

October 23, 2013

The Brooklyn Board of Education held its regular monthly meeting on October 23, 2013 in the middle school library. In attendance were: Ms. Gerardi-Voccio, Attorney Kelley, Mr. Rossi, Mrs. Trivella, Mrs. Lyons. Also present Dr. Berry, Superintendent, and Ms. Rotella, Elementary School Principal, Mr. Ives, Board of Finance. Mrs. Johnson arrived at 7:15 pm. Members of the teaching staff and public were in the audience.

Absent: N/A

1. Call to Order

Ms. Gerardi-Voccio called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

2. Comments by:

- a. BEA – None
- b. Local 1303 - AFSCME – None
- c. PTO – None
- d. Public – None

3. Minutes of

- Board Meeting held on September 25, 2013

Motion to accept the meeting minutes of September 25, 2013 with the following addition:

Let the minutes reflect that Mr. Yanku will get in touch with Holly Singleton from Woodstock Academy to discuss CAPT scores. Dr. Berry will talk to Mr. Yanku about the same.

(Trivella / Kelley)

Unanimous vote to accept

4. Correspondence:

- CABA – Legislative Delegate Assembly

Dr. Berry presented the registration form for the CABA Delegate Assembly. At this time, no Brooklyn Board of Education members are able to attend.

- Woodstock Academy – Tuition

Dr. Berry presented a letter from Woodstock Academy dated October 1, 2013. The letter included an invoice for the 2013 / 2014 tuition based on the enrollment of Brooklyn students attending Woodstock Academy.

- Carl DalBon Retirement Letter

Motion to accept the letter of resignation from Mr. DalBon, with regrets.
(Trivella / Lyons)
Unanimous vote to accept

5. Consent Agenda

None

6. Administrative Reports:

a. Elementary School Principal

Ms. Rotella noted that the staff development day on October 15, 2013 was a success. The workshops centered around teacher evaluations, the new report card system, and curriculum development. All staff members participated.

She noted that the School Climate Committee is setting goals through community efforts. They have had three meetings since September and have a variety of events planned for students and staff toward one goal, feeling united. Currently the committee is made up of 12 staff members. No parents are on the committee yet. There will be an assembly on November 14, 2013, for students in each grade level. Students will also be participating in the assembly.

Ms. Rotella presented a powerpoint presentation to address concerns from the last Board of Education meeting. The concern was with the number of students in first grade (24%) who are currently receiving interventions, as well as how the district is going to address the Common Core State Standards when it is designed for a full day kindergarten program and Brooklyn's kindergarten program is half-day.

Her presentation showed percentages of first grade students from 2011, 2012, and 2013 who were given universal screens on various letter recognition and phonemic awareness. The percentages ranged from 27% to 62% of students who were at risk or showed a significant need for intervention. However, by the time the students were assessed in grade 2, 80% of students were meeting benchmarks. Ms. Rotella stated that kindergarten teachers choose the most important content from the Common Core Standards. As a result, first grade teachers are also teaching some kindergarten

skills, and having to choose what content is more important for first graders. Support staff members are a great help as well.

A discussion about the Common Core full day curriculum being used in the half-program ensued.

Attorney Kelley asked if the first grade students were at a disadvantage due to the half-day kindergarten program. Ms. Rotella said yes.

Mrs. Johnson asked if students who attended the pre-school readiness program scored higher than those who did not. Ms. Rotella informed that the pre-school readiness program is a developmental program. There are no Common Core State Standards for pre-school at this time.

Ms. Rufo-Pellegrino, first grade teacher, stated that the students show potential, but there are gaps. Students get slowed down when they have to think about letter sounds and then stop and think about how to form the letter.

Mr. Rossi stated a concern that as the Common Core Standards get more rigorous, first grade teachers are going to have a harder time playing catch up.

Mrs. Trivella complimented the kindergarten and first grade teachers on their hard work and efforts. She asked if the pre-school and kindergarten align with each other. Ms. Rotella informed that yes they do.

Dr. Berry stated while there is no question that Common Core Standards are more rigorous and the length of time is a factor, the number of disadvantaged students is rising. Currently, 37% of elementary students receive free or reduced lunch. This is a factor to consider when students are starting school at a lower level of performance.

Ms. Rotella stated that both kindergarten and first grade teachers were to be commended for their outstanding efforts and dedication. Due to time constraints, there is not enough time for student to practice their skills and therefore they fall behind.

Mrs. Lyons questioned the accuracy of the assessments. If the students are catching up by second grade then maybe the assessment is pushing the students and not giving them a chance to mature on their own.

Dr. Berry commented on her visit to schools in Finland and stated that Finland has an outstanding record of student achievement. There is no testing done until students are 10 years of age, and have had time to mature and develop. In this country, emphasis is placed on assessments and measurements at every grade level.

Mrs. Johnson stated that she appreciated the report, and feels that sometimes a child needs to be a child, and are developmentally not ready when the assessments are given.

Ms. Rotella commented that a compromise could be to offer a full day program for students who need it and some half-day programs as well.

Ms. Rufo-Pellegrino stated that if the kindergarten program was full day, it would allow the teachers to slow down and promote developmental readiness.

Ms. Schwab asked if there have been any comparisons done with other districts that offer a full day kindergarten. There was a comparison done about two years ago with schools in Northeastern Connecticut.

b. Middle School Principal

The report was presented. Mrs. Trivella asked a question about high school shadowing. Dr. Berry stated that she will speak to Mr. Yanku about it. Something will be sent home to parents.

c. Assistant Principal

The report was presented. Mr. Rossi recognized Mr. Partyka and his efforts and dedication to the cross country team. He mentioned having a fundraiser to help with costs for new uniforms.

d. Special Education Director

- Special Education Enrollment Report

Dr. Berry presented the report.

- Special Education Article

An article on navigating special education disputes was included in the Board of Education members' packets.

e. Superintendent

- Title I (\$153,938) and Title II (\$42,342) Grant Applications

Dr. Berry stated that the grants have been written and submitted. She is confident Brooklyn will receive the grant money. The grant money is used to pay partial salaries for providing remedial reading programs.

Enrollment report was presented. Dr. Berry noted that the high school enrollment is down more than 20 students this year.

- Quinebaug Middle College – Report on October meeting – enclosed

Brooklyn is sending 15 students to Quinebaug Middle College. This year, there are nine more students than Brooklyn's allowed slots. Towns are allowed to send additional students when other towns do not use all of their allowed slots.

- Occupational Therapist Position

Dr. Berry distributed Sandy Boxall's resume for review. The contract is 35 hours per week until the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

- Financial Report / Fire Alarm System

Dr. Berry met with Mr. Ives and Mr. Kowolenko to discuss repairs needed to upgrade the fire alarm system in both buildings. Mr. Ives stated that the Board of Finance is committed to making the necessary repairs.

- 2013 – 2014 Budget

Dr. Berry reviewed the current year's budget and explained the need for additional funds in a number of accounts. The accounts of concern are:

- Account 111 – to hire a substitute for the Special Education Director who is on leave – an additional \$10,000.00;
- Account 343 – special education requirement for a nurse to help a special education student - an additional \$67,000.00;
- Accounts 561; 563A and 563B – cost of out of district tuition for new special education students – an additional \$202,929.00

Dr. Berry also commented on the decrease in the 561 account with fewer high school students enrolled this year – a reduction of \$175,000.00

7. Public Comments

A parent in the audience expressed her concern about the number of students in first grade who are at risk and receiving interventions. She feels that full day kindergarten is necessary to prepare students for first grade.

8. Committee Reports

a. Policy–

Attorney Kelley briefly went over the proposed policy changes.

Motion to accept the policy changes as proposed
(Johnson / Trivella)

Unanimous vote to accept

Mrs. Trivella stated that she hopes the mission of the Policy Committee will continue, and that the policy will eventually be in an electronic format through CABE.

b. Curriculum –

The Committee met on October 21, 2013. The staff is working on Common Core State Standards.

c. Negotiations (Local 1303 Contract) –

Mrs. Lyons stated that they will start negotiations with Local 1303 after the first of the year.

d. Capital – Meeting with Board of Finance

The committee will meet to discuss what the needs will be.

e. EastConn –

Mrs. Johnson handed out a report about family goal setting.

f. High School Relations –

Woodstock Academy's new principal is Mr. Christopher Sandford. He is well-liked and very enthusiastic. The financial audit is in order.

g. High School Study Committee –

The Committee did not meet this month. Dr. Berry and Mr. Yanku are working on gathering data on CAPT scores.

h. Recreation Committee –

There was no meeting this month. The Spooky Nights Program was a great success.

Representatives from the:

PTO – none

BEA – none

BOF – none

9. Old Business – None

10. New Business –

Mrs. Johnson thanked Ms. Gerardi-Voccio and Mrs. Trivella for their years of service on the Brooklyn Board of Education.

11. Public Comments – None

12. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 9:02 pm
(Johnson / Rossi)

Unanimous vote to accept

Respectfully Submitted

Joann M. Engel

Recording Secretary

Robert Rossi
BOE Secretary