

WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION

April 1, 2019

Special Board Meeting Minutes

Board's Meeting Room

A Special Meeting of the Board of Education was held on April 1, 2019 in the Board's Meeting Room on the second floor of City Hall, 355 Main Street, West Haven, Connecticut. The meeting was called to order by Rosemary Russo, Chairwoman of the Board of Education at 5:45 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

BOARD MEMBERS

IN ATTENDANCE:

Rosemary Russo, Chairman
Robert Guthrie, Vice Chair
Susan Walker, Secretary/Treasurer
Patricia Libero
James W. Morrissey
Karen Pacelli
Rosa Richardson

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Lauren Aceto
Patrick Leigh

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools
Anne Druzolowski, Assistant Superintendent
Matt Cavallaro, Director of Finance

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

PRESENT:

Brendan Carew
Sumedha Chowdhury

Savin Rock School and Pagels School Presentations

Chairwoman Russo thanked everyone for coming and said that we are excited to hear from the two schools tonight. It was decided to go in alphabetical order and both presentations could go over the time limit mentioned as we can start the next meeting a few minutes late.

Principal Gary Palermo thanked the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and the Board for having Pagels School and the Pagels School Staff here tonight. They appreciate this and will share one spotlight area amongst many others at Pagels School. Pagels School is a very special place which we try to make feel like home for the boys and girls during the school day. It was decided to share some insight and the incredible success

they have had with their newcomer students who have traveled across the globe, often from war torn countries, to our home at Pagels and make their home in our incredible city of West Haven. These students often reach us with huge educational gaps and many have not gone to school for some time. Most importantly they are entering a school where everything around them inclusive of sight, sound, routines and most importantly our spoken language is completely unfamiliar to them and their family. Our task at Pagels is simple but challenging first we find those who need their heart mended and their spirit raised, we need to teach them English as quickly as possible and the most challenging is to try to catch them up in all academic areas. Amazingly our EL team and all the teachers at Pagels School have done that along with an incredible supporting cast of helpers, paras, maintenance and staff who all share in our mission. Tonight Esther Theodore, an EL Specialist and Marissa Baglini, a Speech and Language Pathologist will share information on how this is being done. Their expertise is unique to them, they come from different disciplines but their passion, dedication and commitment is exactly the same. Gary turned the presentation over to Esther and Marissa. Applause.

Esther Theodore spoke for a minute or so in a language which not many of us understood. She said that was a very short synopsis of what it feels like for a student who does not speak English who is sitting in your classroom listening to you giving them instructions. You may provide visuals, and aids but language is not accessible nothing is. A test in English is a test of English regardless of what the material is when we are testing our students in a language that they don't understand we are not truly getting a full assessment of their skills. Esther said the language she was speaking in was Creole and she was born in Haiti and came here at the age of nine and she now has the privilege to teach children who are experiencing much like what she experienced when she came here. The presentation focuses on the linguistic diversity at Pagels School. This refers to the cultural and linguistic diversity of learners which refers to racial culture, social classes and language diversity. We look at values, behavioral styles, dialects, nonverbal communication which may defer from what the mainstream is, along with the perspective of the way that we see the world. We have a culture in America and see the world in one perspective with a different perspective from those that are coming into our classrooms.

Marissa Baglini said she didn't have another language to speak (laughter) so she will show some slides. There are 25 different languages are spoken at Pagels right now. This is divided into the primary language the student uses, the primary language that is spoken in the home, and the language that was first acquired by the student. 34% of students at Pagels have a dominant language other than English. The most dominant languages outside of English are Spanish then Arabic and Pashto. 30% of our families speak a dominant language in the home other than English and the trend is similar Spanish is the major language followed by Arabic and Pashto. The first language acquired by 25% of our students is different from English and the trend remains the same Spanish, Arabic and Pashto and they have French coming in also. We have a diverse population of learners and we are so proud that this is what our population looks like and it is growing. Some examples of the different languages are Arabic, Polish, French, Hindi, Tibetan, Filipino, Urdu, and Swahili are all languages spoken in our schools by our families. In our home we speak about inclusion, acceptance and all things that make us good people and we live

that at Pagels School. We live it through welcoming families, teachers who are crying when these students are leaving because they have finally seen the student's progress and they don't want it to go away. We are all so proud of the work that we do collectively and this is a really great representation of just how different they are. 8.5% of our population was EL in 2013 and we are now up to 20%. That 20% only reflects the EL population that qualifies for services while 33% of our students speak in different languages. A further discussion took place. The board gave thanks. Chairwoman Russo thanked them very much and said that was really a powerful tool the way you started speaking in another language and we can see why Pagels has been named a School of Distinction. Applause ensued. Chairwoman Russo thanked them for all they do for children; it is a hard job and she toured Pagels a couple of weeks ago and the kids seemed happy to her and that says it all. Thank you.

Taryn Driend Principal of Savin Rock Community School said it was very hard decision to honor one person on the board but we will be talking about the Reading Department but I think we all work together as a team so that is most of our success. Savin Rock Community School has a very diverse population of 490 students and within this population there is 113 EL Learners, 53 Special Ed Students, and as of today 76 transient students. CALI and our teacher evaluation system have played a huge role in our school's success. The structure, organization and implementation of our school's curriculum, data teams, student assistant team, professional development and school climate have all assisted the staff in monitoring student progress and implementing effective teaching strategies over the year. We have built in reading and math SRBI periods within our school schedule. These periods are supported with our reading team, math coach, paraprofessionals, and literacy and math aids. Our staff spends two periods within each classroom supporting the teachers and students by modeling, team teaching, assist during Daily Five, Math Stations and by effectively utilizing all the members to differentiate the instruction by pulling small groups to meet the individual needs of the students. The level books, the technology resources and the manipulatives have all increased student engagement within these periods. Over the years we have rewritten our curriculum to align with the Common Core Standards, implemented new resources, and provided professional development to enhance teaching strategies. We also have incorporation some sensible ERI's. After building our structure with curriculum and resources the coordinators strategically built in professional development throughout the years to enhance the process which have all contributed to our success. This year the Savin Rock Staff has had many eventful activities such as Trick or Treat Street, Rocking into the Holidays Festival, Math and Reading Nights, and most recently our Read Across America Day. We have monthly assemblies to honor students for perfect attendance, student of the month, and demonstrating pillars of character. The majority of Savin Rock's success is attributed to the hard work and dedication of the staff that you see here tonight. In the largest elementary school, with the youngest staff members, we have become a cohesive family unit. No matter what is asked of them staff members enthusiastically embrace the task and implement what is best for the school, students, community, and parents all with rigor and fidelity. Our staff has passion, commitment and a team spirit that far exceeds the rest. As you can see from the staff here tonight that

is what we have at Savin Rock and Taryn is honored to be part of their success. A short video was also shown and applause ensued.

Board member Jim Morrissey wanted to thank Chairwoman Russo for having the idea to bring in all our schools throughout the course of the year and showcase the talent that we have. He has been so impressed with the presentations by all the schools we have and the staff. The dedication you show as teachers, principals and paras and the love you have for our students is overwhelming and I can't thank you enough. You go above and beyond and just by coming here tonight shows the love you have for our school system and the students and this impresses me and I want to say thank you as a board member. Thank you so much for all you do for our children. Applause.

Board member Rosa Richardson said underneath this tough exterior there is a softie and you made me cry and that is why I am here. I am here for you, I am here for kids and you make me proud every day thank you. Applause.

Chairwoman Russo wanted to piggyback on both Jim and Rosa and say that we keep telling you that we appreciate you but from the bottom of our hearts we really do appreciate you. Rosemary said she is an educator also and has been a teacher for a few years and you guys really inspire her. When she goes back to work Rosemary always talks about what she has seen in the West Haven Schools and she they get to the point that they want her to shut up. (laughter) You really are different from the norm and we appreciate it. We thank you again for all your time and energy and for coming tonight. Before you leave Superintendent Cavallaro has arranged for refreshments so please help yourself especially the kids. We will take a short break and resume in a few minutes. Applause ensued.

Chairwoman Russo asked for a motion to adjourn

Rosa Richardson made the motion

Karen Pacelli seconded the motion

All board members were in agreement

The Special Meeting ended at 6:10 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola
Board Secretary