

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

January 8, 2024

APPROVED MINUTES

BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING

A Special meeting of the Vernon Board of Education was held in-person and via Zoom Webinar at the Administration Building on Monday, January 8, 2024.

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

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

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 7:00 p.m.

3.0 Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Grabowski called for a moment of silence in honor of the four Somers students who tragically perished in a house fire on January 2, 2024.

4.0 Recognitions and Presentations

4.1 Presentation by Northeast School Students (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Dr. Brenda Greene, Principal of Northeast School, introduced Mrs. Agata Cavar, teacher for the ESL Program at Northeast School. They have 31 students in the program who combined, speak over 20 different languages. These students come from all over the world. Mrs. Cavar spoke about the program and the methods used to teach English to the students. She then showed a video called "Journey to Northeast School: Coming to

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America” where the students spoke of the country they were from and the language they speak there. They each spoke of coming to the United States and the fears they had about leaving friends and family behind. They all expressed that they like the United States, their new school, their teacher and the friends they have made. After the video was done, the children sang a song called the “Hello Song”, and asked the Board members to join in by using props.

5.0 Secretary’s Report

5.1 Rockville High School Student Representative Report

My-Ngoc Lai-Huyen reported the following:

- 42% of the Senior Class has applied to one or more post-secondary schools. Colleges are slowly starting to release their decisions.
- The FAFSA has opened up for the 2024-2025 school year as of 12/31/2023. RHS will now be able to kick-off their FAFSA Challenge efforts with the Senior Class.

Aedan Rudock reported the following:

- Course recommendations for the 2024-2025 school year will start later this month
- Semester exams will begin on January 19th.
- Students are getting ready to finish the semester strong and teachers are getting ready for their new students this upcoming semester.

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

No one addressed the Board.

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7.0 Consent Agenda

7.1 Consent Agenda

(a) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on
December 11, 2023

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved to approve Consent Agenda Item 7.1(a)

SECOND: Ms. Colt

VOTE: Unanimous

8.0 Personnel

8.1 Certified Staff Retirements (BOE Goal #2)

Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary announced that the following Certified Staff members have submitted their intentions to retire at the end of the 2023-2024 school year:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Date of Retirement</u>
Debra Hill	Grade K, SRS	June 30, 2024
Paula Hughes	Instructional Coach, Elementary	June 30, 2024
Maureen Kearney	Reading Specialist, SRS	June 30, 2024
Victoria Nordlund	Language Arts, RHS	June 30, 2024

Dr. Macary noted that these four staff members total 100 years of teaching experience and they will be sorely missed.

8.2 Approval of MOA Between the Vernon Board of Education and the Vernon School Nurses' Association (BOE Goal #2)

Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary presented a Memorandum of Agreement Between the Vernon Board of Education and the Vernon School Nurses' Association, similar to the one presented between the Vernon Education Association and the Vernon Board of Education

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back on October 23, 2023. He is requesting that we move the current insurance payments from the September-May schedule to a 26 pay schedule over 12 months. This will eliminate the need to seek repayment from a nurse who resigns during the summer months when no insurance premiums are collected. He is also asking that the Board approve HSA payments being deposited in September and January rather than in July and January. The Nurses' Union agrees with this new schedule as well as our Insurance Broker and Administrative staff.

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved to approve the MOU between the Vernon Board of Education and the Vernon School Nurses' Association as discussed and presented.

SECOND: Dr. Buxton

VOTE: Unanimous

9.0 Teaching and Learning

9.1 District Strategic Plan Implementation Update (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Assistant Superintendent Mr. Robert Testa introduced Mrs. Laura Boutilier of Partners for Educational Leadership. Mrs. Boutilier was instrumental in working with the Vernon Public Schools to develop the District Strategic Plan 2022-2027. Mrs. Boutilier was here this evening to provide an update of the work being done to implement the plan. She went over the plan's three Strategic Priorities: "Student Success", "Family and Community Partnerships" and "System Excellence" and then showed a video as to how these priorities are being carried out in our schools. In the video, each school Principal spoke of the work being done in their buildings that shows the plan in action. They spoke of Teacher/Family relationships and the positive effect it has had on the school community. Students were also interviewed and spoke of the positive environment within their schools and how they love going to school. Vernon Public Schools has so much to be proud of; 2 Blue Ribbon Schools, 2 Schools of Distinction and Connecticut's 2024 Superintendent of the Year. In conclusion, the plan has come alive, the metrics are honest and we are meeting the goals set forth. Mrs. Boutilier wished us continued success with the plan and thanked us for allowing her to be a part of it. Dr. Macary announced that sadly, Mrs. Boutilier will be retiring and this will be her last update on the plan to the Board. He thanked her for her commitment and years of service to Vernon Public Schools.

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9.2 K-3 Reading Waiver: CSDE Memo & Summary (BOE Goal #2)

Assistant Superintendent Mr. Robert Testa reviewed the CSDE Memo and Summary regarding the K-3 Reading Waiver with the Board. He explained that we have been granted a “Transitional Waiver”, which requires our District to add and substitute specific programmatic or curriculum components. We must substitute a core program that meets expectations for fluency, vocabulary and comprehension from the list of Connecticut Approved K-3 Reading Curriculum Models or Programs. Mr. Testa then asked Melissa Trantolo, Director of Teaching and Learning, Elementary, to offer her thoughts. She explained that our curriculum is better, hands down, than the “boxed” curriculum the State wants us to utilize. She went on to explain that being #1 in Alliance Districts, having 2 Blue Ribbon Schools, 2 Schools of Distinction shows that what we are doing is working. Dr. Macary said that this decision is ridiculous; our scores speak for themselves. If we were to purchase the suggested State program, it would cost us a half-million dollars. He recommends we continue to do what we’re doing. There are other districts in the same boat, and it might be a good idea to join a class action law suit with them. We’ll talk more about this when we get closer to the compliance date of July 2025.

10.0 General Business

10.1 Approval of the Board of Education 2023-2025 Budget Priorities (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary presented 7 Budget Priorities to the Board that align the District’s Mission Statement and asked for their approval. They include the following:

- Universal Pre-K Program for 3 & 4-Year-Old
- Enhance Minority Teacher Recruitment
- Social-Emotional Supports for Secondary Students
- Innovative Family & Community Outreach Initiatives
- Summer School Program (Free) to All Students
- Teacher & Staff Recruitment and Retention Efforts
- Continue & Expand Rockville High School’s Career Pathways

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved to approve the Board of Education 2023-2025 Budget Priorities as discussed and presented.

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SECOND: Ms. Wintress
VOTE: Unanimous

10.2 Approval of the Center Road School Roof Project as Complete (BOE Goal #3)

William Meier III, Director of Business and Finance, announced that the Center Road School Roof Project is now complete and requires Board approval in order to submit closeout documentation. It has been signed off by the Architect and we have received the warranty guaranteeing the work.

MOTION: Ms. Nucci moved to approve the Center Road School Roof Project as Complete
SECOND: Ms. Colt
VOTE: Unanimous

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

Dr. Patricia Buxton, Board liaison for Skinner Road School, announced that the PTO met on December 20th. They are very active and a great group of parents. She spoke of fundraising efforts they are organizing and relayed a message to the Board, thanking them for supplying funds to cover their transportation for their Boston Trip.

Mr. Paul Grabowski, Board liaison for Center Road School, spoke of events the PTO has planned. They are a good group and are very dedicated to the school's fundraising efforts.

Dr. Macary spoke of the tragedy in Somers in which 4 children perished in a house fire. The family lived in Vernon for a time, so we will be sending a donation of food to the staff of Somers Public Schools as well as grief counselors to assist with student needs.

He also announced that Maple Street School recently celebrated their 100th Anniversary and will hold a large event in May.

The CABE – Area 3 Legislative Breakfast will take place in Somers on January 31st.

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11.0 Review and Update Board of Education Calendar

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

No updates were made.

Dr. Macary reminded the Board members of the upcoming Budget workshops set to begin on Wednesday, January 17th.

12.0 Opportunity for Questions from the Press Regarding Agenda Items

No one from the Press was in attendance.

13.0 Adjournment

MOTION: Ms. Colt made a motion to adjourn at 8:23 PM
SECOND: Ms. Wintress
VOTE: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Colt, Board Secretary