

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

September 28, 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, September 28, 2020.

Chairperson Fischer called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

Present in person when the meeting was called to order were: Ms. Hyatt, Mrs. Rodriguez, Ms. Arn, Mr. Linton, Mr. Kalina, Dr. Buxton, Mr. Thrall, and Mr. Brown.

Student Representatives present (via Zoom Meeting): Allison Blume

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 Northeast School being Named a “Blue Ribbon School” (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

The U.S. Department of Education has named Vernon’s Northeast School a 2020 National Blue Ribbon School, recognizing the hard work of students, families, teachers, staff and administrators and their success in essentially eliminating the achievement gap. The annual awards program recognizes schools for their overall academic excellence or their progress in closing the achievement gap. Northeast is being recognized for closing the achievement gap, but has actually achieved both, ranking among the top 15 percent of all schools in the state the past two years and helping all students achieve at a high level. Northeast School was among 367 schools nationwide to be honored. Dr. Macary and Mrs. Fischer congratulated the staff, students and families of Northeast School and thanked them for all their hard work to achieve such a great honor. Principal Brenda Greene shared that receiving the Blue Ribbon Award is a great honor. She is very proud and works with a great team. The school and staff are honored and humbled by it.

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2.0 Consent Agenda

2.1

- (a) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on August 24, 2020
- (b) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on September 14, 2020
- (c) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Communications Committee Meeting held on September 9, 2020
- (d) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Facilities Committee Meeting held on September 21, 2020

Mr. Kalina asked to pull Consent Agenda Item #2.1 (b).

Ms. Arn asked to pull Consent Agenda Item #2.1(c).

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

There was a motion on the table from the September 14, 2020 meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Linton moved to take September 14, 2020 Consent Agenda Item #2.1 (a) off the table.

SECOND: Mr. Kalina

VOTE: Unanimous

MOTION: Mr. Linton moved to approve amended September 14, 2020 Consent Agenda Item #2.1(a).

SECOND: Mr. Kalina

The Board reviewed and discussed the amendments as presented.

VOTE: Unanimous

Mr. Kalina asked the recorder to double check who seconded the motion on Consent Agenda Item #2.1(b), page 4 of the minutes. His name is listed and he believes he did not second the motion. The recorder will check her notes and the video and make the revision if necessary.

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MOTION: Mr. Linton moved to approve Consent Agenda Item #2.1(b).
SECOND: Dr. Buxton
VOTE: Unanimous

Ms. Arn noted that on Consent Agenda Item #2.1(c), page 2, item “h”, the word “*Nest Step*” is spelled incorrectly. It should be spelled “*Next Step*”.

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

Mrs. Fischer noted that on Consent Agenda Item #2.1(d), she is listed under “Attendees”. She should be listed as a member of the public as she is not a Board member on the Facilities Committee.

MOTION: Mr. Linton moved to approve Consent Agenda Item #2.1(d) as amended.
SECOND: Mr. Kalina
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:

- Students received a message from Mr. Magao thanking all the students and staff during these trying times.
- Students have taken their photos for the yearbook. She has ordered hers.
- The RHS School Store is open. There are many items for sale including t-shirts and sweatpants.
- The SAT Bootcamp is taking place on Saturdays.

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- Fall sports including Boys and Girls soccer, volleyball, etc. is moving forward.
- The football team is continuing to practice. The fans are limited. They are working on a virtual streaming option.
- Students that applied to the National Honor Society will be receiving their letters.
- History Day Club will have their first meeting on 10/7.

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)

Becca Torns-Barker of 30 Venetta Drive addressed the Board. She saw an email on Friday from the Superintendent where there were going to be changes to the hybrid plan. Her daughter has 14 children in her class and that is at half capacity. She doesn't see how full capacity would happen with social distancing. She noted that needs to be taken into consideration.

Mrs. Carol Hazel addressed the Board. She was wondering what learning would like for 5th grade. She noted that the hybrid model works great in middle school, but there is not enough structure in the elementary school.

Mr. Ole Hermanson addressed the Board. He would like the Board to consider the remote learners. He also echoed the same about having small classes to prevent illness. He shared that if there is a full return, he would like to see the same number of students. He also shared that the remote learners have no opportunity to participate in various opportunities.

Mr. Michael Carlo of 177 Dockeral Road in Tolland addressed the Board. He noted that 17 years ago his daughter took exams and her private information didn't fall under FERPA. His daughter answered the survey and it was sold as private information. He wants the Board to know that there are two lawsuits for College Board addressing the issues that he has had. College Board made mistakes and at that time years ago there were 5-6 million students that took the exam. He has been working with legislators and Congressman Joe Courtney. He wants the Board to know that the issues that he has today are still happening. He told the Board he would continue to be in touch with them.

Mrs. Wishart wished to address the Board but her microphone was not working.

Ms. Lisa Rischowsky addressed the Board and thanked the Board for taking her comment. Her son is doing very well with virtual program and she commends the teachers working very hard to

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make the program successful for him and the other students. Her child is thriving. Some parents may have their concerns about the virtual program but it is working well for some parents. She asked if the Board could confirm whether or not the virtual program would be effected by the changes. She also echoed the concerns of how social distancing would be maintained if classes come back to full capacity.

Chairperson Fischer noted that some of the concerns mentioned in Community Forum will be addressed in Agenda Item #6.2.

5.0 Personnel

5.1 Superintendent's Evaluation (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3) (Executive Session Anticipated)

The Board will discuss the Superintendent's Evaluation in Executive session.

This item was moved to the end of the Agenda.

6.0 Teaching and Learning

6.1 Update on Summer School Programs (BOE Goal #2)

Rockville High School Principal Mr. Jason Magao, Rockville High School Assistant Principal Ms. Allayne Sundt, and Director of VPS Summer Learning Program Mr. Michael DeBellis shared a report on the Summer School Programs – Grades K-8 and Grades 9-12.

Mike DeBellis oversaw the K-8 program and gave the Board a summary. He used the Board's suggestions last year and started meeting and planning in October/November. He sent reminders in December and sent out brochures at the end of January. They began collecting registrations in February. They wanted to give families plenty of notice. Unfortunately, March 13th and COVID-19 happened and changed everything.

This summer 113 students participated in the K-8 Vernon Virtual Summer Learning Program. This number only includes the students that were recommended and attended summer school either through the PPT process or being recommended for the program by the staff at VCMS. All classes were held virtually over Zoom daily, and included at least

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30 minutes of direct instruction per day. For the program to run effectively there were 19 teachers hired to help service our Vernon students. Of the 19 teachers, 12 of them serviced the 113 students mentioned above, and 7 of them provided enrichment opportunities for any student in Vernon.

This year the enrichment teachers were instructed that they did not need to keep track of attendance by student since it was open for any student in Vernon to access their classes during any given week. In order to access any of the enrichment classes, families had to email Mike DeBellis to get the password to enter the class. This was done as a safety measure to make sure no one from outside of the Vernon School District was able to have access into our Zoom classes. By the end of the summer there was 48 families that inquired about the password, and accessed the enrichment classes. Class sizes ranged from 3 students to as many as 14 students per Zoom session. With these numbers in consideration, it is estimated that about 160 students in total (113 + 48) accessed the Vernon Summer Learning Program this year.

One huge highlight coming from the Vernon Virtual Summer Program was the improvement in technology use with both teachers and students. One teacher, who worked with students with Autism, noted that her students made the transition of using technology primarily as a reward to using technology as a true learning tool!

The staff who was part of the Vernon Virtual Summer Learning Program did an amazing job showing creativity, flexibility, and patience during this year's program. Vernon is truly lucky to have such a talented group of educators working for our students. He also gave praise to the paraprofessionals who logged onto the computer daily to support our most needy students. In addition, he thanked Alison Jedidian, who oversaw the middle school daily operations, Melissa Iles, Melissa Ross, and Jackie Middleton for their help with our SPED students, the 9 St. Joseph's Interns that helped instruct students from all grade levels, and Karen Lipski for taking his ideas of the Summer Learning Website and making it a reality. This was truly a team effort.

Assistant Principal Allayne Sundt reported that summer school was unusual this year due to COVID. Rockville High School summer school provided the opportunity for 60+ students to recover credit in various subjects so as to be on track for graduation. These

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students were able to recover a total of 35.75 credits in a variety of core areas utilizing the online program Edgenuity. Highlights for the program included:

- 126 sections were signed up for.
- 41 RHS students earned credit.
- 19 freshmen participated.
- 5 students got back on track for graduation.

Sections and recovered credits included:

Course	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	TOTAL
Business	1			1	2
English	4	4	5	2	15
Health	1	2	4		7
Mathematics	3	5	8	2	18
Science	5	7	1	3	16
Social Studies	4	3	7		14
Total	18	21	25	8	72

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Sections					
Total Credits	9	10.5	12.25	4	35.75

Historical data for RHS student participation was shared:

- 2020 - 55 RHS Students + 8 SWHS
- 2019 - 70 RHS Students + 5 SWHS
- 2018 - 42 RHS students
- 2017 - 44 RHS students
- 2016 - 60 RHS students
- 2015 - 50 RHS students
- 2014 - 76 RHS students
- 2013 - 83 RHS students

Mrs. Sundt reviewed the learning initiatives:

- SAT Saturday Math boot camp is being run this fall.
- SAT Resource Site which includes a Google classroom with test strategy videos and practice tests for both Math and English.
<https://sites.google.com/vernonschools.org/sat-practice-tests/home>
- Math Intervention/help after school in person, and via Zoom.
- Rock Blocks to allow students to seek extra help from subject teachers.
- After school clubs are running in person or via zoom to encourage team building, positive collaboration among peers, and strengthen problem solving skills.
- A Student Equity Committee is being formed to begin the process of assessing the needs of the RHS student community. Initial meetings have taken place and student forums are scheduled.

The Board members reviewed and discussed the Summer School program.

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

Superintendent Dr. Macary gave the Board an update on the Vernon Re-Opening Plan. He shared that today students finished twenty (20) days of school. The North Central Health

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District recently visited Center Road School with him. Slowing the Spread of COVID-19 through effective mitigation strategies is the key to providing a healthy and safe learning environment for all students. The Vernon Public Schools has experienced positive results with numerous mitigation strategies over the past 5 weeks and Dr. Macary highlighted some of them:

- Face Coverings at all times for Students and Staff
- Regular hand-washing for students in bathrooms
- Reconfigured Water Fountains to avoid germs
- Sanitizing and Cleaning all tabletops and desks
- Cohorting of Students & Contact Tracing
- Twice daily cleaning of high-touch areas
- Self-monitoring for Covid-19 symptoms
- Social Distancing, maximizing where feasible
- Visual Markers and Positioning in Hallways
- No Public Entry & Limited Visitors
- Bagged Breakfast & Lunches in Cafeteria
- Enhanced Building Cleaning every day

The elementary schools will be moving back to five (5) days a week in-person learning. Virtual learning will still be an option for parents. Dr. Macary and principals will be sending out more detailed information tomorrow. The middle school and high school will be doing adjustments to their schedules. Not much will change but Rockville High School will try to decouple virtual learning from in person learning. The reason the district is moving to five (5) days a week in person learning at the elementary level is due to the learning loss, especially in grades K-3. We want to bring them back and the health district says it's OK. It's going to be difficult to cohort in middle and high school. We are trying to do this one step at a time. We will reassess in a few weeks.

Board members reviewed and discussed the community service requirements, virtual and distance learning, the cap on the number of students in classrooms, COVID and contact tracing, and average class sizes.

7.0 General Business

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7.1 Fiscal Impact on FY2020 Budget (BOE Goal #2)

Superintendent Dr. Macary gave the Board a fiscal impact analysis of the 2019-2020 Vernon Public Schools Budget, specifically in regards to Magnet School Tuition – Special Education (Object Code 55816) under the Office of Pupil Personnel.

There has been conversation at the Board and finance level regarding our current budget. Right now the current number of Vernon students in magnet school has gone down 15%. However the expense for special education has risen at magnet schools. Students attending went down but costs went up. When you look at CREC and Hartford, the billing rates increased. These numbers are alarming. Dr. Macary is dismayed that CREC and Hartford ended up being the same. It is not coincidental. They must have communicated. We have an issue and we want to know why the special education tuition rates increased. We will be looking at the numbers for this year. When you look at these numbers for Vernon this is wrong. Dr. Macary shared his disappointment. This effects every district in CT. We are obligated to pay as we are a Scheff district and students can attend magnet schools. He noted that CREC and Hartford have no comments at this time.

Board members reviewed and discussed the analysis. There was a suggestion of advocating and possibly sending a resolution to CREC and getting other districts to send a statement also.

7.2 Summer Projects Report (BOE Goal #3)

The Board of Education Facilities Committee will report on summer projects 2020.

Dr. Macary introduced Public Works Director Dwight Ryniewicz who has worked closely with Supervisor of Schools Facilities William Peluso. Together, they highlighted the following summer projects with the Board:

- VCMS Oil Tank Removal
- Lake Street School Hallway Windows and Drainage
- Lake Street School Drainage
- Maple Street School Art Room Renovation
- Center Road School Repointing

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- Northeast School Parking Lot Drainage

RHS:

- RHS Gym Floor Refinishing
- Library/Media Center Renovations
- TALC, Adult Ed, Storage reconfiguration
- School Store

ASTE:

- Bathrooms
- Fascia
- Barn
- Composter

VCMS:

- Tech Ed Room
- Auditorium PA System
- Front Office HVAC Repair

Other:

- Maple Street School and Skinner Road School Gym PA Systems
- Skinner Road School Outdoor Classroom
- Skinner Road School Safe Routes to School Radar Sign
- Skinner Road School Computer Lab Conversion
- Central Office 2nd floor renovation
- 38 Park Street IT Installation
- Districtwide Painting

COVID 19 Projects:

- Installation of plexi-glass barriers in all schools and Central Office by VPS Maintainers

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- Innovative, low-cost adaptation of existing water coolers to bottle filler functionality by VPS Maintainer. Also disabling of all existing traditional water coolers.
- Purchasing, distribution, and use instruction of hand sanitizers, disinfectants, masks, shields, and cleaning protocols
- Purchase of connex boxes for furniture storage
- Installation of four new bottle filler water coolers donated by CT Water
- Evaluation of HVAC systems district wide to meet ventilation mandates
- Replacement of over numerous exhaust fans to meet ventilation standards by VPS Maintainers
- DPW Sign Shop produced all bottle filler, A/B, and M/T—Th/F stickers
- Cleaned all buildings

Board members reviewed and discussed the summer projects. Dr. Macary and Mrs. Fischer thanked Mr. Peluso and Mr. Ryniewicz for their work on the summer projects.

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

The Board of Education liaisons will report on their attendance at any meetings that were held recently.

Mrs. Rodriguez reported that she didn't have a chance to go to the Northeast School PTO Meeting but talked to the president. The school is excited about being awarded the Blue Ribbon. The students have been painting rocks and the PTO will be doing some virtual events this year. The PTO is excited about doing only one fundraiser this year – "RAISE CRAZE" by doing acts of kindness. The fundraiser will run for three weeks and is done school-wide and by grade levels. The students send out the different things they are going to do. The third week is a food drive and then the items will be donated locally to HVCC. The students are really excited about doing acts of kindness such as cleaning, raking, etc. People send in donations. It's an awesome idea. Also, this year instead of having a luncheon for the staff the PTO stocked the staff room with snacks, juices, etc. The PTO also noted that the National Recognition for Blue Ribbon Schools is in November.

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Mr. Brown noted that similar to Northeast School, Center Road School is trying to engage families virtually. One of their recent events was the drive through ice cream social. It was well attended. One car had 13 occupants! They are looking forward to holding more events in a virtual fashion.

Dr. Buxton was not able to attend the virtual Lake Street School PTO Meeting on September 16th. The PTO thanked Mike Ferguson for his service as President. There was a shout out to Shannon Perez who will take over. The PTO will be meeting virtually once a month on a Thursday. They recently held a drive through KONA ice event on September 22nd.

Mr. Kalina attended the Vernon Center Middle School PTO virtually. There were many that attended - easily 5 times the usual number attending. There was a lot of volunteer spirit. There were concerns about fundraising in a challenging environment. They have moved to meeting once a month. They are a lot more active this year and there is a lot of enthusiasm. They look forward to a bright future.

8.0 To Review and Update Board of Education Calendar

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

No changes were made to the calendar.

9.0 Opportunity for Questions from the Press Regarding Agenda Items

There were no questions from the press.

Mr. Kalina made the motion to extend curfew until the close of business at 9:14 PM. Mrs. Rodriguez seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Linton made the motion to go into Executive Session to discuss the Superintendent's Evaluation at 9:15 PM. Mr. Kalina seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 11:03 PM.

Mrs. Rodriguez made the motion to adjourn at 11:04 PM. Mr. Linton seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

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To view the video recording of the September 28, 2020 Board of Education, please use the following link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QGJEJlwKwft-CqRMX8h0EUBpISo6v-09/view> or visit our website at: <https://www.vernonpublicschools.org/board-of-education/meetings-broadcasts>

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Linton, Board Secretary