

# 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 a meeting in the Central Office Community Room and virtually on December 21, 2022 via Zoom. In attendance were Mrs. Lyons, Dr. Perkins-Banas, Mr. Phaiah, Mrs. Burgess, and Mr. Ives, and Mr. Sostre. Mrs. Buell, Superintendent, and Mr. Carey, Business Manager, were 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 a Quorum has been established. Board members that were present: Melissa Perkins-Banas, Justin Phaiah, Kayla Burgess, Rick Ives, Isaias Sostre, and herself, Mae Lyons.

Mrs. Lyons called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Comment

None

4. Approval of Minutes

a. November 22, 2022 BOE Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes for November 22, 2022.  
(Perkins-Banas/Burgess)

No discussion

**Vote Count:** 6, 0

Unanimous vote to approve

## 5. Correspondence and Communication

### a. Early Reading BES Presentation

Mrs. Buell stated that Mrs. Graef, BES Principal, and Mr. Weaver, BES Assistant Principal, are attending the meeting virtually for the Early Reading BES Presentation.

Mrs. Graef stated that they have a video to share with the Board of the Kindergarten students learning how to read. She stated that literacy starts in pre-kindergarten and students become readers in kindergarten. Mrs. Graef stated that the video will show how the students are learning to read with their super/reading powers, assessments that are conducted, as well as data collection.

Mr. Weaver stated that the video is showing the students working on their snap words.

Mrs. Graef stated that all the classrooms have word walls with their snap words. The students practice writing the snap words, practice using flashcards with one another, and pick the snap words out of text that they are reading.

Super/Reading Powers:

- Snap Words - words that students should know in a snap. Students demonstrated this technique.
- Pointer Power - the students put a pointer on their finger, or use their index/pointer finger, and point to each word as they read. One of the first things students are taught to do when learning to read is using their pointer powers. Students demonstrated this technique.
- Pointer Power and Picture Power - students point at the words as they read and use the pictures to help with words they do not know. Students demonstrated this technique.
- Rereading Power - writing snap words, practicing snap words at school and at home, picking out snap words in the book. Students demonstrated this technique.
- Partner Reading - students are provided with instructions and strategies for partner reading. The students help each other sound out words while reading.
- Small Group Instruction - a teacher demonstrated how students use their arms and stretch out the word by the sound of each letter.

Mrs. Graef stated that kindergarten students are taught to read by using their pointer power, that each group of letters has a sound, reading from the left of the page to the right of the page, and starting at the front of the book.

Mr. Weaver stated that the kindergarten students are picking out their snap words during partner reading and you will hear them correcting each other.

Mrs. Graef stated that universal screenings are done three times a year where students are assessed in different areas. For example, students are asked what the first sound is in a word.

Mrs. Cathy Case, Brooklyn Elementary School Reading Specialist, gave a review of how reading is taught to students and things that can be done at home. At the beginning of the year students are expected to know the letter names. They will start to learn the sounds of the letters. Mrs. Case stated that they use the Lucy Calkins Drill Deck, which is skywriting with the letter name, picture, and the sound. Example that was used: s, picture of the sun, (make the "s" sound), and make the letter formation. She stated that the biggest confusion is with the "b" and "d" and the most important way of teaching the "b" is with a straight line down and give it a belly; teaching the "d" is with making a "c" with a straight line up and down. They use letter magnets and point to letters and say the letter names and the sound. Mrs. Case stated they will then start writing and are expected to read words in January. Fluency is the combination of using phonics and sight words. They will then move on to snap words and words that rhyme with the snap words by changing a letter in the word. For example: no, so, go; cat, rat, fat. The five pillars of reading are Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Comprehension, and sight words. She stated that all five are needed to create the fluency that they are looking for. In January, students should be able to start reading nonsense words. The logic for dibbles is they can combine the nonsense words to make two syllable words. She stated that students get really excited to be able to read the two syllable words. For example: bas, ket = basket; mit, ten = mitten.

Mrs. Graef stated that the students are doing repetitive reading of books that start with one sentence on a page and the next will have the same with one word different on it. It is teaching the students that sounds have meaning and sounds put together make words.

Mr. Weaver stated that students are making connections. Students starting kindergarten from pre-kindergarten, they are still learning to recognize the upper and lowercase letters, and their sounds. At this point in the year, they are starting to write and develop sentences. He stated that it is incredible to see the amount of growth the students have made by going through their snap words and recognizing snap words in text.

Mrs. Buell thanked Mrs Graef, Mr. Weaver as well as many staff members that attended virtually for taking Brooklyn's youngest learners and making them readers. She stated that it was wonderful to watch the video on how the kindergarteners are learning how to read.

Mrs. Burgess stated that she has seen how the students learn how to read through her own children going through kindergarten. She stated that everything that was shown on the video she has seen and the amount of growth they have made in a short amount of time is amazing. She sees her children use the pointer power and the picture power, recognizing and reading snap words.

Mrs. Buell stated that Cathy Case, Reading Specialist, will be presenting January 11, 2023 at the Parent Expo, which will have workshops on reading and other topics as well as resources in the community. There will be other presenters there as well. Mrs. Buell stated that the Parent Expo is open to all parents to attend.

b. Teen Center Presentation - Logic Model

Mrs. Buell stated that Jason Plourde, Social Worker Intern from Sacred Heart University, will be giving a presentation on the Teen Center. He was an intern last year and has returned to intern again this year. He has been working with Brooklyn Schools' social workers and they are looking at ways of expanding the use of the Community Center. Mrs. Buell stated that Mr. Plourde reached out to other students in his class to work on this project.

Mr. Plourde stated that they started the Community Center Project in class as their community assessment and engagement piece. He shared a powerpoint with an update on what they have done so far.

Mr. Plourde stated that Brooklyn Public Schools wants to provide a place for teens to go after school. The Community Center, formally known as the Teen Center, is located between Quebec Square and Elm Street in eastern Brooklyn. The building has mainly been inactive for the last five years, due to safety concerns and staffing issues. The building was used during the pandemic to serve food to approximately 30-40 families in Brooklyn. In the Summer of 2022, the Brooklyn Middle School Social Workers were running a small program for children to hang out and get mental health services. He stated that the long term goal would be to have a community closet, food pantry, after school program for teens, and an activity room. He stated that they would like to start with the food pantry and recreation activities.

Mr. Plourde stated that they would be looking to serve families in the Brooklyn community in helping them connect with the appropriate resources, youth 9-12 year olds (Brooklyn Middle Schoolers). He stated that they will be looking for teenage engagement for volunteer work as well as partnering with agencies such as Connecticut Food Bank and TEEG.

Mr. Plourde stated that he and his classmates worked on putting together a grant proposal by working on a generic grant template handed off to Brooklyn Public Schools to use if funding becomes available for the Community Center. The grant proposal is to improve the current Teen/Community Center in Brooklyn. The

space is to be used by people who live in Brooklyn. He stated that the goal of the grant is to implement changes/updates to the Center so that it can be a safe space. The gatekeepers and town officials in Brooklyn have the opportunity to consider feedback from the community to update programs that are worthwhile and under consideration.

Mr. Plourde stated that a parent survey was sent out through school messenger to parents and families and received 62 responses from parents. The youth survey received 24 responses. The following questions were asked in the survey:

Would you be interested in participating in Teen Center programs? (24 responses)

- Maybe: 45.8% of teens
- Yes: 25% of teens
- No: 29.2% of teens

How would you feel if Brooklyn opened the Teen Center for students to attend after school? ( 61 responses)

- Interested: 55.7% of parents
- Somewhat Interested: 36.1% of parents
- Somewhat Opposed: 2 parents
- Opposed: 1 parent

What activities would you take advantage of if available? (18 responses)

Parents:

- Food: 15.3%
- Discussion Group: 25.8%
- Academics: 32.8%
- Entertainment: 24.9%

Students:

- Homework Time: 33.3% (6 responses)
- Rec/Free Time: 94.4% (17 responses)
- Music and Dance: 38.9% (7 responses)
- Arts and Crafts: 83.3% (15 responses)
- Community Garden: 14.4% (5 responses)
- Food: 38.9% (7 responses)
- Clothing: 22.2% (4 responses)

Mr. Plourde stated that the aim for the Brooklyn Community Center is to create a safe, supervised location for young people and starting small with a food pantry. Additional programs will be added as the organization grows and becomes more established. He stated that with the help from local leaders at the school, stakeholders and the community the center has the potential to become a beneficial place where young people can spend time and for community families to be connected with resources that are needed. The intended outcome of the Community Center Project is to give the Brooklyn community a safe space to learn, grow, feel included, and foster a connection and receive advocacy from local leaders at school. He stated that the initiative is to create an after school program with a food pantry and future activities such as recreation/free time and

health & wellness groups.

Mr. Plourde discussed the next steps:

- Vision: The Community Center will be a safe and caring place for the Brooklyn community to have their needs met, as well as to support one another.
- Mission: To develop a safe and healthy community through collaborative planning, community action, and broad program implementation.
- Objectives: By January 2023 - increase engagement as evidenced by 30% more responses on community surveys; by March 2023 - have the after school program staffed by teachers volunteering from the Brooklyn Public Schools; by June 2023 - 10 or more youth will engage in an afterschool program at the Community Center; by June 2024 - implement a volunteer training program for all volunteers
- Strategies: Build rapport with outside agencies to exchange knowledge such as TEEG; research places where money can be applied to the Community Center; Engage with social media (radio, facebook, posters, etc) in order to promote children and families to engage with the community center
- Contact Connecticut Food Bank in order to start the process of implementing our own community food pantry

Mrs. Lyons asked how this is going to differ from when the Recreation Program tried to put this together. She stated that it only lasted a short time and was it due to lack of interest? Mr. Ives stated that it was and there were many more responses in a survey than this survey and it didn't work out. Mr. Ives stated that he has a lot of questions. He stated that he is surprised they are speaking with TEEG and notices that there is now a relationship with them. He stated that TEEG is not Brooklyn's Community Action Agency. Mr. Ives stated that Access is and they have been trying to get a food truck there. He stated that the Assisi Food Pantry could set Brooklyn up as a food bank. Mr. Ives stated that what Mr. Plourde has shared sounds wonderful and it sounded wonderful four years ago. There was very little interest with nine kids and we kept it going for a year. He stated that they should try to get a response to a survey sooner rather than later to get higher numbers. This will come under scrutiny for money.

Mrs. Buell stated that they have done some clean up already and to begin to access the facility again. The Brooklyn Parks and Recreation might hold an evening program as well. Prior to surveys, school social workers and Mrs. Buell would deliver food there during the pandemic, 30-40 meals. A lot of families accessed the resources during covid and when school re-opened, the access went away. She stated we are doing this without a lot of funding and volunteering. The Brooklyn Parks and Recreation would charge \$100.00 for students to access the teen center. Mrs. Buell stated that they are trying to build the relationship back from people being isolated during covid and not being able to access health services. She has worked with TEEG and has worked with ACCESS as well.

Mrs. Buell thanked Mr. Plourde and his classmates for their work and attending the meeting virtually and presenting to the Board. Mr. Plourde stated that he looks forward to working on this project further.

c. Thank you letter - Debra Granger

Mrs. Buell stated that she sent a thank you letter to Debra Granger for her generous donation to Brooklyn Public Schools in memory of her mother, Edna Granger, in food services. This donation will be used to help many students in need.

d. Thank you letter - Cassandra O'Connor

Mrs. Buell stated that she sent a thank you letter to Cassandra O'Connor for her continued donation to Brooklyn Public Schools this year in memory of her late husband, Rob O'Connor. Her generous donation of \$1,000.00 will be used to help many students in need. Ms. O'Connor has donated for many years in a row and her support and interest in the Brooklyn Public Schools is greatly appreciated.

e. Thank you letter - Jewett City Savings Bank

Mrs. Buell stated that a thank you letter was sent to Jewett City Savings Bank for their generous donation that will be used for the Literacy Program at Brooklyn Public Schools. She stated that the students sang Christmas carols and they were so proud and fun to watch.

6. Administrative Reports

a. Brooklyn Enrollment Report

Mrs. Buell discussed the enrollment report. Brooklyn Elementary School went down by two. Brooklyn Middle School went down by 2. The high school enrollment went up by one. She stated that overall there was a decrease of 8 students for enrollment. The enrollment has gone from 1290 to 1291 for total enrollment.

b. FY23 Financial Reports

Mrs. Buell stated that Mr. Carey will be sharing the Budget Report with the Board.

Mr. Carey discussed the Budget Report stating that the substitute teacher line is projected to be under budget and does not expect it to be \$80,000.00. The teachers salary line is under budget due to FMLA and some open vacancies. He stated that the stipends will be fully expended. Mr. Carey has been analyzing the health insurance line and states that this line will be approximately \$130,000.00 under

budget. He will continue to monitor this and figure out how to have the system encumber funds correctly. Mr. Carey stated that the HSA contributions for the Board's contributions will be paid out in January and he is expecting it to be under budget due to changes in coverage. Also, the unemployment line is expected to be under budget due to there being no claims for unemployment. The professional educational services line is expected to be fully expended. The transportation line is over budget due to added bus monitors. Special education transportation is over budget due to outplacements made during the school year. With the high school tuition, we are expected to be under budget for this school year and we will be paying more for Woodstock Academy next year due to more students choosing Woodstock Academy this year. Woodstock bills Brooklyn for the previous year's October enrollment numbers. The high school tuition line will be offset by the increase in special education outplacements.

Mrs. Lyons asked if they had locked in with fuel oil prices for next year. Mrs. Buell and Mr. Carey stated that they are still monitoring the prices on a daily basis.

Mrs. Buell stated that Mr. Carey has been great and is learning the system. All the work that has been done to get procedures in place and have everybody cross trained has helped with a smooth transition. The staff in the Business Office have been doing a great job. She stated that it has been a pleasure to have Mr. Carey join Brooklyn.

c. Data Dashboard - November

Mrs. Buell stated that there have not been a lot of changes to the November Data Dashboard. She stated that the full day absences have been slightly worse and the half day absences have gotten slightly better. She stated that there are a lot of illnesses with RSV: 13 cases; Flu: 60 cases; Covid: 18 cases. Mrs. Buell stated that she does not think that everyone is testing. Strep throat is also going around and hopefully people will rest over the winter break and be ready to be back to school in January.

d. Brooklyn's Best

**BES**

- Our November BEAR winners are Addison Mizak, Joseph Pelletier, Vassilios Exarhoulous, Emma Cullen, Johanna Sigfridson, Grayson Castro, Aaliyah Sorel, Waylon Pudvah, McKenna Peek, Kaizen Sirmongkhoun, Lauren Robillard, Michael Rascoe
- Mrs. Gatlin led the staff in the annual Paint Night. This event is held as a fundraiser for the Parks and Recreation Toy Drive. We had over 50 people consisting of staff members, former staff members and friends attend the event.



- Mr. March led the 3rd and 4th grade chorus students in a beautiful concert at Jewett City Savings Bank. Additionally, the bank made a donation to the library for \$350.
- Mrs. Minark's class made welcome posters and set up buddies for a new student in the classroom. They made the transition to a new school an extra special day!
- Thank you to Mrs. Bessette and Ms. Loomis for holding an AMAZING Book Fair. The children were thrilled to share their books with everyone they saw.
- Thank you to our PTO for organizing the raffle basket event, CCMC's PJ Day and the Holiday Store. These events go a long way in supporting our schools and children.

### **BMS**

- Good Cookie November 2022:  
**Grade 5:** Taylor Dupont, Lanna Gold  
**Grade 6:** Lillian Dumond, Asher Jarvis  
**Grade 7:** Lilah Ledogar, Chris Bowen  
**Grade 8:** Kaitlyn Thiffeault, Cogan Gosselin
- Chorus members attended the tree lighting.
- We are excited to have a choral concert on December 11th and a band concert on December 20th, which will be sampled at our Honor's Recognition Assembly on December 23, 2022 for all students.
- Thank you to the band at Woodstock Academy and Killingly High School for their winter concert performances.
- NJHS organized a hat and glove collection.
- The Student Council supported a Brighter Christmas with a collection of items for donation.

### 7. Board of Education Committee Reports

None to report

### 8. Board Representatives to Other Committees

None to report

### 9. Old Business

#### a. 2023-2024 School Calendar

Mrs. Buell stated that there were some minor revisions made to the 2023-2024 School Calendar. Thanksgiving was not listed as a holiday, which adjusted our end date and there were some dates in the center that needed correcting.

- 2023-2024 School Calendar - DRAFT 1

- April vacation is moved to the third week of April
- 2023-2024 School Calendar - DRAFT 2
  - April vacation is moved to the third week of April
  - The half PD day on 2/16/2024 is moved to 9/1/2023
- 2023-2024 School Calendar - DRAFT 3
  - April vacation is moved to the third week of April
  - Moved the half PD day on 2/16/2024 to 9/1/2023
  - Moved the PD day on 3/1/2024 to 3/22/2024
- 2023-2024 School Calendar - DRAFT 4
  - April vacation is moved to the third week of April
  - Removed early dismissal on 2/16/2024, now a full day of school
  - Moved PD day on 3/01/2024 to 3/22/2024

The Board had discussions on the 2023-2024 School Calendar drafts and are in favor of the 2023-2024 School Calendar Draft 3.

Mrs. Buell stated that out of all the districts in the area, Brooklyn Public Schools is the only school district having a full school day on Friday, December 23, 2022. She stated the Board had discussed this last year and decided to have it as a full Day due to it not being Christmas Eve.

Dr. Perkins-Banas made a motion to approve Draft 3 of the 2023-2024 School Calendar.

(Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)

No discussion

**Vote Count:** 6, 0

Unanimous vote to approve

## 10. New Business

Mrs. Buell stated that there are some dates that she wanted the Board to be aware of:

CABE set a date for their Legislative Breakfast and Mrs. Buell was asked to host it at Brooklyn Public Schools on January 9, 2023 from 7:30am-9:00am. She stated that she would like the Board to attend if they are available and she will share speaking points that might be out there for them to review. It is an opportunity for the Legislatives to hear their thoughts and concerns.

Mrs. Buell stated that January 6, 2023 is an internal practice Reunification Drill here at Brooklyn Public Schools. She stated that they are looking for staff volunteers, parents volunteers, and there are administrator volunteers from other communities that will be there. The Board is welcome to come. She would like people to RSVP to her so that she will know how many people she should

plan for. She stated that they will practice being in a lockdown and taking students to a location for reunification and go through the protocol for reunification. It will start at 3:30pm and last approximately an hour. She will forward the information to the Board members.

Mrs. Buell stated that the first Budget Meeting is scheduled for January 11, 2023. She would like to adjust this date due to a conflict with the Parent Expo. The Board agrees to rescheduling the Budget Meeting from January 11, 2023 to January 18, 2023 from 5:00pm-7:00pm.

11. Public Comment

None

12. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:25 p.m.  
(Perkins-Banas/Phaiah)  
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