

BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION
Special Communication Committee Minutes

DATE: **October 20, 2021**

LOCATION: **Walsh Intermediate School Cafeteria**
185 East Main Street, Branford, CT

SUBJECT: **Communication Committee**

ATTENDANCE

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

Others present:

BUSINESS ITEMS

ITEM DESCRIPTION

CALL

- 01** Meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Committee Chair, Meredith Gaffney.

PRESENTATION

- 02** **Branford Families Mental Health Program**
Celia Toche provided a presentation on the Branford Families Mental Health Program. Among the items that Ms. Toche discussed were; a way to destigmatize what we are all feeling, tools to work things through, looking at different aspects that were identified as being challenging areas around town, workshops will be one Monday a month from 6:30 - 8:00 PM, child care will be provided by volunteers, collaboration with Guilford Arts Center, tutoring for children while their parents are attending a program, space provided by Branford schools, accessible parking, making the future bright for kids, a community that cares, no fee for these programs and the need for help in getting the word out regarding these programs.

Ms. Toche also discussed the following upcoming programs:

- November - the topic is social emotional learning.
- December - the topic is suicide prevention, kids and adult training.
- January - the conversation will be self-care.
- February - the guest speaker is Dr. John Siebold
- March - the topic is anxiety.
- April - the focus is Men (what it means to be strong emotionally)
- May - the topic is body image.

June - the focus is putting together a tool kit for families

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DISCUSSION/UPDATE ITEMS

03 A. COVID-19 Update

Among the items that Superintendent Hernandez discussed in his update were:

- The COVID Dashboard
- Two important things happening - 1. meeting with the DPH Director to discuss how to implement a testing out of quarantine and 2. vaccination clinics for our younger students.
- Booster clinics (for our employees)
- District compliance with the Governor's mandate
- Discussions with families at the Superintendent Check-ins regarding opportunities for students to socialize more in school (moving more toward a normal day)
- One of the challenges that we face are lunch rooms in the winter months
- Starting to mitigate impacts

04 D. Walsh Intermediate School (WIS) Project Update

Superintendent Hernandez discussed the following; involving students in a virtual tour, discussing a more formal tour with the Public Building Commission when the pool is done (possibly in Spring and nicer weather), the Antinozzi Study (November BOE meeting), his recent meeting with the Park & Recreation Department including Antinozzi and Stantec, the First Selectman's Committee looking at fields, the District's needs, the first round of Superintendent's check-in meetings, and The Sound article regarding the first month of school.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON DISCUSSION UPDATE ITEMS

Jennifer Orlando, District parent, asked in regards to the meetings that Ms. Toche' just presented on if meetings were being held in person and if so why other programs are not being held in person. Ms. Orlando spoke about Dashboards and the WIS project and children coming home muddy.

Megan Delucia, District parent, asked about vaccination clinics (mandatory?), mask metrics/guidelines and mandates and the 8th grade trip (Washington, D.C.)

Brett Jolly, District parent, spoke about teacher vaccinations, the Governor's Executive Order #13D and where students should eat their lunch.

Stephanie Ducharme, District parent, spoke about speaking and appearing at meetings, an article that was in the New Haven Register, and parent frustration.

Gregg Jerolman, Branford resident, spoke about his experience while attending a past BOE meeting.

Jamie Kovescses, District parent, spoke about having a plan when the mask mandate is lifted, tools used to combat illness (hand washing), the price and a particular type of masks.

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ADJOURNMENT

- 05** MOTION (Raynor/Berdon) to adjourn.
APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Ms. Gaffney adjourned the meeting at 7:17 PM.

The next Communication Committee Meeting will be held on
November 10, 2021, at 6:30 PM at Walsh Intermediate School Cafeteria

Respectfully submitted,
Meredith Gaffney
Secretary

Prepared by,
Kerry Eyrich