

Central Falls School District Board of Trustees  
Meeting Minutes  
March 22, 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 6:05 PM.

Present: Ms. Anna Cano-Morales, Chairwoman  
Ms. Sonia Rodrigues, Vice Chairwoman  
Ms. Cheryl Lafond  
Mr. B.K. Nordan  
Ms. Stephanie Gonzalez (6:12 PM)

Not Present: Ms. Ana Cecilia Rosado (excused)  
Ms. Leslie Estrada-Berroa (excused)

**II. Pledge**

**III. Recognitions**

*A. Braille presentation and recognition of student use*

Carmen Cintron, a fourth grader at Ella Risk, provided the Board with a presentation of her PAC Mate Portable Braille computer. Ms. Carmadello commented that one of the PAC Mate computer system's features is that it allows a parent or teacher to see the student's work so that review and collaboration can occur instantly. The PAC Mate converts objects and text to speech so users can hear documents, images and content. It helps play a key role in empowering and increasing the productivity of the user.

The student's mother and sister were in attendance for the presentation as well as teacher assistant Johanna Connell of the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities. Ms. Connell currently has eight students that are visually impaired. She meets with Ms. Carmadello to make sure that the students' needs are being met. Ms. Carmadello thanked her for her dedication and work.

Carmen showed the Board how her machine worked. She informed the Board that she had been able to create a file that had information about herself and about her computer.

In her own words Carmen's fingers read and she stated, "I am blind and I read braille very well and I am reading this to you on my new PAC mate. It has no screen but has a display for every line I read and I can do my work and then it comes up so that my teacher can see it. It has a calendar, address book, calculator, timer and clock. It helps me be more independent. It can also speak."

She has had the PAC mate for less than one month. She indicated that her favorite part of the machine was that she could write whatever she wanted to write. She took questions from the Board and from the audience about the machine and its features.

Ms. Carmadello also informed the Board that Ms. Connell had started an afterschool club with three students who are visually-impaired. They meet at Robertson School so the students can interact with one another and be a support system for each other. Additionally, Ms. Connell was looking to expand the program and an anonymous donor has donated funds to support the program's expansion. Carmen took the NECAP testing with the machine and was proficient. Ella Risk Principal Ms. Azar, who was also in attendance, stated that Carmen had only learned braille the previous year.

#### *B. ACT Academy Dancers recognition*

Central Falls High School students Jean Villar and Pedro Raposo represented the school's ACT Academy Dance Composition class at the Winter Mini-Fest 2011 in the new Perry and Marty Granoff Center for the Creative Arts at Brown University on Saturday, March 12th. This is brand new interdisciplinary arts center dedicated to fostering innovation, research, collaboration, creativity, and education among the arts, humanities, and sciences. Winter Mini-Fest 2011 features movement experiences, dialogues about creative process and collaboration, multi-media installations, and dance performance. The American Dance Legacy Institute is a dynamic and varied intergenerational group of passionate and energetic artists, creative practitioners, and dance enthusiasts from all walks of life.

All students from the Dance Composition class were represented with written work, video, photos, and with Villar and Raposo's live dance performances. They worked in partnership with the Public Humanities graduate students to curate the exhibits and performances. Villar and Raposo attended a master class, were part of the festival discussions, heard a panel discussion with professional choreographers, performed, and saw the evening performance.

Raposo was thankful for the opportunity to take part in the master class and he state that the performance at Brown was exhilarating. He stated, "It was exciting to see what a two-hour class was like instead of a 51 minute class that we receive at the high school."

ACT Academy Leader Ms. Camputaro commented that the partnership with the Legacy Group had grown and that this time the student work was commissioned. The students' written work, video journals and photography were all on display.

### **IV. Policy & Planning**

#### *A. Civics Presentation*

Literacy Consultant Barbara Halzel presented the civics curriculum work that was being done in the area of civics at the elementary and middle school levels. Michael Trofi, the project coordinator from the Center for Civics Education met with Ms. Halzel to discuss civics training and what it might look like in Central Falls. With Dr. Gallo's approval and support, Ms. Halzel and Mr. Trofi designed a three year plan for grades K, 1, 2, 4, 5 and 8. Grade 3 will be included next year.

In the first year, fourth grade teachers attended one day of training each month, which totaled 50 hours of training. They also attended afterschool workshops and a facilitator visited their classrooms to observe their lessons. All sub costs, materials and books for each student and teacher was provided through the Civics Center School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program grant. In the second year, fifth and eighth grade teachers went through the same type of training.

Additionally, students in grades 4, 5 and 8 do take part in civics work by participating in Project Citizen, a program that promotes competent and responsible participation in local and state government by having students learn how to monitor and influence school and public policy.

Ms. Halzel attended a national conference in Washington D.C. in which Central Falls was recognized for the training that the fourth and fifth grade teachers received in civic education so that it could be a mandatory part of the social studies curriculum.

The district is now in the third phase of the grant. All Kindergarten and first grade teachers had one day training and grade two teachers had two days of training. Also included were two hours of after school support by the facilitator and all books and materials were provided. Each school received seven literacy books on bullying to add to their libraries, at no cost to the district.

Bullying and how to prevent it is a high topic of concern in the nation so the K-2 training was extremely focused on the topic. The thought behind it was that if young students learn about civic issues such as justice, responsibility, privacy and authority it would help to prevent bullying.

Ms. Halzel turned the presentation over to Ms. Judy Ouilette, a retired teacher from West Warwick who spent most of her years as a Kindergarten and Grade 1 teacher. She facilitated the professional development for all the teachers in grades K-2.

Ms. Ouilette presented a 14 minute montage of video, pictures, songs and raps that showed the evidence of civic learning.

#### *B. Early Childhood Program Presentation*

The presentation was not held and would be scheduled for another time.

#### *C. Inappropriate Social Media and Texting policy*

The ACLU reviewed the revisions that were made to the policy that had been approved by the Board on February 8, 2011. The ACLU approved the revision and felt that it addressed their concerns. Dr. Gallo stated that Mr. Brown was pleased at how quickly the Board had responded with the revisions.

There was discussion regarding some of the sections of the policy, specifically the staff section that involved coaches and teachers giving out their private phone numbers to students and checking in with the principal before doing so. It was further discussed that the policy was a safeguard for coaches and teachers so that the communications are not inhibited but are legitimate.

An additional reference to the professional code of conduct was requested.

*Action:* A motion to approve the Inappropriate Social Media and Texting policy, with the additional reference, was made by Ms. Rodrigues, seconded by Ms. Lafond, and approved 5,0.

#### *D. Earth Day Proposal*

City Councilman James Diossa informed the Board that he and a group of residents, youth and local businesses were planning to celebrate Earth Day by hosting a “Take Pride in Our City” Earth Day event on April 23<sup>rd</sup> from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM beginning at the Central Falls High School. The event would help clean the city and to bring the community together in a positive way.

Councilman Diossa stated that donations such as trash bags, gloves, rakes, and push brooms would be helpful and if anyone had any of those items to donate or loan it would be appreciated. Additionally, there will be a recycling component to the clean up.

As the event approaches an agenda will be sent out. Volunteers will gather at the high school and split up into groups for the clean up. Flyers for the event will be finalized by April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Ms. Lafond thanked the Councilman for planning this type of project. She stated that she does keep her property clean but that this event is a wonderful opportunity to teach a lifestyle that should be kept on a daily basis.

#### *E. Central Falls High School Update*

Mr. Capellan informed the Board that Ms. Elisabeth Ochess was the new Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) Coordinator. He welcomed her and stated that she would also be working with Nellie Mae and the ELOs.

At the previous Board meeting, a parent had brought up some suggestions regarding the Central Falls High School graduation ceremony. Mr. Capellan and the school’s graduation committee followed up. The graduation ceremonies have been held at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) Warwick campus for the last few years and that venue had been booked again for this year. Given the parent’s suggestion to hold the graduation at the Lincoln campus, the committee agreed to find out if it was available and what the cost would be. Unfortunately the graduation date was already booked by Lincoln High School, who is having their graduation on the same night. Additionally, the Lincoln campus does not have the same accommodations as the Warwick campus, therefore the chairs, staging would need to be rented and additional manpower would be needed. The cost for the Lincoln campus would be significantly higher than the Warwick campus. The Warwick campus is approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000 versus the Lincoln campus that is approximately \$11,000 to 12, 000. The committee also did look into having the graduation outdoors but weather would be a factor that can not be overlooked.

It was agreed that more discussions regarding the graduation ceremony could be conducted to see what other possibilities might be available for next year.

The Board noted that the sound system at the Warwick campus had not been very good. Mr. Capellan stated that the committee had brought that up and had already requested to have the college's sound system augmented.

The Leadership Rhode Island visit was successful as the Board could read from the positive press it received. Sophomores and juniors would be able to take part in a college fair would be held on April 27<sup>th</sup> at the high school.

Mr. Capellan introduced Ms. Jodi Timpani, a ninth grade teacher, who is working with AS220 and Ms. Tina Cane, who is a poet, a teacher and the founder of the Writers-in-the-Schools program. The team wanted to redesign their intervention efforts so right before the third quarter began, Ms. Timpani and others looked at students' strengths and interest so they could put a program in place that would engage the students but still hold them to high academic standards.

Ms. Cane explained that the Writers-in-the-Schools program places writers/poets in public schools to enhance and support curriculum through teaching "imaginative writing." Students produce, polish and publish original work. Students learn how to read as writers and write as readers, and discover process, craft and genre. While participating in Writers-in-the-Schools youth are encouraged to explore language in new ways and become increasingly invested and deliberate in how they use words.

Ms. Tampani informed the Board that the participating students were now five weeks into the program. Additionally, those Central Falls High School students would be reading their original work live at AS220 on Saturday, April 9 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Five of the students who would be participating in the AS220 event read there original work for the Board.

#### *F. Building committee reports and approval of bills*

Dr. Gallo informed that Board that the Building Committee meeting that was held on March 21<sup>st</sup> was null and void because the posted agenda listed the wrong date; therefore no update or bills would be given. Additionally, a special meeting would need to be held on Tuesday, April 5<sup>th</sup> to discuss and approve Building Committee items.

#### *G. Streamlined Contract Discussion*

The Administration and Union leadership continue to meet on the contract.

### **V. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **VI. Consent Agenda**

A motion to approve the minutes and personnel actions was made by Ms. Rodrigues, seconded by Ms. Lafond, and approved 5,0.

## **VII. Board Comments**

Ms. Rodrigues, who represents the Board on Health and Wellness Committee, stated that the Health and Wellness Committee were discussing and reviewing the bullying policy. The members will have their comments ready to present to the Board soon.

The Board received a tentative 2011-2012 academic calendar to review and for approval at the next meeting.

## **VIII. Next Board of Trustees**

A special meeting will be held on April 5, 2011. The next Board of Trustees regular meeting will be on Tuesday, April 12, 2011.

## **IX. Motion to Recess to Executive Session and Adjournment**

A motion to recess to executive session pursuant to chapter 42-46-5(a)(2), that this public body convene in executive session to discuss certain matters that are the subject of collective bargaining (certified teacher contract negotiations) was made by Ms. Gonzalez, seconded by Ms. Lafond, and approved 5,0.

Ms. Cano-Morales noted for the public that the Trustees would not reconvene into public session.