

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2006

WILLIAM A. BRIGGS BUILDING (REED CONFERENCE ROOM)

845 PARK AVENUE

EXECUTIVE SESSION: 6:00 P.M.

PUBLIC WORK SESSION: 7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

A special meeting of the Cranston School Committee was held on the evening of the above date in the William A. Briggs Building in the Reed Conference Room with the following members present: Mr. Archetto, Mrs. Greifer, Ms. Iannazzi, Mr. Lupino, Mr. Stycos, and Mr. Traficante (arrived at 7:00 p.m.) Also present were Mr. Scherza, Mr. Balducci, and Mr. Votto.

The meeting was called to order at 6:12 p.m. It was moved Mrs. Greifer, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried that the members adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to RI State Law 42-46-5 (a)(1) Personnel and PL 42-46-5(a)(2) Contract and Litigation.

I. Adjourn to Public Meeting

a. Seal Executive Session Minutes

The Executive Session minutes were not sealed. They will be sealed

at the May 15, 2006 meeting of the School Committee.

II. Adjourn to Public Work Session

Mr. Lupino convened the public work session at 7:20 p.m. Mr. Lupino noted that the committee suspended adjourning Executive Session and would reconvene to Executive Session immediately after the public work session.

The roll was called.

It was moved by Mrs. Greifer, seconded by Ms. Iannazzi and unanimously carried to change the order of No.'s 4 and 5 and take 5 before 4.

1. Necessity of Construction Proposal Submitted to RI Department of Education

2. Cranston Area Career & Technical Center Redirecting Bond Authorization

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Mr. Zisseron stated that this November school administration would

like to have three bonds on the ballot. One was passed by the School Committee in 2004 and was also passed by the Board of Regents. This bond is for middle school renovations and improvements. There is a bond that they hoped to put on the ballot during the last election, but they weren't successful. There are various projects within this bond for Western Hills, Bain, and Park View. By the time the district gets to it, there won't be enough money to do all three, but they want to put it on the ballot so that they have the bonding authority to do some improvements at the middle schools. Very little money has been spent on renovations at the middle schools. In addition, the district was recently approved by the Board of Regents for \$5,150,000 on fire code upgrades. This was discussed with the committee at a previous work session. There was a bond passed at the time the Department of Education was going to turn the vocational schools over to the local school departments. The district went out for a \$1.4 million bond in anticipation of this action for improvements at the Cranston Area Career & Technical Center. The bond passed, and a short time later, the Department of Education decided that they would continue to operate the vocational schools. There was a bond that was passed by the voters for \$1.4 million, but it was restricted to only the vocational school because of wording on the bond. Since there is approval from the Board of Regents for \$1.4 million, administration wants to go before the voters with language that will be a repair and renovation bond at various schools. Mr. Paul Grimes has been informed by the Superintendent of what administration wants to do and what they want on the ballot in November. Because of the

turnover in personnel at City Hall, no one contacted school administration to ask what they would like to have on the ballot. The process is that the Board of Regents must approve it, then the School Committee, then the City Council, and finally the Legislature for approval. He hopes to keep the process moving and eventually have it on the ballot in November.

Mr. Traficante asked what projects Mr. Zisseron was referring to for middle schools. In response, Mr. Zisseron stated that at Park View he wanted to do renovations to science rooms, art rooms, labs, and consumer science rooms. He noted that Western Hills could be a bond in itself, but he is looking for renovation of science rooms and family and consumer science rooms. He has to see how far the money will go because he would like to put on a cafeteria addition there as well. Mr. Traficante added that Mr. Zisseron is looking for approximately \$11 million. He also noted that when they met with the State, they were supposed to bring the vocational school up to code before the district took it over. He asked why the district would be going out for a bond for a building they don't own. Mr. Zisseron responded that at the time the Department of Education was going to turn the vocational schools back to the communities, and they were very serious about it. Mr. Balducci explained that as an incentive to the districts the state was offering an additional 4% reimbursement on top of the normal reimbursement of housing aid. That was a little incentive to try to convince the communities to take over the buildings. Administration had to tell the State what their needs were,

and he and Mr. Zisseron sat down with representatives from the

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vocational school and came up with what they felt were areas that needed to be addressed. In the meantime, the State changed its mind. They decided to keep the buildings, and the State went out and bonded approximately \$15 million. Mr. Traficante added that in his impression that in order to bring that building up to code it would cost between \$4 million and \$6 million. Mr. Zisseron explained that the Department of Education did a survey of the building, and they differed from how school administration felt. They said the building needs approximately \$3 million to \$3.5 million worth of work. They have the \$15 million bond for nine vocational schools in the state, and there is a bid for work on the nine facilities. Cranston's vocational school is one of nine. They will get the bids back and then determine where the \$15 million will take them. Their first priority will be fire code. Other than fire code which will be windows and rescue, he doesn't think they will see much more than that this year. They have only \$15 million, and there is approximately \$18 million to \$20 million worth of work. Mr. Traficante stated that there should be an understanding that this district will not assume ownership of that building unless it is brought up to code. Mr. Lupino added that when Mr. Zisseron came before the School Committee for the \$1.4 million he told the committee about a minimal amount of work that needed to be done before he would accept the building. Mr. Traficante was not

entirely wrong when he said that it needs \$4 million or \$5 million worth of work. Mr. Zisseron also noted that the State limited the district what they could put out there for bonding. Mr. Lupino explained that this is not taking into consideration the addition to Park View. He further noted that Mr. Zisseron did not mention the auditorium at Western Hills Middle School. Mr. Zisseron explained that Western Hills could use all of the \$9.5 million if it were to be expanded with an auditorium. The district does have approval on this bond from the Board of Regents. The committee would then decide where the money will go, but it has to be approved in order to get to this money. Mr. Lupino asked if the district has any document that states it can change that purpose from the Career and Technical Center to the other buildings. Mr. Balducci responded that he spoke with both Celeste Bilotti and Kristin Cole who handle school capital projects. They both indicated that the district should write a letter explaining the steps in the process for this bond. Because it has already been approved by all bodies, the district would ask for a change for the use of the \$1.4 million and bring it back to the voters as a district wide repair and renovation bond. Both seemed confident that a letter would suffice, and he was in the processing of writing such a letter.

Mr. Zisseron indicated to the committee that this will come before the committee at its meeting Monday, May 15th, for their approval.

3. User Facility Fee

Mr. Traficante told the committee that he was recruited to serve on the 21st Century by Deirdre London. He attended the first meeting at Gladstone School, and while he was there, there was another activity going on by another organization. He inquired if they

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were paying a user fee for use of the building since they were charging kids for that particular program, and the answer was no that they were not paying a dime for use of the building. Based on that, he wrote to Mr. Zisseron asking him to outline the organizations utilizing the buildings and what they are being charged. He asked if they were being charged a custodial fee; were some being charged more than a custodial fee; or were some being charged less than a custodial fee or nothing. He knows that Kids Club which is a for-profit organization is using buildings at no charge to them. He suggested that the committee develop a fee that will be conducive to the use of the building. The PTG's and PTO's are charged for the use of the facilities and asked why for-profit organizations are not being charged.

Mr. Zisseron stated that he had no explanation for the fees. He thought back to the time when day care became a serious issue for parents because of the economy and single parents working full time.

At that time, the YMCA was willing to formulate an after-school

program that was first started at Horton. He heard that at one time there was supposed to be a reciprocal agreement whereby the YMCA was going to let the school department use the Y gym for the Bain students, but that never took place. He has a little history as to how it started, but he doesn't have the history of why they weren't charged a user fee.

Mr. Traficante referred to the Kids Club, and Mr. Zisseron explained that he did not have much history of Kids Club. Mr. Lupino explained that he was trying to get an after-school program for as long as he has been on the School Committee. They talked with several groups on many occasions. Kids Klub was not the first group that came before the committee. There was another group that made a presentation, and Kids Klub came before the committee. It was decided by the School Committee that they wanted to take financial responsibility away from the School Committee and place it with the PTO's and PTG's to see what might work for them. It was his understanding that it was going to be a test market in a couple of the schools. He knew that Edgewood Highlands was one of them, and it is going on right now. Hope Highlands School is the other test market. The committee was assured at those meetings that there would be no cost to the district for these programs, that they would provide clean up and not interfere. Based on the fees that they would pay, the district would be able to recoup such things as electricity, and they would bring in self-contained cubicles that they would put away and they would bring in any and all materials. How it got from

that to what there is now, he didn't know. In November, he asked for an update on the Kids Klubs types of programs. He knows that Stadium, Barrows and Eden Park Schools want similar programs. They see a need for use of the school buildings after the school day. He asked for a report but has not received it. He doesn't know why they are not being charged what they should be charged.

Mr. Traficante commented that he wants to come forward with a resolution to form a study group to review fees. The PTG's and PTO's are raising thousands of dollars for

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the kids in the various elementary and secondary schools, and they are being charged a custodial fee. There are other groups using the buildings charging the children, but they are not being charged a dime to use the facilities. He would like the study group to study these fees and to see who is utilizing the buildings and to encourage other groups to utilize them.

Mr. Lupino commented that this was discussed in the past regarding the YMCA, and there was a reason for the trade off with them. He believed it had something to do with the youth center. Mr. Traficante noted that the YMCA ran the Youth Center, so the students at Bain were entitled to use the entire facility. Mr. Lupino commented that if they did not get charged at the school level for some of these

programs they would not charge the city or the school department for the staff they use at the Youth Center. Mr. Traficante also added that the +2 Program at Bain is not utilizing the Youth Center at all. Several years ago they were utilizing it for programs, but now it has disappeared. Mr. Traficante indicated that the study committee could study the whole situation and then make a presentation to the School Committee.

Mr. Lupino reiterated the fact that he was asking for a report on the successes and failures of the pay per day programs. Mr. Stycos agreed that a for-profit company should not be using the facilities for free when all of these organizations that put in thousands of volunteer hours should have to pay.

Mr. Stycos referred to the East and West Swim Club. He indicated that both he and Mr. Zisseron have discussed it. He felt that a mistake was being made that there is a Swim Club that is being supervised by coaches of the swim team that involves the high school swim athletes and some junior high athletes. It has been going on for several years, and they are now being told that they can't use the Park View pool because of liability issues. He felt that the city built a pool, and it should be used as a pool. The parents are talking about the club moving to CCRI in Lincoln and RIC. Having a 16 year old driving is nerve racking enough without the school department encouraging them to drive on Route 95 when they could be swimming down the street. Mr. Zisseron responded that many organizations

will use a Cranston club to get into a Cranston gym or pool. They take outsiders; they don't take just Cranston kids. Mr. Stycos commented that the fact that someone has a different address doesn't mean that he or she is a bad person. Mr. Zisseron responded that he is a taxpayer in Cranston, and he doesn't want outsiders using his facilities that he pays taxes for. It is not an East Swim Club because Coach Bouchard brings in kids from other communities. If they were strictly Cranston kids, and the coach had documentation and \$1 million liability insurance, he would be allowed to use it. Mr. Stycos asked if he had that documentation all the other years, and Mr. Zisseron said that he didn't. It was three years ago since he last rented the pool. Mr. Stycos said that it wasn't three years according to the parents he spoke with. Mr. Zisseron added that it was the School Committee's final decision and not his. Mr. Stycos commented that the study committee should look at this.

Now there is a

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situation where there has been a change. He felt that those clubs that have used the facilities in the past should use the facilities now subject to recommendations of this committee. If they look at the entire picture and state that changes should be made and the School Committee adopts it, then they will be followed. He didn't think changes should occur before that has been done. They are inconveniencing parents throughout the city, and he didn't

understand it.

Mr. Traficante stated that it will not be the intention of this committee to discourage after-school programs or the use of the facilities. They will try to encourage it. He suggested encouraging other groups to come in to generate some funds for the district.

Mr. Lupino remarked that the district is a member of the Interlocal Trust, and they have Tulip Insurance. He asked how the YMCA and the Kids Club were paying their Tulip Insurance, and Mr. Balducci responded that they are identified as additionally insured. Mr. Lupino commented that he thought they had to pay the Interlocal a fee for that. Mr. Balducci commented that for a fee an organization can approach the Interlocal Trust to obtain that type of insurance. If they are insured by another insurance company, they have to produce a certificate of insurance to the district. Mr. Lupino suggested that his new committee may wish to look into this.

Mr. Stycos stated that he didn't want the situation to change for the Swim Club. Mr. Zisseron agreed that it has gone on in the past with no problems. There was no misbehavior to terminate them. Mr. Zisseron commented that he had to chase them for money after. Mr. Lupino suggested that the various organizations pay up front. He also asked if the committee would want to charge a premium to groups that were not entirely made up of Cranston children. He asked if the committee should charge more to groups who charge a

fee to join as opposed to some of the groups that don't charge a fee.

Mr. Traficante asked if the Swim Club was utilizing the pool all along, and Mr. Zisseron responded that they hadn't used the pool in at least one year. They used it for three or four years prior to that. Mr. Traficante asked if the district was covered by the Interlocal Trust at that time, and Mr. Balducci responded that outside organizations had to provide their own insurance on a year-to-year basis. In the past, Mr. Bouchard showed proof of insurance. Mr. Zisseron said that every organization must provide a certificate of insurance made payable to Cranston Public Schools for \$1 million in liability. Mr. Traficante asked what the problem is with Mr. Bouchard using the facility, and Mr. Zisseron responded that if the committee wants him to use it, he can. Mr. Lupino commented that it would be a feeder program for the swim teams. The district has had difficulty getting students at West to participate on the swim team. He would like to see what rules they must follow, particularly with regard to swimming. He asked what numbers it would reach before he would require an additional person there.

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Mr. Stycos stated that he would contact Mr. Bouchard. Mr. Zisseron thought that the west swim club was no longer in existence.

4. Cranston Educational Advisory Board Presentation on Investigations Math Program

Mr. Scherza introduced Mrs. Ann Hampson, Cranston Educational Advisory Board President.

Mr. Lupino stated that the committee had received an e-mail from Mrs. Hampson. Based on a conversation he had with Mrs. Greifer and some of the School Committee members, they thought it was necessary for the CEAB to come forward to present their views. The committee has seen the Investigations Program several times. Mrs. Hampson had made several points as to why the CEAB didn't want to see Investigations utilized or why it was not a good situation for Cranston Public Schools.

Mrs. Hampson stated that the CEAB had a good meeting with representatives from Cranston Public Schools. The committee received more than an e-mail. They received a packet of information and a letter. The role of the CEAB was established by the School Committee many years ago as a parent advisory board to provide parent input on issues and concerns to parents all over the district. The categories described are budget, which they are often called upon to speak loudly and forcefully for and curriculum and other issues that might come up. Since she has been serving on the board and Investigations started to be brought in, she has been hearing,

and so have many other members of the committee, from parents in the schools saying that they have concerns about Investigations. They don't understand it; they are not sure what it is all about. On the basis of that, the CEAB stepped forward to do more investigation, as is the charge as a parent advisory group. They started researching it, and they have a curriculum sub-committee. Mrs. Hampson also noted that Mr. Laliberte was invited along with Mrs. Lundsten, Mrs. Lancia, and Mr. Haskins who presented to the CEAB a well thought out presentation. Mrs. Hampson distributed information to the committee regarding research on this program.

Mrs. Hampson read brief testimony regarding the Investigations Math Program concerning the Seattle, Washington, school district. She noted that she can fill in the gaps for her child but was concerned for those parents who are not able to interpret this material to support their children who will fall behind in math.

Mrs. Hampson introduced Mr. Ken McDaniels, Chair of the CEAB Curriculum Committee, who presented to the committee a brief history of the program. He introduced Mrs. Lisa Penta, a CEAB parent representative, who is a librarian and did extensive research related to Investigations Math. He introduced Dr. Jerry Thompson,

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Curriculum Director, Times Square Academy, who shared some math

facts in elementary math instruction.

In response to Mr. Lupino's question to Dr. Thompson as to how long the school had used Investigations, Dr. Thompson said that it was the school's third year. She stated that the school was not getting the results they should have been and whether or not the program was meeting the GLE's. She commented that this school could do some additional choice of programs to see what else was out there. From her perspective, it was not all Investigations' fault, but they were not yielding at this point the results. It is her charge to see what else is out there and to get the best results possible. Her teachers were trained in Investigations and were strictly using Investigations. There were no other traditional methods that were interspersed into the program.

Mr. Scherza asked how long they were using the other program that was yielding better results, Dr. Thompson responded that this is the first year. Dr. McDaniel noted that there is a call to this School Committee because the top minds around the country have come to a consensus of what elementary students need, and the district is not providing it. It can be potentially related to career choices and salaries in the future which is from a kid's perspective unforgivable. There are very logic pieces learned in the 3rd and 4th grades that are not learned, and the students won't be able to perform higher level types of activities in college in the future.

Mrs. Hampson distributed to the committee “Reaching for Common Ground in K-12 Mathematics Education” and “New Battles in the Math Wars”.

In conclusion, Mrs. Hampson stated that the committee has heard loud and clear the parents’ concerns. They were not here to tell the Cranston School Committee and central administration what they should do although the Investigations program may be a better supplemental program and bring something in that is a main core program that parents can support. The CEAB made some recommendations for areas they hoped the committee and administration would support. They particularly want the parents to be supported in their attempts to help their children with math and want it to be very clear that those parental efforts should be supported by staff and parents should not be made to feel that they are doing the wrong thing if they teach conventional math. CEAB hopes that some curriculum changes could be made in what is being offered to their children.

Mr. McDaniels noted that CEAB is not anti-Investigations. In talking with some people who know the authors of Investigations, they said that it started as a supplemental program and not a curriculum.

Mr. Lupino asked the CEAB members present not to take his comments the wrong way. He appreciates everything the CEAB has done. Mrs. Greifer has been a member of

that board for a long time. He was the School Committee representative for a long time. He appreciates everything they try to do. From a philosophical standpoint, and he was speaking as one member of this committee, but they made some points about world ranking. The one reality that stands out about world ranking is that his son recently graduated from the University of Connecticut, and throughout his career he was a public school student and had all the opportunity available to take whatever track he wanted to. That is not the case in a lot of the industrialized nations that this country is compared to. To compare the United States globally with some of the other nations, Mr. McDaniels was talking on deaf ears. He further commented that he appreciated that all the CEAB members are good parents. The reality of this situation is the fact that as much as everyone likes all children to be equal and they all have the potential, the reality of this situation is that their children go home to a well lit, well heated, wonderful, loving atmosphere where there is a computer and other distractions, but most of the district's dollars are geared toward those children in a cold flat where other children might be doing drugs and mom is working a second job. He asked them not to take it the wrong way, but some assumptions are made by this group that he understood from that standpoint but not globally for this school system. Mr. McDaniels stated that he differed with Mr. Lupino because at-risk kids are more at risk with what is presently being

provided.

Mr. Laliberte stated that one of the reasons central administration went with Math Investigations Program was because what was presented at this work session is only one aspect of math. It does not take into consideration concept development, and it doesn't take into consideration problem solving. Mr. Lupino interrupted and noted that Dr. Thompson left the work session and he wished to ask her additional questions. Mr. Laliberte continued and stated that the state assessment has very little and even TERC will state that students need to learn their math facts. However, the state assessment concentrates on the learning of math concepts and the learning of problem solving. The district has indications right now that before Investigations was every implemented, Cranston students were performing poorly in math, and there was a decline in math as they went from elementary to middle to the high school. Fewer and fewer students were getting into higher level math. That is also true of colleges today. There is a reason for this, and there is a reason for the various attempts to change math because when all the minds came together one of the things they did find was that they could not continue to teach math the way math has always been taught. To say that the district doesn't need math coaches, this district has had reading consultants in this city for over twenty years; and no one said or questioned the cost of the reading consultants. Math needs the very same attention that reading and literacy has been given over the years. He noted that he had a packet ready for the School Committee

so that they could read through the positives of the TERC Program, Math Investigations. Some of the changes that will be made in the program next year will address some of the concerns made by the CEAB and other people. They have indications that the students are beginning to do better on the national test, better than they were doing prior to the implementation of

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Investigations. When he looked at the 2nd grade scores when they first started using the IOWA for the Enrichment Program, the district's scores were very low at the 2nd grade level in math. Those scores have risen from approximately 30% in the nation to 50% in the nation since they have started using the Investigation Math Program. That is basically in the concept area and the problem solving area. In the computation area, they have come up but not as far as in the problem solving area and the concept development. The math facts the children will have to know in the future, but it is not the most important thing they will have to know. The most important thing they will have to do is solve problems on their feet. If they can't do that, they won't be marketable.

Mr. Lupino remarked that Dr. Thompson said that her school was using only Investigations, and the point was made when Investigations was first presented to the School Committee that it wasn't a do-all comprehensive situation. He asked Mr. Laliberte if he

could put a percentage factor on how much is Investigations and how much is traditional math, and Mr. Laliberte said that he couldn't. He did say that a comment has been made that it is a math curriculum. The district has a math curriculum that is not Math Investigations. Math Investigations is the tool through which the district is implementing their math curriculum. Their math curriculum is based on grade level expectations so that is what they are basing the program on. He has no doubt that some of the quotes made came from teachers. The teachers at the elementary level are finding that they have to go back and be retrained in order to teach math concepts.

Mrs. Hampson stated that she didn't want people to conclude that the CEAB members don't understand that children need to understand concepts or need to be good problem solvers. If there are other materials being used in addition to Investigations, she asked why the parents are seeing them at home and why they aren't able to support their children using it. She never sees any other math in Investigations coming home. Her daughter is frustrated along with many other students by the materials. She can explain it to her and segway from the Investigations problem solving method to now she can understand the concept as to why it is done a certain way. It is the shorthand the students need to get to after they understand the concept. She would like to see parents seeing more of that come home so that they know that the Investigations Program is teaching the conceptual problem solving piece, but in addition to that,

students will get the shorthand procedures.

Mrs. Lundsten, Principal of Oak Lawn School, commented that they have been having their own little math wars at her school. They have a School Improvement Committee which is comprised of some parents who are expressing the same concerns as Mrs. Hampson. The entire committee agrees that they want the best math for the students. Investigations Math, as Mr. Laliberte commented earlier, is not their math curriculum. It is a tool that they are using. She explained a process that took place at her school. They have done a cross walk between the GLE's, the curriculum, and Investigations.

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The math coaches were directed to put a packet together to fill in because they saw gaps. The program doesn't cover everything. At the end of each quarter, they are now doing assessments, and all the principals are reading the assessments. They are looking for the gaps. The teachers are constantly feeding information back on the assessments indicating what is working and not working for them. She remarked on comments made by the students on this program. For the most part, the students think it is cool and makes them think. She told them that it is not easy, and she reviews the books herself. They were told by Investigations that it would take three to five years to see the turnover. Mrs. Hampson stated that TERC has also said that it should not be supplemented, and she was glad to hear that the

district is. Mrs. Lundsten remarked that every publisher does it with their programs, and everyone has to be savvy consumers and take the best. The program should be given a chance. This is the first year of implementation of Investigations.

Mrs. Stanelun, one of the districts math coaches, stated that the district truly appreciates what the CEAB has done. They will be having math nights so that parents can help their children.

Mrs. Lancia, one of the district's math coaches, distributed samples of the students' work to the committee for their perusal as well as other information about Investigations.

She had to be sold on the program, and she is very excited about what it has to offer. She commented that what really sells this program is seeing a math lesson.

Mr. McDaniels suggested to the committee that they review the websites for the individual schools because they state TERC or nothing else. There is nothing about alternate pieces of material that was indicated should be a part of what a child is exposed to.

Mr. Stycos asked Mr. McDaniels and Mrs. Hampson if their opinion changed at all this evening or was it the same kinds of things they have heard through their investigation of Investigations. Mrs. Hampson responded that she was not seeing anything new. She still felt that there was a disconnect for the parents, and she still felt that there was an issue with the parents not being able to help their

children. She doesn't think that Math Nights where they play one particular game is very helpful when a week later the students and parents get material at home when they have to interpret it. She can figure it out, but there is a real problem for the majority of the parents in making those cross-over links. That is where some attention needs to be paid. She would also like to see, if the district stays with Investigations, some of the other materials that are going to be added to the program sent home with the students. She hasn't seen any parent letters coming home talking about the unit. She knows that booklets and materials have come out, and they cost money. She wants to make sure that the district is willing to give the parents the tools and materials necessary to support the program if this is the program the district will be using.

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5. Middle School Reform Presentation

Mrs. Donna Vigneau and Mr. Dennis Morrell, on behalf of the Joint Committee for Middle School Reform, presented to the School Committee their recommendations for middle school reform. Mr. Morrell introduced the members of this committee who were present at this work session. They are Mr. John Thompson, Ms. Suzanne Coutu, Ms. Lizbeth Larkin, Ms. Amy Misbin, Mr. Frank Flynn, Mr. Thomas Barbieri, Mr. Laliberte, and Ms. Norma Cole.

Mrs. Vigneau distributed a packet of information regarding middle school reform to the committee. Mr. Morrell indicated that this committee was formed as a direct result of contract negotiations in 2005 where it was agreed upon that there would be a collaborative committee formed with members from the administration, the Cranston Teachers' Alliance, and a chairperson from each party selected who are himself and Mrs. Vigneau. The committee got together to look at the middle schools to see where they were and what they have. They have met four times for two-hour sessions after school. They have met with Mrs. Ciarlo, Mr. Scherza, and the administrative team to clarify the committee's charge. They did some on-site visits within the district and listened to questions from faculty and students. They toured the buildings with questions regarding curriculum, schedules, etc. They also did site visits at middle schools outside the district that are recognized for having high performing middle schools; namely, North Kingstown and Coventry. Information regarding these visits is available in the Superintendent's office. Mr. Morrell went on to explain the Middle School Reform Committee Charge, a copy of which is attached for the record. Before the committee started their work, they met with administration to finalize their charge.

Mrs. Vigneau added that many people were anxious for this committee to get to the actual implementation stage, but this committee felt very strongly that they should go through a rather

extensive planning process. They came together as a group that had never worked together before, and the group is working very well together. They saw this year as getting to know each other first and then to know and understand the middle schools. They are doing a needs assessment as to where they are now. They see next year as a clear planning year, and then the following two years as implementation for any changes they might wish to suggest or recommend. Mrs. Vigneau discussed the committee's recommendations, a copy of which is attached. Up to this point, there hasn't been a clear direction for middle school included in the Strategic Plan. This needs to be identified more specifically. Mr. Lupino referred to Mrs. Vigneau's comments regarding the fact that the District Strategic Plan needed to be updated to include middle school reform as a major goal with needed support and asked what was meant by needed support. Mr. Morrell explained that effective September 1, 2007 the Board of Regents has put forth a list of middle school regulations and reform. Much of this is coming to the districts, and they don't have a choice. What is being done at the high schools with regard to regulations will be done

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at the middle schools. They have to show that they have done some of this work in progress by September 1, 2007. Mrs. Vigneau added that the committee is asking for some planning money for next year to move forward with this initiative. She has no idea where that

money is targeted to come from. They are looking to create a budget proposal for implementation the following year. Mr. Laliberte noted that money would be made available through grants and through the 25% set aside the district receives from the state that must be spent on professional development. Mr. Lupino added that the support mechanism is there already, and the committee is not looking for additional support. Mrs. Vigneau continued to explain the committee's recommendations. In closing, Mrs. Vigneau commented that the committee feels very good about the work that has taken place this year. They are encouraged to continue their work this coming year.

Mr. Scherza asked the committee to touch upon the dynamics of getting this committee started and the trust level to work together to get on a common ground and perspective as opposed to union versus management type attitudes. Mr. Morrell responded that the committee doesn't have this problem, and sometimes the committee members have to be reminded that any changes that will be made must be negotiated. It is a very cohesive team. Mrs. Vigneau added that she has been a middle school educator for most of her career and a middle school principal so she has been the X factor. Mrs. Morrell remarked that Mrs. Vigneau came in to help the district when they transitioned from a junior high structure to a middle school structure. She helped the teachers get their endorsement to teach middle school. He further commented that a lot of what is going on in the middle school in Cranston is good stuff. There is work to be

done, and Cranston has good people working in the middle schools. The district should be proud of them. The committee wants to fine tune what they have to make it better.

Mr. Stycos asked if the committee had considered parental involvement on the committee, and Mr. Morrell responded that they hadn't thought it out yet. It was something that they could consider. Mr. Stycos stated that it was important to have parent participation. Most people are pretty happy with the elementary schools and the high schools; and the middle schools, from his own experience, have their pluses and minuses with them being mediocre overall. The School Committee just heard about the Investigations Math Program and the parents' concerns. There needs to be a meeting not where the school department says they have thought about it for a long time, and here's what we are going to do but rather what are the problems. Mrs. Vigneau commented that the charge at the negotiations table was to have a group of administrators and teachers come together, so it was not an oversight on the part of this group to not include parents. She indicated that Mr. Stycos's suggestion was a great one, and the parents belong at the table. Mr. Lupino suggested that the committee post a questionnaire that parents could respond to on the website. Not all parents can sit at a table. He further commented that groups talk about support and spending money, and Mr. Frank Flynn put out a heartfelt letter to get people to come to the budget

meetings, and he saw three of those present at this meeting present at the budget meetings. It upsets him that the School Committee will be cutting \$3.8 million from their budget, and he bet that everyone would be at those meetings. He was very disappointed not to see at least all of those present there. Mr. Traficante asked where the CEAB was during the budget meetings. Mr. Lupino further stated that it was very disheartening for the School Committee to listen to people talk about spending money when they don't see them at the meetings speaking up for what they believe in. He thanked the committee for their work. Mr. Morrell commented that this committee has spent many hours of their own time after school and weekends as well.

6. Athletic Funding

Mr. Michael Traficante, Athletic Director, indicated that he had asked Mr. Lupino to speak before the School Committee. He stated that he is aware of the monetary shortfall the committee is facing. He knows that there are many more important things to deal with other than athletics. He wants the committee to be completely aware of everything before they make any decisions of what they are going to cut or add. Whatever decision the School Committee makes, he will fully support and do his job as best he can. The Interscholastic League has e-mailed him several times over the last couple of weeks

trying to pin him down as to whether or not the district will come forth to request a waiver hearing regarding girls' hockey. Secondly, since he last met with the School Committee, the Interscholastic League is now going to introduce competitive cheerleading as an Interscholastic League sport. He indicated that he wanted the committee to be aware of it. It is in its infant stages, but they plan on having it up and running in the fall season. This will be a two-season sport. There will be a fall team and a winter team. The fall team will be a travel team by invitational tournaments only. No state champion is crowned, but in the winter that same group participates in a competitive league where a state champion is crowned in March. Any girl who now cheerleads cannot play an Interscholastic League sport.

In the past, anyone who has been a cheerleader usually cheers nights or during the weekends, has been able to play girls' soccer in the fall as well as girls' volleyball in the fall. If cheerleading is added as a sport, at some point in time the girls can no longer play Interscholastic League sports. The base is only so big that the district draws from. He pointed out that that he was asked to create a zero based budget, and since then, the notion of a co-op hockey team came into flux at a cost of approximately \$21,000. The answer was that they took \$10,000 from middle school sports and \$10,000 from non-Interscholastic League events. He asked the committee to keep in mind that they look for \$29,000 a year in revenue from the Athletic Department. This year, as it stands, he hopes to give Mr. Balducci in excess of \$45,000 in revenue. If the district eliminates non-Interscholastic League sports for football, basketball, and

wrestling which are the three sports for which they charge, the \$10,000 that will be saved in the budget will be lost in gate receipts. This amounts to eighteen events. Mr. Balducci will be getting approximately \$10,000

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less at the end of the year. The money saved will be lost on the other end because they will be losing two football games, one for East and one for West; they will lose a minimum of six basketball home games for boys East and West; six basketball games between the two schools for girls; and four wrestling matches, two for each school. They brought in \$45,000 thus far this year. West had a very good winter season. If the teams don't do as well, they tend not to have the support they did this past year.

Mr. Traficante stated to the committee that he is not against adding girls' hockey or girls' competitive cheerleading, but he doesn't want to add by subtraction. He asked the committee not to add girls' hockey at the expense of taking away something else the district already has. If they have the money, that is great; if they don't have the money, he doesn't think it is wrong to say that the district can't afford it. He doesn't want to take \$10,000 from the high school budget and shift it toward girls' hockey and eliminate all non-league games. It is going to hurt the athletic program. He doesn't want to take \$10,000 from middle school sports to add girls' hockey because

it will hurt middle school sports. He doesn't like doing everything half baked. If the district can't afford it, he doesn't want to do it. He can't outfit them the way they should be, and they can't play in the events where they should be playing.

Mr. Lupino commented to Mr. Traficante that the committee is being faced with a tough budget for the coming year. Mr. Lupino was on a committee that tried to institute a sports fee, and the Chairperson at the time, raised some funds to save the sports fee for that year. Increasingly, he is seeing in neighboring states where there is a fee to play sports. It is based on X number of dollars per sport. Mr. Lupino asked Mr. Traficante to research with the Interscholastic League what their feeling is with regard to a sports fee. Although educational issues are much more important to educators, sports seem to be much more important to the general public and the politicians. Mr. Traficante indicated that he recently went to a conference, and Massachusetts is virtually pay to play. There are a lot of problems associated with it in Massachusetts. There are many students who can't afford it. He doesn't think the Interscholastic League cares one way or the other. Mrs. Greifer commented that she thought it was illegal in Rhode Island. Mr. Scherza added the Board of Regents prohibits pay to play by regulation. It would take a policy change by the Board of Regents and possibly by the Legislature.

Mr. Traficante remarked that everybody now is doing significant fund

raising. He would never have the money to outfit a football team. The teams are doing a lot on their own. Mr. Lupino indicated that because there are such successful fund raising situations at what point would this committee decide that they are not going to fully fund a sport. Mr. Traficante responded that he doesn't know how much more the athletes can do. Football, basketball, and wrestling garner 90% of the money that goes back to the School Committee. They are expensive sports, but any money Mr. Balducci receives from the Athletic Department comes from football, basketball, and wrestling. The district

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does not charge for outdoor events or swimming. To a certain extent, they are funding their programs and giving back to the school department. Even with a blizzard on Thanksgiving Day for the football game, they still brought in \$8,000. On a sunny day, the receipts would have been approximately \$50,000.

Mr. Flynn noted that the district currently has cheerleading squads for football in the fall and winter for basketball and hockey. He asked if this competitive team would do the same. Mr. Traficante explained that the fall team would have to cheer for the football team. If the district goes competitive, it would fall in the athletic budget. For the coach, the position would have to be posted, and the person would have to have certification in that area.

Mr. Traficante, School Committee member, asked that if the cheerleaders did go competitive, if a girl competes in the fall and winter cheerleading on a competitive team, could she play on a spring sport, and Mr. Traficante, Athletic Director, indicated that she could. Some of the Athletic Directors are fighting this that they should be allowed to play fall sports. A discussion ensued regarding cheerleading. Mr. Flynn commented that he was not sure that any girl who was seriously involved in cheerleading would possibly play another sport.

Mr. Archetto stated that from what he understood the Athletic Director has a problem creating two new sports when there is a problem funding the present sports. Mr. Traficante stated that he was correct. Mr. Archetto asked how many coaches there were in the athletic program, and Mr. Traficante said there are 112 members, and the average stipend is \$2,000. Mr. Archetto asked if a 10% to 15% cut in their stipends would help the district at all to fund any programs. Mr. Traficante said that it would help, but that being said, the coaches would not take a 10% cut. At the present time, the district is mid range statewide what the coaches are paid. Mr. Traficante further commented that the district is not in hard times athletically if they don't over-extend themselves. He said that he could live with the budget he proposed to the School Committee, but he can't see taking that budget and trying to create a girls' hockey team and a girls' cheerleading team with the same amount of money. Mr. Archetto

noted that the School Committee is facing a \$3.8 million short fall, and he was concerned about middle school sports. Mr. Traficante responded that he would even modify the middle school sports program because they are very important. Instead of offering nine sports, offer six or three sports. He has in his mind what he would like to see first. The teams that suffered the most this year without middle schools sports were the cross country teams because there are no recreational opportunities for cross country runners and the wrestling programs because there are no recreational programs in Cranston other than the CLCF wrestling program which is geared more toward the elementary students. Outdoor track in the spring also suffered. There are plenty of opportunities to play soccer in the fall, basketball in the winter for males or females, and the same holds true for baseball and softball. Instead of offering \$90,000, give him \$30,000 to do wrestling,

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outdoor track, and cross country. He wants to offer what the district can afford. Mr. Lupino noted that the phone calls he received were few and far between on middle school sports, and the calls he did receive asked if there were middle school sports because if there weren't the parents wanted to enroll their children in recreational leagues.

Mr. Traficante indicated that if the committee wanted to do a modified

middle school sports program, they could put the \$10,000 back into the high schools and take another \$10,000 for middle school sports and do a modified version of middle school sports. He just doesn't want to offer something the district can't afford. He can't offer things just to make people happy. It will be done haphazardly, and everyone gets angry.

Mr. Stycos stated that this is an important issue as will be a lot of other budget issues. It would be good to set some kind of schedule so that the committee knows when they will be talking about certain issues. This was done for the original budget. Mr. Lupino stated that he assumed that administration, through the budget process, has already started to compile information. Mr. Scherza commented that administration started today.

Mr. Traficante stated that Cranston East has competitive cheerleading, but West does not. They raise their own funds with the help of Mr. Frederick. With regard to girls' hockey, he asked the committee to take his original proposal for the budget, to forget girls' hockey and competitive cheerleading. Don't take \$10,000 from the high schools. If they want to cut athletics by \$50,000, leave him \$40,000, and he would do a modified version for middle school sports. If they want to cut \$90,000 from his budget, then they would have to start with middle school. By taking away the non-league events, it will have a very big effect on the high school programs. Mr. Lupino asked if the competitive cheerleading came as a result of

some schools struggling to comply with Title 9, and Mr. Traficante responded that cheerleading came to the surface because there are thousands and thousands of dollars to be made hosting cheerleading events. That is the only reason why the Interscholastic League is delving into this. It is a huge money making venture.

Mr. Lupino asked Mr. Traficante what he would like the committee to do. Mr. Traficante responded that he would support whatever the committee wants to do, but he hates taking from Peter to give Paul; he hates addition by subtraction. Mr. Lupino stated that the promise was emphatically stated when the committee voted on the hockey situation that the committee voted on a lot of things that may not happen because of shortfalls. Some were educational and some were extra-curricular activities.

Mr. Stycos questioned Mr. Traficante's statement regarding the loss of gate receipts on eighteen events. He asked how he could lose one quarter of his gate receipts on eighteen events. A long discussion ensued regarding the number of games and the

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amount of money lost. Mr. Stycos stated that there was no way that 25% of the revenue came from those events. Mr. Traficante said that he could show him the gate receipts he has. Mr. Stycos responded that he also had expenses at those events, and those expenses

should be subtracted from the receipts. He asked Mr. Traficante to put the numbers together so that they could discuss it. He commented that he thought the numbers were exaggerated. He wanted the proof that revenue was going to be reduced by 25% by \$10,000 out of \$40,000 by eliminating non-league games.

Mr. Flynn responded to a comment made earlier by Mr. Zisseron earlier in the work session regarding the Cranston Area Career & Technical Center bond. He knows that the state has prioritized the fire code violations to deal with that money. He wanted the committee to be aware of the fact that there are huge air quality issues at that school. Within the very near future, whether Cranston Public Schools owns the building or not, they need to pro-actively move on this. Mr. Traficante, School Committee member, indicated that Mr. Flynn was correct. He and others sat down with the state. They assured the district that they were going to address these issues. They then came back and gave a miniscule amount of money to take care of the fire code. They were told that when they brought the building totally up to code, the district would consider its purchase. Other than that, the district will not take over that building.

When it is owned by the state, they should bring it up to code. Mr. Flynn stated that at some point there needs to be a plan to get more bond funding or deal with this issue. It is a health and safety issue for the students and employees. When there is a lot of rain, there is a big mold issue. Mr. Lupino stated that this district can do nothing, because they don't own it. Mr. Scherza added that at this meeting the

state was told that there is a health and safety issue at the center, however, the district was told that they are not the highest priority. Mr. Lupino suggested that administration write a letter to the School Buildings Committee so that they could address it and send an official letter from that committee.

Moved by Ms. Iannazzi, seconded by Mrs. Greifer and unanimously carried to adjourn the Work Session to Executive Session.

There being no further business to come before the Work Session, it was adjourned to Executive Session at 9:50 p.m. to discuss personnel pursuant to RI State Law PL 42-46-5(a)(1) and contract and litigation pursuant to RI State Law PL 42-46-5(a)(2).

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony J. Lupino

Clerk

Cranston Education Advisory Board

March 4, 2006

To: Distribution List

The Cranston Educational Advisory Board (CEAB) was established to advise the Superintendent and the School Committee of parents' concerns about the Cranston School Department. The math curriculum at the elementary school level was brought to the CEAB as a matter of continuing concern from parents in many schools. CEAB's Curriculum Sub-committee carefully researched the issue and recently presented their findings to the CEAB and several members of the Cranston School Department, who also presented their view of math instruction at the elementary level. Cranston School Department members at this meeting were Norman Laliberte, Director of Education Programs and Services, Chris Haskins, Principal at Glen Hills, Deb Lancia, Math Coach Judy Lundsten, Principal at Oak Lawn and Linda Stanelun, Aspiring Principal at Oak Lawn and Hope Highlands and Math Coach.

The purpose of this correspondence is to convey the Board's concerns about the math program, formally known as Investigations in Data, Number and Space (TERC), hereinafter referred to as Investigations Math. CEAB wishes to communicate those concerns as well as make recommendations about Investigations Math.

Our concerns address three main categories:

1. Investigation Math's selection and justification

2. Investigation Math's effectiveness and implementation in the Cranston Public Schools

3. Quality of Parental Involvement

We enclose documentation supporting our concerns in enclosures (1), (2), and (3).

Our recommendations relative to the elementary math curriculum are as follows:

1. Immediately restructure the curriculum's content to embrace the points of consensus reached by both the proponents and critics of "reform" math. Among the points agreed to by the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) and the National Science Foundation are:

a. Heavy reliance on calculators in the early elementary grades is a bad idea.

b. Elementary school children must have automatic recall of number facts.

c. Children must master basic algorithms.

2. Ensure that negative characterizations of those who question existing programs are not fostered by employees of the Cranston School Department.

3. Initiate an assessment of the elementary math curriculum that reflects the current

information provided by both the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and other leading mathematical scholars.

4. Ensure that industry, higher education and parents have a role in the process of curriculum development.

Elaboration of these points is attached as enclosure (4).

We would appreciate the opportunity to participate in further discussions with the school committee on this important issue and to present information such as the Curriculum Sub-Committee's power point presentation to the CEAB, attached as enclosure (5).

In one sense, we are competing with more than 15,000 other school districts in the United States. It is our belief that our school district can easily out-match the vast majority of our 'competitors' if we accept the challenge.

Sincerely,

Ann Hampson

CEAB Chair

Distribution List:

Catherine Ciarlo

Rick Scherza

Norman Laliberte

M. Gordon Palumbo

Investigations Math Program

Selection and Justification

1. Supplementing

Concern - TERC, the formulator of Investigations Math, advises against supplementing.'

Developed by TERC, with finding from the National Science Foundation (NSF), Investigations in Number, Data, and Space purports to be "a complete K-5 mathematics curriculum that supports all students as they learn to think mathematically." ...This program is very bad because it omits standard computational methods, standard formulas, and standard terminology. TERC says most of this is now obsolete, due to the power of \$5 calculators.

A more complete text can be found

at:

<http://math.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http%3A%2Fwgquirk.com%2Fwelcome.html>

"The conventional wisdom is that U.S. students perform above average in grades 4 and 8, and then decline sharply in high school,"

says Steven Leinwand, principal research analyst at AIR and one of the report's authors. "But this study proves the conventional wisdom is dead wrong." ... Countries that score well on items that emphasize mathematical reasoning (a higher-level skill) also 'score well on items that, require knowledge of facts and procedures (a lower-level skill), suggesting that reasoning and computation skills are mutually reinforcing in learning mathematics well. Compared to other countries, students in the United States do not do, well on questions at either skill level.

Source: NEW STUDY FINDS U.S. MATH STUDENTS CONSISTENTLY BEHIND THEIR PEERS AROUND THE WORLD . Dated November 2005.

Concern - Investigations Math is a program not a curriculum. Supplementation, which Investigations Math does not support, allows for the inclusion of critical elements such as 'teacher wisdom' and 'best practices.'

2. Potential Student "losses"

Concern - Those that 'get' math are not allowed to progress ahead of the "most common denominator" student's pace.

".... The primary object of concern these days in mathematics education seems to be the low-achieving student, how to raise the floor.... The percentage of people who need to be highly competent in

“In math, I have been informed that Providence has adopted Investigations in Number, Data and Space. I can say, without a doubt, that this is the worst math program I have seen. It is based entirely on a philosophy that students should discover mathematical methods for themselves, that efficient, standard methods should not be taught and may indeed be dangerous to children, that computation is not critical, that idiosyncratic, not general, methods -are more important than general methods and so on Programs such as this are, particularly deleterious to at-risk students as they already lack skills and knowledge that advantaged kids get at home....”

Author is Michael McKeown, professor of Medical Science, at Brown University and one of the founders of Mathematically Correct, a nationwide organization of parents, mathematics professionals and educators.

3. Higher Level Math Preparedness

Concern -Students that do not master elemental proof processes are unlikely to perform higher level math and thereby not qualify for technical career fields.

“We have examined closely new curricula that have been implemented in New York City and nationwide, and believe firmly that K-12 students subjected to these curricula, including TERC Investigations, will have little if any chance to succeed in even basic mathematics and science courses when they get to college.... The

Board of Education has insisted on implementing these curricula, based on what is called ‘constructivist’ educational philosophy, despite the fact that they have been denounced by mathematicians locally and nationwide.”

4. Meeting GLE’s

Concern - There are reported ‘gaps in Investigations Math when ‘cross-walked’

with GLE’s. Education professionals in Providence have found gaps in

Investigations Math when ‘cross-walked’ with the GLE’s.

Investigations Math Program

Effectiveness and Implementation in the Cranston Public Schools

1. “Supplementing” and Investigations Math Program.

Concern - Investigations Math is a 'program' but is being interpreted by some as a curriculum; a curriculum that excludes supplementation. To our understanding, there is no known educational 'program' that does not benefit from supplementing. Within Cranston, as evidenced by members of the CEAB's direct contact with elementary schools, parents are getting different 'messages' on supplementation from one teacher to the next, and from one school to the next. Also of concern is the lack of discretion allowed to teachers, the on-site professionals, some of whom have made known that they feel supplementing is imperative but if they do so, they maybe violating policy.

2. Costs/Resources

Concern - Locations where Investigations Math is considered a success expend a level of resources that Cranston has not provided and likely cannot afford.

Extensive and continued training for teachers during the school term and summer sessions.

Coaching — as many as a coach for each grade level.

Tutors

Math nights — as often as monthly.

Literature on the program for every parent.

Reform movements like new math and whole language have left millions of damaged kids in their wake. We've wasted billions of taxpayer dollars and forced our teachers to spend countless hours in

workshops learning to implement the latest fads. Every minute teachers have spent on misguided educational strategies (like building kids' self-esteem by acting as "facilitators" who oversee group projects) is time they could have been teaching academics.

Newsweek ~

What will fix public education? A teacher, a chalkboard and a roomful of willing students By Evan Keliher

Concern - Remediation efforts, to include after school sessions are occurring at the middle level to bolster math facts/skills. Middle schools also have to contend with the melding of students from elementary schools that have variations in the implementation of elementary math instruction.

3. Differentiated learning

Concern - Investigations Math does not support the implementation of differentiated learning (a method that allows remediation, standard and advanced content to be offered at the same time to students that are considered 'ready' for such.) In addition, Students that were to be offered an enrichment program are no longer receiving such. 'Advanced' students are held back — No Child Left Behind has become No Child Allowed To Get Ahead.

“One very important issue [of vital importance to mathematics education is not captured by broad measures of student achievement] is the maintenance of a challenging high-quality

education for the best students. The primary object of concern these days in mathematics education seems to be the low-achieving student, how to raise the floor.... The percentage of people who need to be highly competent in mathematics has always been and will continue to be small, but it will not get smaller. We must make sure that mathematics education serves these people well.’
—Roger Howe, Yale University.”

End (2)

Quality of Parental Involvement

1. Concern - Parents are discouraged from using the forms of math they know; the availability of literature, re ‘how to support the program’, has not been readily available to date.

2. Concern - The Investigations Math program was implemented with little notification for parents. This is slowly beginning to change as Math Nights are being held, but many parents still know little about how Investigations Math “teaches” math or how they can help their child with homework, should the need arise.

“Parents and other members of the community influence practices in ways that can significantly and regularly affect curriculum implementation. ...

“Parents are influential and need to be considered in multiple ways.... To ensure that parental satisfaction and concerns are adequately and fairly considered, evaluators must provide representative sources of evidence.”

The National Research Council, in their book On Evaluating Curricular Effectiveness: Judging the Quality of K-12 Mathematics Evaluations (2004), page 48.

3. Concern - Some parents have been dismissed as “helicopter parents,” always hovering and over involved in their children’s schoolwork. Some others have been accused of being fearful of the new program, or unwilling to accept change.

4. Concern — The lack of involvement of parents in the process of curriculum development. Some parents have skills sets that can blend industry, higher education, and other perspectives.

End (3)

**CEAB Recommendations to Improve the
Elementary Math Curriculum**

1. Immediately restructure the content of elementary math to embrace the points of consensus reached by the proponents and critics of “reform” math. Among the topics agreed on through a joint effort (meeting of June 2005) of the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) are the, following.

o Heavy reliance on calculators in the early elementary grades is a bad idea.

• Elementary school children must have automatic recall of number facts, meaning that, yes, they have to memorize multiplication tables.

- **Children must master basic algorithms..**

**Elaboration on these points can be found at:
<http://www.maa.org/common-2round1> and
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/lwu-dyn/articles/A15026-2004Dec20.html>**

Contrary to newer developments in Math education, the Cranston School Department is relying on outdated information in determining which curriculum to use in its schools.

The Cranston School Department relies heavily on the 1989 NCTM document 'Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics' which, among other things, de-emphasizes memorizing of number facts, discourages learning traditional algorithms and encourages learning math through "self-discovery" rather than teacher-to-pupil instruction.

They also rely heavily on the 2000 NCTM document 'Principles and Standards for School Mathematics' which, while admitting learning basic number facts was more important than originally stated (in the 1989 NCTM document), still emphasized learning strategies over mathematical facts; discovery over what reformists describe "drill and kill" memorization.

In September 2005 a working paper was produced-supported by not only the National Science Foundation(NSF), but also the Association of State Supervisors of Mathematics (ASSM) and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) entitled “What is Important in School Mathematics.”

Principle One reads as follows:

“Whole number arithmetic and the place value system are the foundation for school mathematics with most other mathematical strands evolving from this foundation. This foundation should be the subject of most instruction in early grades.”

“Mastering addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts needs to be an

incremental, evolving process, which carefully extends previous knowledge and constantly lays a solid foundation for future knowledge.”

“The firm foundation in arithmetic we advocate involves a solid dose of drill to build accuracy, speed and confidence. With calculators, there is less need for drill with very large numbers than there was 50

years ago, but we believe that many state standards reflect a swing too far in the other direction, especially in downplaying pencil-and-paper arithmetic drill with multi-digit numbers.”

2. Ensure that negative characterizations of those who question existing programs do not occur?

- Some parents have been dismissed as “helicopter parents,” always hovering and over-

involved in their children’s schoolwork.

- Some Others have been accused of being fearful of the new program, or unwilling to accept change.

3. Initiate an assessment of the elementary math curriculum that reflects the current information provided by both the NCTM and other leading mathematical scholars.

4. Ensure that industry, higher education and parents have a role in the process of curriculum development?

Middle School Reform Committee Charge

1. Review the present middle school concept, organization, structures and practices to determine the extent to which:

- we have implemented a Turning Points (or other) model**
- we develop a model aligned with draft state regulations for middle level**
- we are getting the results we need to improve student performance for all student groups**

2. Assess what's working well, what's not, and what needs to be done differently

3. Learn, study, read about and visit exemplary middle schools

4. Make recommendations to Central Office Administration and the Cranston Teachers' Alliance for review and implementation

- Provide periodic reports of progress to Central Office Administration**
- Develop an on-going communications plan (union newsletter, faculty meetings, principal meetings)**
- Develop a three year implementation plan, timeline and budget**

Joint Committee for Middle School Reform

Recommendations

April, 2006

1) Request that the District Strategic Plan be updated to include middle school reform as a major goal with needed support

2) Align each School Improvement Plan with District Strategic Plan and include the work of the Middle School Reform Committee

3) Ask each middle School Improvement Team and Professional Development Committee to develop their plans for 2006-2007 to include:

- draft middle level regulations**
- Breaking Ranks in the Middle agenda**

4) Develop a plan to coordinate and unify curriculum and

instructional practice across all three middle schools

5) Purchase Breakin2 Ranks in the Middle for every middle school teacher

6) Plan a three school middle level presentation for one hour following opening day festivities at Rhodes in September and request a three school joint faculty meeting next January

7) Request a budget for 2006 to purchase books, bring in speakers, etc.

8) Develop a budget proposal for implementation of scheduling, advisory and leadership structures for the 2007 school year.