

**Central Falls School District  
Board of Trustees  
Minutes**

**November 13, 2007**

**I. Call to Order:**

**Chairperson, Mrs. Anna Cano-Morales called the Central Falls School District Board of Trustees Meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.**

**Present were: Ms. Anna Cano Morales**

**Ms. Mary Lou Perez, clerk**

**Ms. Ana-Cecilia Rosado**

**Ms. Sonia Rodrigues**

**Mr. David Cruise**

**II. Recognition:**

**a. Ms. Cano-Morales had a special recognition for the team who worked together to garner support for the Safe Walk to Schools Grant. Through the efforts of this team, Central Falls schools secured \$386,000 for the benefit of this community. The following people received a certificate of appreciation for their diligent work:**

**" Mario Papitto: Coordinator of Grants, Outreach Service, Title 1, for overseeing, coordinating, and submitting the grant.**

**" Mr. Richard Currier: School District Maintenance Supervisor and Chair of the CF School District Safety Committee for organizing and for bringing together the members of the SRTS team as well as for coordinating this effort.**

**" Mr. Joseph Nield and Mr. Art Hanson: From the City Public Works and Planning Departments, respectively, for their contribution and work in mapping the safe routes to school and for analyzing the infrastructural needs.**

**" Police Chief Joseph Moran and Detective Drew Delicio: Central Falls Police Department for their contribution to the development of the enforcement component of this initiative.**

**" Mr. Dan Davis, Principal at Ella Risk and Ms. Ann Lynch, Principal at Veterans Memorial, for their work and contribution to the initiative.**

**" Mrs. Lucille Daignault, S.C.O.P.E Secretary, for her work in photographing the streets designated as safe routes to school.**

**" The staff from Channel One-Ralph J. Holden Community Center for designing the educational component.**

**b. Another recognition the Board brought to light was the successful intervention of teams of people at the high school that brought about the official removal of probationary status of the High School in the areas of Mission and Expectations for Student Learning and Leadership and Organization.**

### **III. Policy and Planning**

#### **a. Presentation on Truancy Court - Larry DeCoste**

**Mr. DeCoste started by introducing, Head of Truancy Courts in RI, Mr. Norman L. Proulx and Magistrate Angela Paulhus to the Board. They did a presentation regarding court here in Central Falls and about courts in general. The Truancy Court of RI was started in 1999 at Hope High School by Mr. Harry Potter, Principal at that time. At Hope High School, they wanted to address the truancy problem in a timely fashion as opposed to sending children to the Family Court in Providence. They discussed holding the truancy court in the schools, so the students would leave the classroom, attend the court at the school, and then go back to their class – as opposed to going to court in Providence and waiting for a Judge to call their case. Mr. Proulx also mentioned that they now have five Truancy Court magistrates covering the state. At the end of last year, they had about 2,300 students throughout the state under the jurisdiction of this court. The objective of the Truancy Court is to get children to attend school, identify why they are not going to school, and try to help them as much as they can. The R.I. Truancy Court is a nationally**

recognized program, and Judge Jeremiah travels throughout the country to talk about it. The Truancy Court asked for support of this program; they cannot do it by themselves. Magistrate Angela Paulhus talked about Truancy Court in Central Falls. Ms. Paulhus was a prosecutor for nine years. She is very passionate about the Truancy program, because it allows them to obtain measurable results. Magistrate Paulhus also explained that the Truancy program reduces the truancy statistics because when a student is referred to the truancy court, the he or she has the option of going to trial on the petition or of participating in the program. At the time of the arraignment, they have documented the child's academic record and they know what grades the child has been getting (C, B, or A's) at the time they enter the process. The Truancy Court also tells the child and parent(s) that the process usually takes a year and that they keep track of the student's attendance before entering the program versus their attendance at the time they dismiss the petition. Magistrate Paulhus said that their goal is to dismiss the truancy petition after a year and to have the child develop an educational work ethic, to attend school more, and to get good grades so by the time they dismiss the petition, the child is ready to be successful. In the seven years that Magistrate Paulhus has worked in this District, she has seen that 70% to 80% of the children who appear before the Truancy Court consistently improve their attendance, and approximately 60% improve their grades. Ms. Paulhus gave some samples of students who have improved their grades. She also mentioned that parents are essential in this program.

**b. 2nd Reading Attendance Policy:**

**Ms. Cano-Morales said that she understands from Dr. Gallo that many teachers are voicing concerns about the attendance policy suggested changes. These individuals would prefer that we punish students with the ten-point reduction in grade average, rather than introducing Saturday school or social restrictions, and that she would like to hear from those in attendance at this meeting regarding this policy. Dr. Andrade mentioned that the high school department Chairs voiced concerns as to why the attendance policy was changing. The current one says that if a student misses ten days, their grade will go down ten points. In addition, they asked Dr. Andrade why they are changing the policy now when a lot of time was spent putting this policy together. Dr. Andrade said that students now know that if they miss ten days of school their grade will be reduced by ten points and that they know why it is important to be in their classroom on a regular basis. Ms. Rodrigues asked: Has this helped the children? Are the children not missing school as much as before? Dr. Andrade said that currently the Attendance Policy was still in place and gave a report on failures for the first quarter at the high school. Dr. Andrade said that now they have 1,042 absences, split between 436 students, 270 students failed two or more classes and 166 students failed one class so students that are failing, are failing multiple classes. Dr. Andrade does not know where the correlation is on this. Ms. Rodrigues also asked: Does the HS know if these students who failed classes are failing because of absences? Dr. Andrade said that he had run the attendance**

report and at this point, the majority of students have been absent five or more days, so if you would to take a five-day mark all of those students whether they are A students, honor students will be suffering the ten-point reduction. Since the beginning of the year, Mr. DeCoste has been trying to get students to class in order for them to pass their classes.

c. 2nd Reading Athletic Eligible Policy. Ms. Cano-Morales said that Dr. Gallo informed her that many coaches are concerned with being able to field a team if the academic criteria for play are too high. We are most interested in hearing views on this matter, as the Board is adamant about raising the requirements. Certainly, no one should be eligible if they are carrying a failing grade in any subject area. Ms. Kathy Luther athletic director at the high school said that this past year she submitted the student's handbook to the Board and they asked to review the policies of academics, which were at 60%. Sixty percent is what the Interscholastic League suggests. Ms. Luther spoke to Dr. Andrade and the Guidance office and suggested some ideas about possible work to increase the standards, and came up with 75%. In addition, Coach Jackson spoke during this meeting and shared some concerns that he had regarding the grades that the students have to maintain in order to play sports. Coach Jackson also asked the Board if this policy will take effect on the other activities that go on in the school, such as the chess club, book club, dance club, etc.; he said that if they are going to apply this policy to the sports it should be applied to the rest of the activities at the high school. One question asked was if they need to pass three out of

four classes with an average of 75%. The Board said that they were not ready to make a decision on this. They will decide before the second quarter starts.

d. 2nd Reading Health and Wellness Policy. Ms. Cano-Morales said that she believes they agree.

#### **IV. Public Comments:**

Mrs. Millie Castro said that her Daughter Vanessa Orozco, who attended the Central Falls High School, was here last June ready for an IEP; they told her that her daughter was going to go to the Homestead because the CFHS had nothing else to offer. Mrs. Castro said that she worked with Jennifer Cooks and nothing was done. Her daughter was sitting home until November 7, when she finally started going to Homestead. Her daughter wanted to go to school but no one placed her anywhere. Ms. Castro said that she was very angry especially today because her daughter was supposed to be picked up from school by the Central Falls School Department and nobody picked her up. Her daughter got stuck in Woonsocket. Ms. Castro said that she was trying to be a full time mom and have a full time job, but that nothing is being done and she does not think that this is fair. Mrs. Castro asked to the Board if they were going to do something to solve this problem. Mrs. Cano-Morales asked Mrs. Castro if she had spoken to Arlene Garrison and Dr. Gallo; Ms. Castro said yes. Ms. Cano-Morales told Mrs. Castro that she had gone through the right channels and that she was sure that both Mrs. Garrison and Dr. Gallo would help her in everything. Ms. Cano-Morales said that it is not the

function of the Board to intervene directly in this type of situation, because the Board's function is one of governance, but that they are here to listen and to keep everything on record.

#### **V. Consent Agenda:**

##### **a. Approval of minutes:**

Mr. David Cruise made a motion to approve the minutes from October 9, 2007 and to seal the executive minutes from October 9, 2007. The motion was seconded by Ms. Sonia Rodrigues and unanimously approved by the Board, 5-0. Ms. Cano-Morales asked for any comments and Mr. Cruise said that when the Chairperson asks all members in favor to say "Aye," if they don't answer it's because they agree. Ms. Cano-Morales said that she would like to hear all of the members respond whenever she asks. Ms. Sonia Rodrigues made a motion to seal the executive minutes from June 12th, and July 10th.

##### **b. Personnel Appointments:**

#### **APPOINTMENTS**

**Bridget Salisbury - ESL.ELA - Grade 7 & 8 teacher at Calcutt Middle School - Effective October 3, 2007**

**Robert Anastasi - Elementary Librarian - District Wide - Effective October 15, 2007**

**Lynn Nunn\_ Facilitator of Student Services- Effective December 11, 2007**

**Joshua Karten- temporary business Teacher HS - October 15, 2007**

#### **RETIREMENT:**

**Georgina Hepburn-Morris submitted her letter for retirement, from her**

teaching position at M. I. Robertson School. Her last day of work will be December 21, 2007. Mrs. Morris has been employed by the Central Falls School District for 19 years.

#### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE:**

Kristen Bond - Ms. Bond has requested a one year unpaid family leave from her Music Teaching position at the Calcutt Middle School for the 2007/2008 school year.

Ms. Mary Lou Perez made a motion to approve the appointments, retirement and leave of absence. The motion was second by Ms. Ana Cecilia Rosado and unanimously approved by the Board, 5-0.

#### **VI. Action Items:**

a. **Attendance Policy – Vote for the alternative solution versus the reduction of ten points in the student’s grade.**

Ms. Sonia Rodrigues made a motion to approve the Alternative Attendance Policy. The motion was seconded by Ms. Ana Cecilia Rosado and unanimously approved by the Board, 5-0. Ms. Cano-Morales asked for any comments and Ms. Rosado suggested that the policy be worded in the future tense, so that where it says: student is dropped from the athletic team .... it should say: the student will be dropped.... also Ms. Rosado asked: should we distinguish between academic trips and fun trips? Ms. Cano-Morales said that we had decided at an earlier meeting that only trips that have educational value for the kids would be approved.

b. **Athletic Policy Vote:**

Ms. Cano-Morales said that at this point she would like to table this

vote until the members of the Board meet again and discuss what would be the minimum grade average to be required of students who want to take part in sports.

**c. Health and Wellness Policy:**

Ms. Mary Lou Perez made a motion to approve the Health and Wellness Policy. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Cruise and unanimously approved by the Board, 5-0. Ms. Cano-Morales asked for any comments. Ms. Rosado mentioned some grammatical corrections, and Ms. Rodrigues will make the changes so that the policy will be written in the future tense.

**VII. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Gallo said that due to the time and because they needed to go into executive session by 8:00 p.m., that she will e-mail the Board members any updates. Dr. Gallo said that tonight they would not be ratifying the Local 94 Council agreement due to a typographical error that went out. This will be presented to the Board of Regents this Thursday for their endorsement. Dr. Gallo gave some information about the Energy performance that the finance department and she are exploring in terms of promoting with the city major improvements in the next five years.

**VIII. School Board Comments:**

Ms. Cano-Morales mentioned that on Wednesday, November 14, 2007 Commissioner Peter McWalters will be touring the District from 11:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. and said that if any of the trustees would

**like to go along, they would be more than welcome to attend.**

**X. Future Meeting:**

**Next Board of Trustees meeting will be on December 11, 2007 at 6:00 p.m.**

**XI. Executive Session and Adjournment of public session:**

**Executive Session pursuant to Chapter 42-46-5 (a) 1&2 of the Rhode Island General Laws.**

**(Personnel) (Collective Bargaining) (Grievance) (Litigation). A roll call was taken and the meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.**