

The Board of Education Town of Vernon

30 Park Street – PO Box 600
Vernon, Connecticut 06066

Anne Fischer, Chairperson
Mark Kalina, Vice Chairperson
Stephen Linton, Secretary
Patricia Buxton, Treasurer
Michele Arn
Kevin Brown
Latasha Hyatt
Deborah Rodriguez
Mason Thrall

October 26, 2020

APPROVED MINUTES BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

A meeting of the Vernon Board of Education was held via Zoom Webinar and in person on Monday, October 26, 2020.

Roll call was taken at 7:05 p.m. BOE members present in person: Mrs. Fischer, Mr. Linton, Dr. Buxton, Mr. Brown, Ms. Hyatt, Mrs. Rodriguez, and Mr. Thrall. Mr. Kalina was absent. Ms. Arn attended via ZOOM Meeting.

Chairperson Fischer called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

Student Representative Allison Blume was present.

Administration present in person: Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary, Assistant Superintendent Robert Testa, Director of Business and Finance Angela Wang

1.0 Recognitions and Presentations

1.1 Recognition of Rockville High School as a “Special Olympics Unified Champion School” (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Rockville High School Unified Sports Coach Joseph Prignano shared with the Board that the Special Olympics in Connecticut has announced that Rockville High School, a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, is receiving *national banner recognition* for its efforts to provide inclusive sports and activities for students with and without disabilities. Rockville High School is receiving this honor as a result of meeting national standards of excellence in the areas of inclusion, advocacy and respect. The program is aimed at promoting social inclusion through intentionally planned and implemented activities affecting systems-wide change and to create sports, classroom and school climates of acceptance. There are 12 standards that must be adhered to for renewal. Coach Prignano is thankful to the Board, the Superintendent, the principal, staff, parents and team members for making this work. He shared that their big bowling event that they hold twice a year (December and April) at Spare Time brings together over 100 participants from other schools around the state. Unfortunately, the event in December this year has been

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cancelled. Coach Prignano also noted that on Wednesday the CIAC will be presenting the “Michael’s Cup” award and banner to Rockville High School Unified Sports. The Michael’s Cup Award is the Special Olympics' top honor for outstanding high school Unified Sports programs.

2.0 Consent Agenda

2.1

- (a) Approval of the Board of Education Facilities Committee Meeting held on October 19, 2020
- (b) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on October 13, 2020
- (c) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Finance Committee Meeting held on October 13, 2020
- (d) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Policy Committee Meeting held on October 7, 2020
- (e) Approval of Revised Board Policy #9030 – Communications
- (f) Approval of Revised Board Policy #9121 – Election of Officers

Mrs. Fischer pulled Consent Agenda Item #2.1(b).

MOTION: Mrs. Rodriguez moved to approve Consent Agenda Items #2.1(a), (c), (d), (e), and (f).

SECOND: Dr. Buxton

VOTE: Unanimous

Mrs. Fischer noted the following corrections to Consent Agenda Item #2.1(b);

- Page 5 of the October 13, 2020 minutes, 3rd paragraph, second sentence reads: *“Today is the first day of stidemts5...”* and it should read: *“Today is the first day of students...”*
- Page 5 of the October 13, 2020 minutes, 6th paragraph, first line reads: *“..it is still be...”* and it should read *“...it is still being...”*

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- Page 6 of the October 13, 2020 minutes, 2nd paragraph, first sentence reads *“With regard to the high school science lab for students for virtual learners, that is a problem.”* It should read *“With regard to the high school science lab for in-person learners, that is a problem.”*

MOTION: Mr. Linton moved to approve Consent Agenda Item #2.1(b) as amended.
SECOND: Mrs. Rodriguez
VOTE: Unanimous

3.0 Secretary’s Report

3.1 Opportunity for Board of Education to add/delete urgent agenda items

No agenda items were added or deleted.

3.2 Rockville High School Student Representative Report

Student Representative Allison Blume reported the following:

- 7th grade student Tommy Glinski is collecting socks for “Socktober”. The high school is participating in this.
- On 10/28 there is a virtual leadership conference. The application fee has been waived so students can attend for free. Class officers, peer advocates, and anyone who has expressed interest or teachers who thought students would be a fit can attend. The conference talks about how to be a better leader, how to help kids emotionally and mentally, and ways to take on leadership roles. There may be 20 or so students attending.
- Sports are going well, state tournaments are not occurring this fall. Senior nights were held this past week.
- On 11/3 there will be no school. It is a PD day and it’s also Election Day.
- The National Honor Society Induction is taking place on 11/11 at 7 p.m.
- Winter sports begin on 11/21.
-

Dr. Macary noted that he will be meeting with the new junior Board of Education Student Representative James Wheeler this week.

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4.0 Community Forum

Opportunity for comments on agenda items, potential future agenda items, or general information provided to the Board from citizens and community organizations (limited to 15 minutes)

No one addressed the Board.

5.0 Personnel

5.1 Board of Education Self-Evaluation (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3) (Executive Session Anticipated)

This item was moved to the end of the meeting.

6.0 Teaching and Learning

6.1 School Improvement Plans – Elementary Schools (Grades K-5) (BOE Goal #2)

Assistant Superintendent Robert Testa, Center Road School Principal Jennifer Miller, Lake Street School Principal Tracy Duenzl, Maple Street School Principal Joshua Egan, Northeast School Principal Brenda Greene, and Skinner Road School Principal Bryan Kerachsky shared with the Board the School Improvement Plans for the elementary schools. Each plan includes three goals and additional plans that align to the mission, blueprint, vision and core goals. Principals highlighted and shared their priorities, goals, strategies, and data.

CENTER ROAD SCHOOL:

Goal 1: Rigorous Curriculum (Reading and Math)/Increase reading and math achievement for all students

Strategies: Gradual release of responsibility model of instruction; SRBI

Goal 2: Develop a positive school climate/culture so that student success will flourish

Strategies: Equity PD; Trauma informed practices

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Goal 3: Family Engagement and Partnerships/Engage families to build positive relationships that support learning and the development of the whole child.

Strategies: Seesaw; touchpoints; home reading engagement strategies

LAKE STREET SCHOOL:

Goal 1: Rigorous Curriculum (Reading/Math)/All students will make a year's growth in reading and math over the 2020-21 academic year, as measured by formative and unit assessments.

Strategies:

Reading - All teachers will enhance their ability to collect and use informal data to support differentiated instruction; all teachers will enhance their ability to provide instruction on tier II vocabulary through read alouds.

Strategies:

Math - Teachers will engage in district wide PLCs to align targeted instruction on prioritized standards; all teachers will enhance their mathematical instruction to promote mathematical practices.

Goal 2: School Climate/Culture/Develop a positive school climate/culture so that student success will flourish.

Strategies: Implement action plans on identified areas of focus to develop trauma sensitive practices; identify and implement a progress monitoring tool for trauma sensitive practices; weekly meetings with school psychologist and school social worker to develop responsive plans for students with one or more ODR.

Goal 3: Family Engagement/Engage families to build positive relationships that support equity, learning and the development of the whole child.

Strategies: Conduct an equity audit; engage in a book study on equity; celebrate our school's diversity

MAPLE STREET SCHOOL

Goal 1: Rigorous Curriculum (Reading/Math)/Increase English Language Arts and Math achievement for all students

Strategies: The staff will engage in job-embedded professional development focused on the structures and methodology of the writing workshop. The staff will engage in professional learning committees where teachers analyze student assessment data, both

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formal and informal, to plan explicitly goal oriented individualized conference sessions for writing workshop. The staff will engage in PL committees where teachers analyze student work an learning progressions for the purpose of calibration. The staff will engage in job embedded PD focused on productive struggle and higher order thinking questions to enable discovery learning through mathematics.

Goal 2: School Climate/Culture/To embed trauma-sensitive approaches into the school climate and daily operations in order to create educational conditions where all students, including students affected by trauma, feel like they belong and can succeed.

Strategies: Develop a climate team subcommittee to engage in more indepth professional development on trauma; survey staff to assess current practice in order to develop and implement a school-wide action plan to support staff development related to trauma and the use of trauma-sensitive practices. All grade levels will implement the Tier I Second Step social emotional program in connection with the Zones of Regulation for teaching and modeling social and emotional skills into classroom structures. Weekly meetings with psychologist and social worker to develop responsive plans for students with 2 or more ODRs.

Goal 3 – Family Engagement/Engage students, staff and families to build positive relationships that support learning and the development of the whole child (in-person and virtually).

Strategies: Teachers will implement SeeSaw/Google Classroom in order to inform families on current classroom events/activities, Ask Me Abouts, and to showcase student learning; create an environment that honors the cultural norms and experiences of students and families; work collaboratively with families who have a student identified as chronically absent or truant in order to establish supports; engage in a book study on equity.

NORTHEAST SCHOOL

Goal 1 – Student Interventions, Professional Learning, Learning Task/All students in Grades 1-5 will reach their growth target in Reading and Math on the Spring 2020 i-Ready assessment.

Strategies: Math interventionist and reading teachers will use i-Ready and unit assessment results to implement Tier II instruction for students during intensive support. Establish and maintain learning environments that are physically and emotionally safe that enable all

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students to actively participate and take risks in their thinking. Provide daily opportunities for explaining thinking in writing across the content areas. Incorporate number talks in the K-2 classrooms.

Goal 2: School Climate/Increase the percentage of favorable responses to target questions on the 2020-2021 student, teacher and support staff survey.

Strategies: Throughout the year staff will identify 1-2 strategies to create a systematic approach to assist student in developing coping strategies; a check-in and check-out with students each day. Instructional leadership team members will conduct weekly meetings with teachers to discuss student progress on interventions. The special education teaching staff will meet with paraeducators bi-monthly to review support expectations. Staff will be trained on trauma/SEL strategies and equity education.

Goal 3: Family Engagement, Professional Learning/Build and improve relationships and partnerships with family and community as measured by the Spring 2020-21 Family School Relationship survey.

Strategies: Staff will arrange periodic celebrations to recognize student successes and to encourage positive relationships with the community. Staff and students will publish a monthly video newsletter. The family engagement committee will work with district, SGC and NES community to increase parent engagement and learning at home. Staff will conduct home visits throughout the year.

SKINNER ROAD SCHOOL

Goal 1: Student interventions, professional learning, learning tasks

Skinner Road School will have a 10% increase on the SBAC system IABs in reading and math according to pre and post assessment data.

Strategies: students will receive high quality tier 1 instruction through the workshop delivery model. Students will receive high quality small group instruction.

Goal 2: School Climate, student interventions/Skinner Road School will focus on the community's social-emotional approach to each day and will increase their survey numbers by 15% based on survey questions related to SEL.

Strategies: Opportunities for staff to engage in social emotional wellness activities. Work with Viana Tucios-Cotto to integrate trauma informed/SEL practices to support our students.

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Goal 3: Family engagement, professional learning/Engage students, staff and families to build positive relationships that support equity, learning and the whole child. In 2020-21, Skinner road School will drop our chronic absenteeism below 10% for the 2020-2021 school year.

Strategies: Teachers and staff will utilize technology to connect with families while using their home visit training to support these discussions. Through our Chronic Absenteeism Team we will meet with families to work in partnership. In collaboration with RE-Center, our teachers will be able to work with staff on practices that support and promote equity.

Board members discussed and asked questions regarding each of the School Improvement Plans.

6.2 Review of Upcoming Professional Development Day (BOE Goal #2)

Assistant Superintendent Mr. Robert Testa shared the schedule of the upcoming Professional Development Day on November 3, 2020. He noted that the sessions are focused on three needs:

1. Educational Equity in Opportunities for Learning
2. Trauma Informed Instruction
3. Teaching & Learning in a Blended/Hybrid Learning Environment

The district has partnered with RE-Center and is continuing work on revising curriculum and introducing teacher resources. We received positive feedback for the teachers to self-select so we are following a similar format to the last professional development. Our teachers have demonstrated resilience. Today Mr. Testa met with the Professional Development Committee and finalized the calendar and feedback form. They are looking forward to next week's sessions. The majority of the sessions will be held via Zoom. There will be a few sessions that are in person, but only with 7 – 8 persons physically attending. The facilities will be open on that day to the public for voting, but each school has a plan in place for social distancing and separate restrooms for staff. Sign-up sheets are being sent out tomorrow and the sessions will be balanced like they have been in the past.

6.3 Update on the Vernon Re-Opening Plan (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

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Superintendent Dr. Macary shared that every meeting is opened by a COVID discussion. Tomorrow is the 40th day of school and we have had five (5) confirmed cases so far. In his own home town district, they have had three (3) cases. We are faring very well in Vernon. Dr. Macary was talking with the Health Department and the State Epidemiologist and besides home, the safest place to be is in the schools due to mitigation. There is minimal or no cases related to schools. Mitigation is working well. The biggest issues are large family gatherings and youth sports. That's where the transmission is happening. Dr. Macary shared with the Governor's Office and the State Department of Education that those are the two main areas. Last Monday Dr. Macary sent an email to families explaining contact tracing. Basically what is happening if you have contact of 15 minutes or more with a person – you are a close contact. We are ensuring that we are not together for more than 15 minutes. It was also noted that all positive cases are reported through the health district and families are also reporting cases to the nurses' offices.

Board members held a discussion and some concerns were brought up regarding some of the buildings being used as polling places and allowing the public into the buildings. Dr. Macary shared that additional custodians have been placed at those polling places and they will be treating and deep cleaning the high touch places. Polling places are being held in the gym or cafeteria. There should not be close contact with any staff members.

7.0 General Business

7.1 Alliance District Facilities Grant Submission (BOE Goal #3)

Assistant Superintendent Robert Testa shared information regarding the “General Improvements to Alliance Districts’ School Buildings Grant Program”. The grant amount is for \$477,000.00. This is state funding targeted for the types of repair, replacement and other general improvements not covered by existing school construction grant programs. Funding will be used for Center Road School (parking lot and HVAC), Northeast School (parking lot and HVAC) and Vernon Center Middle School (refrigerators). The Board was asked to approve the request.

MOTION: Mr. Linton moved to approve the grant request for “General Improvements to Alliance Districts’ School Buildings Grant Program.

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SECOND: Mr. Thrall
VOTE: Unanimous

7.2 Rapid Response Fund Grant Submission (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Assistant Superintendent Robert Testa shared information regarding the “Rapid Response Fund Grant”. This grant amount is for \$30,000 for use in championing efforts to prioritize community goals that challenge racial inequities and advance excellent, student-centered public education for all New England youth. Vernon will be working with RE-Center to provide professional learning opportunities for staff to create a safe, nurturing, welcoming district. The matching amount of \$35,952 has already been budgeted through the Alliance District funding. The Board was asked to approve the request.

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved that the Board approve the request for the “Rapid Response Fund Grant”.
SECOND: Mr. Linton
VOTE: Unanimous

7.3 Approval of Board of Education Rules of Procedures (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

The Board reviewed and discussed the revised “Board of Education Rules of Procedure” at their 6 p.m. meeting. They made revisions and added the Vision of the Graduate.

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved to approve the Board of Education Rules of Procedure as reviewed and discussed.
SECOND: Mr. Thrall
VOTE: Unanimous

7.4 Board of Education Communication to Vernon Legislators regarding Special Education Funding to Magnet Schools (BOE Goal #2)

At the Board of Education Meeting on October 13, 2020, the Board members approved of Superintendent Dr. Macary drafting a letter to Vernon legislators regarding the fiscal impact on the Board of Education FY2020 budget. There is a deficit of \$213,890.04 in the

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line item for Special Education Services for Magnet Schools, while there was a 15% decrease in the total number of magnet school students. It was discovered that the established special education rates by CREC and Hartford Public Schools increased by an average of over 40% in one year. There needs to be a systemic and fair solution to resolve this issue. The Superintendents are forming a committee of five (5) members including the CREC Superintendent to address this issue. The Board reviewed and discussed the drafted letter from Superintendent Dr. Macary to Vernon Legislators.

MOTION: Mrs. Rodriguez moved that the Board approve the drafted letter from Superintendent Dr. Macary to Vernon legislators regarding special education funding for magnet schools.

SECOND: Mr. Brown

VOTE: Mrs. Rodriguez, Mr. Brown, Mr. Linton, Dr. Buxton, Ms. Hyatt, and Ms. Arn voted in favor of the motion. Mr. Thrall abstained. The motion carried.

7.5 District Leadership Theory of Action (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary reviewed the Superintendent's District Leadership Theory of Action with the Board and asked for their approval. He shared the five (5) indicators noting that re-opening of schools during COVID-19 is a critical area:

1. Re-Opening of Schools during COVID-19
2. Build Leadership Capacity & Efficacy
3. Vision of the Graduate
4. Advocate Community & Parent Outreach
5. Conduct Administrator School Visits

MOTION: Ms. Arn moved that the Board approve the Superintendent's District Leadership Theory of Action as presented.

SECOND: Ms. Hyatt

VOTE: Unanimous

7.6 Board of Education Meeting Calendar for 2021 (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

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The Board of Education reviewed the Board of Education Meeting Calendar for 2021 and were asked to approve it. A correction was noted – May 24, 2021 is not a **“Tuesday”**.

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved that the Vernon Board of Education approve the 2021 meeting calendar as presented and amended.

SECOND: Mrs. Rodriguez

VOTE: Unanimous

7.7 Reports from Board of Education Liaisons Regarding Attendance at Organization/Committee Meetings (BOE Goal #1)

Dr. Buxton reported that the Lake Street School PTO welcomed their new president. They are continuing to work on fundraising and car magnets are for sale for \$6. The pie fundraiser has been completed and pies will be distributed in the next two weeks. The Book Fair will be held on November 2nd and all funds will go towards enrichment programs. The first program was a guest speaker via Zoom with a poetry lesson.

Ms. Arn reported that she attended the ASTE Consulting Committee Meeting last week. They are electing the FFA officers. The silver lining to this year’s National Convention is that it is being held virtually and there is no fundraising needed. There will be no competitions like they usually do. They will be able to take some field trips this year. Their Open House is being held on November 10th. They have 32 families signed up. They will stagger the times and make directions one way. Overall enrollment is up 16%. They did a video on their website for recruiting and they do have students and families interested in attending the program. Holiday sales begin on December 1st. Students will be making wreaths and small decorated trees and you can order on their website. You can drive up and pick up your items. The animal barn is complete and they are waiting for fencing. They have a new composter and a new aquaponics system also. The teachers are making every effort to connect with students. They have virtual students and teacher Ashley Lanz has gone above and beyond to create recorded labs to connect the kids to the labs and programs going on.

8.0 To Review and Update Board of Education Calendar

<https://www.vernonpublicschools.org/district-information/district-calendar>

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No changes were made to the calendar. Dr. Macary noted that school will be in session on Veterans Day with activities being held. The schools will not be inviting Veterans into the buildings this year due to COVID and the safety of our Veterans. They will be, however, doing Skype and Zoom with Veterans.

9.0 Opportunity for Questions from the Press Regarding Agenda Items

There were no questions from the press.

Mr. Linton made the motion at 9:08 PM to go into Executive Session inviting the Superintendent for the purpose of performing the Board of Education's Self-Evaluation. Dr. Buxton seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:56 PM.

Mr. Linton made a motion at 9:56 PM to extend curfew until the completion of business. Ms. Hyatt seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The Board returned to Executive Session at 9:57 PM.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 10:21 PM.

Mr. Linton made the motion at 10:22 PM to adjourn. Mr. Brown seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

To view the video of the October 26, 2020 Board of Education Meeting, please go to the Vernon Public Schools website link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pw0mkI-3aOciBXLuLLzx6qouKHYo5CF3/view>

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Linton, Board Secretary