

Ashford Board of Education  
Meeting Minutes – April 7, 2016  
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.*

**Call To Order**

Board Chair J. Rupert called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm. Present were members J. Calarese, J. Lippert (7:41 pm), K. Rourke, K. Warren and M. Matthews. Also present were Superintendent Dr. J. Longo, Pupil Personnel Director C. Ford, Principal T. Hopkins, Asst. Principal G. Dukette and recording secretary J. Barsaleau. Unable to attend was board member L. Donegan.

**Persons to be Heard**

Parent Maureen Caye addressed the Board summarizing Grade 2 class size concerns for next year. Questions and dialogue followed. Chair J. Rupert thanked Mrs. Caye for coming and noted that the Board appreciates and values parent input and the Board does look into such concerns, making the best decision it can based upon administrative input.

**Communications**

J. Rupert acknowledged receipt of the following communications:

- Letter from M. Caye to the Board concerning grade 2 classroom sizes for next year;
- Letter from the DPH affirming retroactive approval of the Asbestos Management Plan submitted in 1990;
- Copies of thank-you letters sent to persons who provided services and materials for the construction of the Ashford School greenhouse;
- April 2016 enrollment;
- March/April editions of School Planning & Management magazine
- C. Ford announced that teacher Kathleen Knecht has received a fellowship to Iceland this summer.

**Approval of Minutes: 03/17/2016**

***Motion made by J. Lippert to approve the regular meeting minutes of 03/17/2016, motion seconded by K. Warren and carried with one abstention (K. Rourke).***

**Administrative Reports**

**a. Superintendent**

No report. The subject of the next Ashford Citizen article will be standardized testing.

**New Business**

**a. Extension of the Bicknell Trust Scholarship Application Deadline**

Applications for the scholarship have been slow to arrive by the published April 1, 2016 deadline.

***Motion made by M. Matthews to extend the deadline for receipt of Bicknell Trust scholarships to April 8, 2016. Motion seconded by K. Warren and carried with one abstention (J. Lippert).***

***Motion made by K. Warren to add to the agenda as item 6b, Acceptance of Retirement. Motion seconded by M. Matthews and carried unanimously.***

Chair J. Rupert read aloud a letter of retirement from teacher Kathleen Bryce, effective at the end of the 2015-2016 school year.

***Motion made by J. Calarese to accept with regret the retirement of Kathleen Bryce at the end of the 2015-2016 school year. Motion seconded by J. Lippert and carried unanimously.***

The Board expressed sincere thanks and its best wishes to Mrs. Bryce in her retirement.

**Old Business**

**a. FY 17 Budget**

**1. Budget Worksession (if necessary)**

Board chair J. Rupert reported that the FY 17 Ashford School budget was presented at Public Hearing on April 5<sup>th</sup>. To comply with statutory minimum budget requirements, the Board of Finance authorized that an additional \$15,000 be added to the FY 17 Ashford School budget.

**b. Capital Improvement Plan**

Henry Racki of Rockfall Construction met with Dr. Longo and others on April 1<sup>st</sup> and provided draft space drawings and discussion notes from that meeting. The board discussed its continued desire for reconsideration of acoustical ceiling plans requested for FY17. The Board expressed its appreciation to

the First Selectman for voicing its request for reconsideration of this item for the FY 17 capital improvement list with the Board of Finance, however, the request was rejected.

**Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items**

***Motion made by M. Matthews to cancel the regularly scheduled 4/21/16 meeting and to table administrative reports and action concerning March financial reports including quarterly transfers to the 05/05/16 regular meeting. Motion seconded by K. Rourke and carried unanimously.***

**Superintendent Evaluation (Executive Session Anticipated)**

***Motion made by J. Rupert to enter into executive session (9:00 pm) for the purpose of evaluation of the Superintendent, inviting Dr. Longo to attend. Motion seconded by K. Warren and carried unanimously.***

Present in session were: J. Rupert, K. Warren, M. Matthews, K. Rourke, J. Lippert, J. Calarese and Dr. Longo.

The Board and Dr. Longo exited executive session at 9:28 pm with no action taken.

***Motion made by M. Matthews to adjourn the meeting (9:29 pm). Motion seconded by K. Warren and carried unanimously.***

Recorded by:

Jennifer Barsaleau  
Recording Secretary

*Attachments: Communications (Letters from M. Caye and DPH; copies of letters sent; April enrollment)  
Retirement Letter (K. Bryce)  
Tech Ed space renovation drawing (draft)*

Maureen Caye  
28 Hillcrest Drive  
Ashford, CT 06278

April 5, 2016

Dear Superintendent Longo,

I am writing to you to express my concern with the currently proposed budget for Ashford School for the 2016/2017 academic year. I have been unable to attend budget meetings, but I have reviewed the budget (as dated March 4, 2016) as well as talked with community members who have attended to date; in addition I had a formal meeting with Troy Hopkins and Garrett Dukette at Ashford School. Specifically during my meeting with Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Dukette, I wanted to understand the current proposal as well as to reiterate my concerns with the plans I had heard rumors of, which were in fact confirmed by both school administrators. Specifically, my main concern is around the plan to consolidate three first grade classrooms into two second grade classrooms, thereby **increasing the average class size by 50% in one year** (using the budget numbers cited as of October 2015, currently 36 students with class size of 12 moving to 36 students with class size of 18).

I understand the need to balance budgetary concerns with the needs of the students, faculty, and community members to ultimately come up with a 2016/2017 budget which was created, using your words, "with the promise of quality and tradition in mind." However based on my experiences over the past school year, as well as based on conversations with both teachers in the school as well as with other parents, I would respectfully challenge your characterization of it being "educationally sound." I recognize that with limited resources, difficult decisions need to be made; with this letter, I'm formally urging you, as well as the Board of Education, Principal, Vice Principal (all cc'd on this letter), and anyone else involved in the process to reconsider the consolidation of the incoming second grade classrooms from three to two. I would also respectfully request that this letter be forwarded to the Board of Finance as well.

We are truly fortunate and blessed that at Ashford School we are able to have smaller class sizes than that of more urban areas. That being said, I also understand that Ashford School has a disproportionate number of students with special and/or behavioral needs than other districts. I'm hopeful that the condensing of the classrooms from three to two can at least be tabled for one more year – for further evaluation – with the hope that some of the behavior issues specifically may resolve themselves with either (1) Additional maturity level of students, or (2) Positive results from actions put into place this academic year as well as next as the staff/administrators work through addressing some of these specific student needs. Alternately, I am hopeful that if a staff reduction or redeployment must take place, that instead it be considered for a higher grade with a similar number of students.

I am confident that in developing the proposal, Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Dukette have done their best, taking into account the issues they're aware of, the needs of the broader school, and balancing that with a budget number. I am concerned however, that in meeting with Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Dukette, when asked specifically if they had asked for feedback from the first grade teachers (including specials teachers) regarding the needs of the incoming second grade class; that they had not. They indicated instead that they were "very close to all the students and staff," and that they "fully understood the needs." I would challenge that. While I do have confidence that the two administrators have an excellent relationship and rapport with both students and staff, they are responsible for all 400 Ashford students, whereas the first grade teachers (and specials teachers) spend 6+ hours each day with them --- and would clearly be able to provide some valuable perspective with regards to their thoughts on the needs and challenges of the incoming second graders. To not at least ask their feedback during a year that has been filled with a number of behavior issues that I am aware of, does not lend itself in my mind to making the best decision for the students involved nor the community at large.

Our children are the future of our community --- they are the life of our community; they are young, and frankly deserve the opportunity to benefit from smaller class sizes for at least one more year. Hopefully during that time, some of the issues will resolve themselves with one more year of maturity as well as the positive impact of some of the actions/plans/programs put in place.

I can provide my perspective as a parent of a current first grader over the current school year. The examples I cite below are not in any way meant to single out any one student; rather they are to simply illustrate some of the issues this year in Mrs. Benton's first grade classroom. I was first alerted to an issue when another first grader exposed himself to my son and another boy in the cafeteria; I chalked this up to immaturity and boys being boys. When I received another call (mind you the day after it happened --- which is also unacceptable) from a teacher checking to see if my son was okay after being hit across the head by another student's backpack/binder --- I became more concerned. After a second incident in which my son was on the receiving end of unprovoked violence, I met with Mr. Dukette. I followed up that meeting with an e-mail detailing my concerns and asking for a plan of action. Subsequently after no written response (chalked up to misunderstanding on the part of Mr. Dukette), I followed up with another e-mail; at which point I received a written response from Mr. Dukette. I have attached all three of those e-mails at the end of this letter; note that I have redacted them in order to maintain the privacy of the other student). While the specific plan for this student was not shared with me, I do know that it sometimes involved calling a "crisis response team" if the student became violent and/or "evacuating" the classroom if the disruptive child cannot be controlled; it also involved removing the child from the classroom at certain times. The good news is that after several more incidents, the action that has been taken seems to have taken care of preventing violence from escalating further.

It has not however, ended the disruption: I've been in the classroom attending events and/or volunteering a handful of times since then. On one occasion, I was literally sitting with my son, with *four* other adults in the room (Mrs. Benton, two para-professionals apparently assigned to specific students, plus one other adult/teacher that I'm not sure what her role was). With less than 12 kids in the classroom (I believe a couple students were absent), 4 adults other than me, plus me literally sitting next to my son while he was working; this other student was disruptive to my son --- scribbling on his paper, reaching over him, and taunting him. I put myself between this child and my son, and my son kept scooting away to no avail. Ultimately another adult was called to the classroom (the school psychologist) who spent time with the disruptive student trying to prevent further escalation and to convince him to come to her "room." Eventually (after approximately 20 minutes or so), she was successful. This is just one instance when I happen to be in the classroom to witness this myself. There have been numerous other disruptive incidents. **I cannot reiterate enough how concerned I am with the current proposal to increase the class size by 50%; it certainly cannot improve things, and I'm concerned they will actually deteriorate and/or go backwards.**

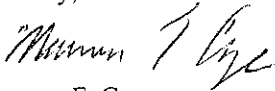
I have talked with other parents --- who are concerned as well. I hear of another classroom that has "four or five" students that regularly disrupt the class. Again, I'm hopeful that with additional maturity perhaps some of this wanes --- but based on the current level of issues (improved from earlier in the year yet still far from an ideal learning environment), do not see how the students can be successful with a 50% increase in class size. I have the utmost respect for Mrs. Benton, and her ability to lead the classroom and educate our children. She has listened to my concerns and been respectful of the need for privacy for other students' with needs. I also understand that the second grade teachers are fantastic (according to Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Dukette --- they are not only great educators, but also fantastic classroom managers) --- but even the most seasoned, effective teacher cannot be asked to teach to 18 children with a disproportionate amount of needs. It is not fair to the educators nor to the students.

In closing, I respectfully request reconsideration on the plan to combine three first grade classrooms into two second grade classrooms. Based on my observations over the past year as well as what I understand the current case to be, I

believe this plan is short-sighted and has the potential to do additional harm. If we are to help this group of children become motivated, productive, well-adjusted life-long learners, now is the time to invest in them --- as they are still developing their character and classroom management skills. In my mind, a disrupted classroom can only lead to a lower quality of education and a class of children who become less interested and motivated in school – ultimately leading to much more serious problems in the future.

Thank you in advance for your additional consideration. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these concerns with you in greater detail. I can be reached via e-mail at [maureenecaye@hotmail.com](mailto:maureenecaye@hotmail.com) or via cellphone at 860-377-0481.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Maureen E. Caye".

Maureen E. Caye

Cc:

John B. Calarese, Member, Board of Education  
Garret J. Dukette, Assistant Principal, Ashford School  
Troy C. Hopkins, Principal, Ashford School  
John E. Lippert, Member, Board of Education  
Marian K. Matthews, Member, Board of Education  
Lisa McAdam Donegan, Member, Board of Education  
Kimberly A. Rourke, Vice Chairperson, Board of Education  
James M. Rupert, Chairperson, Board of Education  
Kay M. Warren, Secretary, Board of Education

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



Raul Pino, M.D., M.P.H.  
Commissioner

Dannel P. Malloy  
Governor  
Nancy Wyman  
Lt. Governor

### Environmental Health Section

**To:** Dr. James Longo  
Superintendent of Schools  
Ashford Public Schools

**From:** Kristen M. Day  
Asbestos Program  
Department of Public Health (DPH)  
410 Capitol Ave, MS 51 AIR, Hartford, CT 06134-0308

**Date:** March 31, 2016

**Subject:** **AHERA Asbestos Management Plan (AMP) Submission for:**  
*Ashford Public Schools, Ashford Elementary School*  
*440 Westford Road, Ashford, CT*

DPH received the initial asbestos management plan for Ashford Elementary School on November 7, 1990. DPH reviewed the plan and did not issue a formal acceptance letter. Based on the checklist in the file, the only documentation missing was the annual notification. Your office provided a copy of all annual notifications from 1990 to 1999. Please ensure that your office retains annual notifications for every year since implementation of the management plan.

As a result of the review of the plan at the school on September 16, 2015 and subsequent information received by the DPH, the AMP appears to be complete and in conformation with the submission requirements.

Please retain a copy of this approval letter in the updated management plan, as there must be a complete, up to date management plan in the school office. Please feel free to contact this office should you have any questions regarding this correspondence or asbestos management in schools.

cc: Michael Akana [makana@eastconn.org](mailto:makana@eastconn.org); Donna Sylvestre <DSylvestre@eastconn.org>  
Jennifer Barsaleau <jbarsaleau@ashfordct.org>



Phone: (860) 509-7367 • Fax: (860) 509-7378  
410 Capitol Avenue, MS #51AIR - P.O. Box 340308  
Hartford, Connecticut 06134-0308  
[www.ct.gov/dph](http://www.ct.gov/dph)  
*Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer*

Ashford Board of Education  
440 Westford Road  
Ashford, Connecticut 06278

James M. Rupert, Chair  
Kimberley Rourke, Vice-Chair  
Kay M. Warren, Secretary  
(860) 429-1927

John Calarese  
John Lippert  
Lisa McAdam Donegan  
Marian K. Matthews

March 31, 2016

Ziggy Kertenis Jr.  
Enfield Transit Mix, Inc.  
P.O. Box 376  
Enfield, CT 06083

Dear Mr. Kertenis;

The Ashford Board of Education wishes to extend to Enfield Transit its sincere thanks and appreciation for your generous donation of the readi-mixed concrete used in the construction of the Ashford School Greenhouse.

There will be a Greenhouse ribbon cutting ceremony at Ashford School in the near future. Once those plans are finalized, the Principal of Ashford School will be in contact with you to extend an invitation to attend this event. It is our sincere hope that you will be able to attend.

Once again, we thank you for your donation and for your support of education at Ashford School.

Sincerely,

James M. Rupert, Chair

Ashford Board of Education  
440 Westford Road  
Ashford, Connecticut 06278

James M. Rupert, Chair  
Kimberley Rourke, Vice-Chair  
Kay M. Warren, Secretary  
(860) 429-1927

John Calarese  
John Lippert  
Lisa McAdam Donegan  
Marian K. Matthews

March 31, 2016

Jake Stevenson  
Jake's Foundations, Inc.  
380 North Rd.  
Ashford, CT 06278

Dear Mr. Stevenson;

The Ashford Board of Education wishes to extend to Jake's Foundations its sincere thanks and appreciation for your generous donation of employee labor, concrete form construction and foundation installation for the Ashford School Greenhouse.

There will be a Greenhouse ribbon cutting ceremony at Ashford School in the near future. Once those plans are finalized, the Principal of Ashford School will be in contact with you to extend an invitation to attend this event. It is our sincere hope that you will be able to attend.

Once again, we thank you for your donation and for your support of education at Ashford School.

Sincerely,

James M. Rupert, Chair



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440 Westford Road  
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John Lippert  
Lisa McAdam Donegan  
Marian K. Matthews

March 31, 2016

Michael Zambo, First Selectman  
Joseph Kalinowski, Highway Supervisor  
Town of Ashford  
5 Town Hall Rd.  
Ashford, CT 06278

Dear Mike and Joe;

The Ashford Board of Education wishes to extend to its sincere thanks and appreciation to the Board of Selectmen and the Town of Ashford Highway employees for their contribution of employee labor and use of the Town's equipment in preparation of the site for the Ashford School Greenhouse.

There will be a Greenhouse ribbon cutting ceremony at Ashford School in the near future. Once those plans are finalized, the Principal of Ashford School will be in contact with you to extend an invitation to attend this event. It is our sincere hope that you will be able to attend.

Once again, we thank you for assistance and for your support of education at Ashford School.

Sincerely,

James M. Rupert, Chair

# Enrollment Summary: Federal Ethnicity and Race Report

Ashford School

View:

Federal Ethnicity and Race

Students:

☐ All Active Enrollments☒ Current Selection

Date:

04/01/2016

Grade Level	Total in Grade	(I) American Indian or Alaska Native	(A) Asian	(B) Black or African American	(P) Native Hawaiian / Other Pac Islander	(W) White	Hispanic/Latino	Two or More Race Categories	Unspecified
-2	13 7 / 6	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	10 5 / 5	2 1 / 1	1 1 / 0	0 0 / 0
-1	31 17 / 14	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	1 0 / 1	1 1 / 0	25 15 / 10	3 0 / 3	1 1 / 0	0 0 / 0
0	42 18 / 24	0 0 / 0	1 0 / 1	1 1 / 0	0 0 / 0	32 12 / 20	4 3 / 1	4 2 / 2	0 0 / 0
1	33 21 / 12	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	3 2 / 1	0 0 / 0	22 14 / 8	4 3 / 1	4 2 / 2	0 0 / 0
2	43 20 / 23	0 0 / 0	1 0 / 1	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	35 17 / 18	3 2 / 1	4 1 / 3	0 0 / 0
3	30 15 / 15	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	2 2 / 0	0 0 / 0	23 13 / 10	5 0 / 5	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0
4	42 20 / 22	0 0 / 0	2 0 / 2	1 0 / 1	0 0 / 0	36 18 / 18	2 1 / 1	1 1 / 0	0 0 / 0
5	37 11 / 26	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	1 1 / 0	0 0 / 0	34 9 / 25	2 1 / 1	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0
6	38 22 / 16	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	35 21 / 14	3 1 / 2	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0
7	50 25 / 25	0 0 / 0	3 0 / 3	4 3 / 1	0 0 / 0	41 21 / 20	2 1 / 1	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0
8	36 22 / 14	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	33 20 / 13	3 2 / 1	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0
Total	395 198 / 197	0 0 / 0	7 0 / 7	13 9 / 4	1 1 / 0	326 165 / 161	33 15 / 18	15 8 / 7	0 0 / 0

The Federal Ethnicity and Race view displays aggregate student data as required by the Federal Ethnicity and Race Categories from the U.S. Department of Education. See the help for more information.

+ 3 Outplaced District Enrollment **398**

## Legend

Icons  - Date Entry

Kathleen Bryce  
80 Candide Lane  
Storrs, CT 06268

March 31, 2016

Dr. James P. Longo, Superintendent  
Ashford Public Schools  
440 Westford Road  
Ashford, CT 06278

Dear Dr. Longo,

After a long career in education, most of which has been spent as the social studies teacher at Ashford School, I have decided to retire at the end of the current school year.

It is difficult to leave this professionally and personally rewarding position, as it has been a pleasure to teach the children of this community as they make the important transition to high school. Please extend my gratitude to the Board of Education for their support throughout my tenure.

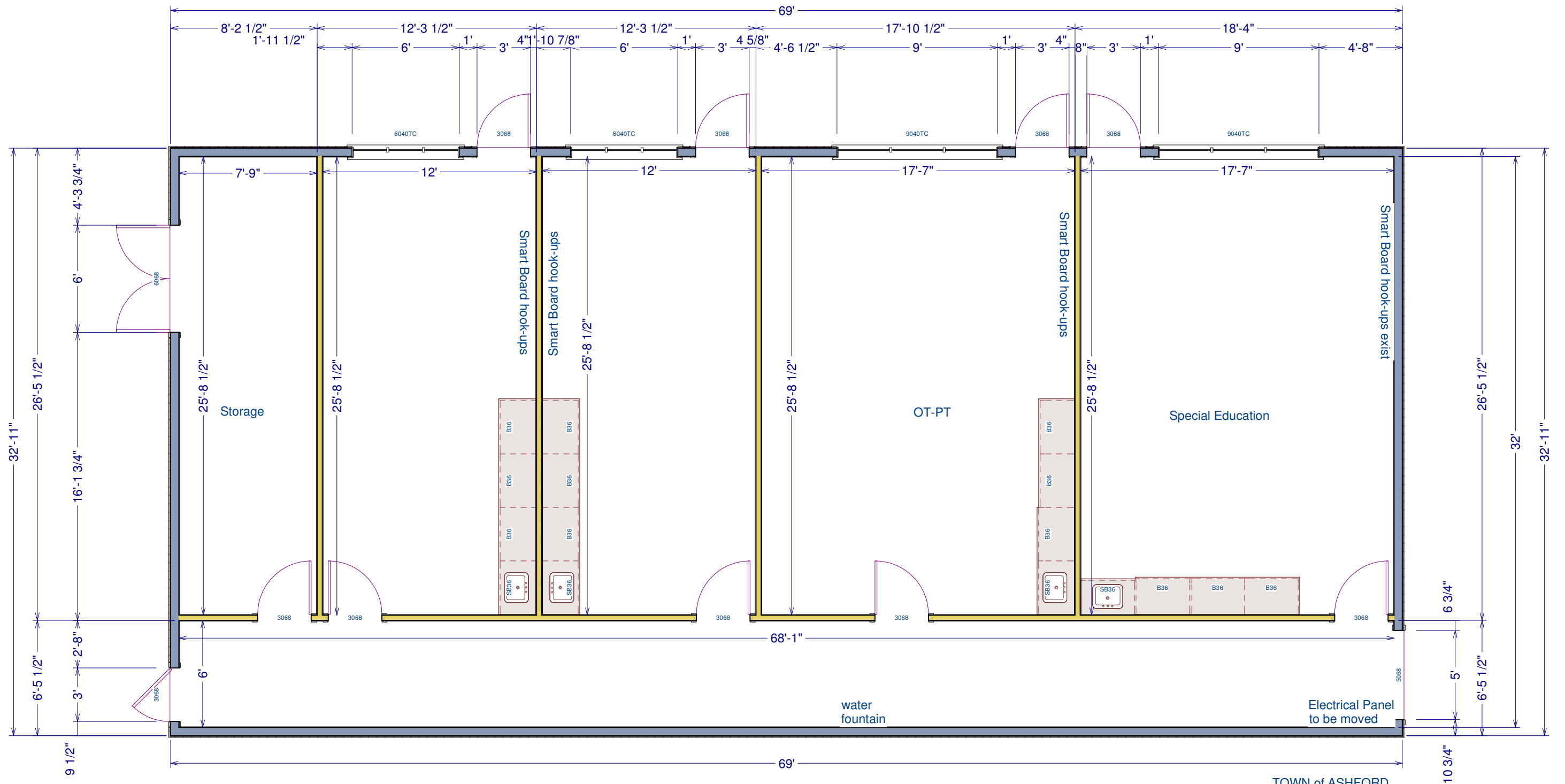
During my time at Ashford School, I have been fortunate to work with highly skilled and dedicated colleagues on the 7/8 Team. These caring and talented staff members have nurtured our students to meet and surpass the goals we have set for them. I will sincerely miss the Ashford Family.

Respectfully,



Kathleen Bryce

*Accepted with regret  
by the Ashford BOE  
4/7/16*



LIVING AREA  
2271 sq ft

TOWN of ASHFORD  
Ashford Schools Opt. #6  
Industrial Arts Renovation  
Priscilla Racki, A.S.I.D.  
4-4-2016