

Ashford Board of Education
Regular Meeting Minutes – August 21, 2014
7:30 p.m.

Note: Per C.G.S. §10 – 218, Board of Education meeting minutes are provided in a draft format within 48 hours of the date the meeting was held. With the exception of motions and votes recorded, these minutes are unofficial until they have been read and approved by a majority vote of the Board. Should edits be necessary, they will be made at a regularly scheduled meeting, noted in the meeting minutes, and so voted upon.

While waiting for board members to arrive to call the meeting to order, Dr. Longo displayed the working draft of the new Ashford School website to those present. While it is still a working draft, the new site is an improvement, and it is our hope that it will be the “go to” source for school related news, budget news and archives, sports venue links, and general information. We hope that it will be ready to go live in early October. Dr. Longo asked that board and community review the site link and invited them to make suggestions or share ideas they may have that would benefit the site. Members noted that the “Ashford School” letters in the exterior photo of outside of the building near the main entry are too faint and should be painted or changed

Call To Order

Board chair J. Rupert called the meeting to order at 7:45 pm. Present were J. Rupert, K. Warren, J. Lippert and L. Donegan (7:42 pm). Also present were Superintendent J. Longo, Principal T. Hopkins, Director of Pupil Personnel D. Hartigan, Transportation Coordinator J. Celotti and recording secretary J. Barsaleau. Unable to attend were board members B. Supina, D. Wesson and K. Rourke. There were several persons in attendance in the audience: D. Atkinson, G. Leedie, C. Silver-Smith, N. Page, teacher J. Horn and Akaya McElveen, reporter for the Willimantic Chronicle.

Persons to be Heard

Cathryn Silver-Smith shared that the Town is preparing its annual report and a report from the Superintendent is required and should include an FY14 year in review, and plans for FY 15.

Communications

Chair J. Rupert read a letter from board member Beth Supina, resigning her seat on the Board of Education, effective immediately. The board members acknowledged the resignation, however, the letter is addressed to the Town Clerk. J. Barsaleau will deliver the letter to the town hall Friday, and seek confirmation of the remainder of Mrs. Supina’s term and the process for filling the vacancy.

The PTO has elected new officers and their action requires that the Board of Education secretary sign a document from First Niagra Bank approving a change in the authorized signature for the new PTO treasurer. By mutual consent, the board members present were not opposed to Mrs. Warren signing the document for the PTO.

Approval of Minutes: 07/17/2014

Motion to approve the minutes of 07/17/2014 made by J. Lippert, seconded by L. Donegan. The name of the Chronicle reporter was omitted in the call to order. Akaya McElveen’s name will be added to the meeting attendance. The motion as amended passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

No reports.

Administrative Reports

a. Superintendent

Dr. Longo’s reviewed his report (attached). The first day for staff is August 25th with the PTO providing breakfast. Dr. Longo invited board members to attend. Dr. Longo noted that there has been so much accomplished over the summer in terms of curricular work and much of it was done on a volunteered time by a very enthusiastic group of teachers. Dr. Longo went on to compliment the custodial staff who have worked tirelessly all summer on various projects, some planned and some unplanned.

Dr. Longo stated that he was disturbed that communications to the town from the district office have not been clear or as concise as they must be in reporting to the town. Dr. Longo directed comment to Ms. Silver-Smith in the audience that the district office staff and the board are committed to making sure lines of communication are open and transparent at all times, and if he finds this is not the case, he will take appropriate measures to ensure that it is addressed.

Ms. Silver Smith stated that the employees of business office and the town offices do work cooperatively. She also noted that the auditors are to provide audit services only and should not be placed in the middle of any matters and asked to provide opinions or advice.

Dr. Longo asked that the Director's report follow next on the agenda.

b. Director of Pupil Personnel

D. Hartigan provided a written report (attached). Mrs. Hartigan stated that it is "great to be back". The summer ESY (Extended School Year) program is theme-based and this year, the theme was camping. Staff members are working with a new program, known as SCERTS, and recently several members got together one summer evening outside of school, to view training videos and discuss the program and school and how it may benefit students they work with.

Dr. Longo took a moment to thank Mrs. Hartigan for all of her hard work while she was recovering at even though she was at home, she was hard at work. Mrs. Hartigan shared that that in her whole career, she honestly has never worked with a better, more supportive group of people.

J. Rupert asked that the board take a brief, 5 minute recess.

The meeting resumed at 8:14 pm.

Motion by J. Lippert to add a report from the Bus Coordinator and reorder the agenda as follows: item 7b Director of Pupil Personnel, item 7c Bus Coordinator, item 7d Principal and 7e Cafeteria . Motion seconded by K. Warren and carried unanimously.

c. Bus Coordinator

J. Celotti opened the floor for any questions the board may have. She reported that one elementary run was eliminated, leaving 7 elementary school runs, and 4 high school. The board commended Mrs. Celotti for the improvements that have occurred in busing over the past few years.

d. Principal

T. Hopkins reviewed his report "Community of Learners" (attached). New teacher orientation was held today and Mr. Hopkins shared that he was so pleased with not only the new teachers, but the five teachers that ran sessions with these new teachers. Our staff truly are a team of experts and strengthen each other. CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute) training was provided today for all new staff members.

Teacher Jason Horn stated that he was involved with the new teacher training and spoke of the diligent efforts made in the process of recruitment and screening of candidates, and that it clearly been beneficial. Other teachers that participated in the new training were Michelle Klock, Chris Moore, Dory Manfre and Rebecca Aubrey.

The board asked the new staff members be invited to attend the second September meeting of the board.

e. Cafeteria

No report.

Old Business

a. FY 14 Year End Budget Status

1. Budget Transfer

C. Miller had a conflict and was not able to attend the meeting. She will be in the office 8/26 and all reports will be finished and forwarded no later than that date. Object transfers will be held until completion of the audit.

J. Rupert expressed that there should be no reason that the business office cannot forward to the town treasurer a reconciliation document according to the agreed upon schedule; even if that reconciliation is in the form of a draft at the time is sent.

b. Board of Education Retreat/CABE Convention

K. Warren would like to attend the CABE Convention. Members K. Rourke and D. Wesson will be polled for attendance. No other members will be attending. The board retreat is scheduled for September 13th from 4-8 pm and it is open to the public. Dr. Longo has reached out to Deb Seigel at EASTCONN to discuss facilitating the retreat. The board needs to discuss this further and finalize the plans within the next week or so.

New Business

a. Request for Leave of Absence

Middle school teacher Nicole Preston has requested a one year unpaid leave of absence for childrearing.

K. Warren motioned to approve the unpaid leave request of Nicole Preston. Motion seconded by L. Donegan and carried unanimously.

b. Staff Resignations

Dr. Longo reported that he had received resignations from teacher Eva Beermann, paraprofessional Kate Conway and library consultant Vin Bologna.

Motion made by L. Donegan to accept with regret, the resignations of Eva Beermann, Kate Conway and Vin Bologna. Motion seconded by J. Lippert and carried unanimously.

c. Staff Appointments

Resumes were included in the packet for several recommended appointments. Dr. Longo reminded the board that many of these appointments are the result of positions created by lateral movement of existing staff members within the non-certified union.

Motion made by J. Lippert to appoint Matthew Kiefer to the position of grade 7/8 language arts teacher and to appoint Rob Ackerson, Lynn Fontaine, Kristen Johnson, Christine Knowlton and Chelsea Samperi to the position of paraprofessional; and to appoint Seth Lyman to the position of bus mechanic. Motion seconded by L. Donegan and carried unanimously.

Motion made by K. Warren to appoint David Donegan to the position of part time custodian. Seconded by K. Warren and carried with one abstention (L. Donegan).

d. Security Grant

Dr. Longo will complete an application for the next round of school security grant funding, but districts that have already received a grant, as we have, will generally not be eligible for funding.

Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items

The next regular meeting date is September 4th. Agenda items to include the board of education vacancy, bus fleet status report, policy updates, audit and year end update.

Personnel Matter (Executive Session Anticipated)

Motion by K. Warren to enter into an executive session with Dr. Longo for the purpose of discussing a disciplinary matter related to personnel. Motion seconded by J. Rupert and carried unanimously. Present in the session were Dr. Longo, J. Rupert, L. Donegan, J. Lippert and K. Warren.

The board exited the session at 9:33 pm with the following motion made by J. Lippert:

The board of education recognizes that the financial oversight provided to the board by Cheryl Miller and CL Services is needed and is appreciated. The board directs Dr. James Longo to communicate to Mrs. Miller that the board requires that district business office communications and reports to the town be carried out by district finance staff members Darcy Morgan and Lalaine San Diego. Materials to be provided to the town will be sent by the district office staff to Mrs. Miller for review. Following a two day review period by Ms. Miller, reports or materials will be forwarded to the Town by Mrs. Morgan or Ms. SanDiego.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at (9:40 pm) made by J. Lippert, seconded by L. Donegan and carried unanimously.

Recorded by:



Jennifer Barsaleau
Recording Secretary

**ASHFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION
MINUTES
July 17, 2014**

1. Chairman Jim Rupert called the meeting to order at 7:36 pm.

Attendance: Jim Rupert (chair), John Lippert, Kay Warren (secretary, Don Wesson, Lisa Donegan (7:50 pm), Troy Hopkins (principal), and Dr. James Longo (superintendent). Guests: Gay Leedie, Maureen Connolly, Debbie Atkinson, and ~~the~~ *Chronicle* reporter, *Akaya McEreen*.

2. Persons to be Heard: None.

3. Communications

- a. State Board of Education district reports. Letter from Michael Koerner, Cooperative Work Education Coordinator at E.O. Smith High School for allowing students in the program to do work with our maintenance department.
- b. A letter from the Ashford Education Association thanking the Board of Education for reinstating the positions that were originally cut from the budget.
- c. Thank you letters from Danielle Cote and Justin Gagnon for selecting them for the Maurice B. & Mildred C. Bicknell Scholarship.
- d. A thank you card from Marti Hardesty for the vase that was given to her for her years of service.
- e. An application from CAFE for the Awards of Excellence for Educational Communications entry form for the CAFE/CAPSS Conference in November.
- f. A thank you from Shannon Marimon, Division Director for Educator Effectiveness and Professional Learning for submitting the District's 2014/15 Educator Evaluation and Support plan.
- g. A copy of a letter that Dr. Longo submitted to Cathryn Silver-Smith pertaining to the non-lapsing education fund from 2013/14 budget.
- h. A letter from Stefan Pryor, Commissioner of Education, acknowledging the district's efforts in being one of 152 districts to be assigned to Meets Requirements in the identified areas used to make the determination for 2012/13.

4. Approval of minutes for 6/5/14 and 6/12/14. **Kay Warren motioned to accept the minutes of 6/5/14. John Lippert seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Jim Rupert motioned to accept the minutes of 6/12/14. Don Wesson seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

5. Committee Reports. No reports. The committees will only meet when absolutely necessary.

6. Administrative Reports/Summary.

- a. Superintendent's report.
 1. Goal Setting. The principal and superintendent have met and created administrative goals based upon the superintendent's goals for 2014/15.
 2. Curriculum. Ashford school is continuing the transition to a Common Core State Standards-based curriculum as designated by the Conn. State Dept. of Education. New books have been purchased and related curriculum support materials. A math curriculum day is scheduled for 8/26 for K-5 and a summer session is scheduled 7/21-7/24 for College Prep math training. Meetings will be held with all of the Arts and Science staff to refine our STEAM programs for 2014/15.
 3. Special Education. A letter was received from the Conn. State Dept. of Education indicating that the district has met the requirements of the IDEA performance review. Dr. Longo noted that this has been achieved every year since 2008-09 due to the restructuring of the department that he undertook as one of his first orders of business.

4. STEAM. Katie Post, EASTCONN consultant, will be assisting the district with our STEAM professional development day on 8/27.
 5. Staffing. Supt. Longo stated that the school will be fully staffed for the upcoming school year.
 6. Security. Security cameras and a new alarm system are going to be installed. The Board of Education instructed Dr. Longo that First Selectman Mike Zambo is in charge of the grant and that the district will assist in any way that we can.
 7. Budget Recommendation. Supt. Longo stated that the part-time custodial position, that was eliminated during the budget process, will be restored to a full-time position and he will restore the library paraprofessional position.
 8. Facility. Minor work was done in the nurse's office and we are in the process of starting to work on a computer lab/robotics room. The work should be completed by the end of August.
 9. Website. Dr. Longo stated that the website was doing well. We have contracted with the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology for a complete revamp of our website.
 10. Ashford Citizen. Supt. Longo had submitted an article for the newly redesigned Ashford Citizen for the July issue and he hopes to continue putting articles in the newsletter.
- b. **PRINCIPAL**. Principal Hopkins stated that he was busy through the summer with different school committees. He is starting a new course for the 8th graders called "Habits of Success." He is searching for a track and field coach as well as cross country. Principal Hopkins is going to check into using the pool at UConn and at the Mansfield Community Center.
 - c. **DIRECTOR OF PUPIL PERSONNEL**. Donna Hartigan, director, stated that the extended school year is about to begin on July 1 through July 24. Students will go 1/2 days. There will be 25 students participating in this program. Mrs. Hartigan has been busy setting up the transportation schedules for the coming year. Parents have been provided with a color-coded calendar specific to the Extended School Year program with dates, times and emergency numbers they could use to call if needed.
 - d. **CAFETERIA**. Our financial consultant, Cheryl LaFlamme-Miller stated that the cafeteria, as of May 30, was showing a profit of \$8,117.06. At the current time she stated that it does not appear that any board of education subsidies will be necessary this year. The new cafeteria tables have been ordered and will arrive before the start of school in August. Some of the old tables will be put into storage.

7. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **FY 14 YEAR-END BUDGET STATUS**. The auditors will be starting their pre-testing on July 24/25. The Board of Education has to review the FY14 transfers. Don Wesson motioned that the Board of Education reviewed the transfers by Object Code and we will continue to review on a monthly basis and anticipate acting on those transfers at the conclusion of the audit process. John Lippert seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Cheryl Miller stated that most towns hold their books open one month after the fiscal year ends.
- b. **RESPONSES TO DRAFT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION: PROMOTION AND RETENTION**. These are some new regulations to accompany our already existing policy.
- c. **REVISIT ADDITIONAL STAFFING RECOMMENDATIONS (non-certified)**. **Kay Warren motioned to allow the Superintendent to post the opening for the full-time maintenance person to be either 1 full-time (40 hrs.) or 2 part-time at 20 hrs. per person and one full-time paraprofessional for the school library. Seconded by James Rupert. Motion passed unanimously.** Chairman Rupert asked about the part-time worker that was working in the cafeteria. Dr. Longo is going to repost the position.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT PRIMARY MENTAL HEALTHCARE GRANT (KARE)**. **Don Wesson motioned to authorize the superintendent to apply for the healthcare grant. Seconded by John Lippert. Motion passed unanimously.**
- b. **Staff Appointment**. **Don Wesson motioned to hire Kaitlyn S. Mielniczuk as a full-time teacher. Lisa Donegan seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

- c. Staff Resignation. Dan Kanopka, our bus mechanic, resigned effective immediately due to physical problems. **Lisa Donegan motioned to accept the Dan Kanopka's resignation, with regret. Don Wesson seconded. There will be a committee appointed to find another mechanic.**
- e. Approval of School Bus Specifications. **Don Wesson motioned that the Board of Education approve the bus specs to the selectmen so they can go out to bid for a new bus. Lisa Donegan seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**
- f. Removal of vehicles from fleet service. **Don Wesson motioned to retire two old buses. Lisa Donegan seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**
- g. Review 2014-15 school bus routes for publication. Kay Warren questioned the stops at Lake Chaffee. She will be speaking to Joan Cellotti on this. Supt. Longo stated that they will be anticipating one less bus driver this year.
- h. Discussion of Board of Education Retreat. **Don Wesson motioned that the Board of Education schedule a retreat on Sept. 13th from 4-8 pm to discuss the Board's goals. Seconded by Lisa Donegan. Motion passed unanimously.**

9. NEXT MEETING DATE/AGENDA ITEMS.

- a. Next meeting August 21, 7:30 pm in the district conference room.
- b. CABA/CAPSS convention under New Business.
- c. Board of Education Retreat (under old business)
- d. Tour of the school to see the improvements over the summer (new business)
Don Wesson made a motion to add the new counter tops in the teacher's lounge. Seconded by Lisa Donegan. Motion passed unanimously. Visit to the staff lounge. (new business)
- e. Another security grant (new business)

10. ADJOURNMENT. **Lisa Donegan motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Don Wesson. Motion passed unanimously.** Meeting was adjourned at 9:50 pm.

Kay M. Warren
Secretary
Board of Education

Ashford
Superintendent's Report
J. Longo
LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

August 21, 2014

Opening of School 2014-2015

The PTO Staff Breakfast is scheduled for Monday, August 25st beginning at 8:00 am. There will be a welcoming address and meeting from 8:30-9:15 from the administration. You are invited and urged to attend if you are available.

Professional Development Schedule for 2014-2015

Troy, Donna, Cindy and I have worked out the schedule for 2014-2015 professional development for all certified and non-certified staff. Troy will provide you with an outline as part of his report.

Staffing

We are still interviewing for positions left by both certified and uncertified staff. We anticipate having all positions filled by the first day of professional Development next week. The Library/Media paraprofessional position was internally filled through transfers of staff.

Status of Vacancies and Appointments

- Grade 7-8 English Language Arts: (pending leave approval) Matthew Kiefer
- Special Education Teacher: (pending acceptance of resignation) TB Posted
- Bus Mechanic: Position still open, acting mechanic – Seth Lyman
- Anticipated Driver Posting: Posted
- Kindergarten Paraprofessional: (due to resignation) Currently Posted
- Cafeteria Helper Position: (due to transfer to Para position) Posted
- Two Part-time custodial positions: Appointment recommended. David Donegan, more interviews pending for second position.

Summer Curriculum Work

- College Prep Math Training (grades 6-8)
- Envisions Math Training (K-5)
- STEAM Planning with EASTCONN Planning Session
- Character Development K-2 Planning
- School Improvement Team Planning
- English/Language Arts Curriculum Planning (1-8)
- New Teacher Orientation
- STRIVE Program Planning (Gifted-Talented Program)
- Health Curriculum Planning
- Habits of Success Curriculum Work (gr. 8)
- Computer Technology Curriculum Planning
- Writing Workshop (Columbia TC)
- TEAM Beginning Teacher Support Program Updated
- Web Site Committee Creating New Website
- Safety Committee Revising of the School Safety and Security plan
- Faculty Mentor Training
- Social Studies Curriculum Planning

Positive Press

We have enjoyed positive press this summer in both the Chronicle and the Citizen. It is rewarding to see the efforts of our staff recognized in the community. We have many initiatives and progressive work being implemented at our school and want the community to be aware of them.

Web Site

I will conduct a demo of the revamped website at the Board of Education meeting. It is just about ready for initial release. We are working to make it user friendly, transparent and full of practical and useful resources. We will be enlisting ideas from staff and the public to ensure that it meets the needs of the community.

You can check out the web site (development is in progress) through this link.

<http://ashford.ccat.us>

Robotics Lab and Computer Lab Grand Opening

August 21st marks the official opening of our two new laboratory spaces in room 20A and 20B. The robotics arena is set up and ready for creative and inventive minds to be engaged. We are excited about the potential of both spaces.

Summer Facility Projects

This summer has been a continuation of our drive to improve the facility, making it a more effective and efficient place for student learning and safety. We have creatively improved the facility each summer for the past six years. These improvements have given the facility a brighter and more welcoming feel as well as a safer and more comfortable space for learning. The following list is in addition to the regular summer cleaning of the facility.

- Painted several rooms, teachers lounge, bathrooms
- Adding the new computer laboratory
- Adding the Robotics laboratory
- Building storage space, painting the Nurse's Office
- Continuing the renovation of student lavatory floors (two front lavatories.)
- Adding protective film to entrance glass
- Panic and fire alarm magnets for classroom doors are scheduled to begin
- Re-designating and lining of front parking lot with Fire Lane
- Going out to bid for outdoor cameras and improved alarm system
- New Tables in the Cafeteria
- Room Signage completed
- New Partitions in boys and girls locker rooms
- New Blinds and electricity in room 20A and 20B
- Remove old metal poles outside
- Replace manhole cover

Connecticut State Department of Education "Back to School Resources

At the Commissioners Back to School Superintendents meeting Tuesday the following link was rolled out. You might find some of the information useful.

<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2683&Q=335472>

Administrator's Retreat

I have scheduled a retreat for the Ashford School administrative staff for the end of September to follow-up on the Board of Education retreat of September 13th. We will be addressing district and school goals as well as all committee work and long-term plans.

Business Office Report FY13-14 Year in Review

Earlier in my report I list the summer curriculum work by the teachers as well as the summer projects by the custodial staff. The following is an opening of the year report regarding the business office staff. I felt that we should have reports from those three major divisions (Certified Staff, Custodial Staff, and Business Office Staff) for your review at the opening of school each year.

Changes from 12-13 to 13-14

Payroll & Benefits/Retirement/Personnel Management

- Payroll processes have been modernized from the ancient time-clock to an electronic timekeeping system. This has eliminated timecard stock costs and reduced the payroll processing costs providing Ashford Board of Education with a total savings of \$2,000.00.
 - Supervisors have direct access to approve staff hours and attendance
 - Payroll process has been reduced from 3 days to 1 day.
 - Payroll reconciliation prior to submission of payroll files has eliminated payment errors.
 - Vendor checks automatically issued for payroll voluntary deductions such as 403b, Aflac, etc. reducing confusion with our GL items as part of AP runs.
- Life insurance switch from Anthem to Sun Life has provided a savings of \$1,211.00 for the year.
- Reconciliation of insurance benefits ensures proper payments and credits are made without fear of over- or under-payment.
- Formal recordkeeping of staff attendance made available on employees' pay stubs.

Accounts Payable/Receivables & Purchasing

- Independent Contractors reported as 1099s are now included in payroll. Year-end production of tax forms and filing is now included with payroll processes and will be produced at the same time with W2s.
- Updated Purchase Order procedure to include multiple signatures, which now includes the signature of a business office staff member, to ensure that there are at least two signers.

Monthly Reports

- Creation of monthly Excel report of Accounts Payable items for Board review.
- Encumbrances included in accounting software reports. Encumbrances are adjusted as real-time events occur.
- BOE and BOE Grant funds are reconciled with Town Treasurer to prevent discrepancies at year-end.

- Cafeteria activities are entered into their QuickBooks system monthly, which include income and expense items and bank account reconciliations. Reports on their financial status are provided to the board monthly for their review.
- Budget Transfers by Object when requested for Board Review; Year-End Budget Transfers by Object performed after audit.

Budget Processes

- Creation of Budget Analysis for BOE expenses in the last 3 years to justify and explain Proposed BOE Budget FY14-15.
- Public explanation of how salaries and benefits are calculated for upcoming school year.
- Region 19 and Special Education Excess Cost expenses are no longer budgeted for. Payments and reimbursements are issued directly to BOE to offset unbudgeted costs.
- Proposed BOE Budget information made available on Ashford School website for public viewing and informational transparency.

Anticipated Changes in 14-15

Payroll & Benefits/Retirement/Personnel Management

- Through AEA Collective Bargaining Agreement, AEA and MEUI Staff Members and Administrators are now offered a High Deductible Health Plan partnered with a Health Savings Account. This agreement will reduce anticipated district health costs for the FY 14-15 by \$128,405.00.

Accounts Payable/Receivables & Purchasing

- Receipt of delivered packages will be handled at the main office. Some deliveries will still be managed at the business office, but now at a reduced number.

Monthly Reports

- Per Dr. Longo and Board requests, reports for Board of Education meetings will be made available at least 2 days in advance for Board review and discussion prior to Thursday Board of Education meetings.
- Continued recording and updating of encumbrances.
- Quarterly Budget Transfers by Object for Board Review, and Year End Budget Transfers by Object for Board Approval.

Budget Processes

- Budget Information, such as schedule of meetings and detailed proposed budgets, will be made available on enhanced Ashford School website.

Pupil Personnel Director's Report to the Board of Education

August 21, 2014

It's great to be back!:

I would like to take a moment to say how great it is to be physically back in the district, working with the Administrative team. Meeting over the summer with the team to discuss initiatives and school climate, has not only been productive but clearly points to the positive change that has occurred administratively in Ashford. The collaborative partnership of the four administrators here, is unique, and rarely seen in other districts.

Moving forward, 2014-2015:

Summer school students wrapped up another positive summer school experience on July 24th. This year's theme was camping and everybody had a great time. Students read books, wrote letters and reports, calculated math problems and studied science all connected to camping. It was hard on the last day to say goodbye.

The new year promises to be one of change and growth within the Pupil Personnel Services Department. Previous students have returned from faraway places and new students have enrolled from other districts all requiring special education services. Analysis of each student's needs has meant reallocation of services and staff to address the every-changing needs of students.

Exciting new program, SCERTS:

Staff working with our younger autistic spectrum disorder students are learning a new technique called SCERTS (Social Communication Emotional Regulation Transactional Support) created by a multidisciplinary team led by Dr. Barry Prizant. This program, more than others, recognizes individual differences in children, is family-centered and involves an integrated approach. With SCERTS, professionals from different disciplines collaborate with each other and the family of the student, to address core challenges and address adaptive skill deficits.

Amy Vasington, Speech and Language Clinician and Katie Knecht, CORR teacher have both been formally trained in SCERTS. Our integrated team is currently made up of Amy Vasington, Katie Knecht, Ginger Lusa-preschool, Jadey Longo-preschool, Hilary Lemos-SLP, Danielle Romano-School Psychologist, Lori Goodale-paraprofessional, Jane Evans-paraprofessional. On a warm summer night this dedicated group came together to review the training DVD, discuss elements of the program, and analyze how this program would benefit the student they work with.

Respectfully submitted,



Donna A. Hartigan
Director of Pupil Personnel Services

Principal's Report – Troy C. Hopkins
Ashford Board of Education
August 21, 2014

Community of Learners

*We optimize learning for our faculty and staff so they are fully prepared to
optimize learning for our students.*

Our administrative team collaborates to ensure that we are providing quality professional learning opportunities for our faculty and staff. Jim, Donna, Cindy, and I intentionally focus on how best to support the on going learning of our staff and prepare them to achieve the district and school goals.

As you know, we have focused on school climate over the previous two years because we recognize that learning occurs best in a safe environment in which people feel they have a sense of belonging. Last year we implemented a daily practice of morning meeting to support this need for belonging and mutual respect. Our seven new teachers are being trained currently, during our new teacher orientation, on facilitating these meetings. Several of our teachers created activities for the orientation that will not only impart knowledge of Ashford School but also, and most importantly, welcome and instill in our new teachers a sense of purpose and belonging in our learning community. Besides the teacher orientation, we will support the learning of our new teachers throughout the year through the TEAM (Teacher Education and Mentoring) program, in which they are assigned trained mentors. As part of our updated TEAM plan, we added regular new teacher meetings where all new teachers and mentors gather together to support one another and discuss relevant educational topics.

We take pride in the fact that we specifically train our staff on how to respond to a child in crisis. We use the CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute) approach that focuses on providing levels of support for a child experiencing different phases of an emotional crisis. We will be offering this training to all new teachers and many other staff members on Monday, August 25th. Our certified trainers are Marina Brand, Deb Courtright, and Cindy Ford.

A major focus of professional development this year is preparing staff to meet the following goal:

Promote critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills through the implementation of interdisciplinary curriculum, following the concept of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics), which apply to the real world now and in the future.

We held planning sessions this summer and worked with an EASTCONN trainer, Katie Post, to design our approach to the adult learning necessary to achieve this goal. Katie will present a workshop on August 26th, building a solid foundation of conceptual knowledge for STEAM instruction. Our STEAM committee will monitor our progress and organize the second faculty meeting of each month to facilitate interactions between teachers of different grade levels and disciplines. Also, we will utilize our professional days, as recommended by the STEAM committee, throughout the year to support this goal.

As previously shared in the Superintendent's Report dated July 17, 2014, we have detailed plans on how to meet all of our school goals. Once again, here are the other goals.

Personalize learning for each student through the examination of performance data and the design of specific differentiated instruction that targets skills and results in personal success.

Communicate and display student achievements and school spirit while clearly articulating learning expectations and the school's role in preparing students for success in the 21st century to the larger community.

Improve communication procedures among all staff, departments and families.