

The Board of Education

Town of Vernon

30 Park Street – PO Box 600
Vernon, Connecticut 06066

Paul Grabowski, Chair
Kristiana Wintress, Vice Chair
Karen Colt, Secretary
Anthony Bedlack
Patricia Buxton
Susan Jablonecki
Kriste Nucci
Simone Sewell
Mason Thrall

December 11, 2023

APPROVED MINUTES BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING

A meeting of the Vernon Board of Education was held in-person and via Zoom Webinar at the Administration Building on Monday, December 11, 2023.

Roll call was taken at 7:00 p.m.

There was a quorum. Board members present: Mr. Grabowski, Ms. Wintress, Ms. Colt, Mr. Bedlack, Dr. Buxton, Mrs. Jablonecki, Ms. Nucci, Ms. Sewell and Mr. Thrall.

Student Representatives present: My-Ngoc Lai-Huyen and Aedan Ruddock.

Administration present: Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary, Assistant Superintendent Mr. Robert Testa and Director of Business and Finance Mr. William Meier III.

2.0 Call to Order

Board Chair Mr. Grabowski called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

3.0 Pledge of Allegiance

4.0 Recognitions and Presentations

4.1 Presentation from State Senator Jeffrey Gordon (BOE Goal #1)

State Senator Jeffrey Gordon, along with Representative Kevin Brown, Representative Jamie Foster and Representative Tammy Nuccio, were present this evening to honor Dr. Macary for being named Connecticut's Superintendent of the Year. They presented him with an Official State Citation from the Connecticut General Assembly, noting his outstanding commitment to the students of Vernon. The delegation also congratulated the Board of Education for being named a "Board of Distinction" for the eighth year. Dr. Macary thanked the delegation for this special honor and said he would not have been Superintendent of the Year if it were not for the students, their families, the Board, the teachers and Administration. The entire school community played an important role in his

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receiving this award and he is most grateful to be the Superintendent of Vernon Public Schools.

4.2 Recognition of Elementary School Art Student's Exhibits at Central Office (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Board Chair Mr. Grabowski announced that we will be honoring the Elementary Art students present this evening for their art displays that are currently adorning the walls of the third floor lobby in Central Office. Art teachers from each elementary school were also in attendance to present certificates of achievement to their students. The following students were honored this evening:

Rian Coma
Liam Virkler
Ivory Huot
Olivia Boudreau
London Martinez
Khloe Cruz
Addilyn Hakian
Hussain Chaudhry
Roxie Farrell
Evers White
Erickson Fronczek
Asia Ouellette

4.3 Presentation by Rockville High School's Culinary Arts Students (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Chef Amy Lessard, Culinary Arts Teacher at Rockville High School, introduced two of her students from the program and asked them to pass out a special treat that the students made for the Board members. She then spoke about the Culinary Arts program and all that it offers to the students, including the Thanksgiving Bread Making Fundraiser, of which all proceeds go to assist families in need in the community. The students then spoke of how much they love the program and how it has taught them life skills that they would never have known had they not taken this class. They encourage all incoming Freshmen to take the class; they said they love the class and it's a lot of fun!

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4.4 Fall Sports Season Report (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Athletic Director Jeff Farrell gave a presentation to the Board regarding the 2023 Fall Sports Season. At Vernon Center Middle School, 20 girls and 23 boys participated in Soccer and 34 students took part in Cross Country. It was a successful season and all participants improved. Rockville High School had 257 student athletes take part in the following sports; Soccer, Unified Sports, Cheerleading, Football, Cross Country, Volleyball, E-Sports, Swimming and Field Hockey. Their overall academic average was 89 (B+) in quarter 1. The Student Athletic Leadership Team (SALT) expanded to 30 members this year and attended a leadership conference at SCSU as well as a CIAC Sportsmanship Conference. They are planning an Officials Appreciation for the winter. All in all, the students had a great Fall Sports Season and are now on to Winter Sports.

5.0 Secretary's Report

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

No agenda items were added.

5.2 Rockville High School Student Representative Report

My-Ngoc Lai-Huyen reported the following:

- 36% of the Senior class has applied to a post-secondary program and decisions are starting to be received by students
- The RHS School Store sale to support Mr. RHS was a big success. For updated information, you can follow their Instagram @RHS.SHOPTHEROCK

Aedan Rudock reported the following:

- Winter sports start their seasons this week
- Progress reports come out on Wednesday, December 13th

6.0 Community Forum

Opportunity for comments on agenda items, potential future agenda items, or general information provided to the Board from citizens and community organizations (Individual speakers shall be

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limited to five minutes and the total time for public forum shall be limited to 15 minutes.)

No one addressed the Board.

7.0 Consent Agenda

7.1 Consent Agenda

(a) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on
November 27, 2023

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved to approve Consent Agenda Item 7.1(a)
SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki
VOTE: Unanimous

8.0 Personnel

8.1 Leave of Absence Request (BOE Goal #2) (Executive Session Anticipated)

This item was moved to the end of the meeting.

8.2 Leave of Absence Request (BOE Goal #2) (Executive Session Anticipated)

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9.0 Teaching and Learning

9.1 District Profile and Performance Report (BOE Goal #2)

Mr. Testa presented the District Profile and Performance Report for school year 2022-2023 to the Board. He reviewed the data on each page of the 8 page report, including student enrollment and chronic absenteeism, educator statistics, instruction and resources and

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performance and accountability. There were no significant changes in enrollment. 18.5% of Vernon's student population has been identified as Special Education students. Mr. Testa noted that we are not pleased with our chronic absenteeism rate of 18% and are making efforts district wide to reduce the numbers. We hope to increase the diversity of our teaching staff. We did have 3 participants start in our Teacher Residency program over the last three years; only one has completed the program. Special Education students spend 80% or greater of their time with non-disabled peers. The district per pupil cost is currently \$18,050 whereas the State's per pupil cost is \$20,165. Special Education costs take up 22% of our total budget whereas the State's Special Education costs take up 24.9% of their total budget. We utilize grants, State funding and local funding to invest in our students. Students in sub groups in ELA, Math and Science made positive growth in the past year. Vernon Public Schools outperformed the State average in 18 out of 23 Accountability Index indicators.

10.0 General Business

10.1 2023-24 Enrollment Projection Report from NESDEC (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary reviewed the 2023-2024 Enrollment Projection Report from NESDEC with the Board. He noted 3 takeaways from the report:

1. We have stable enrollment in Vernon – both historical and projected
2. There are certain fluctuations in the percentages:
 - a. Lower K-5 students
 - b. Stable in 6-8 students
 - c. Higher in 9-12 students (due to ASTE and VoAg program popularity)
3. This report is grounded in birthrates. It *does not* take into account the new Kindergarten entry age ruling. The state's student rate is projected to decrease by 6.5%; the number in Vernon is projected to decrease by 3.3%.

This report is very important as it is used to plan for facility needs, projection and our school budget.

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10.2 CAPSS Alliance Districts Narrative (BOE Goal #2)

Dr. Macary reviewed the CAPSS Alliance District Narrative with the Board. Vernon is one of 36 Alliance Districts who service 44% of the students in Connecticut. Alliance District students include more than 64% of CT's students of color, 66% of CT's low-income students and 77% of CT's English Learners. When Alliance Districts are put together with Non-Alliance Districts, the State of Connecticut spends one billion dollars *less* annually on students in Alliance Districts. Alliance Districts are seeing growth in graduation rates, ELA SBAC rates and improvement in chronic absenteeism rates. However, per pupil expenditure is less.

10.3 Creation of an Ad Hoc Committee on Legal Services (BOE Goal #2)

Mr. Grabowski announced that our Board Attorney has submitted his retirement letter. We put out an RFP for Legal Services and received 5 bids. The proposals are rather lengthy and we have a short window of time to review them. After speaking with Dr. Macary, it was thought that an Ad Hoc Committee should be created to interview each law firm during two afternoons in January from 3 – 5 PM. The new firm would handle items such as expulsions and policy. Mr. Grabowski asked if any Board members would be interested in serving on the Ad Hoc Committee; Mr. Thrall said he would be interested. Mr. Grabowski asked the remaining Board members to reach out to him should they be interested.

10.4 Approval of a Revision to the Board of Education Meeting Calendar for 2024 (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary mentioned that a technicality was discovered regarding submitting the Board Meeting Calendar to the Secretary of the State. When submitting, the calendar must also include all Board meetings in January of the following year per CT State Statute Section § 1-225. If not included, they must be labeled as a "Special Meeting". Since our Board meeting calendars have always listed meetings from January through December of a given year, we are asking that the Board approve the revised meeting calendar for 2024, which now includes the Board meeting for January 2025. This will keep us in compliance with the State statute going forward. As a result of this discovery, our January 8, 2024 meeting

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will now need to be labeled as a “Special Meeting” since it was not included in last year’s submission.

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved to approve the revised Board of Education Meeting Calendar for 2024, which now includes the January 2025 meeting.
SECOND: Ms. Nucci
VOTE: Unanimous

Board Chair Mr. Paul Grabowski asked for a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss agenda items 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3, inviting Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary and Assistant Superintendent Mr. Bob Testa.

MOTION: Mr. Thrall made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:00 PM to discuss agenda items 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3, inviting Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary and Assistant Superintendent Mr. Bob Testa.
SECOND: Ms. Wintress
VOTE: Unanimous

The Board returned from Executive Session at 8:46 PM.

8.1 Leave of Absence Request (BOE Goal #2) (Executive Session Anticipated)

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved that the Board deny the request for an extended leave of absence, submitted by Leah Hill, for the reasons discussed in Executive Session, and authorize the Superintendent to inform the employee of the Board’s decision and the reason therefore.
SECOND: Mr. Thrall
VOTE: Unanimous

8.2 Leave of Absence Request (BOE Goal #2) (Executive Session Anticipated)

MOTION: Ms. Colt moved that the Board deny the request for an extended leave of absence, submitted by Julia Sullivan, for the reasons discussed in Executive

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Session, and authorize the Superintendent to inform the employee of the Board's decision and the reason therefore.

SECOND: Mr. Bedlack
VOTE: Unanimous

8.3 Leave of Absence Request (BOE Goal #2) (Executive Session Anticipated)

MOTION: Mrs. Jablonecki moved that the Board approve the request for an extended leave of absence, submitted by Amina Azeez, for the reasons discussed in Executive Session, and authorize the Superintendent to inform the employee of the Board's decision and the reason therefore.

SECOND: Ms. Nucci
VOTE: Unanimous

11.0 Review and Update Board of Education Calendar

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

No updates were made.

12.0 Opportunity for Questions from the Press Regarding Agenda Items

No one from the Press was in attendance.

13.0 Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Thrall made a motion to adjourn at 8:48 PM
SECOND: Ms. Wintress
VOTE: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Colt, Board Secretary