

**BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 1, 2015**

A special meeting of the Enfield Board of Education was held at Town Hall in Council Chambers, located at 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, CT on December 1, 2015.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Tom Sirard.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Tom Sirard
3. **FIRE EVACUATION ANNOUNCEMENT:** Tom Sirard announced the fire evacuation announcement.
4. **ROLL CALL:**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Walter Kruzel, Raymond Peabody, Mike Ludwick, Tina LeBlanc, Tim Neville, Vin Grady, Stacy Thurston and Tom Sirard

MEMBERS ABSENT: Lori Unghire

ALSO PRESENT: Dr. Jeffrey Schumann, Superintendent and Mr. Christopher Drezek, Deputy Superintendent

5. **AUDIENCES**

Mark O'Mara, King Court – He does not like the idea eliminating class ranking and weighted classes. Students need to excel. They need to be rewarded for extra effort. They are our future. He would like to know how you will be able to distinguish between them. Students need to be inspired. He pushes his children to excel to the best of their abilities. We should not take this away from them. We need to raise the bar so our children push themselves. We need to push them forward and up. We should not take away their incentives to excel.

Barbara DeSousa, Fairfield Road – She would like the Board to comment to her questions. She would like to hear the Board's opinion first. She feels the agenda is out of order. She believes changing the policy would be a disservice to our kids. The students work very hard getting into honor classes. Her son is taking A/P classes. She does not want us to take away their incentives. Class rank means a lot. What is the point of eliminating class rank?

Louis Kopacz, Carmella Terrace – Mr. Kopacz is proud of Enfield. He coaches in Enfield and is proud of the youth in this town. He has never been in any honor classes but his wife has. Our children are entitled to be challenged and to succeed. Some students deserve to take honor or A/P classes. All students are different and learn differently. Our children need to receive the same opportunities and expectations that other children are receiving in other school districts and private schools in Connecticut. We need to take pride in our kids. They are our future in Enfield. The students need to receive the credit they are due for taking honors classes and A/P classes. His son takes A/P Physics and the grades matter to him.

Terry Trombetta, Lawn Crest Road – Mrs. Trombetta would like to know where this was posted online. She heard about the changes and would like to know why this is being discussed. As a parent and educator, she is pleased with our A/P classes and rigor. She would like to know what research has been done. What will colleges look at if we take away class rank? Students are motivated by class rank to succeed. This needs to be across the board for all students. We do not want to take away from our high achieving students. Enfield needs to maintain our high quality education. We need to look at this closely before any changes are made.

Guy Beck, Cottage Road – Mr. Beck is happy with Enfield. His children graduated from Enfield. We moved here because of the education system. His children received a good education. Taking the Valedictorian and Salutatorian away will do our children a great disservice. We should encourage our kids to succeed and to be better than us. He thinks this idea is a poor idea. We have not seen the presentation. He feels this agenda was poorly setup. We do not have an opportunity to respond to the presentation before the Board will approve it.

Brenda Lumbert, Standish Street – Mrs. Lumbert believes that dropping the weighted courses and high level courses will hurt our kids. Weighting all classes equally will hurt our students. More schools in Connecticut use weighted courses than those that don't. Some colleges will remove the weighted classes. Making this change is not fair to our upper level students. Only 39% of our students are ready for college. Students will lose financial aid and scholarships if we remove weighted courses and class rank. Our kids deserve to be proud of their class rank. Our students work hard and deserve to receive the grades they work for. Honors classes and A/P classes should be weighted differently. All of our students deserve the grades they work hard for at all levels. Leveling the playing field will hurt our students. If this is the case, we shouldn't care about competitions. This is not the way to start our new high school. Our students work hard and deserve to be recognized for it. Please do not change class rank or weighted classes

Colene Ceniglio, Shannon Drive – Mrs. Ceniglio is concerned about us dropping A/P classes. Student's GPA is based on classes completed. The weighting of honors classes and A/P classes create rigor. Dropping weighted classes will not make our students better-rounded. Our students are taking many different level classes. A/P classes prepare our kids for college. Our students will still be competing against other schools to get into college. This is not the do less for more generation. Our students would not be prepared for college without honors or A/P classes. We do not want to lower the bar for our students at the new high school. We should be raising the bar for them. We do not want to hurt our students by eliminating class rank and weighted classes.

Kim Williams, Edgewood Drive – Mrs. Williams would like to know how many schools are not using weighted courses. What will be the impact on students applying for financial aid and scholarships? How will this affect our participation numbers if we make these changes? Our students need to be well rounded. Why would they want to take honor and A/P classes if all the classes are going to be calculated the same. She would like to see us keep the Valedictorian and Salutatorian. If we make this change, we cannot say we value education in Enfield.

Maureen Mullen, King Street – Mrs. Mullen is concerned with the contaminated soil at the CREC Public Safety Academy. She has seen staff and students on the hill. She would like to know how deep the cap of the soil is. DEEP has looked at the drainage from the berm that seeps into her property. She is concerned for the safety of the students. She would like the Board's liaison to share this concern with the CREC officials.

Jonathan LaPointe, Donna Street – Mr. LaPionte is a current student and is taking 2 A/P classes, a UConn Class and honors classes. He will be affected by these proposed changes. He stays up very late each night doing his homework and takes his grades very seriously. Class rank is needed. Students will be affected by this proposed change. Colleges look at the classes that students take. Taking higher level classes should be recognized by weighting the course. He could take easier classes but that is something he does not want to do. He tries very hard in school and his grades reflect this. You get where you are because of the hard work you do.

Catherine Smith, Iroquois Road – Mrs. Smith is concerned with the safety and security at the new high school. They do not have a phone system in place and are using runners. The doors

are left open during the day. Visitors are not signing in and out. The safety of the students concerns her. When will our kids be safe again?

Ashley Omabane, Thistle Lane – Ms. Omabane stated that she works hard for her grades. She is taking honor classes. What will happen if we change this? What will happen to the grades/credits that we have earned up to this point? Students take the chance and take weighted classes and will risk hurting their GPA if they don't do well in the class. Unweighted classes will affect your GPA and changing this will hurt students.

Abigail Bosco, Simon Road – Ms. Bosco works hard for the grades she receives. She is taking 4 A/P classes and honor classes. What will happen if we change the weighting of classes? Will all the work we have done be lost. Will this reflect our grades? She is taking honors and A/P classes and works really hard. If they aren't going to be weighted, why would anyone want to take them? Students will take the easy way out. You will lower our incentives to take honor classes if you make these proposed changes.

6. ACTION IF ANY REGARDING BOE POLICY #5127.1 PURPOSES OF THE WEIGHTED GRADE SYSTEM – FIRST READING

Mr. Neville moved, seconded by Mr. Peabody to refer Item #6 Action if any regarding BOE Policy #5127.1 Purposes of the Weighted Grade System to the Policy Committee to review.

Discussion:

Mr. Neville stated moving this item to the Curriculum Committee to review is very appropriate.

A vote by **roll call 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

7. CURRICULUM COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Enfield High Interim High School Principal Andy Longey and Enrico Fermi High School Principal Paul Newton presented to the Board and public the new daily schedule; 4.0 grading scale; course leveling, decile rank and the elimination of valedictorian and salutatorian.

Mrs. LeBlanc has a junior that is taking honor classes and a freshman who is taking average classes. They both earned the same grades and she understands what the student audience members are talking about. The students have earned the right to take honors classes because they have worked hard. Some kids take A/P classes and they work hard and want to take them. If we are going to change this, we cannot do this to the students now. We need to do this with the incoming freshman class. She does not want to see this taken away from those students that have been working hard for the past 3 years. We are bringing the students together next year and that is stressful enough. The A/P classes are hard and a lot of kids don't stick with them. Offering more A/P classes when we merge will allow for more flexibility. As a parent, she is concerned with this.

Mrs. LeBlanc appreciates us looking at this now. We are looking to see what we can do to make our 21st century high school even better.

Mr. Peabody agrees with Mrs. LeBlanc that we should not start this right away. It would be unfair to the students that have been working hard. How can we transition this? He would like to know how many of the NEAS&C colleges follow this. He thanked the parents for their research. He also looked at information. Colleges are looking at weighted scores. Class rank is used for scholarships and weighted classes count towards class rank.

Mr. Peabody asked if the Board leaves the weighted classes and this new method is accepted

around the country, could we revisit this again. We need a level playing field for our students. We have a good school system in Enfield. We need to be able to compete with other schools.

Mrs. Peabody would also like to get this information out to the public. We need to communicate this with the public and the parents. There are some concerns that need to be discussed.

Mr. Peabody would like to know the number of A/P courses and honor course we will offer. He would also like to know the cost for the A/P courses that the parents are paying for. We have discussed this at Curriculum meetings.

Mr. Neville stated it is nice to see everyone here tonight. The idea was presented to everyone tonight at the same time. There are many questions that need to be addressed. He likes this and understands it. Our students will be receiving over 1,000 hours of instruction time. He likes the idea of the Eagle Hour. Our students will be going off to college and this will give our students the opportunity to be on their own and the ability to work with staff and students during the school day. This will be good for the teachers. Our students will be given a new way to learn. Our students are quite adaptable.

Mr. Neville stated Valedictorian and Salutatorian students are very competitive. Recognizing the top 2 students is great. Having the students choose the speakers for graduations is in-line with what the colleges are doing. This might work for our commencement speakers.

Mr. Neville stated he was touched by what the students had to say about GPA. What happens to the students next year that have worked hard for 3 years? He would like to continue this discussion next week. He is not ready to make any decisions yet. We want the students to continue to work hard.

Mr. Neville would like to know how many schools in our DRG are doing this and how long have they been doing this for? What are the experiences of the schools and feedback from the parents and students?

Mr. Neville stated we have received feedback from the colleges and want to do what is best for the students. What percentage of colleges are doing this and what kind of colleges? Are they state schools or Ivy League schools?

Mr. Grady would like to receive a copy of the presentation. Is our current system hurting our students to get into college? Mr. Newton stated no.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated with the new schedule, students will not have the same classes every day. This could be a benefit for them.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated pre-calculus is not a weighted class. Mr. Newton stated they are leveled classes – this is a level I class which is the highest level.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated the incentive will not be there for honors classes and not every student will take A/P classes.

Mrs. LeBlanc stated not every student will eat lunch during the Eagle hour. Mr. Newton stated they are not made to eat lunch now. Mrs. LeBlanc is not opposed to the Eagle hour. There are some benefits. She would like to observe an Eagle Hour in Manchester to understand it better.

Mr. Peabody stated earning a high school diploma is a stepping stone towards a higher degree. He loves the idea of 4.0 grading scale. He is also in favor of the schedules. He had this kind of a schedule when he went to high school.

Mr. Peabody thanked the parents for doing the research. This was a very respectful dialogue and he thanked them. There were some concerns regarding the procedure of the agenda. He thanked Mr. Newton and Mr. Longey for the presentation. He sees many new improvements for the new high school.

Mrs. Thurston asked if we will still be able to distinguish the top two students for the Uconn Scholarships. Mr. Longey stated the administration will be able to provide this information.

Mr. Neville stated most scholarships will go through the guidance department. Does converting the rank cause more work? Mr. Longey stated no, we will still know the students class rank. Mr. Newton stated the decile and GPA will be on the report card.

Mr. Neville asked about the scheduling of classes at Asnuntuck, will this continue? Mr. Longey stated we will continue to schedule these classes at the end of the day for students that participate. Mr. Newton added we also have the students that participate at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts.

Mr. Neville stated there are some prerequisite courses that are required before taking A/P classes. Colleges will see this as rigor. Mr. Newton added that parents have the option to override the class placement.

Mr. Neville added that the high school reform is still alive and students will be required to take 25 credits. Students will need to increase the number of credits they take. Mrs. Middleton stated this will take effect in 2021 starting with the freshman class of 2017.

Mr. Ludwick asked about decile ranks. Mr. Newton stated the students know their class rank. The difference can be .001. All the students work hard and are excelling.

Mr. Ludwick stated what will we do to recognize our Valedictorian and Salutatorian? If we are going to be a world class high school, competition, stress and achievement go along with this. Our students need to be recognized. Rank does matter. It is human nature to take the easier path,

Mr. Ludwick likes the idea of the Eagle Hour. Eliminating homeroom is a good idea. Discussing these items is a good idea. Our discussions have been respectful and should continue. We want to be a world class high school and need more rungs to the ladder. We need to challenge our students to be the best they can be. He would like to know how to get more students into these honors programs. We need more leaders. These kids are working really hard and need to be recognized. He likes the direction we are moving in. The application is off to a great start. We all want to succeed but sometimes you learn more by losing. We need to rethink the weighting of classes

Mr. Ludwick thanked Mr. Newton and Mr. Longey for the presentation. It was well thought-out. We still we need to figure out a way to honor our Valedictorian and Salutatorian. We recognize our Band members and our athletes. We need to recognize our top scholars.

Mr. Ludwick likes the scheduling and the Eagle Hour. We can continue to build on this.

Mr. Neville stated that we have all received e-mails and have questions. He would like to continue this discussion at the next Board meeting. He would like Mr. Newton and Mr. Longey to attend the next meeting to address these questions. He requested through the Chair, that any Board member questions should be sent to Mr. Drezek to avoid duplications so we can continue this discussion. Parents will also be able to ask questions at the next meeting. We need to vet this and there are still many misconceptions out there.

Mrs. LeBlanc would like to implement the changes with the incoming Freshman class. The incoming students will know the path they need to take when they enter high school. The students that have A/P classes and honors classes work should not be devalued. She would still like to see a Valedictorian and Salutatorian. She is so proud of these students for their hard work and looks forward to their speeches at graduation.

Mrs. LeBlanc thanked the students for speaking tonight. She is glad the students came to this meeting. You have valued concerns.

Mr. Peabody echoed Mrs. Leblanc's comments.

Mr. Grady asked about a timeline needed for this. Mr. Newton stated the Program of Studies Night will be held on January 28th. We need to know a lot of these things before this. This will affect this and course selections.

Mr. Grady asked if this is an all or nothing proposal. Mr. Longey stated this is for the Enfield Community. We gave you an option of how the school can be done. It is not all or nothing.

Mr. Grady added that we have heard some good ideas tonight. We need to tweak some of the items.

Mr. Longey stated scheduling is very important.

Chairman Sirard thanked Mr. Newton and Mr. Longey for their presentation.

Chairman Sirard stated the Eagle Hour is basically a working lunch for the students and staff. Mr. Longey stated it could be if the students chose to do that. Mr. Newton added they can do many different things during this hour.

Chairman Sirard likes the 4.0 grade system vs. the 16 tiered grading system. He does not have any problems with this change. You will still be able to determine who is number one and who number two is for scholarship purposes. Both Mr. Newton and Mr. Longey agreed with Chairman Sirard.

Chairman Sirard stated back in his day tier III course stacking is what we used to call senior slacking. Mr. Newton stated some students do this. Mr. Longey is not sure of the percentage of students that are doing this.

Chairman Sirard stated we will be expanding the number of A/P course and restructuring honor classes. Mr. Newton stated some courses will be restructured. Students will have more choices now with expanded classes.

Chairman Sirard agreed about the students taking honors classes and A/P classes. We need to give them the credit they have earned. He would also like to phase this in as mentioned by Mrs. LeBlanc and Mr. Peabody. As a parent, he would also be upset if the work the students have done didn't count.

Chairman Sirard would like all Board members to send any questions they have about the presentation to Mr. Drezek.

Chairman Sirard asked audience members to send Board members any additional questions you may have.

Chairman Sirard stated an audience member made a comment about safety concerns at the

new high school. Are we having issues with the doors?

Mr. Schumann stated we were informed about the phone issue when they moved into the new wing and are working with the construction team to see who is responsible for purchasing this item. We anticipate this will be rectified quickly. As far as the doors, students are entering and exiting through the outside corridor all day long. This will need to be discussed further while the other parts of the building are under construction. We might need to address adding additional security for this area while the construction continues.

Chairman Sirard would like everyone to continue with the normal procedure of checking in with the office before entering the building.

Dr. Schumann added there is a make shift office that has been setup. Signs have been posted instructing visitors where to go.

Chairman Sirard stated if people are being told to just go in, that is problem. Dr. Schumann will look into this.

8. EGS PROPOSED STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES & LEADERSHIP

Dr. Schumann presented his proposed student support services and leadership plan for the new high school. This plan will provide support and leadership for everyone in the building. The same team will be with the students as they proceed through high school. All students will be supported until they graduate. A high school diploma is important for our students to receive. The administration believes this team approach will work to support our students. There would be a grade 9/10 team and a grade 11/12 team. Each team would have an Academic Dean. You will get to know your students and can build relationships with the students. There would be an Associate Principal for each team. One Associate Principal would be responsible for scheduling. There would also be one Principal. This is a good plan to support our students so they can be successful.

Dr. Schumann added we will continue to work on this plan. We will present our budget in January and will use this model in the budget. We will save some money with this support system moving from two schools to one. We are happy with this plan and are starting to put the pieces together.

Mr. Ludwick stated the communication we are receiving tonight is a good dialogue to move forward. Having communication in the school is important.

Mr. Neville likes the idea that the staff will be with the same students and families over their 4 years at the high school. This support system will make us better. No students will fall through the cracks with this plan. We will get the opportunity to know the students better.

Mr. Neville stated so many nice things are going to happen at the new high school. We are looking at changes that will affect the students. This is a job well done.

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Neville moved, seconded by Mr. Kruzel that the Enfield Board of Education enters into Executive Session for Matters Related to Collective Bargaining. A vote by **show-of-hands 8-0-0** passed unanimously.

Dr. Schumann and Mr. Drezek joined the Board in Executive Session. No Board action occurred during the Executive Session.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Thurston moved, seconded by Mr. Kruzel to adjourn the Special Meeting of December 1, 2015.

All ayes, motion passed unanimously.

Meeting stood adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Tina LeBlanc
Secretary
Board of Education

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Zalucki, Recording Secretary