

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

November 11, 2024

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, November 11, 2024.

Roll call was taken at 7:01 PM

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

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 7:02 p.m. A moment of silence was observed in honor of all fallen Veterans.

3.0 Pledge of Allegiance

4.0 Recognitions and Presentations

4.1 Presentation by Vernon Center Middle School Students (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Mr. David Caruso, Principal of Vernon Center Middle School, introduced Art Teacher Ms. Bronner to the Board. They had an idea to expand Art offerings at VCMS and applied to the Sykes Foundation for funding for these offerings. Students are so interested in technology. By applying for and receiving the grant, they were able to offer the following additions to the department:

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- New Digital Arts Class
- Integration of Technology to the Animation Class
- Integration of more technology for the Photography Program

The students then gave a presentation to the Board, showing examples of each of these areas and spoke of how much they enjoy their Art class now that they have these tools to work with. They are thankful to the Sykes Foundation for the opportunity to expand the Art program at VCMS.

4.2 Farm to School Program Presentation (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Mrs. Elizabeth Fisher, Director of Food & Nutrition, introduced Ms. Kaylee Carlisle, Farm to School Coordinator, who works part-time in this capacity for Vernon Public Schools. The Farm to School Program was established in 2023. Through this initiative, they empower students to develop healthy eating habits by purchasing fresh food from local farms to serve in the school cafeterias throughout the District. They also strengthen nutrition education in the classrooms and increase students' food literacy and connection to the land, their environment and the community. Local produce is incorporated into recipes and menus regularly, and taste tests and promotional events are held in the cafeterias to increase nutrition education. Through the CT Grown for CT Kids Grant, there is a "Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program" at Skinner Road School where fresh, raw produce is present in the classroom 3 times per week. Through the grant, they were also able to install a few gardens and resurrect the SRS greenhouse. The Farm to School Program also holds cooking classes at VCMS, RHS and they also connect the ASTE Program to the cafeteria. The cafeteria is the largest classroom in the school. Educating student families is invaluable. They attended Vernon's Trunk or Treat event and have held pop-up summer taste test events at Rockville Public Library. They plan to attend upcoming Parent/Teacher Conferences to promote healthy eating and also share the Farm to School story through social media and the Vernon Public Schools website.

5.0 Secretary's Report

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

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No agenda items were added.

5.2 Rockville High School Student Representative Report

Thomas Glinski, Jr. reported on the following:

- Quarter 1 ended on November 4th.
- Mrs. Oak's School Store Club had a pom-pom sale leading up to the Powderpuff game, where each purchase gave a ticket to a raffle. The Seniors got to "pie" our new Assistant Principal, Mrs. Houlihan, at the pep rally and the Freshmen and Sophomores also had the chance to "pie" multiple staff members!
- The Seniors won the Powderpuff game held on October 30th, being undefeated for both their Junior and Senior year!
- VoAg had their Demo Days on the 7th and 8th, where students in the ASTE program were able to show off the courses offered as well as the animals!
- Our Homecoming was this past Friday, November 8th and our Homecoming court winners were Sylvia Lee, Tiffany Sprague, Madison Maiolo and Nai Jay.
- There was an assembly for Veterans' Day today, honoring RHS Students' family members who currently serve or have served in our military.
- Students in the International and Intercultural Club studied and discussed the significance and history of Dia de los Muertos. They also helped create an Ofrenda that is placed by the Ram Center.

My-Ngoc Lai-Huyen reported on the following:

- This Thursday and Friday are half days because of parent-teacher conferences.
- There will be a 3 vs. 3 basketball tournament on November 21st from 2:30 PM to 6:00 PM, sponsored by the Vernon ROCKS Coalition.
- There will be a Senior Night Games for Cheerleading and Football on November 15th, starting at 6:30 PM. The Senior walkout is at 5:30 PM.
- The RHS Main Office and NHS will be collecting stuffed animals for the holidays. They will be delivered to the Cornerstone Children's Holiday Party. Donations can be brought to the Main Office until December 6th.

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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.

7.0 Consent Agenda

7.1 Consent Agenda

- (a) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Finance Committee Meeting held on October 15, 2024
- (b) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Board of Education Meeting held on October 15, 2024
- (c) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Communications Committee Meeting held on October 16, 2024.
- (d) Approval of the Minutes of the Board of Education Special Meeting – Ad Hoc 10-Year Facility Study & Master Plan Committee Meeting held on October 21, 2024
- (e) Approval of Adopted Board of Education Policy #2010 – Administration – Holds on the Destruction of Electronic Information and Paper Records
- (f) Approval of Adopted Board of Education Policy #2020 – Administration – Retention and Disposition of Records and Information
- (g) Approval of Adopted Board of Education Policy #2030 – Administration – Uniform Treatment of Recruiters
- (h) Approval of Adopted Board of Education Policy #3436 – Business and Non-

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Instructional Operations – Code of Conduct Governing Procurements Under a Federal Award

MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved to approve Consent Agenda Items 7.1(a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g) and (h)
SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki
VOTE: Unanimous

8.0 Personnel

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

This item was moved to the end of the meeting.

8.2 Approval of the Agreement between the Vernon Board of Education and the Vernon Education Association (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3) (Executive Session Anticipated)

This item was moved to the end of the meeting.

8.3 Employee Group Census (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Assistant Superintendent Mr. Robert Testa provided an update of the employee census to the Board. We have a total of 860 paid employees of which 582 employees are union staff. 56 employees are salary/non-affiliated and the remaining employees consist of Adult Ed, Continuing Ed, Tutors, Substitute Teachers, Substitute Nurses, Substitute Cafeteria Workers and Athletic Coaches.

9.0 Teaching and Learning

9.1 Next Generation Accountability Index (BOE Goal #2)

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Assistant Superintendent Mr. Robert Testa gave a presentation to the Board about the Next Generation Accountability Index. This report provides a more complete picture of the District and includes a range of 12 indicators, some focused on college and career-readiness and others on arts and physical fitness to draw attention to a well-rounded education. It gives greater emphasis to academic growth on state tests than academic achievement by tracking progress, recognizing successes, showing where support is most needed, helping schools and districts to make improvements and promote transparency. Mr. Testa went on to describe the 12 indicators and shared where Vernon Public Schools scored in the 2023-2024 school year as compared to the State of CT. The data tells us that Vernon Public Schools overall Accountability Index (73.3) outperforms the State of CT's average of 70.8 and outperforms the State of CT average on 18 of the 23 indicators. An area of improvement include progress towards English Proficiency (Multilingual Learners). The CT State Dept. of Education annually identifies groups of schools as "Schools of Distinction" based on overall performance. The top 10% of schools are eligible for this status. Lake Street School, Northeast School and Skinner Road School were all named as "Schools of Distinction" for 2023-2024. Absenteeism is still an issue in all of our schools and we are developing initiatives to combat the problem.

10.0 General Business

10.1 Board of Education Business and Finance Report (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Mr. William Meier III, Director of Business and Finance, announced that the Finance Committee met this evening and reviewed the Finance Report and the Year-to-Date Budget. Elizabeth Fisher, Director of Food and Nutrition, also gave a financial report for food services, which we are happy to report are "in the black". The 2025-2026 Budget process is well underway and meetings will be set-up during the month of December with each school/department to review their needs for the next school year.

10.2 Approval of the Vernon Board of Education 2025/2026 Budget Meeting Calendar (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

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Dr. Macary presented a draft of the 2025/2026 Budget Meeting Calendar and asked for the Board's approval.

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved to approve the Vernon Board of Education 2025/2026 Budget Meeting Calendar as discussed and presented.
SECOND: Ms. Colt
VOTE: Unanimous

10.3 Approval of the Vernon Board of Education January 2025 – January 2026 Meeting Calendar (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

Dr. Macary presented a draft of the January 2025 through January 2026 Board of Education Meeting Calendar and asked the Board for their approval.

MOTION: Ms. Nucci moved to approve the Vernon Board of Education January 2025 through January 2026 Meeting Calendar as discussed and presented.
SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki
VOTE: Unanimous

10.4 Approval of the Following Grant Applications: (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3)

- (a) 2024-25 Consolidated Alliance and Priority School District Grant
- (b) ARP Homeless Children and Youth Grant
- (c) IDEA Part B Section 611 Grant
- (d) IDEA Part B Section 619 Grant
- (e) McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grant
- (f) Alliance Increasing Educator Diversity Grant

Mr. Testa reviewed six grant applications with the Board and asked for their approval.

MOTION: Mrs. Jablonecki moved to approve Grant Applications (a), (b), (c), (d), (e) and (f) as discussed and presented.
SECOND: Mr. Bedlack

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VOTE: Unanimous

10.5 Approval of a Donation to Rockville High School (BOE Goal #1, #2)

Dr. Macary presented a letter from Mrs. Eva Garza-McAdams of Kyle, TX, requesting that a donation of \$900.00 be given to Rockville High School in memory of her husband, Wendell Warren McAdams, a graduate of RHS. She asked that the funds be directed to three of the school's clubs/organizations; the Youth Equity Squad, the International Club and the Peer Advocates Club.

MOTION: Dr. Buxton moved to accept, with gratitude, a donation to Rockville High School as discussed and presented.

SECOND: Mr. Bedlack

VOTE: Unanimous

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

CRS – Mr. Grabowski noted that Trunk or Treat was packed and was a great event
MSS – Ms. Sewell noted that the Veteran's Day Card Challenge event was a great success as MSS won the annual competition.

MOTION: Mr. Thrall motioned to go into executive session at 8:07 PM to discuss items 8.1 and 8.2, inviting Superintendent Dr. Joseph Macary

SECOND: Dr. Buxton

VOTE: Unanimous

The Board came out of executive session at 9:21 PM

8.2 Approval of the Agreement between the Vernon Board of Education and the Vernon Education Association (BOE Goal #1, #2, #3) (Executive Session Anticipated)

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MOTION: Mr. Thrall moved to approve the Agreement between the Vernon Board of Education and the Vernon Education Association as discussed and presented in executive session.

SECOND: Mrs. Jablonecki

ABSTAINED: Mr. Bedlack

11.0 Review and Update Board of Education Calendar

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

Dr. Macary reminded the Board of the upcoming events:

- Policy Committee meeting on November 13th
- CABA Convention on November 15th & 16th
- BOE Student Award Ceremony on November 18th
- RHS vs. Ellington Football Game on the night before Thanksgiving, November 27th

12.0 Opportunity for Questions from the Press Regarding Agenda Items

No one from the Press was in attendance.

13.0 Adjournment

MOTION: Dr. Buxton made a motion to adjourn at 9:23 PM

SECOND: Mr. Bedlack

VOTE: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Colt, Board Secretary