

# The Board of Education

Town of Brooklyn  
119 Gorman Road  
Brooklyn, CT 06234

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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 its regular monthly meeting on February 26, 2020 in the Central Office Community Room. In attendance were Mrs. Lyons, Dr. Perkins-Banas, Mr. Phaiah, Mrs. Jolley, Mrs. Hackbarth, and Mr. Atchinson arrived at 8:10 p.m. Mrs. Buell, Superintendent, Mr. Otto, Board of Finance, Mrs. Tamsin, BMS Principal, Mr. Torchia, BMS Assistant Principal, Mrs. Graef, BES Principal, and Mr. Weaver, BES Assistant Principal, were also present. Members of the teaching staff and public were also in the audience.

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

Quorum established. Mrs. Lyons called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Comment

Mrs. Landis wanted to state that decisions in the district have concerned her over the last year. One of them is the restructuring of the Spanish Language program, which has decreased the amount of time that 7th and 8th graders have Spanish instruction. Spanish isn't considered a regular class anymore, it's a related arts class. Also, in the proposed budget for the next school year, the district wants to eliminate Library Media Specialist positions in both schools. This is the third time since she's lived in the district that they've tried to eliminate the Library Media Specialist and they've been added back into the budget. She also discussed the number of new hires in the budget for next year. She doesn't believe hiring two paras to work in the library and 2 instructional coaches are in the district's best interest. She stated that if we need additional support staff then maybe they need to look at additional sources of revenue. She stated public preschool is a luxury, not a necessity.

4. Approval of minutes

- a. January 29, 2020 BOE Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of January 29, 2020  
(Jolley/Perkins-Banas)

No Discussion, unanimous vote to approve.

## 5. Correspondence and Communication

- a. Letter of Resignation

Mrs. Buell stated she received a letter of resignation from Mr. William Gabriel, Brooklyn Middle School STEAM Teacher, effective at the end of this school year in June. Mrs. Buell accepted Mr. Gabriel's letter of resignation on behalf of the Board of Education and wished him well on his future endeavors.

## 6. Brooklyn's Best

### **BES**

1. Invention Convention workshops have been well attended
2. Mr. Chenail has secured 6 judges for the BES Invention Convention
3. The PTO has purchased classroom rugs for grades 1 and 2
4. Johnny's Pizza made a \$1000 donation to the PTO to offset the cost of the field day t-shirts
5. Multiple staff have volunteered to hold after school sessions in March to promote Health and Wellness
6. Pre-K and K registration takes place the 25-27 of February

### **BMS**

1. NJHS Hosted a Blood drive that collected from 32 Donors
2. Mrs. Dehls was awarded a Little Kids Rock Music grant. She is receiving: 18 ukuleles, 4 acoustic guitars, 10 mini keyboards, 1 electric bass/amp
3. **Good Cookie Award Recipients for January:**  
Grade 5: Aubrey Butler, Kendall Ternowchek  
Grade 6: Delaney Williams, Gavin Moore  
Grade 7: Kylee Bombster, Raiden Olsen  
Grade 8: Christian Estrada-Rojas, Sai Patel
4. **Quarter 2 Lion's Club Award Recipients:**  
Grade 5: Alexis Sansone  
Grade 6: Shannon Donovan  
Grade 7: Madelyn Frechette  
Grade 8: Timothy Engstrume
5. Girls Basketball qualified for the semifinals
6. Boys Basketball qualified for the finals

## 7. Administrative Reports

### a. Mid-Year Advancement Plan Report

Mrs. Buell stated that both school administrators were here to give an update on the Mid-Year Advancement Plan Report. She also discussed the District Goals: Superintendent will support BES and BMS with the Building Advancement Plans by creating the conditions necessary to increase student achievement.

#### Mid-Year Summary:

1. Continued review of data at BES and BMS
2. Classroom observations with teams of administrators continue to focus on effective instruction and feedback.
3. Student successes are being shared monthly at BOE meetings and regularly on social media.
4. PD for the administrative team is on-going. We are looking at leadership topics and SEL work.

Mrs. Graef discussed the BES Goal 1: Literacy Goal: All students will demonstrate vertical growth in the same area of literacy from fall to spring as evidenced by end of year benchmark assessments.

#### Mid-Year Summary BES:

- Professional development focusing on Reading, Writing and Phonics has been the focus for the year. Teaching staff have met with an EASTCONN consultant over 10 days. Additionally, the reading specialists and librarian have participated in the professional development.
- DRA's have been administered and analyzed in all grades K-4
- Peer observations have occurred in all grade levels
- Common planning time is in place for each grade level
- SRBI groupings are determined through SRBI process
- Administrative walk-throughs and observation calibration conducted and talking points reviewed at monthly Leadership Meetings

Mr. Weaver discussed BES Goal 2: Numeracy Goal: All students will demonstrate vertical growth in the area of numeracy from fall to spring as evidenced by end of year benchmark assessments.

#### Mid-Year Summary BES:

- Peer observations have occurred
- Common planning time is in place for each grade level
- SRBI groupings are determined through SRBI process
- ST Math rotations are occurring in each grade level
- 4 staff members are attending regional math PD on March 6th

Mr. Torchia discussed BMS Goal 1: Literacy Goal: Teachers College Reading Workshop (TRW) implementation will continue this year in collaboration with the elementary school.

Mid-Year Summary:

- Units are identified in the BMS pacing guides.
- ELA Committee meets regularly after school
- School-wide reading days
- Coplanning time provided weekly
- PD provided by Jane Cook
- Teachers were provided a link to resources for potential assessments to align with the selected units.
- We have offered the opportunity to attend the Teachers College Reunion workshops on March 21, 2020

Mrs. Tamsin discussed BMS Goal 2: Literacy Goal: Teachers College Writing Workshop (TWW) implementation will continue this year in grades 5-8 in collaboration with the elementary school.

Mid-Year Summary:

- Units identified in the BMS pacing guide document.
- They have participated in professional development on the Units of Study with Jane Cook on each professional development opportunity.
- Coplanning time is provided weekly
- We have offered the opportunity to attend the Teachers College Reunion workshops on March 21, 2020

Mrs. Tamsin discussed the BMS Parent Feedback Goal 4: Support development of family digital literacy.

Mid-Year Summary:

- Internet Safety night was well attended by over 40 parents on the same night as Open House. Separate activity for students that attended presented by Miss Geeza to 12 children ranging in age from 7-12 years old.
- Computer contract signed by all families and Digital Citizenship expectations shared
- Information on Dark Web communicated with parents through School Messenger. Continuing to look for opportunities to share resources with parents electronically.

Mr. Torchia discussed BMS Reading Goal 5: All students will demonstrate vertical growth in the area of literacy from fall to spring as evidenced by end of year benchmark assessments.

Mid-Year Summary:

- We have worked in subject area groups on 4 modules in the Teacher Clarity Playbook
- Teachers have made significant progress on the pacing guide document and links to units/curriculum
- Teachers are piloting Freckle which is aligned with individual student performance on STAR.

Mr. Torchia discussed BMS Curriculum Goal 6: Work to align the curriculum with current standards in Science, Social Studies and Related Arts

Mid-Year Summary:

- The curriculum is being aligned with current standards and frameworks within a pacing guide that provides links to the curriculum documents.
- Interim NGSS assessments implemented in 5th and 8th grades in preparation for EOY assessment
- BMS and BES related arts staff have met and collaborated on the pacing guide on professional development days

Mr. Torchia discussed the BMS Collaborative School Climate Goal 1: To investigate/implement Restorative Discipline Practices

Mid-Year Summary:

- We have provided 4 workshops around restorative practices thus far. The initial training during our first two days of school was led by the teachers involved with the Restorative Practices team. Most recently, we had a school-wide restorative session where classrooms addressed social media issues with Middle School students and when to tell an adult. This information will be compiled and displayed school-wide for students.

Mr. Weaver discussed the BES Collaborative School Climate Goal 1: To investigate/implement Restorative Discipline Practices

Mid-Year Summary:

- At each monthly staff meeting, teachers who attended training provide a Restorative activity to present to staff. To date, we have explored restorative student circles, the impact of trauma and ACES scores, and opportunities for teachers to ask questions and brainstorm solutions.

Mrs. Buell stated that administrators will be back at the end of the year to share their year end report to the Board. Mrs. Buell wanted to acknowledge the efforts are coordinated and articulated, knowing what they're working on. They are seeing growth, growth occurs slowly. It takes the coordinated effort to make progress and we're starting to see progress.

Mr. Otto wanted to state his concern about formal goals for parental involvement for the students day to day work in school. He stated there are many studies that prove that parent involvement is just as important as which the schools present the materials to students. Mr. Otto feels involvement is just as important as communication.

Mrs. Buell stated that teachers are trying to involve parents as much as possible in a variety of ways to communicate with families. Administrators respond to parents as well as the Superintendent when parents call and teachers do as well. It's a part of every teacher's day and expectation.

Mrs. Gaeff did state one of the goals was skipped by mistake, Goal 3: Parent Feedback: BES will strengthen the home-school connection and provide increased opportunities for family and community engagement to enrich student learning.

Mid-Year Summary:

- Pre-K Literacy night planning is underway
- BES Facebook page is live. With our top post reaching 392 people and our least reaching 63 people
- Parents have been invited to end of the unit celebrations in all grade levels
- STEAM night had over 30 participants

Mr. Otto is also surprised to learn that Brooklyn is joining the faculty of Plainfield and Sterling to work on some things. He stated both of those towns have lower test scores than our students have. He believes we should be looking at other towns like Eastford or Mansfield, who have better test scores than Brooklyn has.

b. Preschool Report

Mrs. Buell stated that they've discussed some of the configuration and changes to Preschool.

Mr. Weaver discussed the Brooklyn Elementary Early Childhood Program current enrollment and projected 2020-2021 class sizes. A proposal to restructure things for next year for students that come to school 2, 3 and 5 days a week.

Mrs. Graff discussed the possible tuition proposal for BES Pre-K Program  
Approximate total tuition anticipated tuition costs at \$60 per week

\* Sliding Scale ranges from \$6 to full cost for 24 school readiness slots (minimum \$576 per month).

= \$25,920/month without School Readiness Spots

= \$20,736/month with minimum sliding scale fees applied for all 24 SR slots  
( $\$25,920 - \$5760 + \$576$ )

Mrs. Buell stated this is a starting point. Pre-K tuition was just brought up this evening at the BOE Budget Workshop.

c. Finance Reports, February Operating Statement, Grant Report

Mrs. Buell stated that a Business Manager has been hired. She also discussed the Operating Statement. There is still work to be done, some adjustments are not reflected on this report. ADP isn't interacting with iVisions as they were initially told it would. She stated that the three financial secretaries for the school and the town are doing a nice job.

Mrs. Buell discussed the Grant Report and stated that the new Business Manager is experienced with the grants and has iVisions experience as well.

d. Enrollment Report

Mrs. Buell stated the Enrollment Report is stable at this time.

8. Board of Education Committee Reports

a. Budget Update

The budget meeting was held just prior to the BOE Meeting tonight. Mrs. Lyons believes we should be discussing the Librarian Media Specialist positions. Mrs. Perkins-Banas believes that instructional coaches are important. We need to look at how to increase student outcomes. It shouldn't be Librarian Media Specialists vs. Instructional Coaches. If teacher evaluations are based on student outcomes, then we need to provide the tools they need to teach all students.

Mrs. Hackbarth feels that librarians play an important role in the students enrichment. The school needs to look at a way to generate revenue by tuition for preschool. She believes it's a great idea and a good way to generate revenue.

There was discussion on moving forward at the next budget meeting March 11, 2020. Mrs. Buell will gather more information in regards to Pre-K tuition for the next meeting.

The Board will like Mrs. Buell to add the Librarian Media Specialists back into the Budget if there's revenue coming in.

Mrs. Lyon asked if the other board members saw/read Sharon Loughlin's letter in regards to the Librarian Media Specialist. Mrs. Loughlin was a long time teacher here in Brooklyn. Not everyone was able to read it, paper copies were handed out. Natalie Geeza also wrote a letter supporting the Librarian Media Specialist as well.

Mrs. Buell wanted to explain the teacher salary from a comment earlier with reduction in staff. She stated if the Librarian Media Specialists were reassigned and they have more seniority than a new teacher, they would bump one of the new teachers. Their salary wouldn't change, they would still get their current salary.

9. Board Representatives to Other Committees

Mr. Atchinson stated that the Woodstock Academy is concerned with the Coronavirus and international students going home with spring break approaching and students returning to school after break.

## 10. Old Business

### a. PV Projects Update

Mrs. Buell discussed the PV Project bid has been awarded. Final touches are being put on the contract with the company that will be installing and the Town of Brooklyn. The contract should be signed in the next day or two. The company will send an engineer out next week to look at the roof and electrical panel. Then, panels and parts will be ordered. Our goal is still the end of August.

Mrs. Lyons asked about capital improvements. Mrs. Buell stated that she doesn't believe that there will be any immediate large capital projects to be added to the budget.

## 11. New Business

### a. Board of Education Workshop

Mrs. Buell stated they had their first workshop and it went well. The Board commitment is more than once a month. They're engaged in what's happening at the school and spending additional evenings here at the school.

### b. By Laws of the Board of Education: 9000 Series

Mrs. Buell stated the By Laws have been discussed.

### c. NESDEC Enrollment Report

Mrs. Buell discussed the NESDEC Enrollment Report. There are no big changes.

### d. Next Steps with Budget Process

- i. Meeting Date: March 11, 2020 6:00-7:00 PM  
March 25, 2020 6:00-7:00 PM

- ii. BOE Presentation to Board of Finance is April 1, 2020

### e. SERAC Student Questionnaire 7.1 vs. 8.1 or no survey

Mrs. Buell discussed the SERAC survey. The surveys are to address drug, alcohol, mindset around those behaviors of drinking and smoking. Mrs. Buell



feels that this type of survey may be useful to us to understand the mindset here in prevention. There are 2 surveys: 7.1 is a longer survey with 45 questions or the 8.1, which is shorter with 2 questions. Mrs. Buell would recommend the 8.1 shorter survey. Parents can opt-in or opt-out of the survey with a permission slip for grades 6 through 8. Data is anonymous. SERAC would like to have it by the end of June. Results will be shared with us. The Board agreed to table this until the next meeting.

## 12. Public Comment

Mr. Kerouac commented he was happy he came on a math heavy night. He requested information on how the administrators discussed the 80% swing of students below the critical line last spring vs. this spring. Why is that? Is the test better now or has the test moved the bar? Or is it the teachers are more comfortable? An explanation why would be better. He thinks it's great that they're going to visit Coventry as the board is discussing things with preschool. He knows they have a good school system and wondered if they may reach out to another school system that started the same program and had all day Pre-K and had moved away from that or half day Pre-K benefits to it and where are we seeing those things. He stated he had a conversation with Mrs. Berry years ago about the benefits to it.

Missy Robbins, a bus driver, and was at the last BOE meeting. There was an article on WINY stating that drivers may or may not have jobs come June, which is saddening for them. Is there anything the school or Board can do to keep our jobs here come July 1st or is that something that's not the Board's problem. Are there any amendments that can be made to the contract?

Mrs. Buell stated that public comment isn't public discussion. They can ask questions. Mrs. Buell stated there's a fact sheet in regards to the bus contracts on the counter. It explains the facts. Mrs. Buell stated she appreciates all the drivers with the relationship they have with her, with our students, with our staff, families and children. Mrs. Buell stated she met with EASTCONN and went through questions with them in regards to questions that the drivers brought up last month. The Board of Education worked very hard to get EASTCONN to pay the drivers rate they are currently getting paid. The director of EASTCONN agreed to it. EASTCONN will be inviting the drivers in next week as an initial day to start interviews.

Kim Bush, Director of Transportation with EASTCONN, wanted to make an appearance to let the drivers know that they have every intent of having a meeting with them next week. She wanted the drivers to know that they do have a place with them and they plan on interviewing each of them.

Mr. Kerouac had one more question with the bus contract now that it's been awarded about the repair garage. Was it actually fixed or negotiated? He didn't see it listed as a major change on the fact sheet. His question was about our garage, will it be used in East

Brooklyn? EASTCONN will service their vehicles at the EASTCONN garage. The bus garage office will still be in Brooklyn but not for bus repairs or washing.

Ailla Wasstrom-Evans has a comment as far as the bus drivers situation goes. She knows that the bus contract is done and it's late to turn back now. They still have a role to advocate for the bus drivers here. She stated Penny was her bus driver when she was a kid in Brooklyn and that it's amazing that she's still a bus driver here in Brooklyn. She knows that EASTCONN is saying they will give interviews to the bus drivers, but it's just an interview. She hopes the Board does more than just say they'll give them interviews and to push EASTCONN to hire these people and give them the benefits they deserve.

### 13. Executive Session

#### a. Discussion of the Superintendent's Mid-Year Evaluation

Motion to enter into executive session to discuss the mid-year evaluation of the Superintendent and invite Superintendent Buell to attend.

(Perkins-Banas/Jolley)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

The Board of Education will take no action except to adjourn the meeting following executive session.

Motion to come out of executive session at 9:40 p.m.

(Jolley/Phaiah)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

### 14. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 9:40 p.m.

(Jolly/Phaiah)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

Respectfully Submitted,

*Donna L. DiBenedetto*

Donna L. DiBenedetto  
Board Clerk