

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2011**

The bi-monthly meeting of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held on Monday, February 28, 2011, in the cafeteria of Mt. Hope High School, 199 Chestnut Street in Bristol, RI. The Chairperson, John C. Bento, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 PM.

Present: John C. Bento, Chair, Paul Silva, Vice-Chair (8:50), William M. O'Dell, Treasurer, Karen A. Lynch, Secretary, Denise R. Arsenault, Diana B. Campbell, Marjorie J. McBride, Susan Rancourt and John P. Saviano; Melinda L. Thies, Superintendent; Mario J. Andrade, Assistant Superintendent; Pauline A. Silva, Director of Administration and Finance; Mary N. Almeida, Director of Literacy and Title I; Leslie J. Anderson, Director of Pupil Personnel Services; and Andrew D. Henneous, Esq., District Solicitor

Absent: none

OPENING BUSINESS

All present were invited to join in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Accolades

Five Mt. Hope High School students and six Kickemuit Middle School students won awards in the annual Rhode Island Scholastics statewide competition that honors excellence in visual arts. Their work, along with nearly 200 others, was exhibited at Salve Regina University. Statewide, each art teacher was allowed to submit up to five student artworks. Entrants were judged blindly by local art professionals using the criteria of “originality, technical skill, and the emergence of a personal vision or voice.” Student work that won Gold Key awards will go on to the regional competition in New York. Winning students were also invited to attend workshops with Salve Regina art faculty. We congratulate:

High School Students

Tyler Murgo Gold Key Award

Talia King Gold Key Award

Brooke Pacheco Gold Key Award

Catelynn DaCosta Two Silver Key Awards

Madelaine Dennis Silver Key Award

Middle School Students

Alexis Arel Gold Key Award

Sarah Barboza Gold Key Award

Matthew Cairrao Gold Key Award

Dylan DiFrenna Gold Key Award

Madison Astrologo Silver Key Award

Hannah Riccio Silver Key Award

The Kickemuit Middle School Wrestling Team recently competed in the Middle School State Wrestling Tournament. Under the direction of Coach Matt Martel, ten wrestlers at KMS won titles at the state championship.

1st Place State Champions: Nicholas Teves, Christian Torres, Sean Patrick Thibaudeau, Dominic Lombardo and Quinlin Preston

2nd Place: Nathan Pimental and Joshua Zasowski

3rd Place: Devon Lancaster

4th Place: Joshua Conti and Trevor King

The following Mt. Hope High School students were accepted and performed with the Southern New England Honors Band at the University of Rhode Island on Saturday, January 22, 2011. They auditioned along with students from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island for a seat in this prestigious honors band. These students represented Mt. Hope High School extremely well. Congratulated are: John Hunt, Jocelyn Alexandre, Richard Pavao, Madison Cardoza, Britney Verria and Nicolas Dion.

We are also proud to recognize these Mt. Hope High School musicians who were selected to participate in the All-New England Band Festival at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire: Emily Cambrola, Mason Francis, Nicolas Dion and Krystyna Schinigoj.

Three Mt. Hope students were accepted into Senior Division All-State Band:

Emily Cambrola, Madison Cardoza and Nicolas Dion.

Congratulations to IT Instructor, Ryan Garrity, and the Mt Hope High School Robotics Teams - both boys and girls! Our student engineers captured two of the most prestigious awards at the recent RI State Robotics Competition. As a result, one of our teams qualified to compete in the Annual National HS Robotics Competition in April in St. Louis!

Looney Tuned Robotics Team: Mitchell Contente, David Lam, Benton Smith, Nathan LaBonte, Chace Medeiros and Anthony Rezendes

Rookie Robotics Team -- Connect Award Winners: Diana Camara, Caitlin Fortier, Carolyn St. Vincent, Athina Mitakis, Emily Cambrola, Lauren Fletcher and Rachel Mascena

Underdog Robotics Team -- Inspire Award Winners: Keegan White-O'Brien, Jacob Sardinha, Kendra Cabral, Spencer Dennis, Conor McCormack, Samuel Staton and Trevor Pierce

Congratulations to the following Kickemuit Middle School students who auditioned and were selected for the Rhode Island Junior All State Chorus and Band. These students will rehearse with the All State Band and Chorus and will perform in concert on March 20th at Veteran's Memorial Auditorium in Providence, RI. We congratulate KMS Band Director Melissa Labonte and KMS Choral Director Andre Arsenault and the following students: Michael Contente, band;

Alexandra Brassard, chorus; Sara Slusarski, chorus; Tess Smith, chorus; and Esther Watrous, chorus.

Bristol Warren held our District Spelling Bee on February 10th. Director of Literacy Mary Almeida coordinated the event and NBC 10 News Anchor Barbara Morse Silva was the guest moderator. Twenty contestants from grades 4 to 8 competed; the winner will compete at the state spelling bee to be held at Lincoln Middle School March 12.

Congratulations to:

First Place Winner – 6th grader at KMS, Kathryn Anderson

Second Place Winner -- Guiteras 5th grader, Michael Belliveau

Third Place Winner – 6th grader at KMS, Mollie Rigby

PUBLIC COMMENT / PUBLIC FORUM

Mr. James Dranchak, a teacher at Mt. Hope High School, addressed the Committee on their decision not to include Italian I in the 2011-2012 Mt. Hope Course of Studies. He said that according to RI law for foreign language courses, if 20 or more students sign up for Italian, Portuguese or Spanish, the course must be taught; omission of Italian I is discriminatory and violates the spirit of this law. Mr. Dranchak respectfully requested the course be included in the Program of Studies before Freshman Night on March 1. He went on to say that if the District is facing problems because of lack of money, we need to get creative in finding alternate means to secure funding. An organization through the Italian Government, Centro Attività

Scholastiche Italiane, provides monetary support for programs; a request has been made to them for support. One of his former students sent Mr. Dranchak a thank you note for her experience and the preparation for college that Mr. Dranchak's class provided her; she urged him to continue requiring term projects which were difficult but very helpful to students later on.

Mr. Saviano stated he has known Mr. Dranchak's programs to be very informational and he believes we should abide by state law.

MOTION: Mr. Saviano motioned to include Italian I in the Mt. Hope High School Program of Studies. Mr. Bento explained this action is not on tonight's agenda and therefore cannot be enacted upon but the Committee will take it under advisement.

Mrs. Thies thanked Mr. Dranchak for his remarks; this highlights some of the decisions we will have to make in the years to come in regard to the stressors to our budget. We are proud of what we have been able to provide our students, but unfortunately, there are realities as to how we are going to move forward with \$2.9M less.

Mrs. Thies further explained that the Basic Education Plan (BEP) obligates us to provide two languages; we provide four—French, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. A goal of the Strategic Plan, if we expand our offerings, would be to offer Arabic and Mandarin Chinese.

We must address 1) our ability to provide that breadth of programming with financial constraints, and 2) compliance with the BEP.

Mr. Dan Richards, a Mt. Hope parent, whose son took four years of Italian at Mt. Hope with Mr. Dranchak, told the Committee his son benefitted by not only learning the language but by the passion behind it. The discipline and skill building he learned in Mr. Dranchak's classroom have been a tremendous help to him at Rhode Island College. Mr. Richards is shocked to see Italian I not included in the Program of Studies; by eliminating this bottom rung of the ladder, the whole program essentially gets eliminated. He feels a disservice is being done to those students who are interested in Italian; he asked the Committee to reconsider this decision. Mr. Bento thanked Mr. Richards for his comments.

When asked by Mr. Saviano, Mrs. Thies explained the decision was internal, made by district level and school based administrators, based on past enrollment of classes. Mr. Saviano, being 100% Italian, is saddened by this decision, and asked administration to reconsider; he also asked about the possibilities of an outside funding source; Mrs. Thies said salary and benefits for a teacher would have to be sustained over time; these decisions are not made lightly; if we do not receive the funding needed to continue programs in the deep rich level we have, these are the kinds of decisions that will have to be made. Mr. O'Dell requested the Superintendent be asked for a report on the level of student interest within the language department to provide more in depth information. Mr. Bento asked the Superintendent to report on this at the March business meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION: Mrs. McBride motioned to approve; Mr. O'Dell seconded. The motion passed by a vote of 8 to 0.

MOTION: Mrs. McBride motioned to seal the minutes to the January 24, 2011 Executive Session. Mr. Saviano seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

BUDGET FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. O'Dell reported a meeting is scheduled for tomorrow (March 2), 6:00 PM at Oliver to provide information to the Joint Finance Committee about the Uniform Chart of Accounts and the Per Pupil Cost; the meeting is open to the public.

POLICY/ COMMUNITY AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE

Mrs. Arsenault said the Subcommittee began discussion at their last meeting on the legally required physical restraint policy which will continue at their next meeting on Monday, March 7, 5:30 PM at the Oliver Administration Building; also to be discussed will be a policy on energy efficiency.

PERSONNEL/ CONTRACT NEGOTIATION SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. Saviano and the Negotiations Team are looking forward to a negotiations meeting on Thursday, March 3 and Thursday, March 24.

FUTURE ENROLLMENT AND FACILITIES TASK FORCE

Mrs. Lynch had nothing new to report at this time.

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND ISSUES

S2011-05 A-E: CONSENT AGENDA – PERSONNEL

A. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: That the School Committee confirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to appoint the following applicants to the extracurricular positions listed below for the 2010-11 school year only (pending certification, funding and sufficient sign-ups to warrant running these programs):

HEALTHY HUSKIES WELLNESS CENTER/GYM AREA SUPERVISORS

- 1. After School Gym Area Supervisor (3rd Quarter) ** V. Michael Securo**
- 2. After School Gym Area Supervisor (4th Quarter) ** V. Michael Securo**

**** Funded by Warren Substance Abuse Task Force**

B. MIDDLE SCHOOL EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM: That the School

Committee confirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to appoint the following individuals for the 2010-11 session only of the Kickemuit Middle School Extended Day Program contingent upon sufficient enrollment:

Name Position

- 1. Debra Leffingwell English/Language Arts Teacher**
- 2. Lori Prazeres * Mathematics Teacher**

***Pending satisfactory completion of pre-employment requirements.**

C. CERTIFIED SUBSTITUTES: That the School Committee confirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to place on file in the office of the Superintendent the following applications for certified substitutes pending satisfactory completion of pre-employment requirements:

CERTIFIED

Name Area/Level

- 1. Kathryn M. Camera General Subject Matter**
- 2. Thomas C. DeSisto General Subject Matter**
- 3. Kelly Ann Harper Elementary**
- 4. Kayla A. Magee Elementary**
- 5. Brittany K. McHenry Elementary/Sp.Ed.**
- 6. Sarah M. Topazio Elementary**
- 7. Julianne C.V. Torres Early Childhood/Sp.Ed.**

D. CLASSIFIED SUBSTITUTES: That the School Committee confirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to place on file in the office of the Superintendent the following applications for classified substitutes pending satisfactory completion of pre-employment requirements:

TEACHER ASSISTANTS

1. Nelia F. Guerriero

CUSTODIAN/MAINTENANCE

2. Jerry J. DeOliveira
3. Jose D. Loureiro

E. RESIGNATIONS: That the School Committee confirm the recommendation of the Superintendent to accept the resignations of Patricia B. Gablinske from the position of Elementary Assistant Principal, Elvira Morra-Abilheira from the position of Middle School Social Studies Teacher, Frances Nunes from the position of Teacher Assistant, Linda LaClair from the position of Middle School Library/Media Specialist and Jennifer Medeiros from the position of Child Care Provider as listed below:

1. Patricia B. Gablinske Assistant Principal – Hugh Cole

Effective: June 30, 2011

Reason: Personal

2. Elvira Morra-Abilheira Social Studies Teacher – Kickemuit Middle

Effective: June 30, 2011

Reason: Retirement

3. Frances Nunes Teacher Assistant – Hugh Cole

Effective: March 2, 2011

Reason: Retirement

4. Linda LaClair Library/Media Specialist – Kickemuit Middle

Effective: January 31, 2011

Reason: Personal

5. Jennifer Medeiros Child Care Provider

Effective: January 28, 2011

Reason: Personal

Recommendation #S 2011-06: That the School Committee, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, appoint Melinda Thies as representative of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee on the East Bay Educational Collaborative Board

MOTION: Mrs. McBride motioned to approve; Mrs. Campbell

seconded. Mrs. Arsenault, although not looking to be appointed, questioned the need for a representative of the School Committee. Mrs. Thies explained recent legislation has come forward to broaden the collaboratives' connectedness to the Department of Education and requiring an individual be appointed to represent the School Committee and the District on the Board; in Bristol Warren the representative has always been the Superintendent. Boards meet one Friday a month and deal with efficiencies in scale of models, which the East Bay districts have done on their own. Mrs. Thies is on the Collaborative's finance board. Attorney Henneous added RIDE has issued an opinion it is perfectly permissible to have Superintendent representatives on the Boards, in fact the boards are traditionally made up of superintendents. His suggestion is to appoint the Superintendent as the School Committee's representative. Mrs. Arsenault requested minutes to the Collaborative's Board meetings in order to follow their work. Mrs. Thies will oblige and provide financial statements as well.

Mr. Saviano has concerns for the liability of the District should EBEC run into financial trouble as has the Southern Collaborative, who is filing for bankruptcy. Mr. Saviano requested this action be postponed to the next voting meeting or at least amend the motion to include a disclaimer that the Superintendent is not authorized to incur debt on behalf of the District and must seek the approval of the School Committee prior to any vote involving the District. Attorney Henneous respectfully suggested the vote go forward; he will review

all documents to assess District liability; Collaboratives are typically established as non-profits and are therefore protected; a vote at this time would not change any liability. Mrs. McBride recalls this being researched in the past and no liability being established; she feels a review of the language to assure no changes have taken place is important. Mr. Saviano stated some of the members of the Southern Collaborative are withdrawing but there is a six-month wait and they are concerned for financial liability; he has the utmost faith in the Superintendent and how she represents the School Committee, but the District cannot afford any financial responsibility and he reiterated his request for an amendment to the recommendation.

Mrs. Arsenault takes another member's concern seriously; she has questions herself and supports postponing the vote until the requested information is collected; although the Collaborative has been very good for this District, it would be wise to investigate before we move forward.

Mrs. Campbell believes this vote would not change the District's membership or liability; withdrawing from the Collaborative would be a separate vote; we are already members. Mrs. Thies corroborates Mrs. Campbell's comments; she will be attending a financial meeting this Wednesday; the financials are to be released on March 11.

Mrs. McBride moved the question. In response to Mrs. Arsenault, Mrs. Thies said the executive board meetings are not public; our

Attorney has recommended a vote in order to be in compliance.

MOTION: Mr. Saviano motioned to table this recommendation; Mrs. Arsenault seconded. Mr. O'Dell felt there was no danger to appointment Mrs. Thies tonight and it is in the best interest of the District to have a representative on that board; the issue of protection of our financial interest can be address at a later date. Mrs. Lynch agreed with Mr. O'Dell. Mrs. Arsenault asked if Mr. Saviano would feel more confident if a member of the School Committee were on the board. Mr. Saviano said some collaboratives have both the superintendent and a school committee member; he has confidence in Mrs. Thies but the situation in the southern collaborative is a great concern; Mr. Saviano again asked the Committee to consider a caveat to the recommendation.

The motion to table failed by a vote of 2 to 6 with Mr. Bento, Mrs. Lynch, Mr. O'Dell, Mrs. Campbell, Mrs. McBride and Mrs. Rancourt opposed.

Mrs. Arsenault will oppose the appointment of Mrs. Thies for the sole reason Mr. Saviano, a member of RIASC, is requesting more time to review financials and this Committee is not being given the opportunity to consider the option of both a Committee member and the Superintendent on the Board; she has no issue with the Superintendent's performance. Mr. Saviano totally agreed with Mrs. Arsenault's comments.

Mr. Bento asked if an additional member could be appointed at a future time. Mr. Henneous believes this is permissible but he will research this. Mrs. Arsenault added SORICO includes superintendents and school committee members.

The motion to approve passed by a vote of 6 to 2 with Mrs. Arsenault and Mr. Saviano opposed.

Recommendation #S 2011-07: That the School Committee, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent and supported by the Budget/Facilities Subcommittee, accept the proposed budget package as presented by Administration

MOTION: Mrs. Campbell motioned to approve. Mrs. McBride seconded.

Mr. O'Dell explained the District is requesting \$54,329,935, an increase of \$1.9M, or 3.64%, well above what Senate 3050 allows; we are expecting a reduction in state aid of \$1,081,812. Level funding will require the District to make \$2.987M in cuts for next year.

Mrs. Campbell commented it is important to understand the impact of the funding formula on our budget is incredible; in the past Joint Finance has initially come to the table thinking they can level fund the District; if this is the case this year, we would have to cut our budget by \$1.9M to meet the same programming as this year. Mr. O'Dell reiterated \$2.987M of cuts will be necessary if we are level funded.

Mr. Saviano pointed out there is a provision that towns could allocate additional funds if there is a legitimate emergency. Mrs. Lynch agrees; our Representatives and Commissioner pledged their support in this regard; however, bypassing 3050 is not possible year after year so subsequent years are a real concern.

Mr. Saviano mentioned that Bristol is reported to have a surplus of just over \$13M and Warren a little less than \$2M; additional support might be a little easier and more palatable from the people of Bristol. Mrs. McBride does not believe the Town of Bristol has that amount; the point is, once you remove money from a fund, you are minus that amount and that affects your next budget. In the end Bristol Warren will lose \$40M in funding over the next 10 years; the Towns will have to raise taxes to fund us at past levels. Mrs. McBride believes the fault lies with the State and not at the local level; the towns work very hard to fund education; it is unconscionable the legislature remove money and it is the state's responsibility to fund public education and they are not. If we want to continue to offer the courses we do now, we have to take a very hard look at how we handle this and we have to all work together; she supports this budget because we are doing a good job. Mr. Saviano challenged Mrs. McBride asking her and Mrs. Thies to recall the surplus statement being said at a past Rotary meeting. Mrs. McBride retorted she spoke with Mr. Barboza afterwards and she believes it is not fiscally sound for either town to tap into their resources.

Mrs. Arsenault commented it is the Committee's responsibility to tend to the education of our children; regionalization was a wise decision on the part of the towns and we accomplished more than was asked and at a lesser expense to Bristol and Warren than individually. She asked both community to re-order their priorities; it is a fact that Bristol and Warren have not contributed as much as other in the state because they have not had to; education has to be raised on the priority list; all the townspeople must attend Joint Finance to support prioritizing education.

Mrs. Linda Rimoshytus, as a parent, believes all the funding problems will fall on the backs of our children; the community must join together and come up with more money but parents need guidance from administration on how to do this.

Mrs. Thies thanked everyone for their comments; she believes we are all working together as a team. Our future rests with our children; this budget request has nothing new or extravagant and covers only increases for mandated changes; programs such as Italian I are in jeopardy. Mrs. Thies made the analogy she referenced at an earlier meeting, of a table with an array of food for our children. One of the legs of that table is state revenue, which cannot be relied on anymore; another leg is the decreasing of scale and utilization of efficiencies, but there are limits to what can be done. Another leg is support garnered through negotiations on the teachers' contract. Another support is the community; we are at a point where the

community must group together and say they value education more than they value things like trash pick up. Bristol ranks 30th in the state for contribution to education and 13th in terms of capacity to support it. Mrs. Thies made a plea to local to step up to the plate.

Mr. Saviano thanked the Superintendent for her efforts and the plan she is developing. Our legislators are working diligently to maintain the state funding stream and for our categorical aid to be funded. The Towns' tax revenues are a direct result of education; people do not want to settle in a town whose education system is not good. We will next have to look internally for places to cut.

The motion to accept the proposed budget package passed unanimously.

Mr. Silva arrived at 8:50 PM.

Adoption of a Funding Formula Resolution

Mrs. Thies proposed the adoption of a resolution in support of legislation being proposed by our local legislators. Representative Malik and Senator Felag are proposing restoration of our categorical aid for our regional revenue stream. A second bill being proposed by Representative Morrison is to restore the supplemental aid for regional districts, which would restore approximately \$2M to our budget. Mrs. Thies would craft the resolution and present it to the General Assembly when the bills are heard. Mrs. Campbell and Mrs.

McBride totally agree. Mr. O'Dell requested the resolution be drafted for the March 14 meeting to have I hand for Joint Finance. Mr. Bento will work with the Superintendent in this effort.

Wellness Committee Report

Mrs. Campbell asked that the Wellness Committee Report be moved further up the agenda since this committee is mandated by the State. She reports the group, including Mrs. Rancourt and Mrs. Rimoshytus, is working very hard on Wellness Week; it is hoped there will be many accolades to make.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no need for an Executive Session.

Before adjourning, Mrs. Thies wished to mention a few things for our stakeholders: on March 2 there will be a work session between the Joint Finance Committee and the Budget Subcommittee at 6:00 PM; on Wednesday, March 3 Town Councils, EDC members and other community leaders are invited to visit our classrooms and tour school buildings; on March 8 all PTO presidents and other interested parents are invited to meet at the Mt. Hope Library to address concerns and how we communicate to the Town Councils the importance of the education of our children; and the Joint Finance meetings are at 7:00 PM on March 15 and March 29 at locations to be

determined. Mrs. Campbell added the Bristol Warren Education Foundation's Bodacious Bee is March 18; the Foundation raise \$26,000 last year for the schools and we all should support them; Mrs. McBride, Mr. Bento and Ms. Mary Almeida will compete again as a team.

ADJOURNMENT – 9:05 PM

MOTION: There being no further business to discuss, Mrs. McBride, seconded by Mr. O'Dell, motioned to adjourn at 9:05 PM. The motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen A. Lynch, Secretary

/c