

Ashford Board of Education
Meeting Minutes – November 19, 2020
7:00 pm
Meeting Held Via Zoom

Note: Per CGS 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 exceptions of motions and votes recorded, the minutes are unofficial until they have been read and approved by a majority vote by 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

- Chair John Lippert called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.
- Present were members Marian Matthews, Tina Fradette, Kim Kouatly, Jane Urban, and Al Maccarone. Tess Grous joined the meeting at 7:05 p.m.
- Also present were Superintendent Dr. James Longo, Principal Troy Hopkins, Asst. Principal Polly Borysevicz, Director of Pupil Personnel Cindy Ford, Business Manager Martha Guidry, and Zoom meeting host Scott Waddell, as well as approximately 15 other members of the school staff and the public.

Superintendent Evaluation and Negotiations

- ***MOTION by Marian Matthews to enter executive session for the purpose of superintendent evaluation and negotiations and invite Superintendent Dr. James Longo to join them. Motion seconded by Jane Urban. Motion carried unanimously at 7:04 p.m.***

The board exited executive session at 8:18 p.m. No action was taken. They did come to an agreement between superintendent and BOE that Dr. Longo will retire at the end of this school year.

Communications

- Tess Grous mentioned board members received communication from Tammy Nuccio, new state representative for 53rd district, wanting an opportunity to formally introduce herself. John Lippert would like to address traffic signs again with state government and encouraged board members to think about what they might want to discuss with her. Marian Matthews said it would behoove them to look at CABA legislative priorities and hear from the school about what they are interested in. John will respond on behalf of the board and invite Tammy Nuccio to either one of the December board meetings.

Opportunity for Public Comment – No comments.

Approval of Minutes

- Minutes from special meeting of 10/29/20 will be addressed later, to provide Tess Grous with more time to review the recording.
- ***MOTION by Marian Matthews to approve minutes from 11/5/20. Motion seconded by Tina Fradette.*** Kim Kouatly mentioned a motion Al Maccarone had made to table the minutes from 10/29/20 special meeting. That motion was withdrawn. ***Motion carried unanimously.***

Administrative Reports

Superintendent Dr. James Longo

- Marian Matthews asked about the pavilion suggestion. Dr. Longo said the pavilion on the town property is the same size but with a more elaborate roof. It would be a roof set over a concrete base. It would be nicer than a tent because the tent keeps blowing down. He thinks they have the money to do it if they could get volunteers to do the work.
- John Lippert wanted to amplify the Zoom meetings for public to get in on the discussions about the budget early on – first opportunity will be Wednesday, 12/2/20 at 7 p.m.
- Jane Urban said she does not love the format that the board has been using to present the budget to the Board of Finance. Dr. Longo has a template of it that he can send them. The Finance Committee will look at that.
- Marian Matthews asked if they have received information about fast COVID-19 tests. Dr. Longo said they are only 56% accurate. The best one, PCR test, takes 3 or 4 days to get the answer.
- Marian Matthews asked if there have been any positive tests at school. Dr. Longo said no.

- Al Maccarone asked, given that positivity rate is up to 6% in the state, are we prepared for a shutdown where every child is distance learning? Dr. Longo said they are prepared if it has to happen. He said the positivity rate in the schools is only 0.2%.
- Jane Urban asked about the rumor the governor would shutdown schools for 2 weeks after Thanksgiving. Dr. Longo said the governor got so much backlash, he decided not to bring it up again. Jane appreciated the information sent out about state requirements. Dr. Longo will send that information out again on K12.
- Tess Grous has been speaking with Melissa McDonough. There are different agencies that will provide Thanksgiving dinners for families that are in need. Dr. Longo will talk to Melissa McDonough and see if that information could be put in K12.
- John Lippert wanted to confirm that lunches are not being delivered anymore. Dr. Longo said if there is an emergency they will work it out somehow, but the drivers are driving kids now.
- Dr. Longo thanked the board and the Ashford community. He announced his retirement now because it is a big process for the board to find a replacement.

Business Manager Martha Guidry

- There is one family that does not have transportation for lunch. She is working with Karen on that.
- She wants to be in the loop on potential changes to budget presentation.
- She put together budget projections for FY 20/21. They have a little margin but need to be very prudent in terms of staying within the budget.
- She sent out transfer recommendations.
- They are struggling to get systems and processes in place. They need some technology upgrades. Their systems, security, and back up are inadequate.
- Jane Urban thought they had purchased a nice laptop for the prior business manager. Scott Waddell is reformatting it.
- John Lippert asked about delaying the payroll conversion. Martha said she talked with Dr. Longo, and they have decided that it will be delayed. They need to get themselves up to speed on tax tables and tax laws.
- Jane Urban said years ago they received quarterly financial reports, similar to budget transfers, and asked if there is a projected timeline for when that can be reinstated. Martha said it is a very manual process currently until they move over to the new financial system.
- Marian Matthews asked about the cafeteria fund potential liability. With the USDA free lunch program, they are not generating revenue to be self-sustaining. They are waiting to see what funding they get back from the government. John Lippert asked if they are expecting grants from the state to balance this out. Martha said even though they have been promised funds, they do not know when they will come and if it will be in this fiscal year.
- Jane Urban asked if the USDA program is not enough to cover their salaries. Martha said what they are getting quarterly is really just covering food supplies. It is a net outflow. Tess Grous asked if all schools were experiencing this. Martha has talked with other business managers, and they are experiencing the same thing.
- Pavilion money will not be coming from BOE budget.
- John Lippert asked about the timeline and if the 2/19/21 date for budget presented to Board of Finance was a set date. Martha said that is their date.
- Tess Grous and John Lippert expressed thankfulness to hear from the Business Manager.
- Jane Urban asked if custodial clothing allowance was COVID related. Martha said it was a contractual obligation not budgeted for originally.
- Tess Grous asked about free lunches and if there would be a time when we have to make the hard decision to not offer them? Dr. Longo believes they are state mandated. He said he would inquire.

MOTION by Kim Kouatly to add item 8c to the agenda to discuss transfers from the business office. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.

Principal Troy Hopkins

- Teachers are still working extremely hard. There have been 30 students return from the beginning of the year to be in-person students. They are working out some interventions for at-home students who are struggling.
- They have a German teaching assistant, Inga Heydekorn, who is staying with a host family in Ashford. Teaching assistant from Egypt did not happen.

- They are working out details for the third specials rotation.
- Artists in Residence grant: Chuck and Mira Costa worked with second grade classes to create songs. A completely remote class still participated in that. Marian Matthews said the songs were beautiful and she was interested in knowing how that happened. Troy said the artists brainstormed with the kids, then tried to come up with phrases to put in the songs, and then added the music in. They were gifted at getting the kids to collaborate as a group. Marian would love to hear the kids singing the song. Troy said there is a theater group working with grade 4 now.
- Veterans Day Video: John Lippert said the video was beautiful and touching. Jane Urban said thank you for the video.
- Jane Urban asked Troy about his impression of staff morale. He said it's a mix. Not everybody feels the same way. Overall, people have gotten more used to what they are doing, but it's still zapping a lot of energy. They know they could sometimes make it easier for themselves, but they don't because they know what's best for the kids. Jane said finding substitutes is a real challenge and are we doing something to proactively look for that? She also said she is nervous about more kids coming back into the school and asked how that is being handled. Troy said they are asking other staff and paras to cover for teachers. They do have a couple of dedicated substitute teachers. They haven't tried to recruit additional subs. So far, they've been able to manage it.
- Kim Kouatly gave a shout out to the administration and teachers. She said the kids are coming home smiling.
- Marian Matthews asked how the board could show their appreciation. Troy said positive comments are really helpful. He also thought a letter would be meaningful.
- Tess Grous asked if we need to start looking for more substitutes. Troy said they could reach out to past substitutes or reach out to new people. He said there are emergency certifications people can get this year. They want to make sure substitutes are committed to our school (not subbing for other schools) and responsible in their personal lives.
- Martha Guidry's husband is the principal at Ellington. They had 9 teachers out at once in 14-day quarantine.

Assistant Principal Polly Borysevicz

- John Lippert asked what would prompt a restorative circle. Polly said this is mainly for a reoccurring conflict with students in a classroom. Usually they don't have to do it more than once.
- Marian Matthews asked if disengaged students have all been contacted. Polly said they started with 7th and 8th grade. They were given an opportunity to come into the media center one day a week. Three families are doing that, and it is going very well. They then opened it up to the entire school. Certified letters were sent out to K-6 families whose students seem to be disengaged, somewhere between 12 and 16 letters. They are offering a 10-day homework program between 3:30 and 5:30 p.m. for students to come in who need support. They have 5 students as of now. Some have decided to transition to in-person school.
- Jane Urban asked how the space will work out. They will be using classrooms after school, making sure they are disinfected before those students come in.

Director of Pupil Personnel Cindy Ford

- Cindy said she is sorry to hear of Dr. Longo retiring in June.
- John Lippert asked if she had any concerns about the number of distance learners. Cindy said there is a strong partnership between families and the school. She would prefer all kids in because she thinks that is the best, but in this circumstance the students that are home have remained home for good reasons.
- Cindy presented a PowerPoint presentation on therapy dogs.
 - John Lippert asked if we had done this in the past. Cindy said last year a dog would come into the front office with a schedule set up for kids to come in and see the dog.
 - Jane Urban asked if there would be a cost associated with this. Cindy said there would be no cost for the Board of Education. The handlers would be volunteers and provide their own liability insurance.
 - John Lippert asked board members to look through the draft policy before the second December meeting.
 - Marian Matthews asked if we need to incur the cost of an attorney to look over the policy. John Lippert will look into that.
 - Tess Grous is thrilled about this, especially given all that the kids are going through this year. Cindy said there aren't any organizations going into schools right now.

Old Business – None.

New Business

a. Approval of 2021 BOE Meeting Schedule

- ***MOTION by Al Maccarone to adopt the BOE meeting schedule as presented with deletion of April 29 meeting. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.***

b. BOE Roles and Responsibilities

- Most of the board attended Monday's webinar regarding board rules and responsibilities.
- Jane Urban liked the idea of a consent agenda where they could save time approving several things at once.
- Marian Matthews liked the reminder that their work should be focused on teaching and learning, not the small stuff.
- Al Maccarone has found the Becoming a Better Board Member NSBA book helpful.
- Kim Kouatly said she feels it is important to hone in policies.
- Marian Matthews said they should do a board self evaluation. Jane Urban and John Lippert agreed. Marian thinks they should try to do it on their own the first year. Martha Guidry said she would be happy to head that up.
- Jane Urban loved how they said student achievement should be a regular item on the board agenda. She would like to hear more about that on a regular basis.
- John Lippert said if students ever need an opportunity to present something, the board would be open to it.
- Marian Matthews mentioned Eisenhower Matrix being important.
- John Lippert asked board members to review the first section in the book, through page 10, so that they can discuss it during 12/3/20 meeting.

c. Approve Budget Transfers

- ***MOTION by Marian Matthews to approve the budget transfers. Motion seconded by Jane Urban and carried unanimously.***

Opportunity for Public Comment

- Jennifer Leszczynski – What is the plan for social distancing if they have more kids coming into school? Any hybrid plan? Dr. Longo said they will maintain their current status as long as they can socially distance. They will have to make adjustments if class numbers get too big. They don't have any firm plans at this point because it doesn't seem likely. They would first attempt to find a way to split the classes. They may consider removing furniture to make more room. They could have one-third of every class always in a special. They will find solutions.
- Tess Grous – How are the paraprofessionals doing? Dr. Longo said their schedules are pretty much the same as they've always been.
- John Lippert asked if there is a large group wishing to return at the end of this trimester. Troy Hopkins said they don't anticipate a mad rush to come back.

Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items

- Regular meeting 12/3/20 with committee breakout time.
- Board rules and responsibilities.
- For second December meeting, administration could talk about how teacher evaluations work. Dr. Longo will get the evaluation form.
- John Lippert will offer Tammy Nuccio either December meeting to present.

Adjournment

MOTION by Jane Urban to adjourn the meeting (10:13 p.m.). Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.

Sara Wilson
Recording Secretary

Ashford Board of Education
Special Meeting Minutes – October 29, 2020
7:00 pm
Meeting Held Via Zoom

Note: Per CGS 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 exceptions of motions and votes recorded, the minutes are unofficial until they have been read and approved by a majority vote by 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

- Chair John Lippert called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.
- Present were members Marian Matthews, Tess Grous, Tina Fradette, Kim Kouatly, Al Maccarone, and Jane Urban.
- Also present were Superintendent Dr. James Longo, Principal Troy Hopkins, Asst. Principal Polly Borysevicz, Director of Pupil Personnel Cindy Ford, Ex Officio/First Selectman Cathryn Silver-Smith, Atty. Anne Littlefield, Zoom meeting host Scott Waddell as well as approximately 15 other members of the school staff and the public.
- Tess Grous asked Cathryn Silver-Smith for definition of ex officio. Cathryn said ex officio is a nonvoting member of a board. As First Selectman, she is Ex Officio on all town boards.
- John Lippert stated he wanted the discussion and criticisms of his performance to be in open session, rather than executive session. He also said whatever happens during this meeting, the board members will need to continue to work together. He asked Marian Matthews to facilitate the meeting.

Discussion Concerning Written Attorney Client Privileged Memorandum (legal advice regarding procedures for discussion of board member performance)

- Atty. Anne Littlefield said FOIA permits the board to go into executive session to discuss the document that reflects attorney client privilege and receive legal advice.
- ***MOTION by Jane Urban to enter executive session to discuss written attorney client privileged memorandum and invite Atty. Anne Littlefield to join. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone. Motion carried unanimously at 7:17 p.m.***
- The board and Atty. Anne Littlefield exited executive session at 7:54 p.m.

Discussion Concerning Performance of Board Chair

- Tess Grous shared her concerns about John Lippert's leadership performance in regard to voting in their new board member (Kim Kouatly) as well as conflict of interest.
- Marian Matthews said those concerns have been met and asked Tess Grous, "What is the issue now?"
- Tess Grous stated she feels like there is a pattern of things going wrong. They voted on the new member in executive session and not publicly. She mentioned a conflict of interest, with Kim Kouatly being seen with a class at Ashford School. She stated John Lippert did not communicate all the information that could have been given regarding what Kim was doing at the school (substitute, volunteer, or student teacher?).
- Jane Urban said they took a tally in executive session to gauge interest and acknowledged they did fail to make a motion outside of executive session to appoint Kim Kouatly. She stated every board member was there, that it was not all on John Lippert's shoulders. She mentioned Atty. Anne Littlefield saying, in regard to the mistake during the emergency meeting, the worst-case scenario would be a letter in the board's file since it was not done intentionally or maliciously. Jane said we keep rehashing this one mistake and questioned devoting so much time and energy to it. She said board members should be team members, working harmoniously. She stated she fully supports John and trusts his decision-making ability.
- Al Maccarone said John Lippert is a man of integrity and that he may make a mistake, but there is no malice.
- Kim Kouatly explained her presence at the school. She was a student doing an observation, which ended on 10/20/20. She was not paid. She has modified her student teaching application so that it does not include Ashford School. We learn from mistakes and move forward. We are here with the same goal, here for the kids, the school, and the town.
- Tina Fradette said it is sad that it has come to this and expressed her disappointment. She understands the concerns Tess Grous has. Kim Kouatly could have told the board prior. She said she is on the fence about the leadership of John Lippert and said they need more communication.
- Al Maccarone stated he does not understand the conflict of interest.

- John Lippert said Kim Kouatly described the situation prior to the call to order at the 09/03/20 meeting. On 09/30/20, when John was at the school with Sara Wilson, Jen Barsaleau mentioned something about Kim student teaching. The lawyer said student teaching does not violate the statutes but would not be recommended. John said he failed to follow up with Jen to clarify what Kim was doing and he failed to present the information to the board.
- Tess Grous stated that she values John Lippert, but there have been mistakes along the way. She wants the attorney to train them on board procedures. She expressed frustration in John as the leader in charge of communication. She is bringing her concerns forward and made the request for John to either resign from his position or get proper training. She said the board needs to move forward as a unit.
- Jane Urban mentioned the letters received by the board in support of John Lippert, one from Ashford Education Association and one from Jen Lindsay.
- Cathryn Silver-Smith stated she was Chair on the Board of Finance for 18 years and that it is a lonely place at the top. She said every member is accountable, not just the chair. She commended Tess Grous for trying to ensure proper procedure is followed. She said it would have been better for Kim Kouatly to mention her observation at the school during the formal meeting. She said the chair is a facilitator. She expressed support for John Lippert and said not once has she seen him get ruffled or riled. She encouraged the board members to get CABA training, to look at procedures, and to be open to hearing from each other.
- Marian Matthews said she has attended CABA trainings and a conference, which were very helpful. She said John Lippert has tried to address the issues.

Discussion and Possible Action Concerning Performance of Board Chair

- Tess Grous suggested that John Lippert stay chair and go through training as well as all of the board members. She said there was no malicious intent but rather a lack of knowledge.
- Jane Urban said we are heading into budget season and perhaps we could review and discuss one section of bylaws in each meeting.
- Kim Kouatly said she does not have the book. Marian Matthews will make sure she gets one.
- ***MOTION by Tess Grous that Chair John Lippert and entire board as a whole review and discuss as a board the rules and responsibilities presented at this special meeting (10/29/20) beginning no later than 11/19/20 board meeting. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone. Motion carried with one abstention (J. Lippert).***

Adjournment

MOTION by Al Maccarone to adjourn the meeting (8:42 p.m.). Motion seconded by Jane Urban and carried unanimously.

Sara Wilson
Recording Secretary

Ashford Board of Education
Meeting Minutes – November 5, 2020
7:00 pm
Meeting Held Via Zoom

Note: Per CGS 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 exceptions of motions and votes recorded, the minutes are unofficial until they have been read and approved by a majority vote by 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

- Chair John Lippert called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m.
- Present were members Marian Matthews, Tess Grous, Tina Fradette, Kim Kouatly, Jane Urban, Al Maccarone, and Ex Officio/First Selectman Cathryn Silver-Smith.
- Also present were Superintendent Dr. James Longo, Asst. Principal Polly Borysevicz, Director of Pupil Personnel Cindy Ford, Head Custodian Mike Mellady, and Zoom meeting host/Technology Consultant Scott Waddell, as well as approximately 10 other members of the school staff and the public.

Communications – No communications.

MOTION by John Lippert to add an item to the agenda, 8d Board Roles and Responsibilities. Motion seconded by Tess Grous and carried unanimously.

Opportunity for Public Comment

- Kim Kouatly asked for board meetings to be announced on K12 alerts.

Approval of Minutes

- Discussion about level of detail in minutes: Tess Grous said there was a lot left out of the minutes for the special meeting on 10/29/20. John Lippert said current process is Recording Secretary Sara Wilson preparing the minutes and sending to John for a proofread before being sent to Jen Barsaleau to have agenda items attached and sent to the town. John said if anyone else wanted to proofread, they could contact him. Kim Kouatly asked if Secretary Tess Grous should be reviewing them. In future, Sara Wilson will send draft of minutes to John and copy Tess.
- ***MOTION by Marian Matthews to approve minutes from 06/18/20. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone. Motion carried with three abstentions (T. Fradette, J. Urban, K. Kouatly).***
- ***MOTION by Marian Matthews to approve minutes from 10/15/20. Motion seconded by Tina Fradette.*** Jane Urban wanted to clarify what she had said about the possible future therapy dog program in 4th bullet of Cindy Ford's report, hoping that it could be similar to the town's library program. ***Motion carried unanimously.***
- ***MOTION by Jane Urban to approve minutes from 10/29/20 (special). Motion seconded by Al Maccarone.*** Tess Grous mentioned several things that were left out of the minutes. She would like to see the Zoom recording and add important details. Cathryn Silver-Smith said the Recording Secretary prepares the minutes and the Secretary is responsible for the minutes being taken and filed with the Town Clerk. The board decided that 10/29/20 special meeting minutes would be addressed at a later meeting, to give Tess an opportunity to review them with the recording. Cathryn will talk with John and Tess. ***Motion was not carried.***

Administrative Reports

Dr. Longo

- The underground fuel tank expires in 2023. They need to update and review capital projects request plan.
- Dr Longo encouraged John Lippert to meet with Board of Finance Chair Chuck Funk to set up a schedule for a three-board meeting.
- Jane Urban asked if we currently have anything budgeted for the underground fuel tank. Dr. Longo said we do not. It would have to be through capital. Jane has experience with this and said there is no flexibility on tank expiration. There would be a daily fine accrued for each day beyond the expiration date.
- Dr. Longo said the town owns the school building. It is not owned by the BOE. Cathryn Silver-Smith said she did not have any information and asked Dr. Longo to forward the notice to her.
- Marian Matthews asked about the board goals. Dr. Longo thinks our commitment to investing in the facility might be worthy of its own goal, since there will be capital expenditures presented soon.

- The meeting with the Education Commissioner was very good. Ashford has had the least drama in terms of opening. There is talk now about opening regional 15-minute testing sites for the virus that are free for schools.
- Tess Grous said Ellington opened up a testing site and only 29 people showed up. Dr. Longo said this would be something new. He stated it is being done by the state and we will just receive information. Dr. Longo will inquire through Eastern Highlands Health District for a summary of all the rules regarding it.
- Al Maccarone said he had a COVID-19 test done last Friday. He was asked to limit social contacts until he got the test results. He had the results in 4 days.
- Jane Urban thanked Dr. Longo and administrative team for being proactive in having teachers reach out to families and assess technology needs and other issues in regard to potential distance learning for everybody.
- Dr. Longo said there is a rumor that the state may ask us to close for 2 weeks after Thanksgiving.
- John Lippert said he is thrilled that we are still in school.
- Cathryn Silver-Smith expressed concern about the reliability of the 15-minute test. She will send out some information about free testing available.

Maintenance Report – Mike Mellady

- Mike is very proud of the way his team is working hard to keep the school clean.
- There is a typing error in the maintenance report in regard to upper boiler coil. It was rebuilt 17 years ago, not in 2017. The rebuild was \$12,000-15,000 back then and would have been \$40,000 to replace it. He is getting prices now for that.
- John Lippert asked if they were fully staffed. Mike said yes. Ryan is doing well and working 25 hours per week.
- Kim Kouatly asked about the heat. Mike said the heat is up and running. He thinks he can probably get a year or two out of the coil, that it is operational but in bad shape.
- The hot water tank in the primary wing was replaced. They wanted to make sure there was warm water for washing hands.
- Tess Grous asked Mike how long he has been with the school. He started in 2002. Tess said, "What would we do without you?" She appreciated the detail provided in his report. Tess asked about kids being cold and having to wear coats inside, wondering if that was due to the problem with the upper boiler coil. Mike said the heat was working. He thought it had more to do with the windows being open with the current pandemic situation.
- Mike said Dr. Longo understands what the building really needs. He said the building is in the best overall shape it has been in since he has been here.
- John Lippert seconded the praise for Mike and said nobody takes as much ownership as Mike does.
- Jane Urban said upgrading the windows will help the school be warmer. She asked what year the oil tank was installed. Mike said it is a 30-year fiberglass tank embedded in sand.
- Jane Urban asked if the roofing people gave any dire predictions about how long we have. Mike said The Garland Company gave him a nice kit, and he has patched some holes. The warranty ran out about 7 years ago. Since then, they have been bringing in outside companies every 6 months to try to repair what they can, and they will keep up with patching. Mike mentioned ad hoc committee formed to look at town buildings in need of attention. Some capital projects will need to be bundled together to get a grant.
- Jane Urban thanked Mike and Ryan, saying they are a big reason why we are still in school. Marian Matthews seconded that and said they are doing an awesome job. Marian asked if anybody else knows what Mike knows about the mechanical aspects of the school. She hopes Mike is training someone else too.
- Al Maccarone mentioned E.O. Smith considering the addition of solar when they put on a new roof. Marian Matthews said we will definitely look at solar when we replace the roof. She said it will be a bonding issue, not just a grant.
- Tess Grous asked if replacing the roof is in our long-term goals. Marian Matthews said it is. Dr. Longo said it is for 3 or 4 years from now. Marian has been pushing to move that forward on the timeline. Jane Urban stated she supports Marian's thoughts on that, that we cannot wait.
- Mike said, in regard to solar, the roof is not structurally sound to hold that much weight up there. We need to have a plan B, maybe putting panels on the land on the side of the school. Marian Matthews said previously they had considered putting solar panels in the parking lot and that there are all kinds of possibilities.
- Tess Grous asked if we could have Mike come in when they discuss the goals.
- Cathryn Silver-Smith said there is an Ashford Advisory School Building Committee, a temporary committee that they are making a permanent committee. There is a special town meeting 11/07/20 in regard to this. The

committee will be evaluating the Friar report. Cathryn said we need to make sure we have good communication between the Advisory School Building Committee and the BOE Building Committee. She mentioned the Capital Improvement Committee for the entire town and things going through them to get to the Board of Finance.

- Marian Matthews said the Advisory School Building Committee needs to look at the audit as well as the Friar report. Cathryn Silver-Smith said she does not have a copy of the audit. Marian will follow up to make sure Cathryn gets a copy of the audit.

Technology Coordinator Report

- John Lippert expressed apprehension about the identified hardware needs for the next school year and asked if it was a lot more than we usually do. Scott Waddell said it is not a lot more. He said one of the labs is aging out and cannot be upgraded past where it is (the 25 desktop computers in the media center). Scott said this lab is used for whole classes as well as for testing in the spring.
- John Lippert asked why desktops, as opposed to laptops? Jane Urban said she thought desktops were usually less expensive and would keep the lab from being dismantled by someone who needed a laptop somewhere else.
- Jane Urban asked about 45 iPads for grades K-2. Scott said that is 5 iPads per classroom for kindergarten through grade 2 so they can use them as a center. They currently have approximately 25, but those 25 are with distance learners. Jane thanked Scott for dealing with incredible challenges every day.
- Tess Grous asked if we already have 350 laptops and 250 desktops in stock. She thought it sounded like a lot for 380 students. Scott said we are blessed. He said there are no extras for grades 6-8; they are a 1:1 program with their own assigned computer. They are hoping to make 5th grade 1:1 as well next year. Tess asked if the students pay for insurance on the equipment. Scott answered they do not have insurance, but they do have an extended warranty. Apple is coming out with a special school warranty. The iPads they currently have are 6-7 years old and reaching the end of their life cycle.
- Kim Kouatly asked if iPads were replacing desktops in primary classrooms. Scott said the desktop computers in primary are aging out and rather than replace them, they want to go with iPads. The computers are for staff as well as students. She asked why we are looking at 5th grade doing 1:1. Scott said years ago, when they started the 1:1 program, they wanted to include 5th grade. With changes in the curriculum, they hope to get there. Kim asked why Apple? Scott said when you consider the total cost of ownership of a Mac, in the end Macs are cheaper. They last longer and have better software.
- Marian Matthews agreed with Macs lasting longer. She asked Scott if they were addressing the issues that contribute to technology pitfalls. Scott said he is working with administration. Kate Craven has offered classes. Educators share answers with each other. There is not a lot of time to explore during the school year. Scott said teachers are doing well, but he would love to see them do more with innovative technology pieces. Kate Craven is on the Technology Committee.
- Tess Grous said it sounds like Scott would like to see teachers utilize technology more, but there is not time afforded for that. She asked if it would be a good idea to have a teacher training day. Scott said they are looking at professional development days for that.
- John Lippert asked Scott if it was possible to see a spreadsheet that displays current inventory of hardware. Scott has it and can make it available. Seventy of those devices are in their labs. Scott will get this information to Jen to be included as information in the next meeting.
- Dr. Longo said there are 5 desktops in every classroom so teachers can have stations. There is a cart of laptops for every grade in primary. Some of the machines are 9 years old. They are trying to purchase computers every year as some age out. There will be a workshop in February about things available to the teachers through Apple. He said Scott Waddell and Mike Mellady are wonderful employees. Scott is an Apple genius.
- Jane Urban asked Dr. Longo about the enrollment summary showing 374 kids. She thought historically they had around 408 kids and wondered about the reason for the drop. Dr. Longo said their numbers go up and down. He was only aware of 3 or 4 families that had gone to home schooling. These are the numbers from October 1st. Cindy Ford said we couldn't take as many preschool students due to numbers.
- Al Maccarone asked Dr. Longo what percentage of students are distance learners. Dr. Longo said about 25% are distance learners.

MOTION made by John Lippert for the board to consider agenda items 8b and 8c at this point in the meeting. Motion seconded by Jane Urban and carried unanimously.

New Business

b. Certified Staff Resignation

c. Certified Staff Appointment

- John Lippert said he is always chilled when he sees staff resignation on the agenda but always pleased when it is followed immediately by staff appointment.
- Cindy Ford said she is chilled as well but also happy for School Psychologist Alicia Marceau to move on to another opportunity for herself. She said we have always had two school psychologists. Currently, there are 23 openings for school psychologists in Connecticut. It is challenging to compete with other districts and what they are able to pay. Social workers do similar work. The biggest difference is the assessment piece. The school psychologist looks more at diagnosis and eligibility for special education. They also do counseling, work with general ed kids who are struggling, and reach out to families. Social workers do a lot more of family outreach; they are trained for that. This feels like a good opportunity to round out our team, with a school psychologist, school social worker, and school counselor. This team can work collaboratively with the Youth Services person in town and the community health person.
- John Lippert had asked Cindy years ago what the ideal team would be. Her answer was psychologist, social worker, and counselor. If we approve the hire brought forward, we would have that team. Cindy said Alissa Tatro has a lot of experience and a lot of contacts within the community and beyond.
- Kim Kouatly asked what grades each of them be focusing on. Cindy said that would be something that they develop as a team. They can play different roles in different areas. They are already thinking about it and trying to come up with a good plan.
- Tess Grous asked if there is a difference in their financial contract? Cindy said it will be about a \$9000 increase. Tess asked if the new person happens to have a dog for therapy.

MOTION made by Kim Kouatly to accept with regret the resignation of School Psychologist Alicia Marceau. Motion seconded by Al Maccarone and carried unanimously.

MOTION made by Jane Urban to accept the appointment of Alissa Tatro as School Social Worker. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.

Committee Break Out Sessions – Committees entered break out sessions at 8:57 p.m. and returned from break out sessions at 9:24 p.m.

- **Building & Grounds Committee:** Marian Matthews said they need to spend some time really looking over the Friar report and the audit. They want to delve into this pretty deeply to see how fast we can get to bonding to replace the roof as well as the other items in the audit and the Friar report. They are interested in having the school join the Pollinator Pathway, a big push in Connecticut right now.
 - Jane Urban got to make two new pollinator gardens, and she has a lot of contacts involved in this. She asked Building & Grounds Committee to let her know how she can help.
 - Marian Matthews has done two pollinator gardens, one at her farm and one at the town.
 - Dr. Longo is thinking about trying to get a solar panel to connect to the greenhouse and asked if Building & Grounds Committee could be of assistance in that. It will help the kids learn about solar, and they can go home and talk about it with their parents.
- **Personnel:** Jane Urban said the AEA has requested a meeting with the Personnel Committee, like they have done historically, to discuss school climate. They will set a meeting date for that.
 - Dr. Longo said this spring it will be time to start negotiating contract for noncertified staff.
 - Dr. Longo requested an executive session to discuss his contract.

Old Business

a. Audit Update

b. FY 20 Budget Update

c. FY 21 Budget Planning

- The Business Manager was not in attendance.

- Dr. Longo met with Martha Guidry, Karen Munroe, and Kelee Calkins. He gave them what he feels like is the schedule. He said they are on a good path, that the team is ready to dig in and start working on things.
- Dr. Longo said there is no news about the current audit. It was put on the agenda in the hope that something might have come up about it, but nothing has come up.

New Business

a. Request for Leave of Absence (Certified Staff)

- Dr. Longo said Cindy Ford is going to look for a substitute. It is tough to fill these special positions, but they will find somebody.
- ***MOTION made by Jane Urban to accept School Counselor Jessica Bernardi's request for leave of absence. Motion seconded by Kim Kouatly and carried unanimously.***

d. Discuss Board Rules and Responsibilities

- John Lippert asked if everyone has the blue booklet. There are three sections. John recommends board members read through page 5 and discuss at next meeting.
- Marian Matthews said there is CABA workshop 11/16/20 from 12:00 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. on Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members. Marian recommended that everybody do that before the next meeting. Board members were asked to contact Jen Barsaleau to register if they would like it to be paid for by the board.

Opportunity for Public Comment – No public comment.

Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items

- Dr. Longo has requested an executive session to discuss his contract.
- John Lippert is still missing some evaluation forms. The board will have a special meeting on 11/12/20 at 7:00 p.m. to discuss superintendent evaluation responses in executive session. Kim Kouatly and Al Maccarone will not be able to attend.
- Policies for a second reading.
- Updates on Bicknell scholarship.
- Advisory School Building Committee. Marian Matthews wants to be on that committee, and the only way she can be on that is to be nominated from the floor. The town meeting is at 11:00 a.m. on 11/07/20 at Pompey Hollow Park.

Adjournment

MOTION by Marian Matthews to adjourn the meeting (9:49 p.m.). Motion seconded by Jane Urban and carried unanimously.

Sara Wilson
Recording Secretary

Ashford School
Board of Education
November 19, 2020 Meeting
Superintendent's Report

Budget Calendar and Public Input

I have not yet developed our recommended budget calendar, as we are awaiting the Board of Finance calendar to be published, which will serve as a guide for us.

However, I am scheduling two Zoom Meetings for the public to provide input into our budget recommendations. The first will be Wednesday, December 2 at 7 PM. The second will be in early January. As usual, I value, and include the ideas generated at these meetings into my suggestions to you during the budget development process.

Follow-up to Pavilion Discussion

About two months ago I suggested that Ashford might wish to pursue a group of volunteers and with minimal funds, support building a pavilion to be a permanent fixture to serve the same function as the temporary tent we are currently using. Since then, we have measured the one on the town's property and feel a similar one would work well for us. We could conduct events, classes and have student lunches outdoors most of the year. If anyone is interested in working to help organize this effort, please let me know.

In Praise of the Plan

The Ashford School Reopening Plan continues to function flawlessly. I believe this is because it was developed in the student's best interest, and has been carried out by caring professionals with a very supportive and thoughtful community. The plan could not work if the parents and other community members were not following expert recommendations to mitigate the spread of the virus. We thank everyone who is socially distancing, wearing masks, washing hands regularly, and teaching those intelligent practices to their children. The students have been terrific. This can certainly be traced to the adults providing guidance and positive examples. Please be sure to let everyone know that it is working and appreciated.

Reaching out to Disengaged Students

One of the hazards of distance learning is that some students become disengaged. They do not attend classes, or do not complete assignments regularly. We have to reach these students somehow; we cannot let them be victims of the pandemic's impact on our school.

The administrative team, in a recent brainstorming session to find a way to reach out to these students, has come up with a great solution. I have asked Principal Hopkins to explain it further in his report, but essentially it is an extended day, on site, for a handful of students not thriving with distance instruction.

Water Quality in Our School

In September (9/4/20) we were informed that a check of our water quality resulted in a few locations in the building testing slightly outside the legal amount of lead. All notices were sent out and posted as required, but I thought a reminder was prudent since we will be acting on it soon. While the test said the amount was insignificant it required certain remedial actions be taken, and that it be retested over time. The Friday after Thanksgiving we have scheduled the annual flushing of our water system and are hoping that that resolves this issue.

ASHFORD SCHOOL

440 Westford Road
Ashford, Connecticut 06278
www.AshfordCT.org

James P. Longo, Ed.D

Superintendent of Schools
860-429-1927
jplongo@ashfordct.org

Cynthia A. Ford

Director, Pupil Personnel
860-429-1927
cford@ashfordct.org

Martha E. Guidry

Business Manager
860-429-1927
mguidry@ashfordct.org

Troy C. Hopkins

Principal/Asst. Superintendent
860-429-6419
thopkins@ashfordct.org

Polly A. Borysevicz

Assistant Principal
860-429-6419
pborysevicz@ashfordct.org

Board of Education Report

Business Office

Martha Guidry
October 2020

Closing out FY 19-20

Final EFS report filed by KMunroe on November 7th. This is the final piece that the auditors needed to complete their process.

Financial System Conversion

The team continues to work on the Infinite Visions conversion with both training and data collection/input. We are currently trying to discern whether we should delay the payroll conversion until July 1st due to all the moving parts and so much else occurring as we transition.

Budget

Karen and Martha have worked on the BOE budget projections for FY 20/21. Martha will be able to provide an update and transfer requests in the meeting on 11/19/20.

Martha has started the process of creating the FY 21/22 budget. This will be done with our new IV account codes, but the board will be able to view the former budgets utilizing the new account codes. Various departments are working on their specific parts for the Business Office to integrate. We created a tentative schedule to which Jim has agreed to. The conversion to IV and all the training requires us to have several extra weeks for completion.

Target Date

Friday, 12/17/2020

Tuesday, 1/19/2021

Tuesday, 2/4/2021

Tuesday, 2/11/2021

Thursday, 2/19/2021

Thursday, 2/25/2021

Activity

Draft Budget to Superintendent

Review of Prelim Budget with Admin Team

Budget distributed to BOE

Special BOE meeting to finalize Budget

Budget presented to BOF

Estimated BOF approval

Systems and Processes

We continue to work on systems and processes to make things more efficient. We have a huge challenge with document management as well storage, backup and remote access of electronic documents. Martha has initiated several procedures to help resolve the issues:

- **Electronic Documents:** Martha is in the process of creating a SharePoint site (procured free with educator email) where all Business Office documents can be secured thru a password protected portal for access by appropriate individuals. It will be cloud-based and accessible remotely. Currently, documents are saved on local hard drives and NOT automatically backed up to the cloud or regularly backed up on a hard drive. The new approach will require some retraining of employee habits to appropriately house and catalog documents.
- **Cleanup of Shared Drive:** We have a shared drive that is filled with files from all over the place with no consistent file structure. All the files need to be reviewed and determined if need to be archived. Martha will be reviewing these files over the Winter holiday (due to foot surgery that won't allow her to drive to the school during the week). Of note, while this shared drive would allow for access to different documents and can be password protected, it is only available to employees when in the school building. This does not bode well for remote readiness (Covid /snow days/no power). In addition, this information is NOT backed up in the cloud, so if the server crashes or the building burns down, we lose ALL our data.

- **Cleanup of Paper Archives:** Our cabinets are loaded with documents that may or may not need to be archived. We currently don't have the storage space for some of the information we do need filed, due to a backlog of filing. Our Business Team agreed that the 2nd Friday of each month will be dedicated to cleanup. While we will address any "emergencies" on those days, all 4 staff members will be working on cleanup. It is our goal to make material progress in getting the office in order and working more efficiently.

Fund Balances

Student Activities Fund (SAF)

The auditors have finally signed off our starting balances for the Student Activities. To this end, \$6,717 has been transferred out. \$500 has been moved into a BOE Sp Ed account for services rendered several years ago. The remaining balance has been put in a "grant" fund for the Library, Science, Spanish and PE Equipment that can be used until funds zero balance.

Cafeteria Fund

We are working to determine the potential BOE liability given that the Cafeteria currently does not generate revenue due to Covid.

Ashford BOE Principal Report

Troy C. Hopkins
November 19, 2020

Teaching during a Pandemic

Our school staff continues their impressive dedication to the education of all of our students, both in-person and distance learners. We have had approximately 30 students switch to in-person learning as of the end of the first trimester. Unfortunately, some of our students who continue to be distance learners are suffering academically. Several interventions are being implemented and additional ones are planned. Staffing is starting to become a real challenge and will likely become more difficult in the weeks and months ahead due to the need to quarantine if identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, and as a result of the usual seasonal illnesses.

German Teaching Assistant

Inga Heydekorn is our teaching assistant for the school year. She is from Hannover, Germany and is completing her Masters degree in biology, English, and education. This program enhances mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries, sharpens Teachers' professional skills and methodologies, and provides opportunities to participate in cross-cultural activities at host schools and in U.S. communities.

Artists in Residence

In October, we had our first art residency program through the HOT Approach grant. Chuck and Mira Costa worked with our second grade classes on songwriting as part of a unit on apple trees. Here are links to the songs that each class created:

Mrs. Klock: <https://youtu.be/S-EvmoLZC7U>

Mr. Horn: <https://youtu.be/EKHFPjQPFa8>

Mrs. Zotti: <https://youtu.be/i209lwDKEk0>

Third Specials Rotation (November 30 - January 22)

Kindergarten, grades 1 and 2, will have science and PE, alternating every three weeks. Grades 3 and 4 will continue with Spanish and add music. Grades 5 and 6 will have art. Grades 7 and 8 will have health.

Veterans Day Celebration Video

While we did not have our usual Veterans Day recognition, we did celebrate our veterans in other ways. Our Veterans Day Committee ensured that community members who drove by the school could read signs of appreciation created by staff and students and view the flags of the different branches of the military. Also, a video was produced and shown to the entire school at the same time. The video includes students sharing information, an explanation of the Pledge of Allegiance by Tsgt. Atkinson (Mrs. Atkinson's daughter) from the United States Air Force, a moving speech by our very own Mr. Caldwell, our very own Mrs. Welz singing "America the Beautiful", and students Ana and Quinn performing taps. [Click Here](#) if you would like to watch the video.

Ashford BOE Assistant Principal Report

Polly Borysevicz

November 19, 2020

Restorative-practices: are all about building community and strengthening relationships.

This is based on the idea that when we feel part of a supportive community, we respect others in that community and become accountable to it. Below is an explanation of the Restorative Circle strategy:

- **Restorative Circles:** a core component of the restorative justice process that promotes conversation between students. A Restorative Circle, sometimes called a Peacemaking Circle, helps build relationships and address conflict within a classroom community. Restorative circles are restorative discipline strategies that are used in classrooms to develop relationships, build communities, and respond to conflicts and problems that arise. With restorative circles, everyone is given an equal opportunity to speak, and be listened to. We use a "talking piece". Only the person holding the talking piece can speak. Once they are done, they pass it on to someone else, then it is their turn to speak. This is used to create a safe environment for students to talk about the conflict, how it makes them feel, and why they feel the way they do. From this, solutions are discussed and agreed upon by all parties. Teachers use this within their classrooms and I have been invited in multiple times this year to participate.

SEL: November's SEL curriculum theme is Responsibility (with a focus on accountability and executive functioning).

Mrs. Deliberto (PreK-3 school psychologist) and I are visiting classrooms to discuss the idea of our students as Social Detectives. Discussions around mask wearing and how we can figure out what our classmates need and what our responsibility is to a classmate who may be in need (sad, frustrated, angry, happy).

Distance Learning Opportunities: We have identified, with the help of our school counselor and 7/8 grade team, distance learners who are disengaged and have set up this opportunity for them to come into the school building one day a week to catch up on their assignments and be available for in-person consultation with their classroom teachers. Currently we have 3 families who are participating in this opportunity.

STRIVE: Identification and qualification has been completed. Sra. Leon is our STRIVE teacher for students in grade 3-5 and Sra. Rhubin is our STRIVE teacher for grades 6-8. We currently have 13 students who are labeled as Gifted. Please see the attached brochure.

Cafeteria: We currently have 4 grade levels eating in the cafeteria- Kinder, 2nd grade, 7th grade and 8th grade. Currently, 2nd grade is the only grade for this lunch wave who has chosen to come to the cafeteria. Because 7th and 8th grades have the same lunch wave, these two grade levels are eating there on a rotating weekly schedule. All lunch times are staggered which ensures that there is enough time between every lunch wave for the custodians to wipe down and sanitize



Ashford Public Schools

Respect, Responsibility and Pride

Director of Special Education-BOE Report



440 Westford Road, Ashford, CT 06278 □ Tel: (860) 429-1927 □ Fax: (860)-429-3651 □ www.ashfordct.org

Dr. James P. Longo
Superintendent of Schools

Cynthia A. Ford
Director of Pupil Services

Troy Hopkins
Principal/Asst. Super.

Polly Borysevicz
Asst. Principal

November

Update on special education COVID-19 Numbers: As of 11/13/2020

Grade Level	September Distance Learners	November Distance Learners
K	2	2
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	4	4
4	0	0
5	2	1
6	1	1
7	3	3
8	2	2

The new Social Worker was able to meet with the mental health team at Ashford on Wednesday November 11, 2020 for the day to shadow the School Psychologist prior to her departure. School Psychologists last day: Friday November 13, 2020. New hire will start one day a week until her current contract obligations are met. All service hours were split up among the current professionals. Her first day for full time employment will be after the holidays, specific start date is still to be determined. Attached is a great visual for a division of services between school counselor, social worker and psychologist

Therapy Dog Program:

- Presentation on the benefits of a Therapy Dog program for students and staff
- Next steps: Approval of a BOE policy

Professional Learning:

- Chosen to sit on a state committee around the creation of a Special Education Leadership Program. The state sees a need to give additional training for Administrators in the area of Special Education.
- Continuing to be a part of the Professional Learning Community around best practices and family partnership in special education. This experience is extremely helpful to be able to connect with principals, directors and State Department of Education professionals from around the state.

Community Mental Health Partnership:

- Continuing to go well. Currently 8 families are taking advantage of the services as of November 13, 2020.

Student Support Services: Unique and Overlapping Roles

*** NOTE:** This model offers a snapshot of some of the overlapping and unique roles of CT Student Support Services



School Psychology

Key Roles:

- Assessment (intelligence, achievement, social-emotional, adaptive, cognitive processing)
- Identifying special education needs
- Developing support strategies
- Ongoing counseling to support IEP goals

***Works with select students
Within RTI Framework, supports at
the Tier II & III levels only***

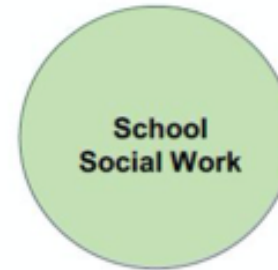


School Counseling

Key Roles:

- Student advocacy
- Program delivery that supports students' academic, social emotional, & career development
- Orientation and transitions from school to school, and school to career
- Short-term counseling; group counseling

***Works with all students
Within RTI Framework, supports at
Tiers I, II & III***

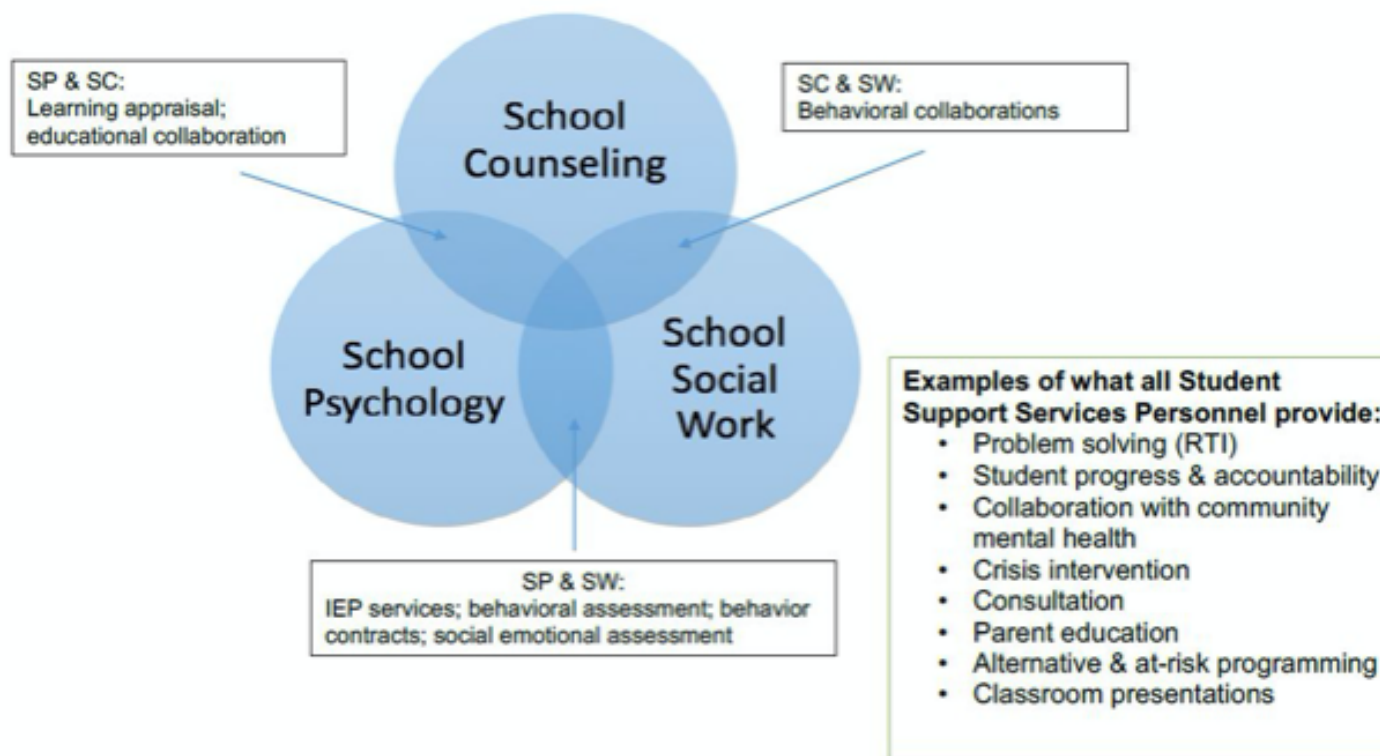


School Social Work

Key Roles:

- Home – School – Community liaison
- Home visits and truancy intervention
- Social emotional & behavioral assessment
- Ongoing counseling to support IEP goals

***Works with select students
Within RTI Framework, supports at
the Tier II & III levels only***



Student support services can be compared to building a house...
You can have one handy-man do it all, but the most efficient and effective home will be built with the expertise of a carpenter, electrician, plumber, etc.

Ashford School District Policy

Therapy Dogs- Draft 11/13/2020

A "therapy dog" is a dog that has been individually trained and certified to work with its (employee) owner or handler to provide emotional support, well-being, comfort or companionship to Ashford students. Research has shown that therapy dogs support psychological and academic growth while increasing social skills and self-esteem in children and adolescents. Therapy dogs have been trained to provide emotional support which positively impacts reading skills, emotional functioning and communication skills. In addition, the use of therapy dogs may decrease anxiety, improve self-esteem and increase overall academic achievement in students.

Therapy dogs are not "service animals" as that term is used in the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). The therapy dog must be well-behaved and have a temperament suitable for interaction with students and others in a public school. Therapy dogs are the personal property of the employee or handler and are not owned by Ashford School District.

- I. **Therapy dog standards and procedures.** The following requirements must be satisfied before a therapy dog will be allowed in school buildings or on school grounds:
 - a. **Request:** At the request of the Principal or Principal's designee, an employee or handler who wishes to bring a therapy dog to Ashford Schools property shall submit a completed written request form to the Superintendent or Superintendent's designee, for approval. request shall be submitted for approval each school year and/or whenever the employee or handler wishes to use a different therapy dog. Such approval may be rescinded at any time at the sole discretion of the Superintendent. Once the Superintendent or designee approves the request, a plan for dog visits shall be developed with the Principal or Principal's designee.
 - b. **Training and certification.** The employee or handler shall submit proof of registration as a therapy dog handler with each therapy dog he or she plans to bring to Ashford School District. Such registration shall be from an organization that requires an evaluation of the therapy dog and employee or handler prior to registration and on-going evaluation as required for registration. The certification must remain current at all times.
 - c. **Health and vaccination.** The therapy dog must be clean, well-groomed, in good health, housebroken, and immunized against diseases common to dogs. The employee or handler must submit proof of current licensure from the local licensing authority and proof of the therapy dog's current vaccinations and immunizations from a licensed veterinarian.
 - d. **Control.** A therapy dog must be under the control of the employee or handler through the use of a leash or other tether unless the use of such item would interfere with the therapy dog's safe, effective performance of its work or tasks. However, the therapy dog must be under the employee's or handler's control at all times.

DRAFT 11 19 2020

- e. **Identification.** The therapy dog must have appropriate identification as a therapy dog. If not an employee, handlers shall wear a visitor's pass while in the school, and any other appropriate identification provided by the registering organization.
- f. **No disruption.** The therapy dog must not disrupt the educational process by barking, seeking attention or any other behavior.
- g. **Health and safety.** The therapy dog must not pose a health and safety risk to any student, employee or other person at school.
- h. **Supervision and care of therapy dogs.** The employee or handler is solely responsible for the supervision and care of the therapy dog, including any feeding, exercising and cleanup while the animal is in a school building or on school property. Ashford School District is not responsible for providing any care, supervision or assistance for a therapy dog.
- i. **Authorized area(s).** The employee or handler shall only allow the therapy dog to be in areas in school buildings or on school property that are authorized by Ashford School District administrators.
- j. **Insurance.** The employee or handler must submit a copy of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on school property, naming Ashford School District as an additional insured on the policy.
- k. **Exclusion or removal from school.** A therapy dog may be excluded from school property and buildings if a school administrator determines that:
 - i. The employee or handler does not have control of the therapy dog;
 - ii. The therapy dog is not housebroken;
 - iii. The therapy dog presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school; or
 - iv. The animal's presence otherwise interferes with the educational process.The employee or handler shall be required to remove the therapy dog from school premises immediately upon such a determination.
- l. **Allergic reactions.** If any student or school employee assigned to a classroom in which a therapy dog is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the therapy dog, the employee or handler of the animal will be required to remove the animal to a different location designated by an administrator. If a student has an aversion to or a fear of dogs, the employee or handler will remove the therapy dog to a designated area assigned by the building Principal or designee.
- m. **Damages to school property and injuries.** The employee or handler of a therapy dog is solely responsible and liable for any damage to school property or injury to personnel, students, or others caused by the therapy dog.
- n. **Therapy dog in training.** *This* policy shall also be applicable to therapy dogs in training that are accompanied by a bona fide trainer.

DRAFT 11 19 2020

Ashford School District
Request to use Therapy Dog in School

This policy governs the use of therapy dogs in schools. The request shall be submitted to the Superintendent or designee for approval each school year and/or whenever the handler wishes to use a different therapy dog. ("Handler" indicates the dog's owner, whether employee or non-employee.)

Name of handler _____ Date _____

Handler address _____ Handler phone number _____

Handler email _____ Name and breed of dog _____

School where the dog will be used _____

Please describe, in detail, what the dog will do at the school _____

Attach the following to this form:

- Proof of registration as a therapy dog handler with the individual therapy dog to be used (*Note: Such registration shall be from an organization that requires an evaluation of the therapy dog and employee or handler prior to registration and on-going evaluation as required for registration. It must remain current at all times.*)
- Proof from a licensed veterinarian that the therapy dog is in good health and has been immunized against diseases common to dogs. Such vaccinations shall be kept current and up to date all times.
- Proof of licensure from the local dog licensing authority.
- Copy of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on school property, naming Concord School District as an additional insured on the policy.

Handler's signature _____ Date _____

Principal's signature _____ Date _____

Superintendent's (or designee's) signature _____ Date _____

Ashford School District

Ashford Board of Education - 2021 Meeting Schedule

Unless otherwise posted, all meetings will be held via Zoom and/or the Library Media Center at Ashford School. The board reserves the right to schedule subcommittee meetings as a part of their regular meeting agendas. The regular meeting schedule is as follows:

January

January 7, 2021
January 21, 2021

February

February 4, 2021
February 18, 2021

March

March 4, 2021
March 18, 2021

April

April 1, 2021
April 15, 2021
April 29, 2021 (if necessary)

May

May 6, 2021
May 20, 2021

June

June 3, 2021
June 17, 2021

July

July 15, 2021

August

August 19, 2021

September

September 2, 2021
September 16, 2021

October

October 7, 2021
October 21, 2021

November

November 4, 2021
November 18, 2021

December

December 2, 2021
December 16, 2021

Approved by the Ashford Board of Education:



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education

81 Wolcott Hill Road, Wethersfield, CT 06109-1242

800-317-0033 • 860-571-7446 • Fax 860-571-7452

www.cabe.org

Revised March 2017

Roles and Responsibilities of Board of Education Membership

**Your acts may
have an impact
on the lives
of thousands.**

roles (rÔl) *n.* The characteristic and expected social behavior of an individual.

re-spon-si-bil-i-ty /ri-,span(t) -s -'bil-t-e *n* **1:** the quality or state of being responsible: as **a:** moral, legal, or mental accountability **b:** RELIABILITY, TRUST-WORTHY-NESS **2:** something for which one is responsible: BURDEN

re-spon-si-ble /-'s pan (t) -s b / *adj* **1 a:** liable to be called upon to answer as the primary cause, motive, or agent **b:** liable to legal review or in case of fault to penalties **2 a:** able to answer for one's conduct and obligations: TRUST-WORTHY **b:** being a free moral agent **3:** involving responsibility or accountability **4:** politically answerable; *esp:* required to submit to the electorate if defeated by the legislature - **re-spon-si-ble-ness** *n* - **re-spon-si-bly** /-ble/*adv*

syn RESPONSIBLE, ANSWER-ABLE, ACCOUNTABLE, AMENABLE, LIABLE mean subject to an authority that may punish default. RESPONSIBLE implies holding a formal organizational role, duty, or trust; ANSWERABLE suggests a relation between one having a moral or legal obligation and a court or other authority charged with oversight of its observance; ACCOUNT-ABLE suggest imminence of retribution for unfulfilled trust or violated obligation.

CABE's Mission Statement

To assist local and regional boards of education
in providing high quality education for all
Connecticut children through effective leadership.

CABE's Vision Statement

CABE is passionate about strengthening public education
through high-performing, transformative local
school board/superintendent leadership teams
that inspire success for each child.

Connecticut's school boards are one of its greatest strengths. Since the establishment of the Connecticut Code in 1650, the citizens of Connecticut's towns and cities have governed their own schools. Through local control, all citizens have the opportunity to have a direct impact on the tone and direction of their local or regional school district. Strong leadership by boards of education is critical in raising student achievement and creating a school climate that fosters academic and personal development. They are also considered "agents of the State" and are thus also responsible for carrying out laws, regulations and other requirements of the State.

School board members are elected* by the citizens of their community. Therefore, they are responsible to those citizens.

School boards provide community input into its schools. It ensures that the needs and desires of the community, both ordinary and extraordinary, will be met by the schools. Board members achieve this through the policies they develop to lead the system and through the professional administrators/educators they employ to translate the policies into action.

**Most boards of education in Connecticut are elected. The New Haven school board is appointed by the Mayor except for two members; Hartford's school board is composed of five members appointed by the Mayor and four elected. In special circumstances, the State Board of Education has authority to intervene and reconstitute school boards.*

Forward

PART ONE

Responsibilities of board of education members

The roles and responsibilities of a board member serving on a board of education are varied and complex; the following pages offer an outline and discussion.

Further information and insight is offered by CABE through the annual CABE/CAPSS Convention, workshops and its biannual regional board candidate orientation sessions and new board member conference.

Boards of education serve the state and the local district, and are thus state and local officials.

1. The Connecticut Constitution requires that ...
"There shall always be free public elementary and secondary schools in the state. The Connecticut General Assembly shall implement this principle by appropriate legislation."

The General Assembly has delegated much of this responsibility to local boards of education. Connecticut always has provided for considerable local autonomy.

2. The local school district has been created as a unit of the state government.

This means that a local board is responsible both to the local community and to state government.

3. A board of education member is a "State official functioning at the local level." Thus board members must carry out responsibilities as set out in law or regulation.

4. General supervision and control of public education is vested in the State Board of Education.

Throughout the years, the State Board, working through the State Department of Education, has discharged its supervisory functions by both working with local school districts to improve school programs and by providing regulatory oversight of school districts.

5. Boards perform acts for which authority exists in the statutes and in court decisions. State law also gives each board discretionary powers to exercise responsibility and initiative locally.

6. The local board of education should function independently of other local government bodies, except as provided by state law and town charter.

The deliberate division of authority between the local board of education and other governmental bodies is intended to make school boards directly responsible to the people. Local selection of board members, either through election or appointment, is intended to keep schools close to the people. ***Boards connect the will of their community to the education of their children.***

**An effective
board member
meets legal
and personal
qualifications**

**The board,
not the
individual, has
authority thus
the board of
education must
work as a team**

1. The State sets few legal qualifications for board membership, requiring only that members: (a) be electors in the town in which they serve; and (b) not be employed by the district.
2. Before beginning board service, board members must take an oath of office.
3. High ethical standards are necessary in the men and women who serve on boards of education.

Board members should hold universal public education in the greatest esteem; who believe that America's future rests primarily on the superior development — physical, mental, moral, spiritual — of all our children and youth; and who will work to provide, defend and support the highest degree of public education for their communities.

1. Board members should view themselves as "team" members, able to work harmoniously with other members.

Board members require some time to become fully informed about the work of the board. As members of the board of directors of multimillion dollar enterprises, school board members must continually seek to enhance their knowledge and skills in the interest of serving their school districts.

2. An individual board member has no more authority than any other citizen when the board is not in session unless granted more authority by the board.
3. Board members speak and vote in accordance with their convictions, but once an official decision has been made, they should support that decision.
4. Board members should make no promises or commitments on educational issues unless they are fully discussed and acted upon in the board meeting.
5. Board members should encourage teamwork, including effective communication and support and adherence to appropriate roles and responsibilities between school administrators and the board.
6. Board members should learn the "chain of command" in the district, and encourage business to be conducted through proper channels.
7. Board members must understand that their primary responsibility is the improvement of student achievement through the adoption and monitoring of board policy.

**Boards of
education
make policies,
ensure policies
are carried out,
and judge
the results**

1. The most important function of a board of education is to improve student achievement. This is done by developing, adopting, monitoring and evaluating the effects of board policies. The board develops and adopts policies to provide a broad guide for action by school personnel so that schools may operate efficiently. *Board members should recognize that their responsibility is not to run the schools, but to see that the schools are well run.*
2. Policies give direction to administrators and staff by clearly defining staff authority and responsibility. They permit discretion when appropriate and provide the ability for school district personnel to respond to a variety of situations.
3. The board should be assisted in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of policies by written and oral reports through appropriate administrators, by direct feedback, and recommendations from the superintendent.
4. Written policies provide for delegation of authority, thus maintaining control and reducing the need for board discussion on many matters. Policies help avoid having decisions made on a case-by-case basis.
5. Written policies permit development of administrative guides, procedures, rules and regulations, where deemed appropriate.
6. In conjunction with the superintendent, each board should establish and maintain efficient methods of judging the effectiveness of policies and the district's schools.

7. Board policies should avoid administrative details as much as possible, unless determined to be necessary.

1. Board members should represent impartially all the people of the district rather than any political, social, religious, economic, or other special interest or geographical area.

Board members should recognize that at times special interests and pressure groups may attempt to exert undue influence on them. Board members must weigh all proposals in terms of the greatest good to the children in the district.

2. The board should consider the views of citizens and staff members and involve them in formulating school policies. However, final decisions on policies are the legal responsibility of the board.

One means of considering other viewpoints is through the appointment of advisory committees, which may be set up to consider a specific problem. The committee's responsibilities and authority should be carefully delineated in advance.

3. The policies and programs of the board need to be communicated to the community, in various ways.

Keeping the public informed involves various media, including the press, radio and television, school bulletins, websites, public meetings, conferences, and other methods of communication.

**The board
of education
represents and
works with
the people**

Funding of the schools

4. Good planning on the part of the board requires cooperative effort between the board and other community agencies, such as those concerned with health, recreation, safety, welfare and community development.
5. All meetings of the board must be held in public except where the board meets to discuss matters exempt under the Freedom of Information Act.

1. Securing adequate financial support is one of the most important responsibilities of the local board. This requires public understanding of the present and future educational needs of the community.

The public schools are funded from local property taxes, and state and federal aid.

2. The board is responsible for developing a school budget including the cost of operating the public schools, and an annual report which shows costs, income and net cost to the town.
3. Public money is a public trust; therefore, every board should insist that all of its business transactions be ethical, open, and straightforward.

1. The board should give adequate time to addressing educational issues concerning student achievement, rather than limiting attention to financial and logistical problems. Some boards make a conscientious effort to devote a portion of each meeting exclusively to student achievement.
2. The board should study its own procedures and methods and have appropriate bylaws and policies to ensure effective and efficient use of meeting time.

There are many good ways to expedite the board's business. Among these are: having the agenda and all materials duplicated and mailed, emailed and/or available on the internet to board members sufficiently in advance of the meeting to allow them to be read beforehand; the use of a consent agenda; and placing more important matters earlier on the agenda. Board members should read their materials before the meetings and be prepared to discuss the issues they contain.

3. Board members should keep informed of new educational ideas and trends.
4. Boards should examine and discuss annually the roles of the board and the superintendent in order to maintain a strong and effective partnership and leadership team in the educational process. For a more in-depth discussion of roles and responsibilities, see the CABA/CAPSS/LEAD CT School Governance Position Statement.

Boards of education grow in service

5. Board members should take full advantage of Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) and National School Boards Association (NSBA) meetings, workshops, and Conventions. Board members should devote time to their own professional development to improve their skills and to increase their effectiveness on the board.

In addition, CABE has worked with the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) and LEAD CT to provide a detailed listing of board and superintendent responsibilities as well as those that are jointly shared. This document, the *CABE/CAPSS School Governance Position Statement*, can be found together with the *CABE/CAPSS/LEAD CT Success Strategies for Leadership Team Evaluation: Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools* on the CABE website under the "Leadership" banner on the top of the home page.

These two documents are "best practices" in the view of the three organizations. They serve as excellent discussion material for boards and superintendents on expectations of each and provide for better understanding of roles and responsibilities.

6. Board members also may benefit from attending meetings of the parent-teacher groups and other relevant school groups, including school governance councils, as well as other community groups.

Boards are required by law to maintain "good public elementary and secondary schools," and to "implement the educational interests of the state" as defined in Section 10-4a. The statutes include the need to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation by providing educational opportunities for students to interact with students from other racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds as among the state's educational interests. These and other requirements are contained in Title 10 of Connecticut's General Statutes. Boards may provide additional educational activities to serve the interests of the school district as they see fit. The following duties of local and regional boards of education are primarily outlined in Section 10-220 and 10-221:

1. To secure, if necessary, educational opportunities in other school districts.
2. To "give all the children in the school district as nearly equal advantage as may be practicable."
3. To "have charge of the schools" in the school district.
4. To "make a continuing study of the need for school facilities and a long term building program" and to make recommendations to the town.
5. To care for, maintain and operate "buildings, land, apparatus and other property used for school purposes."
6. To "determine the number, age and qualifications of pupils admitted to each school."

PART TWO

Basic responsibilities of school boards

7. To "employ and dismiss teachers... subject to the provisions of Section 10-151 and 10-158a."
8. To "designate schools which shall be attended by the various children within the school district."
9. To make provisions to enable children residing in the district to attend school "for the period required by law."
10. To annually establish, with the superintendent, educational priorities for the school district.
11. To consider and adopt an annual budget.
12. To provide an appropriate and safe learning environment for students.
13. To develop and implement a written plan for minority staff recruitment.
14. To provide for transportation where "reasonable and desirable."
15. To "arrange with the board of education of an adjacent town for the instruction" of pupils who can more conveniently attend school in their district.
16. To furnish school accommodations so that children "five years of age and over and under eighteen years of age who is not a graduate of a high school" to attend school.

17. To "perform all acts required of it by the town or necessary to carry into effect the powers and duties imposed by law."
18. To "prepare a statement of educational goals for the school district" and to develop student objectives which relate directly to the statement of educational goals.
19. To evaluate annually the superintendent in a manner agreed upon by the board and superintendent.
20. To provide for the annual evaluation of all personnel.

Boards of education must also prescribe rules for the management, studies, classification, and discipline of the public schools, approve the selection of school library books, approve plans for public school buildings, and adopt and implement written policies concerning homework, attendance, promotion and retention.

It is the primary responsibility of each board of education to develop a set of basic beliefs as to what constitutes a comprehensive educational program in its district.

Board members are pressed by decisions dealing with the direct and practical problems of school buildings, staff recruitment and retention, budgets, bond issues, and other specifics. Under these pressures, questions of educational philosophy may seem remote from their immediate obligations and concerns.

The importance of philosophy and goals

Positive attitudes in meeting basic responsibilities

Effective board members realize, however, that educational decisions are made in the best interests of the children they serve only when the alternatives are examined in the light of basic beliefs about public education and what it should be trying to accomplish. The effective use of resources, both material and human, depends directly upon the clear definition of purposes, and the determination of priorities in working toward specific goals. This idea is reflected in state law requiring boards of education to set goals for the local district.

Only when board of education members examine alternatives and make decisions on the basis of a carefully defined set of fundamental educational principles and beliefs will they fulfill the central function of school board membership. In carrying out this responsibility for developing a philosophy of education and helping to determine the goals which public education in the district should try to attain, the board of education bears responsibility as to how it will be accomplished.

Board members represent the entire community, and not special groups or interests within it. They must exercise their best judgment on a fair and objective basis. It is essential that each board member approach responsibilities with a genuine desire to reach conclusions only upon the basis of facts and through examination of all points of view.

The problems of public education are difficult ones, for which there are seldom easy solutions. The best decisions are not made by hunches,

guesses, and emotion, but by analysis of facts and information, and calm, selective judgment. In seeking sources of information, board members may and should look to their professional administrators for the material which will assist them to build their own conclusions as well as outside sources, such as CABA or NSBA, as appropriate. They should strive to learn enough about the subject so that they "ask the right questions" and rest only when their questions have been answered. Board members should continually examine their own opinions and perceptions and strive to find the "best" answers to the issues they face.

No responsibility of the school board requires more clearly reasoned judgment than that of deciding policies on the content of the school curriculum, or the kind of educational experience it should provide. The question of "who should be taught what" is a basic area of education decision-making — and yet it is fairly common for board members to express surprise when informed that defining and adopting curricular policies is an inescapable obligation.

Curriculum is the means by which decisions on education philosophy and goals are implemented. Philosophy and curriculum are two parts of a whole. Goals are of little use unless steps and means are taken to carry them out; and the effectiveness of any curriculum is greatly dependent upon how closely its contents have been oriented to expected results.

The curricular role of board of education members

PART THREE

Connecticut Code of Ethics for Boards of Education

The Connecticut General Statutes provide that boards of education are to establish the program of studies for the public schools, and several statutes impose specific requirements. This responsibility should be interpreted as the broad duty to create teaching positions and to establish courses. Development of specific curriculum has traditionally been left to the professionals. Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 10-220(e) provides that boards of education are required to appoint a "school district curriculum committee" that shall "recommend, develop, review and approve all curriculum for the district".

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education Board of Directors on April 17, 1997 as a model for school boards. The success of every school system depends on an effective working relationship between the Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools. This code incorporates those standards and responsibilities most critical to productive Board and Superintendent relations.

- Board members and Superintendents ensure the opportunity for high quality education for every student and make the well-being of students the **fundamental goal** of all decision-making and actions.
- Board members and Superintendents are **staunch advocates** of high quality free public education for **all** Connecticut children.
- Board members and Superintendents **honor all** national, state and local laws and regulations pertaining to education and public agencies.
- Board members and Superintendents recognize that **clear** and **appropriate**

communications are key to the successful operation of the school district.

- Board members and Superintendents will always carry out their respective roles with the highest levels of **professionalism, honesty** and **integrity**.
- Board members recognize that they represent the **entire** community and that they must ensure that the community remains fully informed on school-related matters.
- Superintendents and Board members recognize that the Superintendent serves as the Board of Education's **agent** and will, in that role, **faithfully apply** the policies and contracts adopted by the Board.
- Board members adhere to the principle that they shall confine the Board's role to **policy-making, planning** and **appraisal** while the Superintendent shall **implement** the Board's policies.
- Board members and Superintendents both recognize that they serve as a part of an educational team with **mutual respect, trust, civility** and **regard** for each other's respective roles and responsibilities.
- Board members are committed to the concept that the strength of the Superintendent is in being the **educational leader** of the school district.
- Board members and Superintendents practice and promote **ethical behavior** in the **Boardroom** as a **model** for all district employees.
- Board members and Superintendents consider and decide all issues **fairly** and **without bias**.

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) serves local boards by promoting public education and by working for adequate state support of education and enactment of legislation that favors the interests of the public schools. Its broad communications program is designed not only to build support for public education on state and national levels but also to help local school districts create support in their communities. Approximately 90% of the school boards in Connecticut to belong to CABE.

CABE programs include board member professional development, liaison and individual consultation with school districts, legislative and legal services, research, public relations, publications, insurance, communications, administrator searches and policy services. CABE exerts influence on national education policy through its affiliation with the National School Boards Association (NSBA) an association of state school board associations, and by testifying at governmental hearings on matters pertaining to education.

CABE maintains liaison with the State Department of Education, other state agencies and the state legislature. CABE's headquarters are in Wethersfield. CABE houses an information center with extensive research files, a library and sample policy files. The *CABE Journal*, CABE's principle periodical, is sent to all member board members, administrators and other education leaders in the state.

Each year CABE sponsors a variety of meetings and conferences for school board members. These include intensive workshops on board service and leadership, board/superintendent

relations and negotiations. Included are sessions which emphasize the fundamentals of school board membership. The highlight of the association's meetings is the annual Convention at which experts analyze, discuss and debate the problems and challenges confronting our public schools.

The CABE website, webinars, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube channel and various electronic listserves are also used to help board members be informed on many topics important to the fulfillment of board member responsibilities.

CABE'S Positions and Core Values

Pursuant to our Bylaws, the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) sets its positions and policies through a democratic process. We ask member school boards to provide us with resolutions, which are reviewed by our Resolutions Committee and then voted upon at our Delegate Assembly. All member Boards of Education are entitled to at least one vote in the Delegate Assembly and larger districts are entitled to two or three votes depending on their size.

These policies and positions are then put into effect by our Board of Directors, which includes Area Directors, Associate Directors and City Representatives. The five largest school districts in the state, as long as they are CABE members, are each entitled to one Director of the city's choosing. The State Relations Committee, which any board member from a member board can join, sets our legislative priorities for the upcoming Legislative Session.

The Board and committees work with staff to develop legislative strategies and all board members are encouraged to get involved in Day on the Hill and meetings with their legislators to explain our priorities for the Legislative Session.

Our positions include the following:

- Each child must have equal access to effective, free public education and to the services of well-educated and skillful teachers;
- All public schools should provide a quality education for each student;

- We urge every school district to affirm that all children can learn and accept the challenge to educate each child to his/her fullest potential;
- We support the State's efforts to address and solve the issues of social and economic isolation in the areas of housing, transportation, employment, access to health care and social services and to make the necessary funding to school districts to develop and sustain integrated educational programs and exchanges that create educational excellence; and
- We believe in local control and that the best decisions are made by boards of education, which know best how to solve the challenges faced in their communities.

We exist as an organization to serve our members. It is our hope and expectation that all school boards will join with us in support of these goals for increasing achievement for all of Connecticut's children.