

**Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut**

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting held on March 19, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers, Municipal Office Building, 3 Primrose Street.

A. Plante, Chair	C. Melillo
J. Vouros, Vice Chair	A. Uberti
D. Ramsey, Secretary	T. Vadas
S. Tomai	3 Staff
C. Gilson (virtual)	6 Public
D. Linnetz	1 Press
I. Khazadian	
G. Petertonjes	

Mrs. Plante called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Item 1 – Pledge of Allegiance

Item 2 – Vote to Fill Board of Education Vacancy

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education appoint Brian Leonardi as a new member of the Board of Education. Mrs. Tomai seconded. Vote: 2 ayes (Mr. Ramsey, Mrs. Tomai)

Mr. Ramsey spoke about the process and they came to a consensus to appoint Mr. Leonardi. He is a very articulate, friendly and compassionate man and is very knowledgeable about legal matters and protocols, and will be a great addition.

Mrs. Linnetz thanked Mrs. Tomai and Mr. Ramsey for running a very thoughtful and inclusive process and appreciated being included in the interviews. She thanked all of the candidates who stepped forward, and welcomed Mr. Leonardi to the Board.

Mrs. Plante said that consistent with our charter only the remaining members of the former members political party could vote who are Mr. Ramsey and Mrs. Tomai. She thanked them for including all Board members in the process. She congratulated Mr. Leonardi and thanked him for his willingness to serve.

Vote: 2 ayes (Mr. Ramsey, Mrs. Tomai) Motion passes.

Item 3 – Celebration of Excellence

Matt Memoli, Athletic Director, spoke about the three SWC Championships won by the Newtown High School Cheerleading Team, Dance Team and Indoor Track Team. Some of the coaches and team captains attended the meeting. He spoke about the time commitment and dedication by these students and was very proud of them.

Item 4 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the consent agenda which includes the correspondence report. Mrs. Linnetz seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 5 – Public Participation

Item 6 – Reports

Chair Report: Mrs. Plante enjoyed the high school play and she, Mr. Melillo and Mrs. Vadas would be attending the full Legislative Council meeting tomorrow night.

Superintendent's Report:

Mr. Melillo noted that March was Board of Education Appreciation Month and, on behalf of the district, expressed appreciation for the Board's leadership and support.

Committee Reports:

Mrs. Tomai reported that the CFF Subcommittee met this evening and reviewed some items in the financial report.

Mrs. Linnetz noted that the Policy Committee met and are making progress on the emergency and disaster preparedness policy and our drill policy, as well as the safe schools and international travel policies.

Student Representative's Report:

Ms. Khazadian reported that a group of students traveled to Mohegan Sun in honor of Newtown's student section winning the CIAC battle of the fans competition and also supported a group of Newtown Unified Basketball players who also went and played at half-time. Winter sports have come to a close and spring sports kicked off this past weekend.

Mr. Petertonges said the high school play was successful over the weekend. Winterguard won the SWC championship recently. On Thursday there will be a college fair at the high school and the Hawks Honors Association is hosting a food drive. Last Friday the school hosted a check-in fair at lunch in support of student mental health. This week the Hope Squad is hosting Hope Week to promote hope and kindness across the school.

Mr. Ramsey thanked the students for attending the Board meetings and providing important information.

Financial Report for the Month Ending February 29, 2024:

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the financial report for the month ending February 29, 2024. Mrs. Linnetz seconded.

Mrs. Vadas spoke about the financial report.

Motion passes unanimously.

Item 7 – Old Business**Strategic Plan Update:**

Mr. Melillo presented the strategic plan update.

Mr. Ramsey complimented the tenets of the portrait of a graduate and helping students survive post-graduation. Students should be made aware of this strategic plan and see where it applies to help them do what they need to do.

Mr. Gilson referred to the Smarter Balance charts and asked if the district has goals where they look at i-Ready and Dibels data and asked how he looked at the data.

Mr. Melillo said school goals are tied to SBA and standardized testing and wants to see 100% of the students above, but we are still dealing with learning loss and gaps in learning. SBA isn't the end all. He looks to be sure students get what they need. Schools have intervened in addressing learning gaps. The instructional core is providing teachers with what they need to provide for engagement in the classroom. We want everyone to get what they need.

Mr. Gilson said regarding the fourth to fifth grade transition, the SBA data shows a huge gap in 2019. He asked what the district has done to make the transition easier.

Mr. Melillo said the pandemic disrupted learning but we have developed a robust support for students and are closing the gap. It's also work that was done prior to him coming on board. Dr. Rodrigue invested in ESSR funds which played a big part in this. It's not time to tighten our budget because we have data points that what we are doing is working.

Mr. Ramsey referred to the learning walks when staff observes staff and asked if any of the observations were repeated and if these walks increased student instruction.

Mr. Melillo said he's seen the same classrooms multiple times but things could be done better and we are looking at the needs of our staff. Teachers are enjoying observing other teachers.

Mrs. Plante referred to Strategic Priority #1 and asked if we implemented new curriculum in the past three years and when we evaluate the success of a curriculum.

Mr. Melillo said it usually takes about three years for teachers to be comfortable with new curriculum implementation. The implementation has been overseen by Mrs. Uberti and Mrs. DeBartolo to ensure the curriculum is working well. It involves working with teachers and getting strong professional development. He credited Mrs. Uberti and Mrs. DeBartolo for what is involved in the implementation.

Mrs. Plante asked if there were other measures regarding test scores.

Mr. Melillo said we survey teachers, conduct the learning walks, and look for student engagement.

Mrs. Plante referred to the grade 6 to 8 ELA pilot and where we were landing between those two programs.

Mrs. Uberti said there has been a dip in student performance due to the extra transition. One strategy we tried is to have programs run from K-5 with the change in the program happening in the same school. We are only in the first year of Into Math. Either program is a significant elevation from the previous curriculum. For the English program, Abby Marks from the high school is coming to do observations in 8th grade. We will look at a program selection in April.

Mr. Vouros asked what we have in our budget to maintain and enhance the strategic plan going forward for areas everyone needs to understand and to let this made known to the Legislative Council.

Mr. Melillo reported that we are looking to add up to 11 courses at the high school to provide students the dual enrollment opportunity for college credit. We are looking to add the grade 6-8 reading program which is a big investment and maintain the K-5 reading program materials. We are also looking to add more programming combined with career pathways. The Dean positions will handle behavior issues which will allow the principals to be instructional leaders and will build relationships with students along with the home/school connection. They will also deal with attendance issues and chronic absenteeism. We have almost \$1M invested in curriculum enhancement and professional development. We look to add a BCBA to intervene to keep students in the classroom and deal with behavior issues.

Action on Policies:

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve Policy 3542.22 Food Service Personnel – Code of Conduct. Mr. Vouros seconded.

Mrs. Linnetz didn't receive any comments since it was introduced so there are no changes.

Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve Policy 6114.6 Emergency Closings. Mr. Vouros seconded.

Mrs. Linnetz said there were no comments on this one either.

Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the Modern U.S. History Curriculum. Mrs. Tomai seconded.

Mr. Ramsey appreciated input from the public particularly in the areas of history and social studies. We are also in alignment with the state standards.

Motion pass unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the American Government and Politics Curriculum. Mrs. Tomai seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 8 – New Business

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve June 11 for the Newtown Middle School Moving Up Ceremony and June 12 for the Newtown High School Graduation with June 13 as the rain date. Mr. Vouros seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of March 5, 2024. Mrs. Linnetz seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

MOTION: Mr. Ramsey moved that the Board of Education approve the minutes of March 11, 2024. Mrs. Linnetz seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

Item 9 – Public Participation

MOTION: Mr. Vouros moved to adjourn. Mrs. Tomai seconded. Motion passes unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Donald Ramsey
Secretary