



CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT OF NEW BRITAIN

Regular School Board Meeting Minutes from May 21, 2018 Vance Elementary School

Call to Order and Roll Call

Call to Order

Ms. Nicole Rodriguez, President of the New Britain Board Education, called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM.

Board Members Present

Ms. Catherine Cheney, Mr. Merrill Gay, Mr. Nicholas Mercier, Ms. Yvonne Muniz, Ms. Annie Parker, Ms. Nancy Rodriguez, Ms. Nicole Rodriguez, Ms. Gayle Sanders-Connolly, Ms. Violet Jiménez Sims

Board Members Absent/Excused

Mr. James Sanders Jr.

NBHS Student Representative

Ellie Lewicki

Acknowledgement

Ms. Nicole Rodriguez acknowledged that Alderman Daniel Salerno, Alderman Kristian Rosado and Alderman Richard Reyes were in attendance.

Public Participation

Michael Palin

Mr. Palin has two students enrolled in New Britain High School. He says that the present environment at New Britain High School has been rewarding for his children because of the diversity that is offered at NBHS. He is concerned that the new block scheduling will have a negative impact on the options for students. He welcomes the fact that the school district is trying to find solutions but says flexibility is needed for students who want to pursue a diverse education.

Evelyn Hudyma

Ms. Hudyma is here to speak on behalf of Ms. Vanessa Barneschi, who is being involuntarily transferred. She said that Ms. Barneschi created a supportive environment through her involvement in the classroom and the various clubs and activities she engages in with the students. Ms. Hudyma, on behalf of Ms. Barneschi, says the students are devastated to hear that she is moving. She said that this is a tactic to purposely break the bond between teacher and student. Ms. Hudyma, on behalf of Ms. Barneschi, would like to know if the district considers mental health when making these moves. Ms. Hudyma said that there is no data that is being shown when making these moves.

Tina DeAmicis

Ms. DeAmicis is a veteran teacher of over 20 years and is not afraid of change. She has been a teacher within CSDNB for two years. She says she is a victim of the recent redesign as she has been involuntary transferred from DiLoreto as an English teacher

New Britain Board of Education

Nicole Rodriguez - President | Nicholas Mercier – Vice President | Gayle Sanders-Connolly - Secretary

Catherine Cheney | Merrill Gay | Yvonne Muniz | Annie S. Parker | Nancy Rodriguez | James Sanders Jr. | Violet Jiménez Sims

to Slade Middle School as an elective advisory teacher. She said she was given the answer of “I don’t know” when asked why she was being transferred. She takes part in many activities at DiLoreto, including being the head coach of the soccer team.

Mallory Deprey

Ms. Deprey is a lifelong member of New Britain and is involved in many activities within the community. She said that for many years, it has been hard for after-school programs to gain the support of the school district. She said that after-school programs teach many valuable skills but for too long, it has been seen as a babysitting service. However, due to the vision and support of Superintendent Sarra, community programs have taken off and have made a considerable impact within the city of New Britain. Ms. Deprey said the YWCA STRIVE Program has been a program that has found much success with the superintendent’s support. She said she believes in Nancy’s vision of re-structuring and is a supporter of the school district.

Abigail Olson

Ms. Olson is a ninth grader at New Britain High School. She said that next year’s block scheduling will not work at New Britain High School. She said she came to NBHS for the opportunities that she was promised. She has taken many various courses and she has been told that next year, she can only have one elective. She said she hopes that the district can see the students’ perspective of how it is negatively impacting them.

Ivette Guerra

Ms. Guerra said she is a teacher of 24 years and has been highly involved in the Spanish Language Development Program. She was informed last week that she would be a second grade teacher at Smalley Elementary School. This made her think that her preparation to be a teacher in the ELD Program is no longer going to be put to use. She said that this transfer is not student-centered and said that we cannot expect to solve the lack of progress by randomly assigning teachers to positions that they are not a good fit for. She said decisions should be made based on matching the teachers’ strengths to the needs of the district.

Theresa Staranchak

Ms. Staranchak, president of the paraeducator union, said that she has come to the point of seeking guidance and direction regarding the district redesign. She said there are lots of rumors of what is happening to staff members. She wants to give guidance to her union but she is concerned that the paraeducators have not been part of the discussion. She would like to know why it’s so important to disregard the paraeducators and what they can bring to the table.

Maeve Maltese

Ms. Maltese is a senior at New Britain High School. She has received many benefits from being a part of the numerous electives at the high school, especially in the music department. She takes part in many activities and without them, she would not be able to be so integrated within the music community. She also said she had the opportunity to take Italian classes and she was able to become more connected to her heritage. Taking Italian at the high school has opened her up to many new opportunities. She does not support the plan for block schedule because she is a supporter of allowing students to choose numerous electives.

Nicholas Giantonio

Mr. Giantonio said that the students have recently been informed of the scheduling change at New Britain High School. As NBHS was a school that had a tremendous amount to offer, he was excited to go there. He is not happy with the block scheduling and would the Board of Education to reconsider this decision.

Margaret Keithline

Ms. Keithline, a graduate of New Britain High School, said that she is concerned about the scheduling changes at the high school. She said the opportunities she had at the high school helped prepare her for college and her success beyond high school. Ms. Keithline said that despite math and reading scores being low, there must be another way to solve the problem without taking away electives. She said electives complement each other and facilitate student success. She said that taking away electives, the best part of the day, does not feel like student-centered success.

New Britain Board of Education

Nicole Rodriguez - President | Nicholas Mercier – Vice President | Gayle Sanders-Connolly - Secretary

Catherine Cheney | Merrill Gay | Yvonne Muniz | Annie S. Parker | Nancy Rodriguez | James Sanders Jr. | Violet Jiménez Sims

Sal Escobales

Mr. Escobales, president of Local 871, said that he is not here to ‘burn down the castle’ and is here because he and the other members in attendance are not looking to hide behind their social media platforms. He said that his members love the kids and their members go above and beyond their contract. He said that the transfers, in addition to the transformation, has polarized the district and the community. Mr. Escobales said that what is happening is unprecedented and is not fully student-centered. He would like more dialogue and transparency regarding the redesign.

Nora Pasco

Ms. Pasco is a graduate of New Britain High School and is a parent of children in the schools. She said that involuntary transfers will have a negative impact on the district and academic success. She said that the loss of a job or job change is a high stress factor and it impacts everyone, even those who aren’t impacted. She said that when you take teachers out of schools, you are also taking them away from students. She said she hopes that her child’s teacher will be someone who loves teaching where they are.

Andrea Foligno

Ms. Foligno said that the district is full of many wonderful staff. As a district at the bottom of the DRG, she said change is needed to get moving in the right direction. She is hopeful that the redesign process will yield positive results throughout the district.

Beth Mazadoorian

Ms. Mazadoorian is a teacher at New Britain High School and the mother of a current and former student. She said that in addition to the strong core academic foundation, world languages and electives have helped boost that foundation to help them get a well-rounded education. She said that her girls have benefited greatly from the music department throughout the district, especially at the high school level. She hopes that future children will have the same wonderful activities.

Olga Agosto

Ms. Agosto said that she understands the reasons behind the transformation and change. She said she embraces change because she has taught in every school. At DiLoreto, she said that they have been working to develop the SLD Program. Ms. Agosto said that she believes the students in New Britain deserve the very best and she would like to know that whoever is replacing her will be someone who really knows Spanish and that can give the very best to the students. The ultimate goal is that the students need to improve and if the transformation is not done right, the quality of instruction will decline.

Audrey Geragosian

This year, Ms. Geragosian decided to move her daughter out of private schools into public schools. She said her daughter is thriving at Vance Elementary School. However, she is dismayed to hear about fundamental changes to the whole school system without a word of communication to the parents. She wonders why things are being done the way they are, including creating a makerspace and eliminating parts of the library. She wants to see transparency in terms of communication to parents so she understands what is happening.

Sheri Staranchak

Ms. Staranchak has significant concerns about the transformation of the district. She is particularly concerned about the removal of the LEAP Program. She would like the option of having a rigorous curriculum available to her child. She said that students’ needs outweigh the resources that are. She is hoping the school district considers all students when arriving at the solution to the transformation.

Michael Foran

Mr. Foran is highly committed to the change that is coming. The changes that are coming are grounded on the belief that students can do better and to have more opportunities. Mr. Foran said that this transformation will allow all students to receive enrichment opportunities and to give teachers more collaboration time. He said that we cannot continue in the same direction we are moving in. He said that we are 164 of 166 in the state and our students are not experiencing success. He said that change is difficult but continuing to do what we are doing is unacceptable.

New Britain Board of Education

Nicole Rodriguez - President | Nicholas Mercier – Vice President | Gayle Sanders-Connolly - Secretary

Catherine Cheney | Merrill Gay | Yvonne Muniz | Annie S. Parker | Nancy Rodriguez | James Sanders Jr. | Violet Jiménez Sims

Lara Bohlke

Ms. Bohlke read a statement from an anonymous student that talked about how she has been given so many opportunities at New Britain High School with the various academies. She supports the direction the district is headed in.

Marie Cataquet

Ms. Cataquet wants the Board to see the powerful impact that arts can have on the education. She is concerned about the impact that trimesters will have on the students, especially with students only getting physical education, art and music for one trimester a year. She said that staff members feel underwhelmed and underappreciated. She said that the LEAP Program has been a benefit for her son and hopes that it does not go away.

Susan Girolomoni

Ms. Girolomoni said that all of us in the New Britain School District are working tirelessly for our students but remain at the bottom. Ms. Girolomoni said that we are all working hard daily for our students but have not seen a considerable impact. She said that the New Britain Transitional Center, with the support of Ms. Sarra and other administrators has gotten on the map. With that support, student engagement has improved greatly and she is looking forward to working with Ms. Sarra and other administrators and teachers within the district to ensure a bright future.

Cate Keithline

Ms. Keithline, a senior at New Britain High School, said that the block scheduling is not in the best interest of the students. As a current senior, she said that the schedule most beneficial to her was the one she had in her first three years because of all the classes that she had the opportunity to take during her time there. She is afraid that if future students are not given the same opportunities, less students will come to NBHS and more will go to magnet schools. She hopes the decision to change the schedule at the high school will be re-considered.

Romas Bashear

Ms. Bashear, senior at New Britain High School, said that it doesn't matter if the district is ranked towards the bottom of the state - as long as the students get an education. She said that it's not fair for students to have teachers taken away from them. She said that she hopes the board will reconsider their decision to make changes throughout the district.

Sheila Foss Swanson

Ms. Swanson said that she credits the teachers in the district for the success of her students. Ms. Swanson said she made the decision to go back to CCSU to get her degree so she can become a classroom teacher and then a reading teacher. She provides small group instruction for tier three students and her lessons are individualized for students. She said that the reading teacher position has been eliminated but is concerned that it has been eliminated at the expense of STEAM and other positions.

Genny Tabor

Ms. Tabor went through the public school system and is here because she is passionate about what is being done in the district. She is concerned about the transfers that are taking place without various factors in consideration. She is also concerned about the block scheduling system at NBHS. She said she had a lot of great opportunities with the elective courses as it helped her prepare for college. She found success and had fun in high school because of the courses that were offered.

Paola Bronner

Ms. Bronner, NBHS Graduate, is concerned about the block scheduling at the high school because she was able to get so many credits via electives. She said she saved close to \$20,000 because she was able to earn those credits while at New Britain High School. If it wasn't for all the extra credits she got at high school, she would be getting out of college later. The elective options at the high school were beneficial to her.

Arelys Scali

Ms. Scali said that she is more than her certification and has been privileged to serve the students of Pulaski in the developmental guidance program at Pulaski Middle School. She was told that she was going to be involuntarily transferred into a fifth grade ELD

New Britain Board of Education

Nicole Rodriguez - President | Nicholas Mercier – Vice President | Gayle Sanders-Connolly - Secretary

Catherine Cheney | Merrill Gay | Yvonne Muniz | Annie S. Parker | Nancy Rodriguez | James Sanders Jr. | Violet Jiménez Sims

teacher. She said she admires Ms. Sarra's love for elementary school children. However, she is having trouble to see how she can be an effective teacher for her new students as she is totally unprepared.

Frank Medina Sr.

Mr. Medina says that he has had four boys who are proud graduates of New Britain High School. Mr. Medina says that Ms. Sarra has done a tremendous job for his children. However, teachers need to be at a place where they are comfortable and to uproot them and send them somewhere else is not beneficial for students like his son. He wants Central Office administrators to think twice about the teachers that are moved throughout the district.

Gabriel Bermudez

Mr. Bermudez, a freshman at New Britain High School, said he is concerned about the block scheduling proposal at New Britain High School. He has been given many opportunities already at NBHS and has started a track to earning credits for college, even as a freshman. Mr. Bermudez said he knows that Ms. Sarra is here to help and that he wants her to know that eliminating electives is not going to be beneficial for the students at the high school.

Reports

The Superintendent's Report is attached.

Presentation

Update on 2018-2019 fiscal year budget

Mr. Kevin Kane, Chief Financial Officer, gave an update on the 2018-2019 fiscal year budget.

Consent Agenda

There were no objections to pull the following items off the Consent Agenda. Therefore, these items were approved:

Operations: Approve minutes from the Regular Board of Education Meeting on May 7, 2018

Submitted by Matthew Cannata | No subcommittee review

Operations: Accept Enrollment Report

Submitted by Jeff Prokop | No subcommittee review

Partnerships: Approve grant in the amount of \$60,000 from the United Way for SEE & Xtreme summer programs

Submitted by Nancy Puglisi | No committee review

A request for funding was proposed to and awarded to the District from the United Way to support the Summer Learning Experience programs, SEE and Xtreme. The United Way awards will support the afternoon portion of the District summer school Community Based Organization programming and the Xtreme full day program. SEE programming will be provided for over 600 district students at Gaffney, Lincoln and DiLoreto schools and Xtreme will serve 160 middle school students at NBHS. Programming will begin on July 23th and end on August 10th. Students have been selected through the Department of Academics based on academic and social development needs.

The total is \$60,000 for SEE and Xtreme and the funding source is United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut.

Partnerships: Approve grant in the amount of \$2,000 from Liberty Bank for New Britain Adult Education

Submitted by Tricia Putnam | No committee review

New Britain Adult Education has been awarded a \$2,000 grant from Liberty Bank Foundation for the purpose of providing up to

New Britain Board of Education

Nicole Rodriguez - President | Nicholas Mercier – Vice President | Gayle Sanders-Connolly - Secretary

Catherine Cheney | Merrill Gay | Yvonne Muniz | Annie S. Parker | Nancy Rodriguez | James Sanders Jr. | Violet Jiménez Sims

four NB Adult Ed graduates who plan to continue their education at a higher education institution. A minimum of \$500 dollars must be given to any individual student. The total is \$2,000 and the funding source is Liberty Bank Foundation.

Partnerships: Accept donation in the amount of \$500 from Mr. Paul Baylock for the NBHS Fine Arts Scholarship

Submitted by Leona Clerkin | No committee review

In support of the Fine Arts Scholarship at NBHS, Mr. Paul Baylock has graciously donated \$500.00 in order to allow our scholarship recipients to receive additional funds. This donation along with fundraising funds will award each recipient a \$500.00 scholarship this year. This is an increase of \$300 per student for an award this year. The total is 500.00 and the funding source is fundraising.

Academics: Approve bid waiver and purchase order for student agendas

Submitted by Amy Anderson | No committee review

Board Policy 3324.0 (Bids, Quotations and Purchase Orders), requires Board approval for purchase orders in excess of \$15,000. The policy also requires any purchases over \$7,500 to go out to bid, when necessary.

CSDNB provides student agendas for all students. This purchase order contains the total cost for all student agendas for students in grades 3-8. The student agenda is an organizational tool for students to use to record their homework, assignments or projects. It is also an excellent communication tool for parents to help their students stay on track and be successful.

In partnership with family and community, CSDNB works to provide the best personalized and comprehensive whole-child education so our students will be prepared for, and positively contribute to, a profoundly different future. This purchase is directly aligned to our goals in the academic pillar: We prepare all students to be future-ready through an engaging, personalized, and comprehensive education.

Planning, prioritizing, task initiation and time management are critical to academic success. Student agendas assist students with mastering these important life skills and habits of mind.

The total is \$17,429.50 and the funding source is Title 1 2011-969-10001-53401.

Academics: Approve bid waiver for student name badges

Submitted by Lara Bohlke | No committee review

Students are required to wear name badges at the K-12 level. This is not only a safety issue, but also facilitates the ability of all school and district personnel to identify students and refer to them by name. We know the essential nature of relationships between students and the adults in our schools responsible for their learning. Having all students wear name tags allows for the teachers to get to know students more quickly and allows more adults in the building to identify them. At the K-8 level, students are supplied with a name tag, but need a durable badge holder to allow the name tag to attach to clothing and assist in making the badge last longer.

The student badges for both elementary and middle are to be charged to the Alliance grant (2341-969-10001-56110) and the total for the order is \$12,753. We are ordering them from IDVille Photo Identification Systems & Accessories. They gave us the best price.

The total is \$12,753.00 and the funding source is Alliance grant 2341-969-10001-56110.

Academics: Approve bid waiver for chromebooks to be used by English Learners

Submitted by Damaris Lopez | No committee review

This purchase assists in achieving the goal of preparing all students to be future-ready through an engaging, personalized and comprehensive education. The chromebooks are being purchased to be used specifically by English Learners. This touch screen technology will provide great assistance to these immigrants.

New Britain Board of Education

Nicole Rodriguez - President | Nicholas Mercier – Vice President | Gayle Sanders-Connolly - Secretary

Catherine Cheney | Merrill Gay | Yvonne Muniz | Annie S. Parker | Nancy Rodriguez | James Sanders Jr. | Violet Jiménez Sims

The total is \$11,589.40 and the funding source is Immigrant and Education Grant 2060-969-1000-000-002-56114.

New Business

Personnel: Approve Personnel Transactions

Submitted by Shuana Tucker | No subcommittee review

Mr. Mercier motioned to accept the personnel transactions as listed, seconded by Ms. Sanders-Connolly. Motion carried unanimously.

Personnel: Approve bid waiver for Engaging Schools to provide professional dev. for PK-12 administrators

Submitted by Nicole Sanders | No committee review

Mr. Mercier motioned to postpone this item to the next regular meeting, seconded by Ms. Sanders-Connolly. Motion carried unanimously.

Academics: Approve bid waiver and purchase order for Engaging Schools to audit DiLoreto School

Submitted by Nicole Sanders | No committee review

Mr. Mercier motioned to postpone this item indefinitely, seconded by Ms. Sims. Motion carried unanimously.

Operations: Approve bid waiver and purchase order for workstations in middle school culinary classrooms

Submitted by Ray Moore | No committee review

Ms. Sims motioned to approve the bid waiver and purchase order for workstations in middle school culinary classrooms, seconded by Ms. Nancy Rodriguez.

The District is in the process of reconstructing four (4) middle school culinary arts classrooms - 2 at Pulaski Middle School and 2 at Slade Middle School. Each classroom shall have 4 work stations. We will create a total of 16 student workstations in 4 classrooms. The stainless steel countertops have a lead time of 12 weeks. The work stations must be ordered immediately in order to have the classrooms ready for the opening of school at the end of August 2018. Facilities is requesting a bid waiver in order to expedite the ordering of this equipment.

We received two quotes. The lowest quote was received from The Warehouse Restaurant Supply Store, Waterbury, Connecticut in the amount of \$159,000.00. The total is \$159,000.00 and the funding source is Local Funds 101093126000 54300.

Motion carried unanimously.

Finance: Approve 2% ECS Set-Aside Grant Budget and Narrative

Submitted by Kevin Kane | No committee review

Ms. Sanders-Connolly motioned to approve the 2% ECS Set-Aside Grant Budget and Narrative, seconded by Ms. Cheney.

Mr. Kevin Kane, Chief Financial Officer, is recommending that the Board take immediate action (approve) to apply for a maximum of up to 2 percent ECS grant set-aside Award. With Board approval, this will be the 9th consecutive year the District has received the 2 percent ECS grant set-aside Award. The approximate amount is \$1,478,586. This money is being entirely used to provide all day kindergarten. Without this grant we would not be able to have universal kindergarten. We have 41 all-day kindergarten classrooms now.

New Britain Board of Education

Nicole Rodriguez - President | Nicholas Mercier – Vice President | Gayle Sanders-Connolly - Secretary

Catherine Cheney | Merrill Gay | Yvonne Muniz | Annie S. Parker | Nancy Rodriguez | James Sanders Jr. | Violet Jiménez Sims

Motion carried unanimously.

Personnel: Update on personnel matters

Submitted by Nancy Sarra | No committee review

Ms. Sanders-Connolly motioned to go into executive session at 8:54 PM to receive an update on personnel matters, seconded by Mr. Mercier. Ms. Nancy Sarra (Superintendent), Dr. Shuana Tucker (Chief Talent Officer), and Dr. Nicole Sanders (Assistant Chief Talent Officer) were invited into executive session. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting resumed at 9:30 PM.

Closing and Adjournment

Ms. Sanders-Connolly motioned to adjourn at 9:30 PM, seconded by Mr. Mercier. Motion carried unanimously.