

February 22, 2012

The Brooklyn Board of Education held its regular monthly meeting on February 22, 2012 in the middle school library. In attendance were: Robert Rossi, Jo Ann Gerardi-Voccio, Joan Trivella, Mae Lyons, Sheila Johnson, Rick Ives, Board of Finance, Alan Yanku and Francis Rotella, Middle School and Elementary School Principals, respectively, and Louise Berry, Superintendent. Members of the teaching staff and public were also in the audience.

Absent: Andrew Dionne, Board of Selectmen and Attorney Kelly, Board of Education

1. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order by Jo Ann Gerardi-Voccio at 7:05.

2. Public Comments / Comments by Representatives of:

- a) BEA – no report
- b) Local 1303 AFSCME – None
- c) PTO – Ana Klawitter stated that the PTO is currently working on the Father/Daughter dance. Butter braids is the next fundraiser. The 4th grade classes had storytellers come in. The 5th grade has made a request for a reading night. The PTO is still waiting for the smartboards to come in.
- d) Public – Amy Maloney read a letter to the Board and reiterated the importance of her position as school psychologist. She went over her job description and the difficulties of performing her duties on a part-time basis. She voiced concerns of the legal and ethical nature of performing her job only on part-time basis and asked that her position be considered for full-time, based on the needs of the students.

3. Minutes of the Board Meeting held on January 25, 2012

Motion made by Sheila Johnson to accept the meeting minutes from January 25, 2012. Second by Mae Lyons. Abstention by Joan Trivella. Motion passed.

4. Correspondence

Members discussed the Woodstock Academy meeting minutes of February 14, 2012, and January 17, 2012.

5. Administrative Reports

a) Middle School Principal's Report

Mr. Yanku informed the Board that the 8th grade students planning to attend Woodstock Academy would be meeting with one of their counselors to go over their individual course of studies for their 2012-2013 freshmen year.

Mr. Yanku informed the Board the acceptance letters from Ellis Tech and Killingly Vo-Ag have been received by the students who applied.

Mr. Yanku informed the Board the annual Blood Drive sponsored by the National Junior Honor Society was to be held on February 23, 2012 from 1:00 pm to 5:30 pm.

Mr. Yanku gave a presentation and overview of the MyRtl program. He informed the Board that it is a program developed with EASTCONN to keep track of student progress in the areas of math and language arts. The program is a web-based system. He followed with a visual presentation of how to navigate the site and the information available. He discussed the various interventions that currently take place for students who are struggling with reading and comprehension. He noted the biggest problem with the program the time it consumed and labor intensive aspects of entering data into the program. However, the interventions can be somewhat tailored to specific needs of an individual student. Jo Ann Gerardi-Voccio noted the importance of this as a way to keep track of various interventions for state requirements. Mr. Yanku informed Board members that more time and training are needed for the MyRtl program. The most recent professional development has been devoted to the Common Core State Standards. Joan Trivella inquired as to what happens to the data collected when students move on to high school. Mr. Yanku stated that high schools have not expressed interest in the data at this time; however, reports could potentially be printed and put in individual student files.

Robert Rossi asked what services were being provided for the gifted and talented students. Dr. Berry stated that in the past, there was a person who worked with such students. However, due to budget cuts in the past, said position was cut. Currently the ArtPace program is in place for gifted students in the area of the arts. Joan Trivella mentioned differentiated instruction takes place within the classroom setting for students with varying needs. Mr. Rossi asked if the 60 identified gifted and talented students will bring up the overall CMT test scores and what criteria is being used to identify such students. Dr. Berry responded identification of gifted students is the responsibility of the Special Education Director. Mrs. Maloney stated that she is part of the identification process, and that it starts with a parent or teacher referral. A standardized Gifted Rating Scale is used to help make an assessment. Much of the assessment comes from the student's portfolio of work.

b) Elementary Report

Fran Rotella informed the Board that the grade level team meetings have become rich with discussion concerning student needs. She provided student writing prompt samples and explained how they are scored on the Connecticut Mastery Tests. She provided the members with a rubric and three 2nd grade writing samples with scores ranging from a 2 out of 6, a 6 out of 12 and a 9 out of 12. She discussed how scorers arrive at their scores and how students in various score ranges require differentiated instruction. Discussion of the consistency of scoring took place.

Ms. Rotella reviewed the professional development day, which took place on Tuesday, February 21, 2012. She informed the Board that consultants from the Department of Education came in to discuss with middle and elementary school staff how to work together in a concerted effort toward CCSS. Middle and elementary school staff will work independently then come together with their respective ideas. Ms. Rotella thanked the Board for the opportunity to work with the consultants.

d) Assistant Principal's Report

Dr. Berry commented on the girls' basketball team's perfect season. Bob Rossi asked if the team could be invited to a board meeting to be recognized and congratulated. Dr. Berry asked Al Yanku if he could invite the team to an upcoming meeting.

Ms. Rotella reviewed the Elementary School 2010-2011 Profile. Jo Ann Gerardi-Voccio asked Ms. Rotella if she felt there were any areas where improvements could be made. Sheila Johnson noted that the number of students who receive free and reduced has gone up. It is about 1 in 5 students who are currently facing economic difficulty. Mr. Yanku noted at the middle school level, about 1 in 4 students receive free and reduced lunch.

Bob Rossi questioned the difference between the state's average number of hours of instruction per year and that of the Brooklyn Schools. A review of the hours per day and days per year ensued.

Fran Rotella answered Jo Ann Gerardi-Voccio's question concerning areas of improvement. She informed the Board that elementary school students do not have specific hours in a technology class; however, technology is incorporated into other areas of the day. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Rotella mentioned being proud of Brooklyn School's overall CMT scores. She noted that Connecticut schools have higher expectations than other states. Al Yanku spoke to the Middle School 2010-2011 Profile. He informed the Board that Brooklyn Middle School has a 10-11% turnover in students in and out of the district. This turnover increases the number of students who have difficulty with the Connecticut Mastery Test.

He noted the possibility of a second algebra class for the 2012-2013 school year, due to the number of students with strong math skills.

He also noted that the 8th grade science scores were high, and that shows that students are capable of successfully doing high level thinking problems and applications.

He mentioned the constant need for students needing more time and support to be successful as well as the benefit of small groups and individual help from teachers.

Dr. Berry spoke about the Brooklyn School District Strategic School Profile 2010-2011. She reminded the board of the importance of nutrition and the direct correlation between breakfast and student performance during the morning hours and noted that the schedule of the morning buses does not allow many students to participate in the school breakfast program. Discussion followed.

Dr. Berry presented the Special Education Enrollment and commented that the total number of students receiving special education services was consistent with the January report.

Dr. Berry presented the Cafeteria Report.

Dr. Berry spoke of a deficit of \$144,000 in the current budget mainly the result of special education placements and capital costs for Killingly High School. Killingly High School's projected capital costs last spring were \$70,000. In the fall, that figure changed to \$152,000. Discussion ensued.

Dr. Berry presented the proposed budget for 2012-2013. The costs to continue current programs with no additional staff members or programs requires an increase of 1 million dollars. She presented the board with a list of topics for them to consider, if they so wish, when deciding where to reduce costs.

Sheila Johnson suggested meeting at another time to discuss this topic. Jo Ann Gerardi-Voccio agreed.

Rick Ives said the Board of Finance would like to meet with the Board of Education on April 4, 2012.

6. Public Comments

None

Building principals excused at 9:00 pm.

7. Committee Reports

- a) Budget – None
- b) Policy – None
- c) Curriculum – None
- d) Negotiations – None
- e) Capital – None
- f) EASTCONN

Sheila Johnson's name will be added as the responsible party who will provide the minutes and agenda from EASTCONN. Sheila agreed to do her best to provide them, but sometimes EASTCONN meeting times and Board of Education meeting times do not coincide.

- g) High School Relations

Mrs. Gerardi-Voccio spoke of Woodstock Academy's International Program and its sending schools. Discussion ensued.

- h) Recreation Committee – None

Representatives from:

PTO – None

BEA – Linda Congdon-Marr asked if the future budget meeting will be open to the public. Sheila Johnson and Jo Ann Gerardi-Voccio said yes.

BOF – No report

BOS – Austin Tanner suggested looking into changes in health insurance coverage being "more creative" in finding ways to cut from the budget.

8. Old Business

Sheila Johnson commented on how to acknowledge Brooklyn students who have made the honor roll at the high school level. Some possibilities are a letter at the end of the year or being invited to a board meeting to receive verbal recognition. Dr. Berry informed the board members of a school policy that prohibits student academic information from being released publicly without parent permission. Discussion ensued. Sheila Johnson made a motion to amend a previous motion to send recognition letters quarterly, and to continue this discussion in May. Second by Bob Rossi. Unanimous vote to accept.

Board Members went into executive session at 9:40 pm to discuss a personnel issue.

Motion made by Joan Trivella to move to exit executive session at 9:48 pm. Second by Mae Lyons. Motion passed.

Motion made by Bob Rossi to adjourn at 9:50 pm. Second by Sheila Johnson. Motion passed.

Joann Engel
February 23, 2012