

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

April 14, 2015

12:00 P.M. Executive Session

Public Session Immediately Following Executive Session

4 Sharpe Drive, Cranston, RI

MINUTES

This meeting of the New England Laborers' and Cranston Public Schools Construction and Career Academy was held on the above date in the conference room and called to order at 12:07 p.m. with the following members present: Chairman Traficante, Mr. Jay Sabitoni, Dr. Lundsten, Mr. Wall, Mr. Cardi, Dr. Leone, and Mr. Santangelo.

There was no executive session.

Call to Order –Public Session

Roll Call/Quorum

The roll was called; a quorum was present.

Minutes of Previous Meeting Approved – February 25, 2015

A motion to accept the minutes of the February 25, 2015 meeting was made by Mr. Wall and seconded by Mr. Santangelo. All were in favor.

Public Acknowledgements/Communications – none.

Chairperson's Communications – Chairman Traficante stated – I just submitted a check to Carolyn in the amount of \$63,000 from the Laborers. This is part of the \$100,000 donation that Mr. Armand Sabitoni is making to the charter school. This money is to be used to replace all of the furniture, white boards, security cameras, Agile minds, and the extension of our construction craft laborers program. That is very generous of Armand and the Laborers' to do that. That is part of the payment and the rest of the revenue will be forthcoming later in the year.

Board Members Communications – none.

Executive Director's Communications

Student Performance - See handout A – attached.

Ms. Ferris stated – we are kind of in the middle of a pretty hefty assessment period in the state and district. We are in the midst of STAR testing for the third time for the year, which is where we are measuring student growth. We look at student growth and achievement. That window is for the entire month of April so during the May meeting I will be able to report out on what our numbers look like for the year. We just completed our first PARCC, which is called the PBA (Performance-Based Assessment) piece of PARCC. That was completed in March and went pretty well insofar as the administration piece of it. We verbally talked to the students about how they felt

about it and they were very comfortable taking it on the computer. They liked taking it on the computer. They did find the questions themselves difficult and we could...right now we're not going to see scores until next fall but we could kind of gauge by the time spent on it. The 9th graders seem to spend more time on it; 10th grade, ELA and geometry didn't spend as much time which I think we can kind of surmise from that that potentially they had a difficult time with the many steps per question so they kind of answered a piece of it and maybe didn't go on and they didn't seem to spend as much time with the writing piece. We will know better when we get scores. As far as the administration of it and the temperature of the building insofar as the kids were concerned, they weren't anxious about it or upset after so it went pretty smoothly. I know for this building we really didn't have any hiccups. I think the district did a pretty good job too with the technical piece of overseeing all of that. We're glad to put that piece of it to bed and now we have the end of the year PARCC assessment coming up beginning May 4th. In the middle of that we also have science NECAP which will be in the midst of our assessing PARCC. Just for the science, May 12th through May 14th, grade 9 & 10. NECAP is grade 11. They are not at cross purposes, they are just happening at the same time. They are not at cross purposes but it means the building itself needs to come up with testing administration, special grouping for population such as the special ed population and it is an extensive amount of assessing and having students out of classes and I would love to have a dialog with the purpose of the science NECAP continuing since we have moved to

PARCC and we are trying to get a lot of buy-in with PARCC. There is no science component to PARCC. Mr. Curran stated – Rhode Island does not engage in anything in PARCC except the reading and the math. Ms. Ferris continued – with PARCC they assess per course. So if a student is taking geometry, they get tested in geometry. Right now we are doing geometry and algebra I and then English 9 and English 10.

Dr. Lundsten asked – if you have comments, talking points about that, they (RIDE) are having a debriefing with the superintendents on April 28th. If you give me your talking point/comments I would be happy to share those. Ms. Ferris stated she would do that.

Ms. Ferris continued – aside from the assessment piece, you know that we have been addressing the chronic absenteeism rate which is high for our school. It has been improving over the last four years continuously but we are still at a point where we want to make that a focus for the next year or so. We have two initiatives that are going on right now. We had talked about the attendance games last meeting and after seven weeks in quarter three we had a 445 perfect attendance tickets given out. That represented that many students had a week of perfect attendance. We were really impressed with how high that was; 64% of those tickets were represented by the males and 36% were represented by the females. That almost aligns with the percentage of the enrollment here although we do have more growth. 42% of our population here in the building is female. That being said,

the males are having better attendance and we kind of used that to be a competitive tool. Two gift certificates were awarded and we will do the same in the fourth quarter. There is a lot of school spirit around this and it seems to be having a positive impact.

One thing we have noticed in our chronic absenteeism rate is although it has been improving we have seen over the last two years that we have a drop off in the last six weeks of school. Our rate is actually much better in the spring and then we tend to lose, we lost almost 12% by the time we got to the end of the school year. We can surmise some of the reasons, one being students at this age when they feel they have failed a course and there is no way they can pass it, it's like why do I bother coming. We are addressing that from an instructional perspective. We have talked to the teachers about how to talk to the students and address that. But also, there is an initiative that starting in the district for fourth quarter which is called, A Wake Up Call. It's going to be a robocall and texting that will go out in the morning to those students that are chronically absent. Apparently it is used in Florida, in the Kissimmee area, very successfully. What happens is the student and parents will get a call or a text saying school is starting in a half hour. The messages can be very personal to the school and it's just to try to urge the kids to come to school. We are piloting it this year with a control group. We will keep you posted.

Mr. Wall stated – we have credit recovery (in the Providence School

system) and if you could pretty much target the standards that the kids had achieved so far, pretty much in my field, history, we knew what was being taught across the board so if they passed a certain amount, say first, second and third but fourth quarter you didn't. When you went to credit recovery you would go for the portion you needed. Targeting what standards they missed and what quarters. It would take some front loading before but with a school this size you could probably do it.

Mr. Traficante asked – what is the status on the conditions (RIDE)?
Ms. Ferris stated – the condition on the data has been approved to the point where it's ready, they are comfortable bringing it to the commissioner's new board. They are still not sure what that process is with the new board coming in. That piece is holding that up and then with the finance condition, #2, we just sent them...there is a letter from the auditor that is coming up on this docket a little bit later that the auditor signed off on the processes that we have here and RIDE was very comfortable with that. So what RIDE is waiting for now is the acceptance of the February board meeting minutes because that was discussed here. Once they have that I believe that's going to be ...I am also sitting in the pen waiting for the first Regents...apparently they are so back-logged because they haven't been meeting that they said as soon as they can get it on the docket it will go through. The third condition is not due until July but our plan is to have it into their hands in May.

Enrollment – See handout B attached.

Mr. Curran stated – we had Open House last week and it was well attended. We had about 45-50 parents and students in the cafeteria which was a good number for this event. We have 22 students who are firmly committed in the freshmen class for next year. Our goal is 45. We are right about where we were last year at this time and between now and August 15th we will fill in the rest of those spots. We also had a number of students come to that open house who were not freshmen, another grade level in either Cranston or another district, and they also signed up. We have some new students coming in next year in the upper grades as well. In addition to that we have had a number of students in the upper grades. In addition to that we have had a number of students in the last few weeks come in now; they didn't want to wait until next year. We continue to see the ebb and flow of enrollment that we typically see.

Discussion with Kristin Ward

Mr. Curran continued – I have been having discussions with Kristin Ward the ESL supervisor. There is a strong ESL program at Bain and she came here about a month ago; met with me; I showed her around the building; talked about our small classes and important programs that we have here. She thinks this will be a very beneficial school for a small population of Bain students who are in the ESL program; very limited in their English speaking skills but she thinks they would thrive in this environment. She also said the parents don't speak very much English either and although we went there and gave

presentations to the students and sent letters home to the families and so forth that those parents probably need something a little more personal. So, after vacation we're going to have a meeting here with that group of parents and students, along with a translator, and we'll show them what our school can offer to them and she thinks we will probably end up with 5-10 ESL students here next year. We've never had an ESL program here. She will have support staff working with us if we get that population of students. I do have an ESL certified teacher on staff currently so that teacher will be working with them as well. I agree with Kristin. I think this would be a good program for those kids and one that they would flourish with so we are looking into that. That would also increase the numbers in our freshmen class for next year to 32. That would also be a feeder program. Kristin wants to create a model ESL program at this school.

Promotional Posters

Mr. Curran continued – we will continue to put up promotional posters in different communities on public bulletin boards. This summer we will also be doing some public service announcements in local media and probably do some local advertising in local newspapers as well.

Construction Exhibit

Mr. Curran continued – we are also planning on have a construction exhibit here in early June for the students who are committing coming next year. Two reasons for that; one we want to keep them

over the summer interested and eager to come here next year and then also, if they have other friends, maybe a cousin or a friend at school, they'll go back from our exercise here and be excited about what they see. So we're going to have the construction lab open and we're going to have three stations out there. One station will be cutting and burning, one will be demolition, and the third one will be scaffolding. We're going to actually let the 8th graders do it. They will be able to handle the tools, do the work, alongside our juniors who can work with them and show them some of the "so called tools of the trade." We're going to do that over three days and we're going to bring in all those kids who are committed to coming here next year and hope to keep that excitement over the summer. We will probably be doing this after the June 5 graduation.

Mr. Santangelo stated – I would like to see us try to build up the Cranston students and not rely so much on the out of district students.

Mr. Curran stated – well you certainly are singing to the tune that I like to sing to. Right now we have 6 Cranston students in the 22 that I mentioned. The other 16 are all from out of district. We certainly want more Cranston students here and that is why we are doing this outreach to the ESL program and we are continuing to knock on the door. We don't seem to get any students from Western Hills.

Mr. Santangelo stated – maybe the focus, when you come to Western Hills the focus needs to be a little different. Maybe focus on the kids whose parents are already involved in the Laborers' union; we have a lot of them on that side of the city. Obviously the focus at Bain and

Park View would be different. But when coming to that side of the city maybe the focus would be getting kids interested whose parents are already involved in the Laborers' union to come here; advertising that way through the Laborers' union.

Mr. Curran continued – last week we had four teachers who teach in the ESL program at Bain come here and we thought they would be a good source of information for the kids and parents because they are their teachers. The four of them met here with me and Cindy and we talked about our school. I showed them our promotional video; I took them on a tour of the building. Although they were veteran teachers in Cranston, they have never been in this building, they didn't really know what this building was all about, they heard about the charter school but they didn't really know what we have to offer. I brought them into classrooms so they could see how small the student teacher ratio was and they left really with their eyes open about what a good program this would be for those kids. I am hoping that will sow some seeds for us as well. It's all about out-reaching.

Mr. Traficante stated – after your visitations at Bain and Park View, we only got 6 Cranston kids from those two schools?

Ms. Ferris stated – the guidance counselor is going to go back over to meet with the guidance counselors again and they are actually starting to mark ...I think it was Bain that called her and said, now that we have thought about it, there is probably about 15-19 students that we think would be a good fit for this school. So she is going to go back over and meet with those students.

Mr. Curran stated – I also met with Ayana Crichton, the afterschool coordinator. We talked about the program, toured of the building, she was very impressed with it and she thought that the group of kids, she works with very needy students, she thought that group of kids would definitely benefit.

Dr. Lundsten suggested – what if you offered some type of after-school program here for those kids so that when the parents come to pick them up, they would come in, see the program, even just field trips or something.

Mr. Curran replied – we are doing a project with her and her group of kids, their greenhouse. It has collapsed so our construction class is going to help reinforce that and I think we can get those kids to come over here to do some of the prep work.

It was also suggested that when the next union meeting is held at the Charter School, the video about the school be shown to the members. Mr. Curran stated he would mention that to Ray for the next meeting.

Budget - See handout C attached.

Mr. Curran stated – this is Mrs. Corcelli's report; she could not be here today. As of this time we have received about 70% of our revenue. We did our final tuition billing, April 1, so what that means is that on April 1 we were able to bill all the districts that send students to us, including Cranston. We won't bill again until August 15th so the influx of money for now is over once we receive it all and we will bill again on August 15th based upon our enrollment on that date. We are

anticipating a shortfall in our budget. If you look at the last page of this handout, the second column, budget variance, indicates that the number right now we are predicting of having in terms of a shortfall. Now, to be conservative, I'm going to tell you it's probably going to be higher than that and it may be as high as \$100,000. That comes out of our reserve so we never end up in the red because we have a healthy reserve and so any shortfall that we have we would transfer from the reserve into our operating budget to end the fiscal year. But let me explain why we are projecting that shortfall. We built the current budget and approved the current budget at this board last June for this current school year based on 163 students. At that time, our projections in June looked like we would be at 163 students thereabouts so that's the budget we approved and the budget we started the school year with. But, we on average are down about 18 students from that. Our average enrollment this year was 145. I have said this before at this table, you may recall, but we have a high mobility index. What that means is we have a lot of kids coming and going during the school year for any number of reasons. This year, for whatever reason, our average stayed around 145 whereas our budget was built for 163 students. So 18 students on average less than what we were predicting results in a shortfall of about \$167,000. Now we don't anticipate we will have that shortfall because we have savings in other areas that we are planning on. We have also frozen the budget right now for the rest of the year. But I think it is a conservative estimate to say that we would likely end up in June with a transfer from our reserve of about \$100,000. Anything less than that

would be good but I wanted to prepare you that it could be \$100,000 in June that we are looking to transfer from our reserve. So, concomitant with my previous report on enrollment, this is why we need more Cranston kids in our school. We get the most money from Cranston for students, it is based on the per pupil expenditure of the towns, and so for example, from Cranston we get about \$11,000 per student, from Woonsocket we get \$2,000 per student, from Central Falls we get \$1,800 per student. Although we are more than happy to take in students from surrounding towns, we're most benefited when we take in Cranston students. In addition to that, we don't pay for busing in Cranston. We pay for busing from other districts. Next year we will pay 100%. We have been on a scale. Getting students from outside of Cranston, although it's good in one regard because our state aid goes up and it's not as healthy as getting a Cranston kid. Having six Cranston kids in the 9th grade next year is really, in my opinion, untenable. That is why I have been working the midnight oil here trying to get more Cranston kids into this school next year so that we have a stronger solvency in our budget. That's the bad news. The good news is we have a healthy reserve that we built up over the years and unless we have some major change in our budget for the rest of this year, I anticipate we are going to have that shortfall at probably \$100,000.

Questions

Mr. Traficante stated – we are going to have to look at each line item as to where we can save some money and I'm just looking at Capital

Improvements, if we don't need any dollars in that area, that's about \$18,000.

Mr. Curran stated- \$18,000 that we spent to date in that area but that second column is already figured in with that shortfall. We've already spent that this year and that is part of the calculation that got us to \$62,818.

Mr. Traficante stated – in order to maintain our current staffing, for next year, we need at least 160 students.

Mr. Curran stated – yes, but I'm going to give another caveat on that. That is, unless the funding formula changes. The state funding formula for charter schools, that's been in the news. If it changes, to the detriment of charter schools, then we are going to have a bigger hole to fill.

We will graduate 28 seniors, they will be gone. So if we get 28 new freshmen back, then we're even but we want more than 28 because we don't want to be even we want 18 more students in this school next year.

But going back to that caveat, if the fair funding formula changes, and that is the recommendation from that committee at the state house, if the senate and the house change that funding formula and the governor approves it, then we're not going to get as much state aid...we're not going to get as much district aid as we have been getting from all the districts that supply students to us.

Dr. Lundsten asked – Dennis did you talk to Representative O'Grady from Lincoln? Mr. Curran responded – I did not talk to him personally. I did go to the committee meetings.

Dr. Lundsten stated – I asked him about this and he said he didn't think it would affect the three public district charter schools. Mr. Curran stated – I am going to try and interpret what he said, because I am wondering what he would mean by that. There are three district charter schools, we are one of them, the other two are ACE, and Times2 in Providence. Those two charter schools have only Providence students. We are the other district charter school but we have a state-wide catchment area. So we're different. So what he is probably thinking is that we're only supplying Cranston kids to this school. If that fair funding formula changes, Providence is still going to give Times2 and ACE the money per pupil expenditure because they are all Providence kids but we are different. We would definitely be hurt by a change in the fair funding formula. He's assuming we are only dealing with Cranston kids. And quite frankly, I will be honest, if that fair funding formula changes, I couldn't even sit here and tell you that Cranston will continue to support that per pupil expenditure. That will have to be a decision by the school committee, not by this board. I am just hoping that the League, of which we are a member, and I attend those meetings, the League is hoping to put off a discussion of a change in the fair funding formula for at least one year so that the League of Charter Schools can participate in discussions around the table with the people who are making these decisions so that whatever changes might come in the fair funding formula are not drastically debilitating to the charter schools. We know that some changes are going to have to happen, we just don't want it to be a wholesale change that is going to...to be honest with you, the

changes they are suggesting, a lot of charter schools will close. They wouldn't be able to fund their programs, including us.

Mr. Traficante stated – Judy, we are basically in the same predicament right now ourselves. If the city council does not give us additional monies, then we will have to lay off more teachers. We can do that with the new state law, June 1st deadline. We may have to do that here, put more teachers on the layoff list until we know where we stand on our budget. Just as a precaution.

Mr. Curran replied – by our May meeting we will have a much clearer definition on our shortfall and by then we will have a better enrollment projection than we do in mid-April and that might be a decision we have to make at that meeting.

Dr. Lundsten asked – regarding the budget – why was the equipment maintenance so over? Budgeted \$1,200 and you spent \$13,000.

Mr. Curran stated – we upgraded our security system, cameras for \$12,000. It is temporarily in this account because that is part of the reimbursement we are going to get from Armand Sabitoni. When we get that check in it will go back into this account and that will be back to about a \$1,000 expenditure. Holding place right now because we had to pay the bill.

A motion to accept the Executive Directors report was made by Mr. Sabitoni; seconded by Dr. Lundsten. All were in favor.

Public Hearing

- a. Students (agenda/non-agenda matters) – none.**
- b. Members of the Public (agenda matters only) – none.**

Action Calendar/Action Agenda

RESOLUTIONS

Business

NO. 4-1-15 RESOLVED, that at the recommendation of the Chairperson, the Board of Directors accept the formal financial audit and the accompanying management letter prepared by Ward, Fisher and Company, LLP for the period ending June 30, 2014. (On file with the Auditor General, RIDE, and the office of the Executive Director of the NEL/CPS Construction and Career Academy.)

Moved by Mr. Cardi; seconded by Mr. Sabitoni. All were in favor.

Discussion –

**Mr. Curran stated- we had to get the letter from the auditors and then approved by this board so that again it can be part of our second condition to RIDE and it shows RIDE that we did our due-diligence in having that fiscal protocol approved by the auditors and then approved by this board.  **

Public Hearings on Non-Agenda Items – none.

Announcement of Future Meeting – May 19, 2015.

May 21st, 2015 Awards Night

Adjournment

There being no further business a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Wall; seconded by Mr. Sabitoni. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael A. Traficante

Chairperson

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HANDOUT A

Date of Board of Directors Meeting: April 14, 2015

Department/Committee Reporting: Student Performance

Author: Carolyn Ferris

Approved By (Executive Director): Dennis Curran

Key Topics for Consideration

STAR Reading and Math Assessments:

We are currently in the process of STAR testing in Math and Reading all students for their third and final assessment for the year. This testing window spans the month of April. We continue to monitor growth and achievement with a focus on the Student Growth Percentile. We will report out on the final growth scores for the year at the May BoD meeting.

PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers):

The Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) for PARCC was completed in March. We are happy to report there were no significant issues with the administration of the assessment. We found overall that students spent a significant longer period of time on the Algebra 1 and ELA 9 test than the Geometry and ELA 10.

***Feedback from students: They liked taking the assessment on the computer and did not struggle with the technical portion of the assessment. Students found the questions to be difficult.**

Results will not be available until the fall.

The End of Year (EOY) PARCC assessment will begin during the week of May 4th. The same courses- Algebra 1, Geometry, ELA 9, ELA

10 will be tested.

Science NECAP:

The state is continuing with Science NECAP testing for the current 11th grade. The district has established the testing dates for 11th grade:

May 12th- 14th

Addressing the Chronic Absenteeism Rate:

The Chronic Absenteeism Rate (absent >10%) for our school has improved each year over the last four years and it has a ways to go.

Two initiative addressing this challenge:

 1. The “Attendance Games” the perfect attendance initiative just completed Quarter 3.

Seven weeks of data shows:

445 perfect attendance tickets were given out to date!

- 284 (64%) male**
- 161 (36%) female**

We had the first drawing giving away -a gift certificate to one male and one female. All data was shared with students during a school-wide assembly.

 2. District-wide initiative-“Wake-Up Call”. All chronic absentee students (62) were candidates for this initiative. Students were randomly placed into two groups: one group will receive text and calls in the morning prior to school reminding students and parents that it is time to get to school. The other group will not

receive any calls. At the end of Quarter 4 we will compare any changes in attendance behaviors between the two groups.

Recommendation to the Board:

STAR:

Continue to monitor student performance looking at Student Growth Percentile after the April screening period for STAR.

Monitor student data for increase/decrease of intervention support needed as we move forward.

PARCC:

Continue to monitor PARCC assessment administration. After EOY assessment is complete, an analysis will be reviewed by the BoD for best practices for test administration and student preparation.

Attendance:

Monitor outcome of both initiatives at the end of Quarter 4.

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HANDOUT B

Date of Board of Directors Meeting: April 14, 2015

Department/Committee Reporting: Enrollment/Recruiting

Author: Dennis Curran

Approved By (Executive Director):

Background/ Context:

We had our Open House last week and had a good turnout of parents and students. Most of those in attendance had already applied but some had not. We did sign up a few more that night and all in attendance were pleased with the evening. All teachers were present and did a nice job of showing off the school.

At this time we have 22 students committed to grade 9 and a few more to upper grades. Additionally, we have enrolled some upperclassmen in recent weeks.

I have also begun talks with Kristin Ward, ESL supervisor for Cranston. There is a small group of ESL students at Bain that we think would benefit from attending our school. We are planning a meeting of the parents after vacation to show off our school and explain the benefits to their children.

Lastly, we are organizing a construction day at the school in early June to show the incoming students what lies ahead for them in our program. We think this will be a way to keep them eager over the summer and spread the word to their friends.

Key issues for consideration:

We will continue to market the school in Cranston and elsewhere. We will look to have some newspaper ads this summer in local towns. We will also investigate some on-air time in local media. We have also put up promotional posters in neighboring towns about our school.

Recommendation to the Board:

Continue the support of these efforts.

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HANDOUT C

Date of Board of Directors Meeting: April 14, 2015

Department/Committee Reporting: Financial Development

Author: C. Corcelli

Approved By (Executive Director):

Background/ Context:

Operating Budget as of 3/31/2015

Revenue:

As of March 31, we have received 70% of revenue budget. The final tuition billing, QTR4 dated April 1, should culminate in local aid at 87% and out-of-district aid at 88%, an unexpected shortfall to our budget.

Expenditures:

As of March 31, we have expended 73% of budget expenditures with a variable deficit. At this point non-essential expenses will be frozen

through the remainder of the fiscal year. A budget adjustment will be conducted in May seeking board approval.

Key issues for consideration:

- March 4 – RI Charter League rally held at State House in support of and promotion of charter schools**
- March 10 – RI Charter League Conference at Rhode Island College**
- In Process – Workforce Solutions Providence/Cranston Summer Youth Grant**

Recommendation to the Board:

- Continue to support funding formula for charter schools through any means available**
- Assist in recruiting efforts through word-of-mouth to various groups**