

The Board of Education

Town of Brooklyn
119 Gorman Road
Brooklyn, CT 06234

Mae Lyons, Board Chair
Keith Atchinson, Secretary
Tana Jolley

Melissa Perkins-Banas, Vice-Chair
Justin Phaiah
Carolyn Hackbarth

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 virtually on October 28, 2020 via Zoom. In attendance were Mrs. Lyons, Dr. Perkins-Banas, Mr. Atchinson, Mr. Phaiah, Mrs. Jolley and Mrs. Hackbarth. Mrs. Buell, Superintendent, and Mr. Otto, Board of Finance, were also present.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Brooklyn Board of Education will conduct a virtual meeting in accordance with Governor Lamont's Executive Order 7B.

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 prior to the meeting.

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

Quorum established. Mrs. Lyons called the meeting to order at 7:17 pm.

2. Public Comment

No public comment

3. Approval of Minutes

a. September 25, 2020 BOE Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of September 25, 2020
(Hackbarth/Perkins-Banas)
No Discussion, unanimous vote to approve

4. Correspondence and Communication

a. Retirement - M. Blain

Mrs. Buell stated that she received a letter of retirement from Mary Blain, 8th grade Language Arts teacher at the middle school. Mrs. Buell stated that this will be her last week. Mrs. Buell wishes her well.

b. Donation - Earthworks Construction & Septic, LLC.

Mrs. Buell stated that a thank you letter was sent to Earthworks Construction & Septic, LLC. Earthworks Construction & Septic, LLC generously donated 125 headsets to Brooklyn Public Schools' third grade students. Their donation assists our students to continue their education, especially while in a virtual atmosphere.

c. Woodstock Correspondence

Mrs. Buell stated she received a letter from Mr. Sanford at the Woodstock Academy stating that Joey Ignacio has been chosen to receive the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendent's (CAPSS) Student Recognition Award.

5. Administrative Reports

a. Brooklyn BOE Expenditure Report

Mrs. Buell discussed the expenditure report. She stated there are some salary lines that are showing a deficit due to hiring additional staff for distance learning. Mrs. Buell isn't asking the Board to transfer funds at this time. She is expecting to receive covid funding that will be put towards some of these deficits.

b. Enrollment Report

Mrs. Buell discussed the enrollment report. She stated that some students have returned from distance learning and some have gone out on distance learning due to the full in-person model. Currently at the Brooklyn Elementary School, there are 380 (up from 344 last month) students that are full in-person, 96 (down from 134 last month) students are opt-out distance learning and 22 (down from 32 last month) students are being homeschooled. At the Brooklyn Middle School, there are 219 (down from 258 last month) students that are full in-person, 60 (down from 79 last month) students are opt-out distance learning and 13 (up from 8 last month) students are homeschooled. The High school enrollment has been consistent. There are 23 students that are out of the district.

c. UPDATE: Current Instructional Model and Projected Changes

Mrs. Buell stated that when school started in August, Brooklyn spent 7 weeks in a hybrid model of instruction. Brooklyn students returned to full in person learning on October 19, 2020. She stated that when we returned to full in person, we had many families participate who were previously distance learners. Additionally, we've had some families return from home schooling and we have had some

families switch from hybrid to distance learning or home schooling. Mrs. Buell stated that we plan to remain in the in person learning model as long as possible. Mrs. Buell has been in discussion with NDDH and we will not need to close our whole school down if we have an isolated case due to our cohorting and ability to trace potential contacts. There is a possibility of having a “remote” day of school rather than a snow day, stay tuned for approval from the State Board of Education.

Mrs. Buell wanted to share the CT State Data:

CT students in person: 53%

CT students in hybrid: 42%

CT students full in person: Pre-k - Grade 5: 59.2%

Grade 6 - Grade 8: 43.6%

Grade 9 - Grade 12: 24.6%

Mrs. Buell shared an Addendum 4 from the Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut’s Plan to Lead Grow Together, which states that schools are “safer” than most places. There are 10-25 cases per 100K in hybrid, less than 25 cases likely with remote. Any decision that is made, will be in collaboration with NDDH and based on actual cases in our area.

d. Brooklyn’s Best

BES

1. Super reader came and gave pointer power to the kindergarten students.
2. Certified staff are submitting goals and having good conversations around SEL and diversity.
3. Nutmeg books have arrived and are being introduced to grades 2-4 by Mrs. Bessette. Children appear very eager to help determine the winners!
4. Mortlake delivered fire safety materials to the kindergarten team in place of doing their presentation in person.

BMS

1. Each student and staff member planted a bulb to blossom in the spring.
2. This week is Spirit Week at the Middle School.
3. We are happy to have our students back in full.
4. Good Cookie recipients:
Grade 5: Nina Purcell, Makenna Faucher, Kaleigh Cote, Ella Peterson, Melanie DiPippo, Lily Mioduszewski, Brynn Choruzek, Mackenzie Lee, Olivia Devolve
Grade 6: Estelle Hadfield, Christian Hart, Kaitlyn Thiffeault, Elijah Poh
Grade 7: Benjamin Arters, Olivia Tracy, Ella Moyer
Grade 8: Brady Ericson, Avery Hardacker, Julia Jarvis, Georgia

Lukachie,

Phillip Purcell

District

1. The staff have continued to adjust to the various models of instruction and have provided stability and quality instruction to our students. Thank you to all of our employees, parents, Board of Education and mostly to our students!
2. Thank you to the Brooklyn Parks and Recreation and Brooklyn PTO for the “Fang tastic” event they hosted on the school grounds.
3. Barbara-Jean Toth is excited to announce Brooklyn Public School’s full time Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), Karen Hyatt. Karen has worked as a special education teacher for Brooklyn for the past 10 years. In her role as the Intensive Instruction Classroom (IIC) Special Education teacher at the Elementary School, she used Applied Behavior Analysis principles and strategies, provided Discrete Trial Instruction and trained many staff and paraprofessionals in these areas. In 2018, she became a certified State of Connecticut Department of Public Health Behavior Analyst (CT-LBA) and In 2019, she became a Certified Physical & Psychological Management Training Instructor. With this certification she is able to lead required PMT training to certify staff district-wide. Karen is excited to have the opportunity to now serve as the district's full-time BCBA and expand and create more opportunities to help make socially significant behavior changes for all of our student population!
4. I am very happy to welcome Lori Gilpin, Town of Brooklyn and Brooklyn Public Schools’ Director of Human Resources and to Tammy McManaway, Executive Assistant. They are a wonderful addition to the Central Office staff.

6. Board of Education Committee Reports

Mrs. Perkins-Banas stated that the Brooklyn Parks and Recreation met for the Fang-Tastic Halloween Trick or Treat Drive-Thru. They also decided that Basketball and Ski Club will be cancelled for this year. Mrs. Perkins-Banas stated that the Holiday Lighting Contest and the Toy Drive will still be happening.

7. Board Representatives to other Committees

Nothing to report

8. Old Business

a. PV Update

Mrs. Buell stated that the Brooklyn Elementary School is waiting for permission to operate. At the Brooklyn Middle School, racking is partially completed, panel

installation has started, and the electrical tie in is to be completed. Once these are completed, then permission to operate will be sought.

b. Hiring a IT Support Personnel

Mrs. Buell stated that the position for an IT Support Personnel has not been posted as of yet. She has had conversations with our 2 stipend positions that have been handling the schools technology, Mr. Kelleher and Ms. Geeza. Mrs. Buell stated this position will be a shared position between the town and the school.

c. Modified Teacher and Administrator Evaluation for 2020-2021 to reflect the current emotional model

Mrs. Buell stated that she would like the Board to approve the following modified Teacher and Administrator Evaluation for 2020-20201 that reflects the current emotional model.

- i. Goal setting deadline was extended by two weeks (page 14)
- ii. Goals will measure SEL, student engagement and/or family engagement (page 14)
- iii. Summative ratings are waived this school year (page 14)
- iv. Observations will consist of information observations and review of practice (page 25)

Mrs. Buell stated that observations have begun and they have used technology to assist them with this by opening a Zoom meeting and leaving a device in the classroom.

Motion to approve the Modified Teacher and Administrator Evaluation plan for 2020-2021 to reflect the current emotional medel.

(Perkins-Banas/Hackbarth)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

9. New Business

a. First review of the 2021-2022 Brooklyn Schools Calendar

Mrs. Buell discussed the proposed first draft of the Brooklyn Schools calendar for the 2021-2022 school year. The calendar is similar to what we have now. She will share the calendar with staff to see if there are any suggestions/changes to be made.

b. Draft: 2021-2022 Regional School Calendar - EASTCONN

Mrs. Buell included EASTCONN's draft 2021-2022 Regional School Calendar.

c. Dormant Brooklyn Activity Account transfer

Mrs. Buell stated that money from Jewett City Savings Funds were in a CD and matured. She stated that they are unsure of the origin of these funds and they were dormant for years. Mrs. Buell would like to request to use these funds for district wide student activities.

Mrs. Lyons stated that there was a donor years ago that would donate money for field trips and maybe the funds are from that.

Motion to transfer Jewett City Savings Funds to the district wide student activities.

(Perkins/Phaiah)

Mrs. Hackbarth would like to know how much money we are looking at or is there going to be restrictions. If it needs to be used for something else, she would hate to restrict it to student activities.

Mrs. Perkins-Banas asked if the donor that donated the money requested the money be used for district activities. Mrs. Buell stated she can't find any information on it.

No further discussion
Motion carries

d. TiO2 Coatings: Consideration of the application of this product

Mrs. Buell stated that she would like the Board to consider the application of this product at a very reduced cost to Brooklyn. This product has been tested and proven to break down the virus on contact. Other benefits of this product include reduced cleaning schedule, reduced cleaning products and man hours. She stated they may be able to use it on the solar panels as well to break-down dirt build-up and pollen, as long as it doesn't void the warranty on the panels.

Mrs. Lyons asked Mrs. Buell if she wanted to talk about technology. Mrs. Buell stated that she's been asked what's happening with our technology. She stated that there have been some technology challenges. When the Brooklyn Schools switched from the hybrid model to full in person, she had anticipated less recorded video lessons. Recorded videos are still being used at the middle school because they are cohorting. The reason for the recordings is because in different areas of the building, the WiFi is not as strong as other parts of the building. The fifth and sixth grade wings have a stronger WiFi connection than the seventh and eighth grade wings. She observed a classroom live streaming to the other classrooms and it didn't go as expected. The system gets overloaded and sometimes a message shows that the sound or video might be lagging when live streaming. This interruption to instruction is more impactful to the students learning. Mrs. Buell stated that she has seen some of the video instructions that teachers are doing and they are very good. She commends the teachers for their time and effort that goes into each and every lesson they are recording. Mrs. Buell

stated that we are keeping the students in school and it is a good quality of education. She stated that there is some live instruction happening for the distance learning students. Mrs. Buell explained that there are fewer distance learning teachers and the students are at home not wearing down the school's system. For one teacher to zoom out is a little bit different than for several zoom classes to happen at once. She also explained the related arts teachers can zoom due to there not being as many related arts teachers and being the only ones using the internet in that hallway and having a better connection.

Mrs. Buell stated she has a meeting with APEX Technology tomorrow, October 29, 2020. APEX was here a few years ago doing an audit of our technology system and gave many recommendations: purchasing devices, which we have done and has gotten us to where we are now; upgrade the servers, which the town supported. The next thing to upgrade is the WiFi, which is in 2 pieces. One has already been implemented and the cost was approximately \$18,000 or \$19,000. The next piece costs substantially more. Mrs. Buell stated she will be concentrating on the middle school to have stronger connections so there will be more live instruction.

Mrs. Buell wanted to discuss another comment that she has received about students being able to hug their friends. She stated that no one is allowed to hug their friends. There is no one allowing students to hug their friends. If it happens, it's being addressed. We continue to use our mitigation strategies that we have in place, maintain social/physical distancing as much as possible.

Mrs. Buell stated that teachers are not moving from classroom to classroom due to wanting to keep the staff and students healthy. The infection rate in Connecticut continues to increase, she is not going to be making any changes to teachers rotating classes or students rotating classes. Mrs. Buell stated that she continues to look at the numbers every day. She looks at every situation, student, staff, community and compares it to the state. Everyone is doing a great job during this challenging time. We continue to offer full in person and distance learning to meet the needs of students and families at different levels. Both teachers and students are working hard and it is a different kind of education, but a good quality education.

Mrs. Lyons thanked Mrs. Buell for her diligence and attention to detail for the safety of the students and the staff, and to keep the schools open for as long as we can.

10. Public Comment

Kelly Coddling is a parent of 7th grade students and wrote a letter that she thought would be a part of the correspondence during tonight's meeting and was a little bit disappointed it wasn't. Her children feel they aren't learning due to lack of interaction or discussions with their teachers. There isn't a lot of enrichment and engagement happening. She hopes

that these concerns are talked about at the next Board meeting. She does appreciate the work in the schools.

Kristen Elliott is also a parent that wrote a letter that was not read tonight. She watched some of the videos and she agrees that the videos are great. The problem is there are no interactions. These kids need interaction. She doesn't understand the lack of live instruction.

Amy Landis is also a parent that wrote a letter and will read the letter since it wasn't read during the meeting. During the hybrid model, students were in school two days a week with distance learning three days a week. Wednesdays were distance learning for all students with live zoom instruction from each of their core teachers. The other two days of distance learning were pre-recorded lessons. When she heard that students would be returning to school five days a week, she and other parents were under the impression that live instruction would resume in the classroom and this is not the case. They are still receiving a pre-recorded video, but receiving live instruction via zoom from the related arts teachers. She stated that Mrs. Buell had said that they are providing more live instruction in class, but will still be using some pre-recorded lessons. Mrs. Landis stated that her child is in 7th grade and that is the only grade she can speak about. She stated after speaking with his tag teacher, school administration and the superintendent due to technological constraints 7th grade is not receiving live instruction. She knows the 7th grade teachers are exceptional, but she believes the 7th grade students deserve live instruction. She stated she knows a small business owner that is willing to donate \$5,000 to the Brooklyn Schools District to hire a technology consultant. Mrs. Landis has asked why teachers aren't switching classrooms to give live instruction. She said she's been told that if a student or teacher tests positive for covid-19, then the entire grade would have to quarantine not just a classroom. She stated that the CDC guidelines state that one needs to quarantine if someone is within six feet of an infected person for more than fifteen minutes. Mrs. Landis said if teachers are teaching from their desk or smartboard, they can maintain the six feet distance from students. She believes that teachers should be rotating classes and teaching in person. She stated the model the students are getting of a ten minute mini lesson and thirty minutes of live support is not the same as live instruction. She respects these teachers, but wants them to be engaging with her son and classmates in the subjects they teach.

Mrs. Lyons commends all the staff in the school. She knows that Mrs. Buell spends multiple hours daily/weekly to keep up with the latest numbers and what we should be doing. She stated that everyone is doing a great job of doing the best we can under the circumstances we have. She stated she would like the staff to know that they appreciate it and the parents to know that they appreciate them. It's hard on everybody.

Mrs. Buell stated that there is another public comment.

Natalie Geeza wanted to thank Mrs. Buell's support. She feels she needs to address some of the comments being made out in the public/social media with the 7th grade team. Ms. Geeza stated she's a long-time resident of Brooklyn as well as a teacher in the district. She stated that it is disheartening to hear some of the comments from parents. She stated

she understands that parents are entitled to their opinions on the form of education and how teachers are providing instruction during these circumstances. She stated there is no possible or effective way to teach from her desk and be six feet away, especially when there are tech problems on chromebooks. There is also no effective way for her to teach from her SmartBoard when a student has a question about their writing and she needs to look it over with them. She understands parents' concerns and this is not the ideal for education, but it is the best we have at this time. Collaborative work is happening in the classrooms. She gave an example of how Mr. Kiefer, 7th grade Language Arts, prompts teachers in his video lesson in Google Slides to stop the video and lead the students through discussion. She stated that teachers are making connections with each other's curricula. Teachers are referencing each other's curricula in their presentations. Ms. Geeza stated that they have seen some growth in students and connections that they are making between their subjects, which is powerful for students. They are collaborating verbally with each other in their cohort or through documents/comments in Google Classroom. She stated that all the teachers are working double digit hours everyday and weekends to provide the best possible education at this time. She hopes they understand what is happening in the classrooms versus what they envision is happening.

Diane Wimmer wanted to reiterate what Natalie Geeza had mentioned. She has been listening to the Board of Education meetings and some of the same parents comments. As a former teacher listening to her colleagues and looking at the CDC guidelines, this is not what we want for our students. We don't want them three feet apart and wearing masks. We don't want them in a situation where they might be out of school. This is our reality right now. Our reality right now is not what has gone on in the past. She stated what the teachers are doing are exceptional. She stated that children have a perception of what is going on and the reality and their perception is not always the same. Mrs. Wimmer stated that we have to be understanding. She stated that she had done this last year in the spring, she understands what's happening with the time element, how hard it is to video and make sure they have the information they need. She knows this staff and just as Natalie Geeza had said, the group of them are taking the initiative to integrate the videos to what they know how to do. The teachers are doing that. It may not be the traditional learning that is valuable and we need to support the teachers more than what she had heard tonight from parents.

11. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:48 p.m.
(Phaiah/Jolley)

No Discussion, unanimous vote to approve

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna L. DiBenedetto

Donna L. DiBenedetto
Board Clerk