

NORTH BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
February 10, 2004
Second Budget Meeting

The North Branford Board of Education met on Tuesday, February 10, 2004 at Totoket Valley Elementary School Media Center at 7:05 p.m. The following members attended:

Board Chair:	Ron Haskins
Board Vice-Chair:	Cheryl Smith
Board Secretary:	Amy Sochocki-Norton
Board Members:	Lisa Gagliardi
	Penny Q. Seaman
	Kris Vanacore

Superintendent of Schools:	Dr. Robert K. Wolfe
----------------------------	---------------------

I. Visitors

Director of Business/Personnel:	Donald Winnicki
Director of Instruction/Curriculum:	Joan Follo
Director of Special Services:	Suzanne Wright
Principals:	Dr. David Perry, NBHS
	Alan Davis, NBIS
	Nancy Brittingham, TVES
	Robin Brown, JHS
	Dr. Karen Johnson, STW

Todd Stoeffler	Christine Imperato	Deborah Welton, NBFT
Tamre Mokus	Mark Fabrizi	Dolly Potter
Lynn Jenkins	Cliff Potter	Angela Westwood
Grace Polivka	Elaine Larson	Grace Krom
Stephanie Bilskis	Kristyn Narracci	Lori Rubino
Diane Artaiz	Elisabeth Caplan	Lucille Lynch
Marilyn Mesner	Claudia Faughnan	Deborah Ferrucci
Patricia Carlo	Patricia Mulrain	Rose Angeloni
Denise Puzycki	Cheryl Robertson	Joanne Polzella
Angelo Polzella	Emilyann Polzella	George Baldwin
Carrie Sabetta	Joyce Hanchette	Francine Stanio
Nadine Mandigo	Susan Pisani	Anita Pantalena

Mary Ann Mimnaugh
Mary Lovelace
Lynn Lanzoni
Jeanne Prota
Peter Fappiano
Jennette Krawec
David McMahon
Doreen Castaldi
Intissar Fernandez
Kathy Mezerewski

Barbara Gasparine
Meredith Hindinger
Laura Petrella
Donna Ricci
David Borkowski
Nancy Keinz
Kate Anderson
Susan Calamita
Heidi Allstrom-Miller
Abby DeTour

Laura Baldino
John DeNunzio
Lisa Douglas
William Stone
Dave Prather
Margaret Palmieri
Mary Fucci
Gail LeFloch
Elisa Pannone

Dr. Wolfe distributed a new enrollment sheet. It had the October 1st enrollment on the left side and the February 1st enrollment on the right side. The budget is constructed based on the October enrollment. After all the in-migration and out-migration, with summer being among the largest time, we come back to the board and report if there is a problem that needs to be addressed.

The Board received an update from CAPSS (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents) who keep track of budgets. The spreadsheet shows an up to date listing of school systems and their budget increases.

There was also a request for information regarding the amount of time our students are at recess. The Superintendent provided a chart showing how much time was built in for recess in grades K-8.

Dr. Wolfe explained the chart that details what we would have to do in Art, Music and P.E. to bring North Branford up to the mean of the state recommendation. The total sum to bring North Branford to the mean in the state recommendations would be \$1.4 million, the two other problems are where we would put that instruction within our day, and if we increase our school day by 10% and there was a corresponding charge to the teacher's contract, that would cost over a million dollars. Also, where would we put all of those classes? We are far from the mean, and neither have the space or the time.

Penny Seaman asked if it was 80 hours on the Art, Music and P.E. chart.

Dr. Wolfe replied that the chart shows 80 minutes per week. We currently offer 50 minutes per week.

Block Scheduling

Dr. Wolfe stated that in 2001, in the interview process for superintendent, he asked what particular things the Board was looking for the superintendent to be engaged in, and what was important to the Board. One of the things was implementing block scheduling at the high school. The charge for a change in schedules was initially driven by the Board of Education, and ultimately determined that an A/ B schedule would be the best type. If North Branford is not going to implement block scheduling, I would charge the Administration with looking at alternative schedules. The list that was handed out shows schools along the shoreline, every school around us, and some schools within our ERG. The majority of schools have some kind of block, with the majority being A/ B. A/B was able to be implemented in a contractual way that did not force additional payments to have to be made by adding time.

Dr. Wolfe explained Old Saybrook's choice of scheduling. They are using an 8 period day, and they have very short periods. They did this because of the cost.

Another chart delineated the major reasons for block scheduling. It has 15 top reasons for the block scheduling, which was summarized by Dr. Perry and his faculty's presentation a year ago. There is also an executive summary on the block, which is a result of all of the work the high school did last year, and is actually what the block looks like.

Dr. Perry explained the advantages of block scheduling. He explained that the district started looking at block scheduling several years ago. He stated that the students need more time in classes so that they can take advantage of other programs in the area. The only way our students can access other programs in our area would be through a non-rotating block. We think there are substantially more advantages than not. We elected to go with an A/B as opposed to a 4 x 4, because the classes run all year long.

Kris Vanacore asked what type of training our teachers have had on block scheduling.

Dr. Perry replied that they have been involved in video conferencing with people who have done the research. We have formed a team to look at block scheduling. We are involved in a consortium with EastConn that looked at schools across the country. Last year all of our staff members went out to block schools. Teachers have spent their extra hour on Wednesday preparing lesson plans for the block scheduling. There is more to be done, but they spent most of last year writing lesson plans.

Ron Haskins asked how hard it would be for a student who has missed 2 or 3 days of school to catch up.

Dr. Perry replied that classes meet every other day, so the student would have a day in between to catch up. This also gives the student an extra day to seek extra help. The attendance policy has to be adjusted to account for this. Most of the schools they spoke to didn't indicate major problems.

Amy Norton asked what is in the budget for professional development. This is paramount in order to have a successful program.

Dr. Perry replied that the best thing they have found is for the teachers to go to other schools that are doing block scheduling. We are planning to continue to do this.

Amy Norton stated that perhaps one of the professional days would be used for this.

Dr. Perry replied that this was done last year, and would continue to use Wednesdays to refine the lesson plans, and to visit other schools.

Ron Haskins asked what effect this has on music and gym.

Dr. Perry replied that they are not affected by the block, but it will give the students more time to prepare for gym.

Ron Haskins stated that if they have band, they will have it all year and if they have music the first semester, how will they play in the band all year.

Dr. Perry replied that we now have independent study, will have to still do that, and is confident that can be worked out.

Lisa Gagliardi asked if there have been any work on the middle school schedule, so it will be in alignment with the high school schedule.

Dr. Perry replied that as long as both schools are not rotating, which is the main problem now, some students have great difficulty coming back and forth especially in math right now.

Ron Haskins stated his concern with the students taking their SAT's. They might not remember in the spring, because they do not get the classes every day.

Dr. Perry replied that is one of the reasons they chose an A/B schedule, because it meets all year, every other day. They are able to get into more in-depth discussions. The only place where there are some issues with regards to the daily repetition in world language and math. In speaking to a lot of people about this, there really isn't a difficulty.

Lisa Gagliardi feels that the Board needs to look at this seriously because so much time has been put into this. It was the number one objective last year, and at the very last minute it got pulled from the budget, with the understanding that it would be put back as the number one item on this year's budget. It should be put back to where it was at last year's point.

Penny Seaman stated that she was the designee on the block scheduling committee the first time the Board of Education put a designee on the committee. Over the years she has seen a big change in her understanding of the attitude at the high school. She is impressed with the unanimity of the staff and we need to take that very seriously. It is also an investment in our future. We all recognize that we are a small district and that we have budget limitations and we need to find creative ways to provide our children with all the resources of a large school. There are many resources that we can't take advantage of because of this rotating schedule. Our students who might be going into work place after this can't get jobs as easily as they could if they had a set schedule. It would be highly unlikely that we are going to be able to fund everything students want individually, but we need to provide a schedule so our students can get those things in a different way. We have waited so long; and agree that this has to be a high priority. We need to say this is the best for our students, and we need to find a way for this to happen.

Lisa Gagliardi stated that this would eliminate in school field trips.

Amy Norton stated that it is a huge step to take, but with enough professional development, and guidance from an administrator who has the knowledge and background that this is a priority.

Lisa Gagliardi asked if it would impede inclusion students. Would the 80-minute classes be too long for them?

Suzanne Wright replied it wouldn't have a negative effect. The teachers have worked hard to develop practices; they will be able to address problems in the classroom. Because the block allows for more activities and changes within the classroom in the way instruction is delivered, this will be more helpful. The other thing that will help is having two days for homework assignments for those students to get extra help, or to study for a test.

Dr. Perry stated that they thought that might be an issue on paper, but when they asked people it turned out not to be the case.

Dr. Wolfe asked if any members of Dr. Perry's staff had any comments.

Dr. Perry stated that Peter Fappiano has been on the committee a long time. Heidi Alstrom-Miller was at Career High School, was uncertain about it at first, but when she got into it, it was very positive.

Dr. Wolfe thanked Dr. Perry for his presentation.

Library Media

Dr. Wolfe stated that for the most part, the libraries were basically a weekly trip to take out a book. That is a far cry from the standards of a Library/Media Center. The Library/Media Center needs to be the center of our instructional program. At TVES this year, they are entering into a pilot program with the cooperation of the faculty and staff. Rather than have a fixed schedule, they have a flexible schedule that allows the specialist to partner with classroom teachers, and students can access the library on a much more frequent basis. We need significant resources to bring our current libraries to a Library/Media concept. We have used a consultant, Mrs. Bunny Yesner, who assisted on the Strategic Action Committee. That particular study looked at four different aspects of Library Media; the space we are in, human resources running our libraries, other resources meaning our collections, and it also looked at how it is integrated into our instructional program. The collections in all schools are below par. The best way to achieve improvements in our collections is to build them into building renovations and new building construction because the State of Connecticut will support that. We have a long way to go. We would like to turn our Library/Media Specialists into true Media Specialists, and not just people who catalogue books. We want to get them into the classrooms. At the High School, space is an issue, fixtures are an issue, the collection is an issue, staffing is an issue. It is very serious. Library/Media should be at the core of our entire instructional program.

Dr. Wolfe referred to the draft of the Library/Media Center Program Guide, thanking Joan Follo and the Library/Media Specialists. This guide provides a plethora of information on what a modern day Library/Media Specialist and Library should be doing. He encouraged everyone to read this report. The other document is provided by the Connecticut Educational Media Association. Joan Follo, and several Library/Media Specialists are in attendance if you have any questions. The hope is that the Board of Education will chip away at the needs of our Library/Media Centers. Wherever we have an opportunity to improve, there is no academic program that will affect every single corner of the school system more than our Library/Media Centers. The Superintendent saluted the current Specialists for their efforts in trying to be innovative in their programming. The showcase of elementary Library Media Centers is probably Beecher Road School, with a current collection of 44,000 that is almost 7 to 8 times what we have in North Branford Schools. The other area we are short on is our opportunity for electronic media. One of the things the Board has been supportive of is our continual increases in our supply account for Library Media, and it is much appreciated.

Dr. Wolfe asked Joan Follo for comments in terms of the work this committee did.

Joan Follo stated that she was very satisfied with the work that was done. This is the heart of education; this is where it all starts. She explained the various roles of the Library/Media Specialists, and that the teachers need that support. Technology is a very important part today also. We need to teach our students about technology.

Dr. Wolfe stated that we want our students to be able to access information and understand the information. Page 6 of the Library/Media Center Program Guide delineates the roles and responsibilities of the Library/Media Specialists.

Amy Norton asked for an explanation in what the differences would be between having technology in the Library/Media Center versus a computer lab.

Dr. Wolfe explained that you need both. Having technology in the library gives you the ability to access information. The purpose of computers labs, is to produce products which should be the result of skill development. There is a wealth of products that students should be able to produce using technology. You can have 30 students in the lab working on that product.

Penny Seaman stated that the proposal is for 4/10 of a Library/Media Specialist at NBHS and one at the elementary level. What would we do at the elementary level?

Dr. Wolfe replied that it would be a stopgap measure, and that person would have responsibilities at two schools. It would probably be three days at one school and two at the other. Their function will be much more than checking out books.

Penny Seaman asked if the idea would be to retain the aides that are currently in the library.

Dr. Wolfe stated that one Library/Media Specialist would be useless if we have no support for that person. It is critical that we have aides. The eventual long-term plan is to have a Library/Media Specialist and an aide. At the high school, the new Library/Media center, which is proposed as part of our facility study, takes over the parking area at the back of the school, that Library/Media Center needs multiple aides.

Kris Vanacore asked how long we have had a part-time Librarian at the High School.

Dr. Perry stated it has been since we have geared up the media program, going back to 1996.

Dr. Wolfe stated that on paper it looks like we have a full time librarian, but that person teaches two courses, so 4/10 is communications and the other 6/10 is library.

Kris Vanacore stated that she thinks it is rather sad that we do not full time librarian at the high school. It is so important for the high school students to have a full time librarian. If we had to pick and choose it is important to put a full time librarian at the high school.

Lisa Gagliardi stated that she agrees. She can't consider adding any additional library personnel until we first take care of the high school.

Dr. Wolfe added that this is also important for the accreditation report, because that was clearly identified. The space is also identified. If Board Members would like an accreditation report, he would be happy to provide one to the new board members, as it is a critical document for the high school.

Amy Norton asked if it would be possible to build a larger library with access from the high school when we build the new middle school.

Dr. Wolfe replied that there has been a discussion about this, but the collections are significantly different, he is unsure about construction costs, and whether we could get reimbursed to do that. We would have to check into that. If the Board decides the next logical step is to correct that situation at the high school, that is a positive step. He would applaud the Board for that. We need to keep the focus on Library/Media.

Lisa Gagliardi stated if the Board chooses to correct that situation and add the .4, are the communications spot and the library spot mutually exclusive. What would happen to the communication spot? Would we have to approve the addition for that also?

Dr. Wolfe replied that it would be better to do that, but you don't have to do that. You would have to make some decisions about personnel in that area, and ultimately that person would become a full time librarian. We would have to hire a part time communications teacher. That becomes a bit complex on a rotating schedule.

Lisa Gagliardi asked if the block scheduling would help in this situation.

Dr. Wolfe stated with the change in the state's law in regards to what retired people can teach part time, it gives us a great opportunity to attract someone who wants to teach part time. They would not do that in a rotating schedule, but they may do that with block scheduling. This budget contains .4 Library/Media at the high school, and .6 communications at the high school.

Cheryl Smith asked if this was part of the block scheduling.

Dr. Wolfe stated that it was.

Cheryl Smith stated that the Library/Media request alone is for the one elementary.

Dr. Wolfe stated that the Library/Media request is .4 high school and one elementary.

Amy Norton stated that that could fall under two categories.

Dr. Wolfe stated that is an academic debate and they are interchangeable. The bottom line is, our high school continues to grow and we need more personnel.

Title I

Dr. Wolfe stated that we received very late notification that we would not be eligible for Title I funds in 03-04. We lost \$95,000 and we put together a program for this year, and we titled it North Branford Strategies for Success. It is a Language Arts remedial program. We were able to reconfigure aides, plus we were fortunate that we had carry over funding from Title I. That carry-over funding will now be gone at the end of this school year. The next chart details what our staffing pattern in this program is. This program is not a special education program. It is one of the few safety nets that we have for students who do not qualify for special education assistance.

Dr. Wolfe explained the breakdown of staffing shown on the chart, which was funded, by the federal government, plus Board of Education funds. He explained the 2003/2004 breakdown, which shows a considerable reduction for this year. We currently have seven people making up 5.9 full time equivalents.

Dr. Wolfe stated that the proposal for next year, and each year there after, is to gradually come back to where we were so we can deliver services in remedial areas for students who are in the bottom 25% or below on standardized testing. By adding one staff member, we will get to 6.90 and 8 people. In this budget there is money for a new instructional aide, and there is approximately \$18,000 in the budget to make up for the shortfall that we had as a result of exhausting carry over money.

Penny Seaman asked for an explanation of the breakdown on the number of aides, and a breakdown of where the money will come from in the budget.

Dr. Wolfe handed out a total personnel document, which shows the breakdown of where the carry over money is, and where the new aide position is.

Dr. Wolfe stated that the numbers are significant, and we have established criteria, which is the bottom 25%. The federal government is not budging, and we have pursued this as recently as three or four weeks ago, we are getting nowhere. The basic difference is the definition of poverty has changed. We used to use free and reduced lunch, and now they use a random sample, based on the 2000 census.

Lisa Gagliardi asked if the full time aides receive benefits.

Dr. Wolfe replied that they do not receive benefits. The majority of people have fractional schedules. The average is 6 hours.

Lisa Gagliardi asked if it was significantly a lot more money to make them all 6 hours days.

Dr. Wolfe stated that we have some high quality people, and their schedules don't allow this, and we would lose some of the people that are currently employed. It wouldn't be in the best interested of the employees.

Amy Norton stated that it might be better to have the continuity with the child you are working with 5 part time people, each of those people work with the same child you could have the continuity.

Kris Vanacore stated that Lisa Gagliardi wanted to increase the remedial services.

Dr. Wolfe replied that he would like to increase the hours, and the administration can figure out where the best places to add the hours are. Over the next few years, we need to increase personnel in this program. Failure to have this program will mean an increase in special education programs.

Penny Seaman asked how many children this program serves.

Dr. Wolfe replied that he did not have that information, but will get the chart for everyone. It is approximately 150 students.

Kris Vanacore stated that she would like to see how many students are missing the math portion because we have lost aides.

Dr. Wolfe stated that he would be happy to provide that information.

Project SAGE

Dr. Wolfe stated he was informed that the Project SAGE, which has been funded by a state grant, is ending this year. This program is at Jerome Harrison and Stanley T. Williams schools. It is a program for students K-3. It funds a part time

individual as a SAGE counselor. There are 26 students at Jerome and 19 students at Stanley T. Williams. The issues these students are dealing with are self-esteem, feelings, peer relationships. It is a safety net for those children.

Amy Norton stated that there are also other programs offered through the SAGE grant, in addition to the 45 students already being served.

Karen Johnson stated that there are family activities in both schools in addition to the services for the students.

Amy Norton asked if there were enrichment programs as well?

Karen Johnson replied that there is an after school SAGE enrichment program. It helps the children practice the skills they have learned in the SAGE program.

Kris Vanacore stated that the after school program does not come out of the grant.

Karen Johnson explained that the after school program is self sufficient, but the evening programs which are part of the family programs are part of the grant.

Kris Vanacore asked how many times per year that they meet.

Robin Brown replied that they meet usually 2 or 3 times per year.

Kris Vanacore asked if this was the responsibility of the Project SAGE person to coordinate the program.

Robin Brown stated that the School Social Worker and the SAGE Counselor coordinate this.

Kris Vanacore asked who pays for the programs that are brought in. Does that come out of the SAGE grant?

Robin Brown replied that sometimes the program is with the Family Resource Center.

Kris Vanacore stated that this figure in the budget is just for salaries, so we would not have money for speakers.

Dr. Wolfe replied that it is basically the same amount as the grant, and most of the speakers come from the Family Resource Center. The Family Resource budget was also cut. It was \$100,000, and is now \$73,000. This is a pay as you go program, so as the grant gets cut, the subscribers would have to pay more for the services. There are no funds in the budget for FRC.

Lisa Gagliardi asked if Robin would go over the identification process for Project SAGE.

Robin Brown explained the screening process for Project SAGE participants.

Lisa Gagliardi asked if the screening process is from standardized testing.

Robin Brown replied that they are not standardized tests, in the beginning there were a number of programs and workshops for training, and there are still workshops from the Department of Mental Health. There are screening instruments to help identify the children.

Lisa Gagliardi asked if our screening process is different than other districts.

Robin Brown stated that the screening process is the same.

Amy Norton wanted to stress that these are children that are not in a special education program, and we are servicing them in a fiscally responsible program, and if something like this gets cut, the students may then need to get serviced through a special education program. It may not be best for them, and it would be a lot more expensive to do.

Kris Vanacore stated that it is her understanding that this is not any part of special education.

Amy Norton stated that is correct, but there is an identification for emotional disturbance. It could be served by a SAGE Program, then you are servicing that child without having to identify them as special education. You can have programs like these, remedial programs without having to identify them. Even though we are not talking about a learning disability, but emotional and social issues, that down the road if they are not addressed, may get to the point where they need to be identified. This is her concern.

Kris Vanacore asked how many students on a normal day does the Title I aide see, and if these 45 SAGE students are seen once a week. Would our money be better spent with an additional Title I aide, or Project SAGE.

Karen Johnson stated that they are very different programs.

Amy Norton stated that both of these programs are remedial services, if we take away the social emotional piece, it would be a huge disservice to those students.

Lisa Gagliardi stated that she has a concern; she would like to see the money for SAGE spent to increase the Social Worker from .2 to .4 because the Social Worker can also address the social and emotional needs and go beyond the elementary level. She would rather see the money go there.

Penny Seaman stated that our administrators and our staff have worked together to come up with what they believe to be the priorities, and we should rely on the professionals and the people who work with these children all the time. Project SAGE is intended to capture children before their issues are so severe that they end up in special education, and for a relatively small investment, roughly \$15,000 to service 45 students, we have more than paid back our investment. We need to pay attention to what the staff is telling us. They work with these children all the time, and they have done the comparison, and we have to give them some respect.

Kris Vanacore stated that the School Psychologist that Lisa Gagliardi is thinking of is .2 and is at the middle school and high school, not at the elementary level.

Dr. Wolfe stated that they are also different positions.

Cheryl Smith stated that she thought that both of these programs are equally important because we can't just look at children from an academic prospective, we have to look at the social emotional aspect of them. Project SAGE also addresses some family needs, which are also very important. If we put it all into a Title I basket, we might be missing out on a lot of opportunities.

The Arts

Dr. Wolfe stated that the major funding under the Arts is 1.0 for an Art educator to move the high school program along a bit. A copy of the Art study has been handed out, this takes the next logical step; we are woefully understaffed at the high school. This does not satisfy the full need at the high school, but it is clearly an important step. Beyond the Art position is .4 in music at the high school level, and together that creates 1.4 positions. We are chipping away, and increasing support for the Arts, and this is a critical piece to meet the needs of our students. This will do two things in the Arts. In the Art program it will afford us the opportunity to have additional sections of some basic courses, but also to expand the offerings and have a broader Art Department as well.

Kris Vanacore stated that .4 is for music, and wanted to know how many students came from 8th grade and stayed with music.

Dr. Wolfe replied that he would provide this information. It is very difficult at the high school for students to get the courses they want. We have had to employ a lot of independent study up until now. More students go from 8th to 9th in band than in chorus. The real crunch is a year away. This proposal does not speak to the issues identified in the Arts Study. It also did not establish a string program. This is a modest proposal.

Space

Dr. Wolfe stated that looking under 4-21 in your budget there is a sum of \$30,000 to create additional space. He explained the need to relocate certain functions of Central Office out of schools. We are suggesting taking Special Education, Curriculum and Instruction and Technology and consolidate them in rental space, and turn those spaces back to the schools for instructional purposes. At the high school it would mean regaining two offices, and one oversized classroom. At TVES it would mean taking back part of the library. He has asked the Town Manager if there was any space available, but the answer was no. At the high school, we have 5 teachers floating, any new teachers we add will also float, we are almost at 100% maximum use of space, overused at our high school, and we need to capture space. This is one of the ways to capture space. There are several spaces in either Northford or North Branford that might be available. A lot of school systems have done this. On the facilities study, we do not correct these problems for probably more than a decade. Over the next few years we need to be creative and capture more space by getting Central Office out of the High School and out of TVES.

Penny Seaman asked how much space we are asking for.

Dr. Wolfe replied that it is somewhere in the neighborhood of 3,000 square feet.

Penny Seaman asked if it was at a cost of \$30,000.

Dr. Wolfe stated that this is correct.

Capital Budget

Dr. Wolfe explained that we have removed anything that is in the Facility Study. His concern is if we do not get moving on the Facility Study, we will see increased repairs. This capital budget includes what we have been told are essential items, by the Department of Environment Protection or safety and health consultants. The first issue has to do with the bleachers. Our bleachers have safety issues and issues related to handicap accessibility. Our press box has safety issues. What we have is the previously authorized amount of money, and then estimates on completing the work. You would need \$81,000. The Town Council needs to make a decision whether they will support this work. The numbers are getting to the point where we should consider new as opposed to renovating. Either way, this is a major liability to the Board of Education and the Town. The major issue with safety is that the spacing exceeds four inches under the seats and a toddler or baby can fall through to the concrete stanchions and pylons below.

Kris Vanacore asked what does A and E expended mean.

Don Winnicki replied that project has already been bid once and those are the architect and engineer fees.

Kris Vanacore asked if this is just for the bleachers and the press box.

Don Winnicki replied that this is correct.

Kris Vanacore stated that they would do the work on the existing bleachers, so we would not lose the concession stand or anything. They would not be any larger.

Don Winnicki replied that they would not be any larger, we would not lose the concession stand, and we would add handicap access.

Dr. Wolfe added one end of the bleachers would be altered because to put in handicap accessibility, we would put in a ramp and platform.

Kris Vanacore asked what it would be to lease the bleachers.

Dr. Wolfe replied that it would depend on if the town wanted to do this, and for how many years. The more years you lease the total cost goes up. It would require the town to determine what the cost factor would be. If they wanted to do it that way they probably wouldn't have to come up with more money for the first couple of years because there is money already allocated. The other possibility is the Board has some money in the demutualization account and the town might wish to tap into that if they so desire. That is a Town Council decision.

Kris Vanacore asked if the original authorization was to repair both the bleachers and the press box or just the bleachers?

Dr. Wolfe replied that the Board of Education put that in their capital budget and they authorized both.

Penny Seaman stated that we have enough money almost to repair the bleachers, which is the safety issue without further authorization if we chose not to upgrade the press box.

Dr. Wolfe added that the press box is also a safety issue.

Penny Seaman added that is only if we keep it open.

Dr. Wolfe replied this is only if we keep it open, or allow people to film from it, correct.

Lisa Gagliardi asked if we have had the Touchdown Club volunteer to replace the press box.

Don Winnicki replied that there was a group that was starting to get involved with the press box, but when we realized that we had to repair the bleachers also, they put themselves on the back burner waiting to see what happened. It would still be possible to do the bleachers and see if we could get the press box some other way.

Dr. Wolfe stated that the next item on the list is bringing city water to TVES and Stanley T. Williams. This was a number that was provided by the Town. The Town Engineer developed the number. It is to tie both Stanley T. Williams and TVES to city water.

The next item is the parking lot and sidewalk work. There are some critical issues, and in conjunction with the Director of Public Works, and our Supervisor of Building and Grounds we have come up with a high priority list which is the Stanley T. Williams parking lot and sidewalk, and also the NBHS sidewalk. Those are pretty serious hazards.

The last item on the Capital Budget is an amount, which has been identified by the Director of Public Works, who has identified the drainage at the field hockey field, irrigation and then repairs of the drainage culvert at TVES. We have tried to keep items off of the list that would be dealt with on the Facilities Study. Every one of these items are either health related, safety related or imperative because we have received an order from the State of Connecticut.

Amy Norton asked about the transportation account. There was an increase from the 03-04 budget to the 04-05 budget of about approximately \$200,000, why is that.

Don Winnicki replied that it is a contractual increase, not adding any new vehicles.

Amy Norton mentioned that we are very close to needing an additional bus in North Branford side to go into Guilford.

Don Winnicki replied that the issue there is the location; a full size bus can't go there. That will likely be a smaller vehicle. Right now we are piecing things together and we certainly prefer not to add vehicles because of obscure locations that we now have to service. There is another issue on the Branford/North Branford line. There is a set of residents above Williams Road that become very difficult to service as well. Right now we are trying to use the vans.

Lisa Gagliardi asked if the contract would go up \$200,000 every year.

Don Winnicki replied that it would not.

Dr. Wolfe will provide a breakdown of the transportation contract at the next meeting. The costs include Special Education, magnet schools, vocational schools, and technical schools.

Lisa Gagliardi stated that she thought that we did not pay for some of that.

Don Winnicki replied that we do not pay for magnet schools, by and large.

Dr. Wolfe added that ACES pays for Project Choice students, and as Don said we do not pay for most magnet schools.

Don Winnicki added that we do provide transportation for CAMS because it is in Northford, the Sound School, and Lyman because they are Vo-Ag. We also provide transportation to Vinal Technical School.

Penny Seaman stated that in the time she has been on the Board, she has not recalled a budget presentation that so clearly demonstrates that the request of the administration is doing nothing but putting a band-aid on needs that we all know we have in the town. We've had plenty of time to look at this budget, and although some of us might think that one of the requests are more compelling than others, and can't see how we can cut any of these requests without going back on our commitment to meet the strategic objectives and the goals that we have set as a district.

MOTION: Moved by Penny Seaman and seconded by Amy Norton to approve the budget as amended at the last meeting and pass a budget for the 9.97% increase requested by the administration.

Kris Vanacore stated that she thinks that the last part of the Strategic Plan is to be fiscally responsible and does not feel that it is fiscally responsible of us to pass a budget as is, and turn it over to the Town Council for them to do whatever. It is more fiscally responsible for us to decide ahead of time where we feel it needs to come down a little and cut some here and there instead of handing it to the Town Council, and say here you go, because they will throw it back to us and say if you do not want to do it, we won't give you anything.

Penny Seaman added that she does not disagree, but if we are going to pass anything less than this, we would be irresponsible. We have known for a long time that there are needs in the district. It is our obligation as a Board to go and explain to the Town Council why this is not everything the district needs, this is just the things without which this district cannot succeed. We have had plenty of time to look at this information. We have been committed to block scheduling for a long time, we have in some past years worried about our ability to fulfill our commitment to small class size, one can hardly argue that the little bit of money that we are looking for to continue the kind of early intervention and special intervention programs that we have, how can anyone argue that those are

necessary. It is our responsibility to advocate for education. This kind of increase is a significant increase, but we are starting so far behind. We need to take a stand and say this is what we need, and is willing to go and explain it, try to sell it to the Town Council. How can we do less, which of these programs are we prepared to say we do not believe we need in our district.

Kris Vanacore stated that we have let a lot of things go over the last 12-13 years. We can't go in and put it all in at one time. It is irresponsible of us to put forth a budget that gives the Town Council the opportunity to say I'm not giving you anything.

Penny Seaman replied that in years past we have done without. If we don't tell the Town Council what we need, who will? If we say to the Town Council we don't need block scheduling, they won't put it in. In the past we have used that approach, saying that we can't ask for more than we can get from the Town Council.

Kris Vanacore added that we did that last year. Last year we went in with a big fat budget too, and what happened.

Penny Seaman replied that anyone who calls this a big fat budget has not paid attention. This is not getting everything we want. This is prioritizing between many compelling needs. This is not a big fat budget. This is only addressing the most critical needs consistent with the goals we adopted. My motion is on the table.

Kris Vanacore stated that she thought a vote should be taken.

All in favor:

Kris Vanacore	Nay
Cheryl Smith	Aye
Penny Seaman	Aye
Lisa Gagliardi	Nay
Amy Norton	Aye
Ron Haskins	Nay

Motion fails 3/3

Amy Norton stated that when she is looking at this, she does not see anything of significance that we can cut out of here.

Lisa Gagliardi added that even if we wanted to cut something, She doesn't know if it would make up a significant amount of money to make it worthwhile, but wasn't prepared to have to take a vote at the second budget meeting.

Ron Haskins stated that a vote was taken, and it failed.

Amy Norton stated that we had a budget presentation; we had a budget workshop, and this budget workshop. We have had ample opportunity to ask any questions that we have had and still doesn't see anything of significance, in good conscience that we could cut.

Cheryl Smith added that she agreed, if you just look at the Arts alone Dr. Wolfe stated that if we added 1.4 million dollars, maybe we would get up to par. We are not going to do that, but even that wouldn't be fat.

Ron Haskins stated that we would be doing the same thing next week.

Kris Vanacore added that nothing of school programming is fat, but we need to take a look at our existing budget, what we have, what can we do without to get the new programs in. Where can we cut things that we have to get new programs?

Cheryl Smith stated that we should put this off until the next meeting.

Ron Haskins stated that we would put this off until the next meeting. The next meeting we are obligated to present a budget and that is exactly what we will do.

Kris Vanacore asked if we are obligated to present a budget to the town, and we go to 3 – 3, what happens then, are we obligated to turn over the budget as is?

Ron Haskins replied that he would do what has to be done.

Ron Haskins asked if there were any public comments?

Cliff Potter stated that Dr. Wolfe, the administrators, and the educators have given you a budget, they have combed through it, they picked out the fat, it is a bragging right to say you have come from North Branford schools, but we are losing that edge. Vote again, and pass this budget. Trust your administration, trust your educators and do what's right.

Stephanie Bilskis commented that her daughter has been accepted to a private school, she is keeping that option open because she will really be distressed if we lose any more ground than we have. She believes in the North Branford School system. When we get to the High School, we are losing it for our kids. We managed to hold the other programs together, but we still haven't expanded the high school program. If you look at North Haven, their budget is \$34 million they are only giving \$400 more per student, but we need to at some point in time take a risk and convince the town and the Town Council that there are other ways to support the Board of Education budget. That is through development in this town. She graduated in 1975. Don't force her, and other parents to put their

kids in private school because we can't do it here. She thinks it's totally absurd that we cannot provide the education that our kids need and deserve.

Donna Ricci commented on the Title I program. Her son was identified as needing supportive help early in kindergarten. He was given Title I help in 2002, and 2003. It has made a dramatic difference in his development. This year we have a larger class size and only 1 supportive aide at Jerome Harrison. This has resulted in his teacher, his reading consultant, and herself working as a team to help improve his skills. This is one example of how hard our teachers work to provide our children with the best possible service and we need to support them in return. If our children are not offered the proper help from the beginning, they will fall behind. These issues must be addressed and fixed early on in life or the results will potentially affect these children for many years to come.

Carrie Sabetta spoke as a parent, educator, and a former student. The only reason you are having so much difficulty in finding an area to cut is because we have only provided the bare minimum. We have never given any extras. Now you are finding it difficult to cut the extras because they are just not there. It is very important to support the budget as proposed if we are going to even start to progress to the level we need to be if our children are truly going to be successful in society.

Pat Solakian, a resident since 1959, a 1970 graduate, and all of her children have gone through the school system. She has seen that our basic education is wonderful, when we get to our secondary and our high school; you have to look at your high school you have to give them the tools they need to get out into the world, and bring our school system up to where we have to be in the 21st century. She stated that it is very important, and the Board really needs to think about that. For many years, we have done the bare minimum and thinks we need to start to improve what we have. We have to give our students more.

Angela Westwood stated that her third grader has 27 children in his class, and her second grader has 23 children in his class. She is very much in favor of smaller class size, and thanks the administration for supporting this as a priority in this budget. She is sure that with a great deal of research and consideration for it to be there in the first place. This is a crucial time in their development, and a foundation for the rest of their lives. Whether they go on to higher education, or not, she hopes that when they graduate from high school that they have a good foundation in their education. We have a very high regard for the administrators and teachers at TVES and Stanley T. Williams and support the Superintendent's budget proposal. However, we cannot consider a class with 27 children to be very good. We are doing both our children and our teachers a disservice. In addition, my son has been identified as needing Title I services, he could not read in grade 1. If he did not receive those services, he would now be in a 3rd grade class with 27 kids, and it would be very difficult for the teacher to pay attention to him, luckily we have had the services to get his reading level up.

Elisabeth Caplan thanked the Board Members that came to Stanley T. Williams this morning, kudos to Dr. Johnson, the dedicated staff, and the parents. We have a great school. As a parent, she urges the Board to take the advice and the diligent effort of all the administrators, and Dr. Wolfe. There hasn't been any discussion that there is any fat in this budget. There needs to be more participation on members of our community to go to the Town Council meetings. You are our voice and we need you to be able to speak for our school system and we ourselves need to speak for the school system to the Town Council meetings, and the economic development meetings, and thanked the Board for the suggestion today. She will, as a parent, start going to these meetings to show support for the school system. But we also need the Board's help; please pass the budget as it is. We trust you, and please trust the people who have worked so hard to put this together.

Kristin Naracci spoke for Flo Pimer, who is PTO Co-President at Stanley T. Williams. She has a daughter who is in 3rd grade, and there are 27 students in her class. She is supposed to be getting Title I help in math, with the cut in funding, she will not be getting that assistance. There is in the proposed budget, there are funds for these services. She hopes that the funds for these services are not cut. We would like to see the class size reduced.

Elaine Larson spoke in favor of block scheduling. She thinks it is time to move into the 21st century, our kids are going to suffer the consequences of inaction on the part of the Board. She thinks that the Board has been elected to worry about the school system, and the school system alone. It is incredibly important for you to be advocates for the kids and that advocacy means that you have to take a risk. It will not be popular when you go in front of the Town Council, but it is your charge. Step up to the bar, and ask and try to persuade. We would certainly be happy to come and back you up. Whether the Town Council buys it or not, no one can promise. No one got any distance without requesting first. The second thing is a comment on the Library Media, has there been any thought on exploring grants from private foundations that might provide money for books for example.

MOTION: Moved by Kris Vanacore seconded by Cheryl Smith to adjourn this Board of Education Budget meeting at 9:30 p.m.

ALL VOTED AYE

Respectfully submitted,

Terri Rienzo

