

Central Falls School District Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
January 11, 2011
6:00 p.m.
Central Falls High School – Library

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairperson, Ms. Anna Cano-Morales called the Central Falls School District Board of Trustees meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

Present: Ms. Anna Cano-Morales, Chairwoman
Ms. Sonia Rodrigues, Vice Chairwoman
Ms. Leslie Estrada
Ms. Cheryl Lafond

Not Present: Ms. Ana Cecilia Rosado (excused)
Mr. B.K. Nordan (excused)

II. Pledge

III. Recognitions

Ms. Genevieve White and Ms. Marie Grist were inducted into Sigma Theta Tau International, the Honor Society of Nursing on Dec. 5, 2010 for their roles as Nurse Leaders.

Mr. Don Labossiere, from Central Falls High School, has been named Rhode Island's 2010 Counselor of the Year and has been voted President of (RISCA) Rhode Island School Counselor Association. Veterans, Ella Risk, Calcutt and Feinstein have each been awarded the SPARCri Award for the 2009-2010 School Counseling Program. Ms. Nancy Raftery has been voted as Vice President of Elementary Schools for (RISCA) Rhode Island School Counselor Association.

IV. Policy & Planning

A. The Learning Community Benchmarking Data

Veterans Memorial Principal and Lead Principal for Elementary Schools Ms. Ann Lynch reported on the collaboration between the district and The Learning Community charter school. In 2008-2009 the *Growing Readers Initiative* was piloted in Captain Hunt and Feinstein in the K-2 classrooms. In the pilot year, reading scores made a 39-point gain in one school. In the 2009-10 school year, the second year of the partnership, 41 classrooms participated district wide.

2009-2010 Highlights that were given are as follows: Captain Hunt ended their year with 78% of students reading at or above the benchmark; Ella Risk ended year with 69% of students reading at or above the benchmark; Robertson ended the year with 64% of students reading at or above the benchmark; and Veterans ended the year with 54% of students reading at or above the benchmark. Robertson increased scores by 33 percentage points;

Veterans increased scores by 26 percentage points; Ella risk increased scores by 20 percentage points and Hunt increased 19 percentage points from January to March.

At Veterans, 33% fewer students are reading below the benchmark at this time of year, compared to last year. At Ella Risk 9% fewer students are reading below the benchmark at this time of year compared to last year.

The teachers have adopted the curriculum and worked hard. The district is truly working collaboratively with The Learning Community. There is a fully implemented Safety Net this year, with six reading specialists who focus on those children who are 1 to 2 levels below where they should be at any given time of the year and provide them with a double dose of reading instruction. Now, those who are significantly below and moderately below can both be provided with the supports they need. The goal is to have every student at grade level.

The *Growing Readers Initiative* has been written about in education journals this year as a nationally-known collaboration between a public charter school and a traditional public district. The Board commended the staff, our partner, and the children for this effort. Ms. Lafond commented that she has seen her own child make gains in reading through the program.

B. Building Committee – report, bill payments and ANC contract

The committee is moving along. In regards to the \$5M bond, we have expenses against the bond as well as the current Studio JAED work. They are now 75% complete with the schematic designs. In total, our portion of the bill repayment, which includes Studio JAED's work is \$32,809.63 that the committee is seeking approval to pay.

Dr. Gallo received a call from Joe da Silva from RIDE to say that everything is on board for the continued development, and seeking the next \$15M so that all of the emergency repairs across the district will be taken care of.

Dr. Gallo explained for the record that the bills and contracts would now go to Judge Pfeiffer for signature, RIDE, Rhode Island Department of Accounting and then to RIBEC for payment. These were the five steps that were put in for proper oversight.

Action: A motion to approve the bill was made by Ms. Rodrigues, seconded by Ms. Estrada and approved 4, 0.

C. Central Falls High School Transformation - updates

Mr. Capellan informed the Board that January began very positively and with many commitments to move forward. RIDE approved the School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds in the amount of \$1.3M. The breakdown for the funds was shown. There are many improvements to technology in the building. For instance, the new wiring for wireless connections is almost complete. The process of finalizing the bids for the new technology and the computers that will replace the four computer labs, as well as adding more spaces for the virtual learning and the *Study Island* program.

Discipline referrals are decreasing. The teacher absences also decreased. A mid-year report is being compiled and will be discussed during the next meeting. That report would include

more specific data. Parents continue to support the school. The parent meeting that was held the previous night had over 50 parents and students in attendance. Union President Ms. Jane Sessums presented and answered questions from parents and students.

A group of students who were interested in dual enrollment were selected to apply for the dual enrollment offered by CCRI. Dual enrollment programs allow high school students to receive both high school and college credit for taking a college-level course. If they are selected, they would receive free tuition and books. Close to 70 students applied for the program. In other student-related updates, the Board was informed that students had been inducted into the National Honor Society and that it was the largest number of students to be inducted ever.

Ms. Jones reported that in addition to the professional development that is offered on Wednesdays and Thursdays to teachers, they also have their common planning time on a daily basis. Common planning time is a form of in-school, in-team professional development. EBEC will assist the science teachers soon as well. To continue to enrich the program, the lead team asked for teacher feedback and with the assistance of the external evaluators a brochure for the winter session was created with more professional development support for teachers according to the needs they expressed. The brochure was given to the Board members.

Mr. Capellan presented an analysis of the number of students who took the PSAT the prior year in comparison to this year and it showed the improvements that were made. The PSAT presentation is included in the minutes after page 4. The district sponsored the PSAT test.

C. Budget – funding formula impact

The City's financial situation, the average daily membership, and charter school enrollments will all impact the district's budget. The City is willing to help but they are not in a financial position to do so.

A presentation of the actual enrollment figures, October enrollment figures and the projected enrollment figures was shown. The PowerPoint presentation is included in the minutes.

Dr. Gallo informed the Board that the funding formula is based on average daily membership. An example of the impact to Central Falls was given. The current budget is \$42,819,711 and based on the funding formula the district would face a gap of \$2,000,000 for 2011-2012 but could face \$4,000,000. Most of budget (89%) is spent on personnel. The Superintendent met with RIDE during the week to ask how the district should prepare for the budget gap. The district supports the charters but the current projections show a large draw, which the Superintendent believes is inaccurate. RIDE has moved the charter lottery up to early March so the district can still promote the schools to parents. Moving the lottery to March also affects the charters.

The state is currently going to maintain the funds the district receives but no added funds will come from City. The General Assembly may also put the breaks on the funding formula. Jeremy Gill of The Learning Community spoke about this dilemma at a Board of Trustees meeting because he knew the impact the funding formula would have on Central Falls.

V. Public Comment

Roberto Murcia, a Central Falls High School student, commented on the high school being in the media. He feels there is a lot of finger pointing but would like everyone to work together. The students can improve. Everyone is to blame, students, administration, teachers and parents. He feels that the teachers should not be fired. The teachers have put in the time and effort and are trying to help the students. He also feels that administration is trying to help the students. He spoke about an experience he had when he had to go to the school's In-School Suspension room. He commented that he was given a word search instead of work. He feels that the school can improve with the help of everyone.

Maria Lozano, Co-president of the Central Falls High School PTSO. She explained that the organization is called PTSO to reflect that it is a parent, teacher and student organization. It was created so that parents and students could also be engaged in the school's transformation. She asked student Roberto Murcia to become a part of the group. She stated that the organization is not pointing fingers and wants collaboration. She commented that the CFTU president was in attendance at their meeting the night before to talk about and to help solve the absenteeism of teachers and students. She responded to questions. Ms. Lozano further stated that she agrees that the responsibility is for everyone and that it should begin at home. Parents must communicate more with teachers. The students need to feel that they can speak up about what happens at school because there are good teachers but there are some teachers that are lacking. Students take cues from their teachers just as the parents are the role models at home. She extended an invitation to the teachers to be part of the PTSO. The children are the future of this country.

VI. Consent Agenda

There was no motion to approve the minutes because there were not enough Board members who had been present at that meeting to carry the motion. The minutes were tabled until the next meeting. A motion to approve the personnel actions was made by Ms. Rodrigues, seconded by Ms. Estrada and approved 4, 0.

VII. Superintendent's Report

A. U.S. Department of Education Invitation

Representatives from the Central Falls School District have been invited to two reform conferences. The first invitation came from the Secretary of Education's office to travel to Washington D.C. and attending will be the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent for Transformation and three teachers. We are awaiting word on the details. The second invitation also came directly from Arne Duncan's office inviting attendance at a conference in Denver, Colorado on advancing student achievement through building positive labor and management relationships. In order to attend the conference the Superintendent, the Central Falls Teachers' Union President and the Board of Trustees Chair would have to sign a pledge together indicating a willingness to participate in the conference, learn from the conference, and follow-through on new learning when back in the district. The parties would be flown out to the conference so the district would not incur any expenses. Dr. Gallo was awaiting Ms. Sessums' response since both she and Ms. Cano-Morales were ready to sign on.

B. Raymond Rivard Estate

Raymond Rivard was a Central Falls resident for a number of years and his wife was a teacher in Central Falls. In his Last Will & Testament he donated funds to many organizations, and the district was among the recipients. The district will receive \$120,000 to be used for Kindergarten and Grade 1 in the upcoming school years.

C. Streamlined Teacher Contract

The district and the teachers' union are not in full negotiations yet. They did meet seeking to begin negotiating the ground rules.

D. Grant Funding Updates

The district received \$1.3M in School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds and today the Nellie Mae Foundation announced their award of a planning grant. The district was the only recipient in Rhode Island. After the planning period, it is expected that up to \$1M could be given for the next six to eight years. The grant is intended to support student-centered learning while embracing a wide group of partners expanding the traditional school day and place.

VIII. Board Comments

Ms. Cano-Morales stated that during the last Board of Regents meeting, many youth, especially youth from Providence, expressed their concerns about very different graduation regulations. The regulations were passed in 2008 but the students didn't seem to be aware of it. The changes that were being proposed would go out for multiple public hearings over the course of the next few months. One of the concerns that the students expressed was that they were not good at taking tests. Ms. Cano-Morales was glad that Central Falls took proactive steps in exposing students to test-taking skills. Ms. Cano-Morales also praised the parents for publicly supporting the transformation efforts at the high school. The parent letter signed by nearly 200 parents and presented to the Regents was passionately read during the Regents meeting. The letter clearly testified to the involvement of the parents in the education of their children and the shared aspirations for a bright future for all children.

IX. Next Board of Trustees

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be on Tuesday, January 25, 2011.

X. Motion to Recess to Executive Session and Adjournment

No executive session was held. A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Rodrigues, seconded by Ms. Estrada and approved 4, 0.