

WEST HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION ERIN COMMITTEE MINUTES
September 19, 2011
Harriet North Courtroom

The ERIN Committee Meeting of the Board of Education was held in the Harriet North Courtroom of the City Hall, 255 Main Street, West Haven, CT on September 19, 2011. The meeting was called to order by Howard Horvath, Chairman of the Board of Education at 6:00 p.m. The meeting opened with a pledge to the flag.

BOARD MEMBERS

IN ATTENDANCE:

Howard Horvath Jr., Chairman
Dorinda Borer
M. Toni Paine
Cebi Waterfield
Robert Saley

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ABSENT:

Eric Murillo

ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT:

Neil Cavallaro, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Anne Druzolowski, Assistant Superintendent
Dave Cappetta, Director of Finance

CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Howie Horvath welcomed everyone to the second ERIN Committee Meeting. He stated tonight's agenda would be to basically talk about three things

- The state of reform in Connecticut
- Some of the technology things that Anne, Neil and Howie have taken a look at over the last number of months. They seem to be in agreement that they can make a big difference and we are trying to figure out what makes the best sense; this is just informational nothing has been decided
- We will talk a little bit about some initiatives

Howie then presented a slide show. At the end he said the point that he is trying to make is that it is very hard for organizations that have been doing things in one particular way to change. One of the primary examples that come to mind is with a company he worked at for about eight years, IBM. It got to a point they were doing something one particular way and as a result this \$90 billion dollar company was going to be out of business in X number of years. They were so inwardly focused they were losing \$8 million dollars a year. Then Lou Gerstner the new CEO arrived and successfully turned the ship around. There was a lot of pain and a lot of new thinking.

I believe that typically what happens is we get stuck in a box and we think our solutions are only within four walls but the reality is you can think a little bit broader and more innovatively and find some really exciting things even though they might be a little bit scary and that is kind of a segue to the technology.

Howie then read from the following article.

“We have a new commissioner all of 39 years old, Stefan Pryor who was appointed by the Governor as the state's new education commissioner. He was an unconventional choice but it was a good one. It may have seemed like a wildly unconventional gesture but it really wasn't. Governor Malloy has committed himself to improving public schools and to do this he needs a commissioner who is both an educational innovator and a closer, someone who can build consensus and get things done, someone who can win federal challenge grants, for a change, and creatively attack the county's worst achievement gap in test scores between low-income minorities and suburban white peers.

With those priorities, Mr. Pryor's resume jumps out of the pile. As a young man in the 1990's he was one of the founders of the successful Amistad Academy charter school in New Haven. He then worked to reform impoverished schools in New York City where, among other things, he designed a pilot program to introduce data-driven analysis and accountability to low-income schools.

The key to his success would be the continued presence of Governor Malloy. Connecticut once a leader in education has been sitting on its hands for several years and starting to fall behind. States that have turned their schools around have done so with the hands-on involvement of their governors. Mr. Malloy appears ready to assume this role. If he does, his appointment of Mr. Pryor could be the beginning of a productive friendship.”

Howie stated this was a pretty surprising selection. The governor has said that this new legislative session is going to be Priority 1 on education and the new commissioner obviously will have a lot to say about that so there are interesting things to come.

Howie said that New Haven Teachers Union President David Chicarelli came and talked to a small group of our union and administrators about things that we have been studying over eighteen months. He really crystallized everything in 90 minutes and I learned more about it than I had in the previous 18 months. One of the things he said was that weaker teachers in New Haven were identified early in the year (as early as November) in order to give them an opportunity and the support to get better. They also identified high performers and prepared ways for those teachers to help roll out and support the program.

We will hear from Neil and Anne about No Child Left Behind tonight. This is a legislative act that has become stagnant. They haven't reauthorized it in the last four or five years. The Secretary of Education has said he will grant waivers; he has the authority to do that for some of the constraints and consequences of No Child Left Behind. He is asking for certain things in return it is a trade. Howie knows that Connecticut is likely to apply and beyond that he doesn't know but it is something to keep in mind. What they are really saying and he thinks it is really important is that No Child Left Behind, with its focus on status scores which is to say where is that child in that particular moment in time determining whether they are either proficient or not, fundamentally is the question. This is not the right way to measure how a school district is progressing. What you really should look at is whether kids are three years behind when they get to your school system, as they are in urban school settings on a regular basis. Then you should really look at is how far did they progress after that first year and create a system of recognition, rewards and consequences tied to that growth. There are some different approaches to how you do that and some are simpler than others. We will potentially be faced with some serious consequences here in West Haven which I think is important to note before they arrive.

Bridgeport turned its board over to the state and this never happened anywhere. Windham on the other hand was taken over by the state and Howie has heard rumors that there might be a third school district. The Superintendent from Hartford retired and is now running the Windham School District. It is an opportunity to see what the state fundamentally is saying relative to how they envision school systems should run. It is their opportunity to directly determine what happens at least in that school and possibly in another if a third is taken over.

Howie asked if there were any questions about any of the information so far.

Dorinda Borer asked if he had seen any updates on Bridgeport; what has happened. She saw the first article that the state was coming and taking over but hasn't seen anything else. Howie said the new board has been selected it had at least one meeting maybe two. What is interesting is

that they have the new board which has been told the current budget deficit remains and that the state is not taking care of it. He hasn't heard any more but maybe Anne or Neil has.

Neil said the delay was actually putting the board in place. There was controversy as to who should sit on the board. Different segments of the population wanted to be represented. They questioned if they had to be residents or if they could bring in people from outside of Bridgeport. Howie stated that they have included outsiders. Neil said he knew that was a little controversial. Anne Druzolowski said the board is made up of primarily business people and a few real big heavy hitters. Neil said an executive from People's Bank which is centered in Bridgeport is on that board. Howie said he thinks they had a couple of higher education people from Sacred Heart. Howie said that is a little lesson of an example of what the state wants because they are basically saying these folks are running the show.

Howie said when he started with technology he was selling IBM PCs that were heavy and cost three thousand dollars and had two floppy drives; it was quite an experience; they didn't have a hard drive. Technology has come a long way and he has been in that business a long time and has had exposure to different software programs and wanted to share something with everyone about three or four. He wanted to explain what they are and how they might be helpful. This is a decision that Anne and Neil would ultimately make I guess with the board's support.

PD360 is basically a website where you can go online and get professional development and more. They have thousands of videos organized that make sense to teachers and administrators. Focus is an icon that is used so that when a school district signs on they can focus on certain things that would pertain to a certain initiative.

This is an example from New York who is implementing a new teacher support and evaluation program. They are showing Charlotte Danielson's model of effective teaching here with its four domains: Domain 1 is planning and preparation, Domain 2 is classroom environment, Domain 3 is instruction and Domain 4 is reflection. By clicking on "questioning techniques" under instruction you have the choice between elementary and secondary. If you are an elementary teacher you certainly don't need to go to the high school and vice versa so you select the one you want and you can see various areas called questions to stimulate learning and thinking, stage 2 present the questions. This would be used by teachers if they were wondering how to really present a question to the class. Do I just ask a question and wait for a showing of hands? Based on research that is not the best way to do it and there is a video explaining this so you will see shots of professional development types, talking about the methodology and the research behind it. You can use this kind of a tool in a professional development setting with people and talk about it and break out in sessions or you can have teachers, principals and others look at it in their free period, planning period or a home when it is convenient. A video was shown with a portion showing items from Doug Reeves with his legacy assessments, scoring guides for greater student learning, leadership and learning center and all the videos that are available, on demand professional learning, closing the gap, how leaders support differentiation. A further discussion took place. Connecticut PD360 learning is aligned to CALI. We are moving toward a common set of standards and 48 of 50 states have signed on. We are moving pretty quick and Connecticut has done the work to correlate our current standards to these state standards. What is more compelling to Howie about the common core and common standards is that it is going to come

with common assessments and we have a few that are nationwide; NAEP is an example for reading for purposes that you can compare across the country. Other than that every state has its own set of assessments. Here in Connecticut we have the CMT and CAPT. Delaware is DCAS and Massachusetts is MCAS. Some states are known for rigorous high quality standards which would include Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts in particular. Some states such as Tennessee, although they finally corrected it, did just the opposite they made it easier so they wouldn't look bad in this No Child Left Behind Program. They are basically telling parents, citizens and taxpayers the kids are reading just great just look at those scores. Then they would take the NAEP and there would be a big disconnect because that would show that they weren't very well prepared or reading well.

The next program Howie talked about was started by a gentleman named Salman Khan (Khan Academy) a former hedge fund guy and MIT grad. He made lots of money and took some time off and started creating videos to help his nephews in math. He decided to use a little Waycom graphics tablet and Skyped (video chat) with his nephews teaching them different fundamental math concepts. They learned it well and the success was so consistent he quit his job and spent all his time in creating videos in support of mathematics in K-12 and for all kinds of other topics related to math, science and finance. There are now around 2,400 videos that take about 10 minutes or so. The results are there and it is free. There are a number of school districts that are adopting it and implementing it and this is something to take a look at. He has been so successful that the Gates Foundation has just offered him millions to support continued development of it along with others. He had to decide whether they were going to accept money from investors and turn it into a kind of for profit venture but he decided no. He is getting a lot more input and support in a free mode so that is where it stays. This is gaining some traction. It is not overly high tech but very clear.

The next program is called Dream Box and is being used in schools out in California where I had the opportunity to go and visit. It is significant because part of the curriculum, in three elementary schools that send their children to a lab for 90 minutes a day working on math and reading two core subjects that are always tested. The results achieved over the last five years using this software and everything else that they do at those schools which are 100% poverty, primarily Hispanic in tough sections of California have outperformed more affluent and elite schools in the area and certainly outperformed any school that looks like them. I just rode out there to think about using and leveraging software like this. This is called intelligent adaptive learning coupled with really engaging graphics and sound and game like components as was the Khan Academy. They allow students to get points and it does a pretty job of making it competitive. There is a very high quality NCTM aligned math curriculum and content. In assessments when you go through the test on line it recognizes where you are. It actually reacts to every answer on every click that the student has made in the program and moves them to the appropriate next section. It has high quality graphics and virtual manipulatives and everything is based on research strategies. They do a pretest in the beginning and depending on how a kid does he might move all the way past these lessons to lesson 6. If the child doesn't have the skills that is recognized and they move through the program in sequential order. This is pretty common sense but very powerful. A further discussion ensued about reports administrators would get which show how much time students spent on it and the lessons completed and average units completed. You can compare this to previous year and different classes and it is data so you can

really look at it in a multiple of different ways. A further discussion ensued. Howie asked if there were questions.

Dorinda Borer asked if Howie had any idea how much they roughly cost. Not really, one I showed you was free and we have a quote for Dream Box and thought it was really reasonable. He talked to PD360 and said we are trying to do some things with our teachers here, maybe a small segment of them and asked them to come up with something we could avail to them instead of the whole district thing because the district wide license is more expensive maybe 50 grand. The other one was relatively inexpensive like \$3,000 to \$5,000 for the whole district.

Rob asked if there has been any discussions about the ECS grant and how that will be funneled in the next year. Neil said it will be flat. Howie said we are good next year but that is an area that a lot of reformers push on because they don't believe it is a fair system of funding. They call it "money follows the child" based on the child's needs as opposed to looking at the district or city's demographics and poverty and saying OK based on that you are going to get this. That has actually worked out pretty well for us would you agree. Neil said very well for us and next year we are OK and after that I would say all bets are off. Howie said that is important to recognize so if that changes and somehow we get less that is a problem. You might get more so it is kind of hard to know. Neil said his fear is that if it is the same pool of money that we are talking about and they are going to even it out districts like ours stand to loose. Howie said the whole idea of magnet school inner district funding is a system right now that fundamentally allows both the receiving school district and the sending school district to count their students so we get funded on 7,000 students even though 1,000 are in New Haven. Rob said that is where he was going; how is that going to change. Howie said that is a different story. Rob said because that would kill us. Neil said it would kill us. Howie said we would be uniquely at risk because Hartford is the other big magnet and they do it as a way to insure equity and Howie said but that won't happen next year will it. Neil said no the year after. Rob said not this coming fiscal year we are in now but the following fiscal year. Neil said they do a two year budget.

Lastly Howie said we tried to move forward on the Superintendent's evaluation and this was going to be the initial meeting but Sean and Eric weren't available so we decided to make it the next meeting. Neil has seen the documents and everybody should have them as well. There is something from CABE and it is a combination of Superintendent surveys feedback and an evaluation for the boards so I would ask you all to look at that and we will talk about that in the next meeting in executive session. We will also look at the document that has our district goals and objectives listed by category. There is also a copy for us to evaluate ourselves relative to district goals and objectives. The purpose of the next meeting isn't to bring them filled out but to bring them and we will walk through it and talk about it and the following meeting we will have brought them back and we will deal with the ratings and make our decisions. One last document asks board members how they are doing as a board relative to setting clear expectations and creating conditions for success, and holding the system accountable, building public wealth, and learning together as a board and a team. He would like the board members to go through that one as well. There were no questions. Howie asked for a motion to close the meeting. Rob Saley made a motion to close the meeting. Dorinda seconded the motion. The meeting ended at 6:55 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Marylou Amendola
Board Secretary