

North Branford Board of Education Meeting Tuesday, July 26, 2005

The North Branford Board of Education met on Tuesday, July 26, 2005 at Jerome Harrison Elementary School at 7:00 p.m. The following members attended:

Board Chair:	Ron Haskins
Board Vice-Chair:	Cheryl Smith
Board Secretary:	Amy Norton
Board Members:	Larry Casey Marie Diamond Lisa Gagliardi
Director of Curriculum/ Instruction	Joan Follo (representing Dr. Wolfe)
Director of Business/ Personnel:	Donald Winnicki

MOTION: Moved by Cheryl Smith and seconded by Lisa Gagliardi to adjourn to executive session as per Section 1-225 of the Connecticut General Statutes as permitted by Section 1-200 (6) (a,b&c) of the Connecticut General Statutes to discuss safety, security and personnel issues.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

MOTION: Moved by Larry Casey and seconded by Cheryl Smith to reconvene to public session at 7:00 p.m.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

RECOGNITION – None at this time.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE – None at this time.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES –

MOTION: Moved by Cheryl Smith and seconded by Larry Casey to approve the minutes of the June 15, 2005 Board of Education Meeting with no corrections.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

COMMUNICATIONS

Letter from: Cheryl Saloom, Executive Director – ACES

Re: Appointment of new principal of ACES Educational Center for the Arts.

Joan Follo stated that Superintendent Wolfe regrets that he cannot be in attendance because of his hospitalization and wishes him a speedy recovery. The Superintendent announced the appointment of a new principal of the ACES Educational Center for the Arts. As of July 1st Leo Lavalline who has served as the Assistant Principal at Thomas Edison Middle School is now the Principal of CEA and that's under Exhibit A.

Superintendent Wolfe has received a letter from the Connecticut State Department of Education regarding proposed revisions of the State's ERG or ERGs Education Reference Groups. ERGs are towns grouped in accordance to similar criteria such as population, mean, income, poverty index and per people expenditure. The state has changed our present ERG-D to an ERG-E. As an ERG-E we would be the second largest town in the ERG consisting of 30 or 29 other towns. Some of the towns are Ashford, Bosrah, Canaan, Chester, Deep River, Eastford and Thomaston. The Superintendent has serious concerns about this configuration based on comparing us to small rural communities throughout the state, none of which are contiguous in location to North Branford. We are most often compared with North Haven, Branford, Wallingford, all of which have remained in ERG-D. The Superintendent has written the Connecticut State Department of Education about his concerns and will keep the board informed of the proposed changes.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. **Resignations** - There are none at this time

B. **Appointments**

The Superintendent has extended contracts to the following certified staff:

Kristi Maynard	Special Education	TVES	Masters	6
Jerry Prell	Grade 7 Geography	NBIS	Bachelors	1
Heather Porto	Special Ed	NBIS	Masters	5

The Superintendent under the authority granted at the June Board Meeting has appointed the above individuals.

Mr. Jeffrey Doornweerd has withdrawn his application for a .6 K-5 Physical Education position for a full time position in another district.

C. **Leaves** – None at this time.

D. **E-Rate Authorization**

E-Rate funding requires the Board to give the Superintendent authorization to file applications for funding. This federal reimbursement provides the school system with money for technology. Everyone's phone bill has this additional tax. School systems can be provided with consideration in terms of a reduced rate if they fill out the appropriate paperwork. We're requesting the federal reimbursement permission from the board to do that. A question was raised as to why the Superintendent was listed as purchasing agent – Don Winnicki and Joan Follo responded that the wording was a formality and the authorization was for reimbursement purposes. As a result of our E-Rate Application, we are going to get \$15,000-\$20,000 or more back on phone bills and frame relay circuits for the internet connections. This year we received about \$15,000 from SBC and additional money from Nextel. This is the authorization to file the application like you have in most federal grants. The credits from the phone bill are applied to technology equipment only.

MOTION: Moved by Cheryl Smith and seconded by Larry Casey to approve the authorization of Superintendent Robert K. Wolfe to act as purchasing agent for the North Branford Public Schools and as such to be the authorized representative for E-Rate applications.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

E. **Physical Education Curriculum Guide K-12**

The Superintendent is pleased to present Board members a draft for first reading of the Physical Education Curriculum Guide K-12. Carter Welch, a P.E. health teacher at the high school facilitated the development of this curriculum. Carter was unable to attend this evening's meeting but will be present at the August Board Meeting upon adoption of the curriculum. Any questions may be asked of Carter at that time or at the curriculum sub-committee meeting prior to the next meeting. Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Mrs. Joan Follo, was present to answer questions that the Board had.

F. **Summer Professional Development**

The North Branford Public Schools in cooperation with ACES hosted the Columbia Writing Project. This professional development in the area of writing is part of the Strategic Plan. A total of 24 North Branford faculty members attended either the beginning or advanced session the week of June 27th. In all, that totals 54 educators K5 that have been trained in the Columbia Writing Project over the last five years. In

addition, faculty members from neighboring districts were also able to attend. The Columbia Writing Project rarely provides their program outside of New York City.

It should also be noted that a number of faculty members participated in Science, Responsive Classroom, Power School and other district initiatives. In total, 71 staff members are attending Professional Development activities this summer.

G. 2004/2005 Professional Development Activities

Listed for your review is a compilation of professional development activities that certified staff members were involved in during the 2004/2005 school year. The vast majority of activities are in support of the four professional development strands. By having a focused professional development program in the areas of differentiation, writing, character education and technology, the North Branford Public Schools Professional Development Program was most cost effective. Special thanks go to the district's Professional Development committee, the administrative team and the entire certified staff.

H. NBPOPS Grant

The North Branford Public Schools in cooperation with NBPOPS has received a \$10,000 arts grant from the State Department of Education. Elaine Larson, President of NBPOPS, first identified the funding source. The grant was written by Superintendent Wolfe and centered on enrichment activities for both the performing and visual arts. Students will be able to travel to art museums and musical performances to enhance the middle school and high school art programs. Special thanks also go to Representative Bob Ward for his assistance with this project. Lisa Gagliardi raised the question as to the grant requires us to follow any guidelines as to expenditures. Joan Follo responded that the actual grant application gives the framework for expenditures and procedures. Mrs. Gagliardi also questioned whether there was any follow report on expenditures and Mrs. Follo responded that in most cases there is a year-end report required detailing the expenditures and to return unused funds.

I. CMC Update

The Curriculum Management Cycle first introduced in 2001 is an important template for the on-going process with curriculum revision. North Branford employed a four part revision process: review, development, implementation and evaluation. The Curriculum Management Cycle provides a cost-effective on-going process. The Curriculum Management Cycle was last reviewed by administration this past June. The updated/revised cycle is provided for Board review. It should be noted that with the completion of the work in social studies, the school system will have completed one full cycle.

J. Buildings and Grounds Report

Director of Personnel & Business, Don Winnicki, and Supervisor of Buildings and

Grounds, Todd Jaramillo, provided the Board with an update on building and grounds projects that are scheduled for the summer of 2005. The work that is scheduled is perhaps the most aggressive in recent years.

In addition, groundbreaking on the new concession/restroom project sponsored by Rotary occurred on Monday, June 11, 2005. The footings were completed and work on the blocks is underway.

The North Branford middle school project was accepted by the State legislature in the Special Session of the General Assembly. The Superintendent will also provide the Board with an update of the middle school "renovate as new" project at the next Board of Ed Meeting.

Todd Jaramillo gave a breakdown on work being done this summer some of which included incinerator replacement, replacement of locker room shower tiles, roofing repairs, asbestos, painting, upgrading bathrooms, pricing for new doors, replacing exhaust fans, replacing of lockers, additional TV's, checking moisture under old rugs, new carpeting, and ventilator replacement. Completed projects included recycling computers, recycling of light bulbs, removal of hazardous materials, elevator inspections and fire extinguishing testing. Don Winnicki is working with Fran Merola to do some work on the FRC playground. The bleacher retrofit is stalled again. When meeting with the architect and the contractor Don discovered the architect had changed the specs. They had replaced the aluminum straps with wooded straps in order to save money. When asked what it would take to do aluminum, the price was increased by \$28,000. The original quote was \$149,000 and they also said they could not commit to a September completion date. Don has stopped the project. Because of the additional \$28,000, the bleachers and the scoreboard cannot both be done. We would have to drop the scoreboard to get it in the budget.

MOTION: Moved by Cheryl Smith and seconded by Larry Casey to forego the scoreboard and move forward on the bleacher project.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

K. Strategic Planning Update

The administrative team met on June 27th and 28th to review the work completed in 2004/2005. In addition, the administrative team targeted goals for the 2005/2006 school year. The concept of site planning was also introduced. The initial stages of site planning will commence in each building during the coming school year.

Many of the Action Plans have now become operational and part of the fiber of the North Branford Public Schools. The Superintendent will provide the Board with a copy of the Strategic Plans proposed goals by the September Board Meeting.

L. Master Math Plan

In an effort to improve student performance in mathematics at the elementary and middle

school levels, each school developed a draft Mathematics Action Plan. These were then melded into one district mathematics plan. This plan will act as a blueprint for our efforts during the 2005/2006 school year.

M. New Teacher Orientation

New teachers will receive a two-day New Teacher Orientation program on August 25th and 26th, 2005. The program for these two days has been revised based on input that we have collected from a survey of our new teachers during their 2004/2005 orientations. Emphasis is placed for this coming year on topics that novice teachers need to know immediately. For example, where do they go in case of a fire drill, for lunch are they supposed to be eating lunch with the students, are they supposed to be picking up the students after lunch and bringing them back to the classroom, etc? Training and topics relating to instruction will occur throughout the school year.

N. NBSS

With the hiring of one new aide at TVES, we continue to rebuild our remedial language arts and mathematics program. This is the second aide that we have hired in the area of mathematics. Two additional aides are required to be back to the level of the Title I program prior to the loss of funding. Criteria for the NBSS program was developed last year and revised this school year. NBSS serves our non special education population in need of support in language arts.

O. Professional Growth Educator Evaluation Program

The school year 2004/2005 saw the implementation of the Professional Growth Educator Evaluation Program. The plan was fully implemented at each school. Based on the first year's implementation a few positive changes have been recommended. A committee that worked on the original document will reconvene to make the necessary revisions. Some of the revisions involve streamlining the document's forms .

P. Bidding

Based on a statement made during public comment at the last Board Meeting, Don Winnicki will provide a recap of the bidding process. This also includes the school system's involvement in various consortium purchases and items that are a part of the State's bid list. Don stated we bid anything that is \$7,500 or more unless it's on a state contract or unless we are using a consortium or unless it's a vendor-specific item (ex. Apple Computer –have to get from Apple can't bid.) Most of school supplies suppliers participate in the State contracts. We also participate in consortium bids for fuel oil, copy paper, and medical supplies. Custodial materials are different because the labor to put floor finishes down is so intensive and so extensive, it doesn't make sense to use the least expensive floor care product. We now bring in people and test products and equipment before buying them.

Q. Food Service Accounts

The Superintendent also provides information relative to food service accounts and funding levels that are recommended by the State of Connecticut for food service programs. Don Winnicki stated we have a document which is the Annual Revenue and Cost Expenditure Report from the State and that indicates that we should have a three month operating reserve at the end of the fiscal year. We need a working balance of \$200,000 to \$250,000.

R. Staffing

As of this writing, STW, JHS, TVES and NBHS are fully staffed with all required certified personnel. One position remains at NBIS in World Language. At the high school level, there is a possibility of hiring one social studies teacher and two English teachers, but we are presently waiting for verification.

S. Annual Report

One of the tasks completed at the Administrative Retreat on June 28th was to identify the significant accomplishments of the school district during the 2004/2005 school year. The Superintendent provided the Board with advance information of the printed annual report. This report is required by State Statute. The Superintendent will give an oral annual report to the Board upon his return at an upcoming Board of Ed meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Board of Education will review and take possible action on committee reports.

1. Negotiations

The negotiations committee met three times over the last month to discuss the Superintendent's contract. The committee is recommending to postpone the renewal of the Superintendent's contract until the Fall 2005. There are two primary reasons for the recommendation: The first is to protect the Superintendent. Given the current climate amongst teachers and the public at this point in time, it does not feel like it's the right time to make this decision. In addition to the fact that the Superintendent has provided true vision for the North Branford School District, and he has definitely successfully lead us to achieve many objectives including those in our strategic plan and moving towards a new middle school and other issues. There is certainly a morale issue on the table. We have received a vote of no confidence in the Superintendent by teachers. And this is the second reason we are making this recommendation. This issue seems to have emerged purely recently following the arbitration award with the contract and some other issues that have come up and it looks like people are unhappy. But there is nothing specific in the no confidence vote. So

we feel as though we need to explore the issue further with the Superintendent and postpone the renewal of this contract.

MOTION: Moved by Cheryl Smith and seconded by Larry Casey to postpone the renewal of the Superintendent's contract to no later than November 2005.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

2. Budget

a. Line Item Transfers

Mr. Donald Winnicki, Director of Personnel and Business, presented a report of recommended line item transfers. Line item transfers must be completed at the very first meeting following the close of the fiscal year. The accounts on the left side of the ledger are the ones we had the surpluses in and those on the right side are the ones we had the deficits and so the transfers are made to cover them. Made severance payouts. Fuel oil was budgeted for \$1.33 and it's coming in at \$1.85. Final balance to town was \$48,133.

MOTION: Moved by Cheryl Smith and seconded by Larry Casey to accept line item transfers as delineated on the specified report.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

3. Buildings & Grounds – **Previously covered.**

4. Curriculum – **Previously covered.**

5. Pension – No Report.

6. Policy

The first reading of the following policies is provided to the Board:

Policy #P7517 – Security
Policy #P7532 – Property Insurance
Policy #P7540 – Food Service

The second reading of the following policies is provided to the Board:

Policy #P0850 Compliance with Section 504
Policy #P7450 School Based Funds
Policy #P7510 Operation and Maintenance of School Property
Policy #P7514 Use of School Equipment or Property
Policy #P7515 Use of School Facilities
Policy #P7524 Hazardous Materials in School
Policy #P7525 Pesticide Application

MOTION: Moved by Cheryl Smith and seconded by Larry Casey to approve Policy #P0850 – Compliance with Section 504 as submitted.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

MOTION: Moved by Cheryl Smith and seconded by Larry Casey to approve Policy #P7450 – School Based Funds as submitted.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

MOTION: Moved by Cheryl Smith and seconded by Larry Casey to approve Policy #P7510 – Operation and Maintenance of School Property as submitted.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

MOTION: Moved by Cheryl Smith and seconded by Larry Casey to approve Policy #P7514 – Use of School Equipment or Property as submitted.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

MOTION: Moved by Cheryl Smith and seconded by Larry Casey to approve Policy #P7515 Use of School Facilities as submitted.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

MOTION: Moved by Cheryl Smith and seconded by Larry Casey to approve Policy #P7524 – Hazardous Materials in School as submitted.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

MOTION: Moved by Cheryl Smith and seconded by Larry Casey to approve Policy

#P7525 – Pesticide Application as submitted.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

7. Aces – No
8. Strategic Planning - Covered
9. Building Committee - Covered
10. Calendar Committee

Some of the areas highlighted were: the first day of school for students will be prior to Labor Day (August 31); School will be in session on Veteran's Day (November); there will be a full February vacation 2/19-2/23 which includes President's Day; and the April vacation will be early 4/9-4/13 which includes Good Friday. The last day of school will be June 15. Five snow days bringing it to 6/22 and any more than six snow days will be taken from the end of Spring Break 4/9-4/13.

MOTION: Moved by Amy Norton and seconded by Larry Casey to approve calendar 2006-2007 as submitted.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

11. Transportation/Bus Safety Committee – No report this month.

Unfinished Business

There was a Board of Education meeting held earlier in the day.

An overview was given of the meeting held two hours prior to the Executive Session. The focus of the agenda was communication with the public and communication amongst the six members on the board. Results from that meeting will greatly improve communication in our district which has been at an all time low causing stress everywhere in our town. Steps identified for improving communication include the formation of an advisory committee, or sub-committee, of the board to further discuss plans and concerns and then reporting back to the full board. A newsletter that would be published in conjunction with the Board of Education and Central Office and distributed on a quarterly basis to every single student and home in the district as well as the Totoket Times. (Example: the budget process was mentioned as a topic for the newsletter – stating that there is a need to update people as to what is going on within the Board of Education with regards to the budget process.) Also discussed was having board members represent the Board of Education at PTO meetings and reporting back to the board issues that are going on in the schools. Also recommended, was that the public should write down questions and concerns and things that they would like a response to and submit them to the Board. The board will provide answers under New Business or Unfinished Business at the end of the meeting.

At the last meeting discussion was brought up about having to cut the creative learning program out of the budget for this school year. One of the things the board would like to see is a report on what we are doing instead of the creative learning program. Will update in next month's meeting.

Visitors and Press

Elisabeth Caplan commended the board "whether you renew Dr. Wolfe's contract tonight, next month or the month after you showed that you realize how important it is to get in the schools at the ground level to take action at the ground level so you yourselves can hear what's going on at a regular basis and I think that's very important in moving forward. We had challenges this year. We also had a lot of positives this year as well. Thank you for all your hard work."

Cliff Potter asked when the new contract would be voted on. Amy Norton replied that this would be done by the November board meeting. Board members informed the audience that the present board members will be involved in the decision.

"Marilyn Mesner of Village St

I have concerns about communications and I'm sorry I'm not as positive. Here are some more signatures from petitions. I have some copies from the State of Connecticut about a complaint we had to file. There was a breach of confidence by Dr. Wolfe and Ron Haskins regarding my son's PPT.

First I'd like to back up a little bit. Thank you to Lisa Gagliardi. She made an extra effort and went out of her way to get the two meetings that weren't taped to get the audio tapes to Dr. Perry so they can be combined with the video and can someday be put on Channel 19 for the public to see. Thank you for the double taping tonite so those who couldn't make the meeting will be able to view it someday.

The Board members are aware of the breach that occurred by Dr. Wolfe and Ron Haskins. I remain concerned about this because in a letter dated 6/27 that I just passed out to you the State requested a response from Dr. Wolfe within 15 calendar days and the state has received no response. I'll read what they say 'Since the bureau only has 60 calendar days in which to respond to our complaints, your prompt attention to this request is appreciated. In addition, please submit any and all documentation that you feel is pertinent to this complaint.' I called the State yesterday since is past the 20 days and that would have been the 20th and they have not received any response from the town. I would hate for this to go any longer so I ask this board to please look into this.

I've also included an email. I requested information from the special ed department from Suzanne Wright and I believe it was the 12th and it's regarding my son in special ed and I haven't received any information and I have a follow up email there and I don't appreciate – I don't know how long I have to wait and I ask you the board to follow up on that.

Also, my concern regarding communication. Cheryl, I was really, really surprised by your comment that this board is protecting Bob in this contract. Is it your job, the board, to

protect him? Isn't it his job to prove that he is worthy of renewal? What specifics does the board need as far as the vote of no confidence from the teachers? Isn't the vote of no confidence enough? I appreciate that you are looking into this but my only problem is the vote of no confidence should speak for itself."

Penny Seaman stated that she appreciates all the work the board does, the criticism they get, and how much sacrifice it takes to sit on the committee. She has concerns that we allow the kinds of issues that are swirling around in our district to make us all forget the fact that we have come so far. When she looks back at the years that she has been involved in the schools, first as a parent, then as a board member, and now, as a former board member she can't imagine the improvements we have made. She recalled when Dr. Wolfe was first being interviewed for this position, and a poll was taken of all the administrators in town and asked, "what do we need in a superintendent". She can remember two things that were told to her; we need a strategic plan and we need somebody who will make the hard decisions. That is what we got in Dr. Wolfe. We got a strategic plan and we got somebody who will make the hard decisions. It's easy to make the easy decisions. It is easy to make the popular decisions. But it's not easy to make the hard decisions. She does not agree that the board is here to serve the district, serve the superintendent, or serve the teachers. She believes they are here to serve the students. "They've done a good job by my children, as has Dr. Wolfe". Penny's hope is that many other students in this town will benefit from the type of leadership that Dr. Wolfe has demonstrated, the same way her children have. She does not know what the vote of no confidence is about, but thinks it's important to find out. Ask our administrators, "what do you think of Dr. Wolfe?" Do you appreciate how much cleaner our buildings are? Do you appreciate how much improved our food service is. Do you appreciate that the enforced strict environment of our teachers are to benefit our students? I hope you don't let Dr. Wolfe get away.

Carol Papa taught in North Branford for many years. She taught under a lot of superintendents. Dr. Wolfe has a vision, which is outstanding because very often it includes the people that he is serving. Speaking on behalf of the middle school, we certainly have come a long way. He's listened to our needs, I think a lot of us our grateful for that and I hope you will allow him to continue to work towards his vision.

Judy Ruggiero, a Life Skills teacher at NBIS, supports Dr. Wolfe. We began our Life Skills Program from ACES and Dr. Wolfe has done an outstanding job of being supportive. We have the chairman of the Special Education Department at Southern at our beck and call. The amount of materials we have to support our curriculum is very adequate. This is her second job at the public school system and she feels very supported by Dr. Wolfe. "I think you might hear a lot more from people that are unhappy and not from people that are happy. I am very proud to work at North Branford and I am very proud to work for Dr. Wolfe."

Janice Vergati, regarding the superintendent's contract, feels "if you read any of the letters that have been mailed to you, you will clearly see that you do have some skeptics. And this hasn't only happened in the last few months. The non-renewal of teacher's contract was just the straw that broke the camel's back. A superintendent needs to be able to have all the teachers work together, not one teacher or two teachers. You will see a lot of teachers don't work together because of Dr. Wolfe's leadership."

Joan Follo, on behalf of many of the administrators who work directly for Dr. Wolfe, presented the board members with a letter regarding the many successes of Dr. Wolfe's tenure as Superintendent of Schools in the North Branford Public Schools. During his four years in North Branford, Dr. Wolfe's positive impact has resulted in new programs, especially in Special Education, Early Childhood Education, and Summer and after school enrichment programs, curriculum development, student assessment, professional development and significant budget savings. Also Dr. Wolfe has made a positive impact in changes in technology to a comprehensive network system, a strategic plan that has actually changed the way we do business, and the passing of significant renovation of our Middle School. We, the administrators, requested a superintendent with vision and an intricate knowledge of long and short term planning. This was our request of the Board of Education at that time. That Board of Ed took our request seriously and hired this man of vision and planning. Dr. Wolfe sets high standards. He holds high expectations for himself and for each administrator and educator in the North Branford schools. High standards, high expectations bring change to our district.

Any kind of change, even change for the better, can create discomfort in even the most competent high achieving professionals. It is only natural that we would experience growing pains as changes in programming; curriculum and facilities are being made. Every decision made by Superintendent Wolfe has had a positive impact on student's education. The decision is made with an eye on what is best for our students. His tireless efforts and his dedication to the common good of the district and his tough decision-making are fully supported by the undersigned. We look forward to our continued work with this talented, creative, visionary leader for many years to come. A copy of this was given out in the meeting.

The next regular Board of Education meeting is scheduled for August 16, 2005 at Totoket Valley Elementary School at 7:00 p.m.

MOTION: Moved by Larry Casey and seconded by Amy Norton to adjourn this meeting of the North Branford Board of Education at 8:55 p.m.

**ALL VOTED AYE
MOTION PASSED 6-0**

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl A. Spaar