

BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING MINUTES  
JOINT SPECIAL COMMUNICATION/TEACHING & LEARNING COMMITTEE MEETING

DATE: March 10, 2021

LOCATION: Walsh Intermediate School Cafeteria  
185 Damascus Road, Branford, CT 06405

SUBJECT: Board of Education Meeting

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**ATTENDANCE**

HERE	ATTENDEE	AFFILIATION
Y	Meredith Gaffney	Board of Education
Y	Ellen Michaels	Board of Education
Y	John R. Prins	Board of Education
Y	Peter Berdon	Board of Education
Y	Joanne Borrus	Board of Education
Y	Cristina Cantu	Board of Education
Y	Chad Edgar	Board of Education
Y	Dawn Perrotti	Board of Education
Y	Dr. Tim Raynor	Board of Education
Y	Hamlet M. Hernandez, Superintendent	Central Office
Y	Rachel Sexton, Assistant Superintendent	Central Office
N	Don Neel, Chief Operating Officer	Central Office

Others present: Lee Panagoulis, BHS Principal, Raeanne Reynolds, WIS Principal, Charles Cicarella, Director of Student Services, James O'Connor, MRT Principal, Ashley Dubin and Lauren Skultety, District Curriculum Coordinators

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**BUSINESS ITEMS**

**ITEM DESCRIPTION**

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**CALL TO ORDER**

- 01** Meeting was called to order at 6:32 PM by BOE Chair, John Prins.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**02 2021-2022 Calendar Committee Update**

Superintendent Hernandez discussed the 2021-2022 school year calendar. He stated that the Calendar Committee is the process of developing 3 options for the Board to consider. All three options have teachers starting on the same day and all students returning the day after Labor Day. Instead of specifically naming holidays there will be recess/break periods that may overlap with a holiday. The variation of the three options will be in the Spring Recess.

**03 Citizen Petition 10-238**

Superintendent Hernandez discussed the petition that was filed in the Town Clerk's office. Mr. Hernandez stated that the District was seeking councils' opinion on needing to have signatures. When asked to speak regarding the petition, Jennifer Orlando, District parent, stated that the signatures were verified, it was for the proposed agenda dated February 24<sup>th</sup> and there was an accountability piece.

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#### DISCUSSION ITEMS (Continued)

##### 04 COVID 19 (District Dashboard)

Together Superintendent Hernandez and Assistant Superintendent Sexton reviewed the District's COVID-19 positive dashboard. Mr. Hernandez and Ms. Sexton explained where to find the dashboard on the District's website, how to navigate it and how to review the information available there. Superintendent Hernandez stated that this dashboard was created at the suggestion of a parent as a way to replace the dailey letters so that the community can review the information themselves.

#### PRESENTATION

05 Superintendent Hernandez along with the District Leadership Team gave a presentation on the following: Survey Results (Parents and Staff), Full In-person Instructional Model Timeline, SEL Definition. Among the items discussed were:

- BPS adult and student COVID-19 cases by week.
- BPS adult and student COVID-19 total cases by level.
- BPS students in hybrid model.
- BPS requests for voluntary remote vs. requests to return to district model.
- Vaccination update (552 vaccinated employees – at least one dose).
- Public health indicators - Branford's leading indicator and Branford's secondary indicator.
- Parent/guardian survey results (52% response rate) – preferred return timeframe, preferred return process, bus ridership and summer learning.
- Staff survey results (45% response rate) – preferred return option, level of concern regarding the following; hybrid classroom density and full in-person classroom density, lunch supervision/distancing regarding hybrid lunch and full in-person lunch, mask enforcement regarding hybrid mask enforcement and full in-person mask enforcement, ability to sustain model regarding hybrid sustainability and full in-person sustainability.
- Revised framework – March transition as originally proposed, acceleration considerations, accelerated March transition.
- Health and safety measures - current practices in hybrid and modifications for full in-person.
- SEL definition – Priority number 1 – promote student and staff physical health and emotional well-being (social emotional learning and social emotional supports).

#### PUBLIC COMMENT ON ACTION AGENDA ITEMS

Neil Sullivan, District parent, stated that he felt the reopening plan was unacceptable and spoke about recent attacks on the administration, a call for change and a need for Board training. Mr. Sullivan thanked the Board and Superintendent Hernandez for being responsive.

Stephanie Carvin, District parent, thanked the District for updating the plan and for information. Ms. Carvin asked why the priority was younger students. Ms. Carvin discussed the need for social emotional learning and support for teenagers and adolescents and considering moving all students back at the same time.

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PUBLIC COMMENTS (Continued)

Jennifer Orlando, District parent, thanked the Board for this evening's meeting. Ms. Orlando also discussed the District's full plan. Ms. Orlando asked where to find the plan on the website, did teachers have access to the plan and parent involvement.

Becky Gillman, District parent, discussed the parents' need to speak out and stated that she appreciated Superintendent Hernandez and the Board for having heard them. Ms. Gillman also thanked several district staff members including Assistant Superintendent Sexton, Mrs. Eyrich, Dr. Clark, Ms. Pustari and Ms. Evans.

Celia Toche, District parent, stated that she was grateful for everyone's efforts and thanked the Board for being nimble. Ms. Toche also discussed parent engagement, having another listening session, her concern for high school students, what could be done for teachers and staff in regards to working on their mental health and continuing to provide lunch in the classrooms. Ms. Toche also asked about the statutory requirement for convening the ad hoc committee.

Gregg Jerolman, Branford resident, thanked the Board for stepping up to the plate. Mr. Jerolman also discussed the citizen petition and the timeline.

Karen Lopez, District parent, asked why the students were going back at separate times and discussed teacher morale.

Lynn Lacroix, District parent, stated that she was disappointed in seeing high school students being bumped out 4 weeks. Ms. Lacroix also asked why the extra time and is there any way to get the students back sooner?

Derek Green, District parent, thanked the Board and Superintendent for listening to the community and stated that he would like the interaction with the community to continue.

**ADJOURN**

**06** MOTION (Gaffney/Michaels) to adjourn.

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Ms. Gaffney adjourned the meeting at 9:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Meredith Gaffney  
Secretary

Prepared by,  
Kerry Eyrich