listen to the survey results.

Mrs. Lyons stated that at the CABA Zoom meeting, it was stated that schools do not have to start on February 28, 2022.

Mr. Sostre stated that we are approaching two years after being told it would be two weeks to flatten the curve. The people have spoken and we need to defend their decision. He believes everyone should have a choice for any measures whether it be for masks or vaccinations. He stated that people are going to get sick and if you are sick, then you stay home.

Mrs. Buell stated if we move to this choice/stage of mask wearing we will be watching the numbers and we can move back to a mask mandate if needed as well as the Governor being able to reissue an executive order through the end of June. Mrs. Buell stated that families need to continue to report positive test results. She stated that any positive cases are being reported daily, communication is going home if they are impacted by the positive case. She would like to continue communicating the positive cases for the first three weeks after allowing the mask choice to let people know if cases are increasing or decreasing.

Mr. Sostre asked if the kids had been tested daily or what the testing protocols are for kids? Mrs. Buell stated whatever the parents choose to test. She stated that we do not have testing here at the school. It is available and can be offered with parental permission to allow testing to occur on a weekly basis. The State has offered an option to come in and set-up a testing site at the school. Mrs. Buell stated that the committee discussed this and felt it was not necessary, but she can survey parents if they would be interested in having students tested. There would be no cost for testing. The Governor spoke about sending out another batch of test kits, giving tests to staff and students before taking the masks off. Mrs. Buell



stated that Brooklyn is scheduled to receive more test kits on Friday, but with the impending snowstorm it may not happen. There may not be enough tests to test all staff and students.

Mrs. Buell hears the concerns on both sides. She is moving to the choice of wearing masks to help decrease educational disruption that masking will create. She knows there is a level of risk to removing masks. She stated that the schools have followed the CDC, the State Department of Health and the State Department of Education guidelines and they are saying it is time to remove the masks.

Mr. Ives made a motion to extend the mask wearing for all staff and students through the end of March.  
Motion not seconded  
Motion fails

Mrs. Burgess stated that unfortunately not everyone can get the vaccine, not all age groups can. She stated she has children in Brooklyn, that are not of age to receive the vaccine, and has watched them be in remote learning and wearing the masks, it is frustrating. She has reservations about removing the masks, but she believes it is the right move.

b. Board Policies - 2nd Reading

i. 6172.1: Gifted and Talented Students Program

Mrs. Buell stated that this is a second read for the Gifted and talented Students Program and will be tabled until the next meeting

9. New Business

a. COVID Updates

Discussed in Old Business

Dr. Perkins-Banas made a motion to add an agenda item 9b for location change for future meetings.

(Perkins-Banas/Burgess)

No Discussion

**Vote Count:** 6, 0

Unanimous vote to approve

b. Location Change for Future Meetings

Mrs. Lyons stated that the Board would like to move future meetings back to the old location at Central Office.

Dr. Perkins-Banas made a motion for the Brooklyn Board of Education meetings to be moved back to the former location and will inform the Town Clerk of such move for subsequent meetings.

(Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)

No Discussion

**Vote Count:** 6, 0

Unanimous vote to approve

#### 10. Public Comment

Ashley Boucher has a son who is in 2nd Grade. She wanted to thank the Brooklyn Board of education and Mrs. Buell for giving the parents the choice of removing the masks or not. She has observed students outside for mask breaks sitting close together, playing duck duck goose, playing on the playground together, and hugging each other. Kids thrive on social emotional development. She thanked the Board for allowing the choice of removing masks and stated that it is time for kids to get back to normal. She thanked Mrs. Buell for having the best interest of the children in mind.

#### 11. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:10 p.m.

(Phaiah/Perkins-Banas)

No Discussion

**Vote Count:** 6, 0

Unanimous vote to approve

Respectfully Submitted,

***Donna L. DiBenedetto***

Donna L. DiBenedetto  
Board Clerk

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Justin Phaiah, Board of Education Secretary

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Date