

**NEW ENGLAND LABORERS'/CRANSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
CONSTRUCTION CAREER ACADEMY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

October 16, 2012

12:00 P.M. Executive Session

Public Session Immediately Following

4 Sharpe Drive

MINUTES

This meeting of the NEL/CPS Construction Career Academy was held on the above date in the conference room and called to order at 12:15 p.m. with the following members present: Chairman Traficante, Mr. Santangelo (in place of Ms. Larkin), Dr. Leone, Dr. Lundsten, Mrs. McFarland, and Mr. Sabitoni. Absent were Mr. Cardi, and Mr. Rampone.

There was no executive session.

This meeting was called to order; the roll was called. It was noted there was a quorum present.

Minutes of Previous Meeting(s) Approved – September 25, 2012.

Moved by Mr. Sabitoni; seconded by Dr. Leone. All were in favor.

Public Acknowledgements/Communications – none.

Chairperson's Communications – none.

Executive Director's Communications

a. Update on Focus School Status

Mr. Curran stated – the last couple of weeks we have been focusing on NECAP and we have finished the bulk of the testing and are in the makeup sessions at this point in time for students who may have missed a section here or there. We will probably get done with the makeups this week. Tuesday we will pack everything up and send it off to Measured Progress for scoring. We will get those results back in February from RIDE and of course we are believing the scores will be better than they have been in the past. We know one thing for sure is that the students really gave it a great effort this time. As you know they need to get at least 2 on the NECAP or they will not graduate. We drove that home with them as well as their parents and they took it seriously and they really gave it a good effort this time around. Much better than I have seen in the past so we expect that the results will be better. We will have some plans in place at a future meeting to talk about those students who don't have that 2 because we naturally have to respond and react to that so they can get on track to graduate. We have 100% participation as we did last year. Always there is some cleaning up of data that you have to do. You will get labels for students who are no longer here and you have to make sure that RIDE understands that those students were not in this school when the school year began and therefore they should not be looking

for a score from that student. If we don't clear that up that counts as a non-participant. We have done our due diligence on that and we will continue to work with RIDE on that. Last year we did that, in fact John Santangelo and I spent a lot of time to clean up the data and when the results came back in February of last year we had 24 students who showed up as non-participants in spite of all that work. It is because beyond this building some things were not done. We ultimately did get that cleared up and of course we did get 100% participation which is rare for a school so we feel very good about that piece of it. We will have 100% again this year.

The annual report was submitted to RIDE in early September. This is a requirement for all charter schools each year and the three schools that were up for renewal last year (we being one of them) had been given some allowance to get it in in the fall as opposed to last spring because we went through that entire renewal process last year. So all of our plans have been submitted, our annual report and I would like to email that to you it's 60 pages long. I will send that report to you. It is good reading. It is a good cross-section of our school at this time. I think you will find it interesting and at the next meeting if you have some comments or questions bring them to the table and we will review it at that time.

Our enrollment is continuing to be on our radar screen. This time of the year we lose kids, we gain kids, it is sort of an on-going process that we are in. As you know from our last board meeting we are

looking at a capacity of 192 students; right now we have 182 students. We are in the season now where schools are contacting us because their schools have been in session for four to five weeks and the students are not finding success in some of their classes so we are getting calls almost daily now from schools inquiring about our enrollment and our capacity. In fact just today we had two students come to us from Warwick. We will be at that 192 number fairly soon I am sure. We will continue to update you at each meeting about that.

The last thing I wanted to mention is the diagnostic screen which I spoke of last time and did a little walk through with you. I wanted to go over it in a little bit more detail with you on that today but I haven't received it back from RIDE in a timely manner to do that with you. That will have to go onto the next board meeting as an agenda item for me to review the diagnostic screen with you. It will be a lengthy presentation so when we look at agenda items we will have to keep that in mind because it will take a little bit of time to go through that with you. I want you to have a full understanding of where we are as a focus school. The material that RIDE has given us on the diagnostic screen is very informative. It is our data and when we go through that in the next month we will be clearing out some of the data. We are not convinced, and I know from the district level they are not either, that all that data is accurate so we will do some fact checking on that to be sure that we are actually looking at the correct data in all cases.

Today, however, I do want to review with you, with our consultant,

Carolyn Ferris, our focus school plan in terms of what we are doing this year and it's not just because we are a focus school but very importantly we are on the road to getting rechartered in another two years so we have created a plan for that and I would like Carolyn to come to the table now and share that with you.

Ms. Ferris stated – I do have a handout for you (see handout #1 – on file in the superintendent's office). Basically what this handout is is a tool to give you a sense of what a school in turnaround looks like and the process we have to follow in order to find the most success that we can. I will try to be as brief as I can but I do love talking about this. We do establish a vision and develop an action plan from that. Now considering we don't have the diagnostic screen at this point, we're not able to fully form that so we'd like to consider that we are in the developmental stage of this. The diagnostic screen is actually the driving force behind the vision. So that being said, we know some of the areas that need work and that hasn't stifled us from moving forward so we're developing and moving forward but we're aware of the fact that we do need to get the diagnostic screen and complete that assessment before we can have a fully functioning vision. The areas where we can move forward, there are some systems here that we know that we need to have so we have started that process. We have started committee work, there are five different committees, according to the BEP we need to have an advisory program, we need to have response to intervention (RTi), those are two committees that we have working now. We are working in conjunction with the district

to make sure that we are in alignment with the other schools. We have our school improvement team which is our third committee. We have a behavior management system in order to tighten up those systems that are in place and then we have a culture and climate committee. So those are the five committees that we have up and running already addressing a lot of the areas that we know we can foresee are going to show up in the diagnostic screen. Those committees are made up of teachers, support staff, administration, myself, and through that work we are able to address a lot of the issues we can see forthcoming.

Mr. Traficante asked – one of the concerns the last evaluation team had was that the board was not well informed regarding what is going on in the school building. Would you write up a paragraph on each of those committees, what their mission is, what their composition is, to distribute to the board. Ms. Ferris stated – I will do this and as an ongoing process I can start to give you a lot of the data that is going to be supporting this because as you see through this process and as we move forward, data is going to be key to everything. We will become a data driven establishment.

Ms. Ferris continued – on the third step of this process is cultivating climate and culture and it's been my experience having been in a turnaround school prior to this that that's probably the most significant piece of all of this. Where it is the most significant piece we do consider it to be a lagging indicator. It is definitely a long-term

focus and it's one of the more challenging pieces of this to actually be able to measure gains but this is something that is pinnacle to this whole process so we're really keeping a close eye on this and making sure that we move positively forward in all realms being building culture and climate school and then as we move forward to embrace outside community and parent engagement. That is another piece of the culture and climate.

Dr. Leone asked – when I first came to this school board we were told a lot about the personalization model. In the time you and Mr. Curran have been here, do you find that was more show than go? Do you find that kids felt good that they were here but didn't understand that and had to extend to them about having a certain work ethic? What is your assessment of the climate in the short time you have been here? Ms. Ferris said – since I have been here, yes, there is personalization here. The piece of the puzzle that I am finding is that we probably need to improve upon is the collecting of data that supports that. It is a small school and I think we rely a lot on the fact that it is a small school so that in turn makes data collecting probably second, it hasn't been a forethought. So I do see personalization but the depth of it and the fidelity of it I wouldn't be able to comment on. Mr. Curran stated – the advisory program that we will be putting into place this year really is built around that whole concept of personalization for students because in that model small groups of students are assigned to one staff member and we will have a future report on that. That staff member basically becomes the key person for that group of

students in terms of their attendance, academics, and their behavior. Ms. Ferris stated – as we fully develop the advisory program also individual learning plans will be implemented with fidelity which will give us a little bit more information about that connection. That takes up about 40% of the advisory time period as far as what the focus will be and that will be students developing goals and connecting with the mentor they have. We will have data to support the conclusions.

Ms. Ferris continued – as we move forward, setting metrics, assessing and analyzing data is going to be key. One of the pieces that we find being in turnaround and with the charter renewal process as time is not in our favor so we have to be really strategic about how and what we move forward with in setting metrics assessment and analyzing. Also with teachers beginning this whole process with the evaluation with student learning objectives (SLO's) so where you see in that step process references to smart goals, teachers are right now having professional development through the district to establish those and to make sure that we're all moving forward with those processes. So beyond that we are creating and assessing data on every level in order to support the fact that student achievement is above all where we need to do it and to rise that number as we were staying with the whole idea of data and as we move into the fifth process which is our quick gains. As Dennis had mentioned, we just completed our 2014 cohort NECAP, ELA and Math and one of my first charges coming here in August since we know that NECAP is a pinnacle piece in all of this and we need to see gains there, the first

order of business was for me to take the 11th graders, review their charts and start to analyze their 8th grade scores, their GPA's, their grades, and teacher recommendations. Where we went from there was to create a cohort and it ended up being about 14 students that we felt from all that data summarized, they would have success with algebra II curriculum. We've never had algebra II here before so we started that this year and that group now takes algebra II. They had a month of ramped up accelerated NECAP prep that the other classes weren't quite able to go at that level and then through testing they actually stayed and tested together. So very strategically we took every 11th grader and between their classes and how they tested, who they tested with, if they were special ed students what they needed insofar as accommodations, every single student was strategically placed and tested so they would have the best testing environment. That being said we're looking for a quick gain there. It's not going to replace what we all know is curriculum and instruction have to be, we have to raise that along with the student achievement, that's a long term goal that we have but for right now, because we know we are going to be looked at for our NECAP scores coming up these are areas where we can try to put them in the best possible positions so we could get the best possible gains at that point. With these 14 students we will gain a lot of knowledge, whichever way they score but just watching that whole process and watching the kids and how they group together and how they took on...it became our 4 group. We really put them in a good spot. We also had Ron Norris join the team this year and he has experience with teaching algebra II so it

was an easy fit that we had a teacher who had experience teaching it and he was able to take them on and he has done a really great job thus far with the students and trying to move them forward. Beyond that group every 11th grader was analyzed, looked at, and figured out what would make the best testing situation for them, right down to students who are typical behavior students and who could test in the same room with whom. It makes a huge difference. I can say, I'm just going to backup what Dennis said before, I've never seen a group of students work harder. We had 81% of the students stay for the entire 90 minutes, through the math which is the most difficult piece of this and then we have probably close to 45% who went longer. Those numbers are huge. We didn't have a single test refuser.

Dr. Lundsten asked – do you feel like they had enough time to finish. Response from Ms. Ferris was yes and they took as much time as they needed. The students that had extended time used it. All students had the option of extended time. Dr. Lundsten asked – yesterday we heard a discussion that we should be offering geometry. Geometry is the key to getting those 3's and 4's. What are we going to do about that here? Ms. Ferris stated – that is a really good question and we have geometry just staring now. We have Agile Minds which is the math program that we have begun and it is a geometry program. So the entire math department and special ed teachers are here in training right now in a two day intensive PD for this and that's going to be rolled out and started now along with pieces of data management system so the Agile Minds folks are

going to be monitoring this and we're going to be getting benchmark interim data so we can watch it go along and this is really exciting for the group that will be taking the math NECAP's next year so that is showing us a lot of promise.

Mr. Curran stated – our freshmen take a double block of algebra I, sophomores take geometry and then in the junior year they take junior math although this year we started the algebra II section as well. But what we are finding and we have gone back and Ms. Ferris created some data sheets on this 11th grade group as she said what they scored in the NECAP in 8th grade, what their grades have been in algebra and geometry in the previous two years and their GPA's and what I see there in that data is that although many of the students have been exposed to geometry and algebra they weren't very successful in it. They still have to take the NECAP in their junior year whether they passed algebra or geometry or not. There is a direct correlation between whether they were successful or not and I would say with a C or better and how they are going to score on the NECAP so when you dig down and look at the data it's really very interesting because we found some kids who scored 3's in algebra or 8th grade math and got maybe D's or F's in algebra I and then geometry and are taking the NECAP this year and it makes you wonder if they can get a 3 in 8th grade, shouldn't they have done better in math in freshmen and sophomore year and predictably they should be able to get a 3. I know it's not apples to apples, the tests are different, but still we should expect that student would have gotten a 3 in their junior year.

We are looking at motivation, we are looking at instruction, we are looking at resources, programs, there is no one answer to this. The other thing that affects us is that half of our students don't come from Cranston so we are bringing students in and they are taking the test in their junior year having come from a variety of other math experiences and that we have no control over as a district. I don't know, we haven't analyzed that yet; does that help us or hurt us? Are these kids doing better than Cranston kids or worse? Ms. Ferris stated that's even a piece as we wrap up NECAP that we can code the cohort of students who are not Cranston so we can have a chunk right out of NECAP data and that is one of them along with when we created that cohort of the algebra II. We're coding those also so we kind of see if it did have an impact.

Ms. Ferris stated – lastly, with monitoring of systems, that's a key piece of all of this. We had talked before about the time constraints that we are under to take on initiatives. We have the best intentions, and they are great initiatives, and it goes on for a while and takes a long time before you realize you didn't get the gains that you thought or were hoping and we don't have the luxury of the timeframe when you are in a turnaround. You have to be able to assess and monitor really quickly and say okay, you know what we're not getting as much as we wanted from this so we are going to have to reassess and change gears and move on to something else. That is something that needs to be constant even when things are running smoothly if we're not getting the impact that we need to get we have to be able to

switch gears. It's a steep project and it is very doable. I have seen it in experience and if you can follow this and stay on track and do these things you are going to get the gains and that's what excites you about this whole process when you are working in it, it is when the school does a turnaround. It can definitely happen here I am convinced. I will keep you up to date with the data as it comes out.

Mr. Traficante asked – Dennis, have you found out from RIDE what schools we are compared to? Mr. Curran stated – no I haven't received a direct answer from Bill Clark. We're compared to demographically similar schools but my contention is there is no demographically similar school to us. They have an algorithm for it which I would be glad to bring to the table and if anyone here can figure it out that would be great. I have asked Bill Clark to spend some time with us to define how that algorithm is done and he hasn't taken me up on that offer yet. So in charter renewal we are compared to demographically similar schools, in focus school we are compared to Cranston so when we look at the bar graphs and how we're doing as a school it's comparing our 11th graders NECAP students to the entire 11th grade population in Cranston which I also contend is not a fair comparison because about half of our juniors come from other districts but we are held in measure against the Cranston students only. So I don't think the metrics that they use at RIDE really fit us well because we are a district charter school but I can't get them to respond to that. It is what it is.

Ms. Ferris thanked Dr. Lundsten and Jeannine Nota for coming to the staff meeting yesterday and addressing the staff.

Mr. Santangelo asked – I have a question on the reauthorization. Can you elaborate on exactly what the stipulations were for getting that reauthorization? Was it just handed over and you got three years or was it you have three years with stipulations. Mr. Curran stated – In fact as recently as last week I asked Bill Clark again to identify exactly what do we have to hit. What is the end game here? I will bring that report to the table again, probably at the next meeting. But marginally it is all around NECAP. They want to see progress in NECAP. They have set some targets for us which I think are attainable in two years' time. But I am not convinced that there is belief that we should stay open on the RIDE's side of this, I just haven't gotten that feeling that they honestly believe that. Not that they would tell me that, I'm not looking for that answer, I'm just giving you my opinion on that. But even if in two years there were a recommendation that for whatever reason we wouldn't remain open I think as long as we show progress that even the Board of Regents would find it difficult not to keep us open. So what they are looking for based on the report that was done the spring before I came here had a variety of suggestions in it and I will say suggestions for lack of another word, as Traf said earlier that the board has more to do with the daily operations of the school. That the board be more involved in instructional decision making, and that the board be more involved with curriculum development. Well the reality is again, we are a district charter school and as such our

curriculum is dictated by the Cranston Public School system. It is not dictated by this board, and can't be. You don't want that responsibility but you can't take it anyway. I think some of the recommendations that RIDE made in that report were really counter to being a district charter school and I know Traf and several others spent a lot of time trying to clarify that to the people who came from RIDE but I don't think in the end they really could get that point.

Mr. Santangelo stated – I am just concerned because I am looking at this and I am thinking RIDE's definition, I mean this is all great; RIDE's definition of turnaround I think might be different than the way we are using the term here. I would be cautious about that because I see turnaround all over the place and I understand RIDE's definition of turnaround and that's different than what you are doing here Carolyn. Because this is right but it's different.

Mr. Curran asked – what do you think RIDE's definition is? Mr. Santangelo responded – RIDE's definition of turnaround is different than what you are trying to do here. I mean they talked about getting rid of the entire administration. They talked about totally mixing up, having half the staff gone, so it's a little different definition of what's happening here. This I think is absolutely doable I'm just concerned about the term. Do you follow what I am saying?

Mrs. McFarland stated – isn't this the graph you put up last month?
Mr. Curran stated – yes (he asked Mrs. Corcelli to get that graph). Ms.

Ferris stated – that’s all the different groups, there are usually four categories and one of the categories is get rid of 50% of the staff, but we are all choosing from the same grid. It just depends on which group you fall into how many you do the priority schools. And now they have changed the terminology so now it’s become priority focus, that’s new for this year because it was turnaround transformation, and school closing was one of the four. So now turnaround has now become the umbrella term rather than being one of the four so everything is going to fall under it.

Mr. Curran stated – I understand your point, we don’t want RIDE to start calling us a turnaround school because they have a different image of that. I don’t think they will because in the turnaround movement money (SIG) was attached to it. So, turnaround schools based on that SLB, it was federal dollars attached to it. RIDE has made it clear, we don’t have a penny to give anybody so they dropped that themselves. We can call it turnaround, we can call it focus school, and we can call it improvement. We can come with any term that we want. We all know what we have to do.

Ms. Ferris stated – turnaround is the term used nationally for schools in this piece and that is the direction in which I was using it. I do understand last year turnaround was one of the four models.

Mr. Curran added – in that matrix of strategies we have to choose four categories so RIDE is not imposing that on us. But quite frankly Andrea Castendas, when she met with us here, and went through the

diagnostic screen with us at that time really left saying you're a focus school and you need to work on that but you have a bigger issue and that is working on getting rechartered. So the focus school is almost a subset of the real work we have to do here; sort of runs parallel.

Dr. Lundsten asked – how will you determine who will select from that rubric? Who will have the feedback and the buy-in from the staff? Are they willing to have some say in this insofar as which ones you select? Mr. Curran stated – in the process, as you know, there are four elements you have to go through and for each element your data is the indicator for it, so you click on it and it tells you what your data is. For example, if one of them is to improve your attendance rate, you click on that and up will come your attendance data for last year and then you can determine as a school, do we have an issue with attendance or not? For example in that case when we clicked on that data up came an 80% daily average rate so 20% of the students on average were absent. The state average for high schools is 90% so we're 10% of the state average in terms of our student attendance. So we would then have to say, do we have an attendance problem, clearly we do. So is that an area we want to focus on and that's one of the intervention strategies. So what we did that day and what we need to continue when we get it from them is to go through and basically say things we don't need to do. Through that process of elimination we will probably come down to 10 things we could do as a school and we need to then prioritize which four will we pick to do. Certainly we need staff input and buy-in as you say Judy.

Ms. Ferris stated – when we see the diagnostic screen also RIDE is doing an assessment so we will be looking at where they have us too and then compare the two. It’s a green, red, yellow system. When you hit the green or the yellow RIDE is even saying this is probably where you do not need to go. It’s almost a process of elimination the way they do it. There are certain things on there, like to have control over determining staff and stuff; we don’t have that at this type of a charter school so that automatically gets taken off. That’s not even a consideration. There are some fiscal pieces that just make it impossible for us to say we can add financially. What I can tell you, when you are doing this, we are probably going to pick four but we’re probably going to hit eight of them. She even said you can get credit already, this is an assessment done in 2011, you already got a new principal, you already got a new administration, we’re going to give you credit for that. We talked about the fact that I am here. (At this point Mr. Curran showed the graph to the board with items already marked off and explained the graph in detail.) The final decisions will be brought forth to the board for final approval once the administrators and the teachers collaborate. Oversight of this will be the superintendent and the assistant superintendent. This board will serve as an advisory.

Financial Numbers

Mrs. Corcelli went over the operating budget as of September 30, 2012 (see handout #2 on file in the superintendent’s office). Mr.

Traficante spoke about the \$13,000 increase in taxes that was unexpected. He also stated this is a very tight budget.

Certified Nursing Assistant Program (see handout #3 on file in the superintendent's office)

Mrs. Corcelli spoke about the addition of this program and so far we have sixteen students who have signed up for this program.

Board Members Communications – none.

Public Hearing

a. Students (agenda/non-agenda matters) – none.

b. Members of the Public (agenda matters only) – none.

Consent Calendar/Consent Agenda – none.

RESOLUTIONS

PERSONNEL

NO. 10-01-12- RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Executive Director the resignation of the following board member(s) be accepted:

Lizbeth Larkin, CTA President

Effective Date: October 16, 2012

Jamie Bedford, Parent

Effective Date: October 16, 2012

Moved by Mrs. McFarland, seconded by Mr. Sabitoni. All were in favor.

NO. 10-02-12 – RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Executive Director, the appointment(s) of the following board member be accepted:

John Santangelo, CTA Vice President

Effective Date: October 16, 2012

Moved by Dr. Leone, seconded by Mr. Sabitoni. All were in favor.

Policy and Programs

A. Demonstration on new projectors. It was decided to do this next month.

Public Hearings on Non-Agenda Items – none.

Announcement of Future Meetings – November 20, 2012

Gathering in Pomfret – December 12, 2012.

Adjournment

Mrs. McFarland made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Dr. Leone. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael A. Traficante
Chairperson