

**DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 2021 - 7:00 PM
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM
LIVE STREAM**

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chairperson, G. Cooper, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Moment of silence for events in Atlanta and Colorado.

ROLLCALL

Present: Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Loren Daly,
Joseph DaSilva, Richard Jannelli, Kathleen Molinaro, Albert Russo, Amy
Spallino, Kathryn Hodgdon

Absent: Joseph Britton

Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Courtney Leborious, Kelly Truchsess, Kevin Walston, Dr.
Casimiro, Kim Thompson

RECOGNITIONS

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- Katie Johnson

I am a mother of a school age child in the Danbury Public School system and a city resident and taxpayer. I am writing regarding my support for the proposed career academy and my disapproval for any potential charter schools. A charter school drains money from our public schools and doesn't provide opportunities for all of Danbury students! All our students are worthy of an excellent education and a charter school not only doesn't provide that but takes resources away from all our students.

- Roberto Espinal

Thank you for allowing us the ability to testify on behalf of our Danbury students and families. I am a parent of three children and a resident of Danbury. I am also a member of LEAD. I have become increasingly concerned about the overcrowded schools and lack of educational options in our city. I am here to testify I am one of many parents that believe our solution to education cannot be a one size fits all model of education. We have been fighting to open Danbury Prospect Charter School and believe that it can be an important piece in solving our educational needs. Danbury barely has any options for parents,

The technical school and magnet school. Since these two options take students from other towns, we barely make a dent and it has become very difficult for many of us to get our students into those schools. Some prominent members of the board of education have politicized this issue and have ignored the will of the majority of the residents. I understand that the board of education does not decide whether the charter school opens, but I also believe there shouldn't be a vocal voice opposing it. I believe we need a comprehensive solution to our problems. Next year as our students go back to in person learning I don't

think the city will have enough seats or resources to accommodate all of our students. We are severely overcrowded and underfunded as a city. I am particularly disappointed that Senator Kushner voted against bill SB 948 that would have brought between 13 and 20 million dollars a year to our public school. So, to block a charter school because you say it takes funds from our traditional public schools, but then turns around and votes against a bill that blocks millions of additional dollars for our school doesn't make any sense for me. Many of us are not happy with the way our community has been ignored. We ask the board to work on the issue they can help with. We would like your support in the recruitment and hiring of a highly qualified superintendent. We believe that the board needs to send a clear message that equity is not just a political talking point but something that they value and support. That the board finally acknowledges the importance of the Latino community which now constitutes the majority of the students in our schools. We need an educational leader that can relate to this community and bring much needed change.

We will continue to grow, organize and hope we can be partners with the board of education as an independent committee to recruit and retain minority teachers and admin. That we have the ability to cooperate and work together to ensure that our educational system adapts to the 21st century. Thank you again for the opportunity to have our voices heard.

- Tathiana Bueno

I am a highschool student in my senior year at Danbury highschool and a member of Latinos for Educational Advocacy. As someone who has had recent first hand experience in a Danbury public school, I felt compelled to submit this testimony and urge you all to consider the Student-Centered Funding System also known as SB948. Comparing Danbury high schools' infrastructure, curriculum, and overall performance to that of New Fairfield's, Ridgefield's, or Bethel's Highschool makes the real world effects of the ECS funding formula crystal clear. It is by no coincidence that the quality of education and even the educational options Danbury Students receive pales in comparison to its neighboring towns. 20 local school districts currently serve student populations that are more than 50 percent economically disadvantaged, most of which are also predominantly colored communities. These school districts desperately need a funding formula that will support our children and allow them to thrive and flourish regardless of where they live or what school they attend. With all of this experience under my belt I cannot understand why our senator voted against SB948; against something that could be so beneficial to those of us who need it most. Thank you for your time and consideration.

- Gabriela Perez

I am a community organizer in Danbury, college student, daycare teacher, and a member of Latinos for Educational Advocacy and Diversity. It is because of all of my experiences wearing all of my different hats that I have come here today to urge you to consider the Student Centered Funding System. I graduated from Danbury high school in 2018 and I still vividly remember the educational inequity I experienced. My teachers were wonderful and did the best with what they were given but I recall one experience in particular that truly opened my eyes to the inequity in my school system. My senior year of highschool I attended a student exchange field trip during which I visited Newtown highschool. That fieldtrip made one thing glaringly obvious... what my community was being given was NOT the same as what Newtown's community was given. I was amazed at the technology, books, and the general condition of their school. After that field trip I went on to play field

hockey games in neighboring highschools and time and time again I noticed how much nicer their facilities were, how much more resources those students had compared to me, and I couldn't help but feel like I was already losing a race I hadn't even started yet. Simply because I was born in one town rather than another 15 minutes away I was stripped of many educational opportunities and choices that could have altered my life in a drastic way. Had I been from another town I could've had the choice to attend another school but as Danbury only had one free public school I was backed into a corner. I only wish I could've had a chance to attend a charter school that was more equipped to meet my needs. I say all of this to hopefully show you that the ECS funding formula is not working anymore and many many students are suffering as a result. The Educational needs of my community are evolving and together I know we can work towards educational equity. I truly believe that passing bill SB948 can bring us one step closer.

- July Miliano

I am a resident of Danbury, a proud parent of 3 kids and also a member of Latinos for educational advocacy and diversity.

The true strength of the city of Danbury is its diversity. We have families from different cultures who speak different languages and have different perspectives. That is what attracted me to live in this city.

Right now in Danbury, our students are being denied access to new opportunities while our leaders are ignoring the voices of the community.

Most recently Senator Kushner voted against bill SB 948 that would have brought 13 – 20 million dollars a year to our public school. As a representative of the community Senator Kushner also blocked a \$25 million dollar donation to open up a charter school to increase educational choice for our community.

I now demand the Board of Education to ask Senator Kushner why she would vote against this bill that would bring millions of dollars into our already existing schools. We need to hold our political leaders accountable for why our schools continue to be under funded.

Our community has spoken yet no one is listening. I support more funding for our public schools. I support the opening of a school like Danbury Prospect because it will celebrate and honor the diversity of our student body, offer an internationally renowned program, and will open quickly to urgently meet the demands of our growing student population.

I ask the Board of Education to partner with LEAD as an independent committee to recruit and retain minority teachers and administrators. We want to align and ensure that we are working towards one goal, our children.

CONSENT CALENDAR

EXHIBIT

MOTION: Kate Conetta moved, seconded by Amy Spallino that the Board of Education approve the item on the Consent Calendar, Exhibit 21-43, through 21-45- as recommended:

MINUTES

3/4/21 Community Relations Committee

21-43 (pg.4)

3/9/21 Community Relations Committee
3/10/21 Regular Meeting

21-44 (pg.6)
21-45 (pg.7)

A. Russo clarified that E. Daley comments included in the 3/10 regular Meeting Minutes should reflect that NEA takes objection to some things being said about DPS not about Danbury Charter School and asked that the approved minutes reflect the same.

Votes Yes: Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Joseph DaSilva, Albert Russo, Amy Spallino, Kathleen Molinaro, Loren Daly, Richard Jannelli, Kathryn Hodgdon

Absent: Joseph Britton.

Motion carried at 7:25 pm

EDUCATIONAL STAFF REPRESENTATIVES REPORTS

- NEA-Danbury Representative: Erin Daly, President
 - Erin Daly discussed the Speak Out at RPMS in support of equitable education funding. The purpose was to bring attention to educating the public about the Equitable Funding and how the formula is broken. Lots of members of the school community and union spoke in support of equity. Every single dollar makes an impact on all students. It is important to let the Governor know that the ECS formula needs to be amended and not be frozen. Anyone interested in watching the speakers can watch the video on the NEAS Danbury Facebook Page.
- **DSAA: Dr. Kristy Zaleta, President**
 - Dr. Zaleta presented a Video of K-12 DPS Students. It included Shelter Rock's Spirit Day, 5th Grade Movie Night, Mask Breaks, and classroom activities. Broadview Middle School included student announcements, DHS Athletics showed snapshots of students participating and a DHS Documentary Series about students inspired to be part of the change and encouraging members of the school to express themselves as individuals. King Street Intermediate showed classroom activities and students interacting between the classroom and distance learning students. Westside Middle School highlighted their Students of the Month and National History Month.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

- DHS Representatives: Jake Goodwin
 - Everything is going well with our hybrid schedule. Students are now going to school on Wednesday, which switches between the blue and orange cohorts weekly.
 - 7 student athletes were awarded the scholar athlete and sportsmanships awards. Congrats to them.
 - Mrs. Keane, our early childhood instructor, held an early childhood workshop for her students through google meet. Students were able to teach small group instruction to kindergarten students at Park Ave.
 - DHS has now officially added a public health club that aims to educate students on the inequity within the healthcare industry. They feel as though most students going into the healthcare community are unaware of the difficulties minorities face when receiving healthcare.

- We have also approved an Amnesty International club which will work to highlight human rights issues across the country and even the world to its members. They will have fundraisers and hopefully events soon to raise awareness.
 - Seniors received their first “adopt a senior” gift from community members. Some students even received two gifts due to the influx in community involvement and are very grateful.
 - Our softball team will be holding tryouts this weekend.
 - Our theater program met in the beginning of the month to discuss a possible production starting in the fall and hope to get back on the stage soon!
- Ace Representatives: Chris Johnston
 - ACE students are participating in the 53rd annual Danbury Cultural Commission Poetry Contest. Students from the entire school will have the opportunity to submit their original works. Submissions are due by March 29th.
 - ACE is recognizing Women’s History Month as a community by engaging in learning activities and projects designed to celebrate and honor the accomplishments and contributions that women have made in our society. Works of art to celebrate women's month will be added to the ACE creativity showcase website.
 - ACE guidance counsellor Dianna Dinardo is organizing a March into Wellness Day that will include virtual meets with community members who perform duties in their careers related to serving the community as well as promoting physical and emotional wellbeing.
 - ACE will be holding our SAT Day for 11th graders on March 24th. A special thanks to our SAT administrator Kyle Trocolla and our proctors Laura Blake, Anthony Hellman, and Melissa Lasky for providing this opportunity to our students.
 - ACE would like to announce our CABA Award winners Leila Freitas and Brian Galarza for consistently demonstrating strong leadership skills.
 - ACE would like to publicly acknowledge and congratulate our February Students of the month: Kaylee Cottrell and Josh Poulin.
 - Lastly ACE would like to congratulate our most recent student of the week award winners, Jaylyn Batista and Serena Som. Congratulations to both of you and keep up the great work during the rest of Semester 2.
 - Thank you all for allowing us to share the great things happening with our ACE family this spring. Stay safe everyone and remain ACE strong.

ACTION ITEMS

A. February 2021 Operating Results and Analysis (General Funds/Grant Projects)

MOTION: J. DaSilva move, seconded by Conetta that the Board of Education approve the February 2021 Operating Results and Analysis (General Funds/Grant Projects) in accordance with 21-46(pg.19)

Votes Yes: Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Joseph DaSilva, Albert Russo, Amy Spallino, Kathleen Molinaro, Loren Daly, Richard Jannelli, Kathryn Hodgdon

Absent: Joseph Britton.

Motion carried at 7:40 pm

B. P-9125 Attorney

MOTION: K. Molinaro moved, seconded by J. DaSilva that the Board of Education accept for second reading and adoption Policy 9125 Attorney, as recommended by the Policy Committee. 21-47(pg.29)

Votes Yes: Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Joseph DaSilva, Albert Russo, Amy Spallino, Kathleen Molinaro, Loren Daly, Richard Jannelli, Kathryn Hodgdon

Absent: Joseph Britton.

Motion carried at 7:43 pm

C. P-9140 Board Representatives

MOTION: R. Chaleski moved, seconded by J. DaSilva that the Board of Education accept for second reading and adoption Policy 9140 Board Representatives, as recommended by the Policy Committee. 21-48 (pg.30)

Votes Yes: Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Joseph DaSilva, Albert Russo, Amy Spallino, Kathleen Molinaro, Loren Daly, Richard Jannelli, Kathryn Hodgdon

Absent: Joseph Britton.

Motion carried at 7:45 pm

D. P-9250 Remuneration & Reimbursement

MOTION: A. Spallino moved, seconded by K. Conetta that the Board of Education accept for second reading and adoption Policy 9250 Remuneration & Reimbursement, as recommended by the Policy Committee. 21-49 (pg.31)

Votes Yes: Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Joseph DaSilva, Albert Russo, Amy Spallino, Kathleen Molinaro, Loren Daly, Richard Jannelli, Kathryn Hodgdon

Absent: Joseph Britton.

Motion carried at 7:47 pm

E.P-9321 Time, Place, and Notice of Meetings

MOTION: L. Daly moved, seconded by J. DaSilva that the Board of Education accept for second reading and adoption Policy 9321 Time, Place and Notice of Meetings, as recommended by the Policy Committee. 21-50 (pg.32)

Votes Yes: Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Joseph DaSilva, Albert Russo, Amy Spallino, Kathleen Molinaro, Loren Daly, Richard Jannelli, Kathryn Hodgdon

Absent: Joseph Britton.

Motion carried at 7:49 pm

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- District Assessment Windows
 - K. Casimiro shared that the District sent out a letter with the windows for assessments.
 - Grade 5, 8, Science: NGSS Window March 29- May 28
 - Grade 11 Science: NGSS Window February 1- May 28
 - Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics: Smarter Balanced Window March 29 - May 28
 - Grade 11: SAT April 27 Makeup Date May 18
 - Grade 3 & 4 Otis Lennon Ability Test: Early June
 - Assessments will not count towards the accountability index.
 - Schools will offer in person and a remote testing option for distance learners.
- Granville Update
 - K. Truchsess stated that Grandville Early Childhood Center building is beautiful, and we are currently occupying the 1st floor and have a temporary CO for the second floor. Staff is working on moving into classrooms.
 - 3–4-year-old preschoolers were attending Hybrid Monday/Tuesday and Thursday/Friday but because of current in person numbers we were able to bring them in 4 days per week. The program is a 10 hour per week program and Wednesdays is still a DL day for preschool.
- Spring Sports Schedule
 - C. Salvestrini stated that the last week of the Winter Sports season ends on 3/26.
 - Spring will be more normal with 19 teams starting on 3/27 and 10 sports with 500 athletes participating. Spring will run 3/27-6/10.
 - Transportation is still a challenge, but we are working on it. Dr. Pascarella appreciates everyone's efforts.
- Vaccine Update
 - K. O'Dowd shared that we had successful Clinics and by the end of April/ 1st week in May all staff that wished to be vaccinated will be done.
 - 2 weeks after the second vaccine they won't have to quarantine anymore if exposed.
 - Pyzer is the only vaccine approved for 16–17-year-old kids. Looking to work with community partners for this to be available.
 - 18-year-olds can get the Moderna or J&J and are working to make these available for our students.
 - We have had an increase in the community. Case rate is now 31.4% and the positivity rate is 4.78. Having cohorts is a great benefit.
 - As of 3/19/21-CT Travel Advisory Mandate has been lifted. Now we are following CDC guidelines. State Dept. can review this. Our Health Dept would like us to follow the CDC guideline.

- K. Molinaro asked where the uptick is coming from? K. O’Dowd explained that there is a false security from the vaccine and covid fatigue in the community.
 - J. DaSilva- Are parents sending kids to school sick? K. O’Dowd responded yes, there are still children coming to school sick.
 - K. Conetta asked if kids without symptoms can be infecting others? K. O’Dowd stated that she is seeing this, but more parents and families are spreading.
 - J. DaSilva stated that the CDC Guideline is just a guideline but can’t be enforced.
 - Dr. Pascarella we are getting rid of tables and ordering furniture to be able to have the proper distance in the classrooms. In terms of spacing 3 to 6 ft distance we still have to adhere to the current guidelines.
 - K. Thompson added that we have so many staff members out on quarantine. It is unpredictable to know how many staff members will be out.
- **Hybrid Extension - In Person Learning**
 - Dr. Pascarella discussed DPS Road to Reopening Presentation
 - Physical Space- we are still in the 5 days per week Hybrid model. Physical space is still a challenge for us with the CDC minimum 3ft social distance guidelines. We are still facing the same challenges as in the fall with regards for space. Our classroom capacity at the K-5 level ranges from 16 to 24 students districtwide.
 - Possible redistribution of students- when we studied each building in depth utilizing the new spacing criteria, there were 89 elementary classrooms that would be impacted negatively. These impacted classrooms would require us to rebalance students, recall remote teachers (and redistribute their students) and locate additional space for these returning students and teachers.
 - In-person learning capacity could result in some students waiting for an available seat-accommodating in-person learning request for all students K-12 would be very difficult. There is also an equity issue when making choices based upon students with special needs, services or programming. Lunch service continues to be problematic without resolution.
 - Additional furniture & PPE is needed to maintain our social distancing guidelines, we will continue planning to ensure that we can maximize seating occupancy for families that choose to select in-person learning this Spring. This will also help us in our efforts to maximize seats for in-person learning in summer school and the Fall.
 - New registrants could be moved to DL without parent choice. The district continues to receive new students. Requests for in-person learning in the majority of our K-5 classrooms, would not be honored for new families.
 - Medical Challenges-medical advisors have stated their support of returning students to schools, however, a major concern remains with the combining of the cohorts and the spacing needed on the buses to accommodate additional students. Medical advisors have also stated that mixing cohorts at this point is NOT advised. Our school staff who have chosen to be vaccinated, will have received their second dose by the end of April and will have full protection from the vaccine by mid-May. While that is significant, there is still a large population in the community who are not yet vaccinated. We cannot fit all students back at a minimum of 3' physical distance. Because we cannot fit everyone, we would have to limit who we allow back in which is not fair to all students. Other districts that

have all students returned fully in person have seen decreasing enrollment whereas we consistently see increased enrollment. Community spread has doubled this week alone and we have seen a marked uptick in positive cases across the district among staff and students, and we have been informed that the more contagious variant is in Danbury.

- Dr. Pascarella stated we are still finding it difficult to come back full time this year. We will plan for a return for Summer School and next Fall for the 21-22 school year.
- K. Molinaro asked if we are going to have to go complete distance learning after Spring Break and if we do, we need to let the parents know as soon as possible. Dr. Pascarella responded that at this point no announcement has been made. K. Thompson commented it is very hard to predict how many people will be out after Spring Break, great time of uncertainty to predict trends.
- J. DaSilva asked how many staff members will have the second shot past the Spring Break window? K. Truchsess responded that over 900 will get 2nd Vaccine 4/2 & 4/3 and 2 weeks after that date will be considered fully vaccinated.
- **ESSER II Funding**
 - K. Walston & C. LeBorious provided a PowerPoint presentation on ESSER Funding.
 - Esser II Priorities: \$11.1 M. K. Walston explained the purpose of the funds is to sustain local school district capacity and provide equity and access to a high-quality education for ALL children. He reviewed the following priorities of this grant.
 - Academic Support, Learning Loss, Learning Acceleration and Family and Recovery. Part of the guidelines require us to focus on our most vulnerable students.
 - Family and Community Connections. The need to support our families so that they can help the students at home. Finding opportunities to support our families, parent liaison like the model in Morris School. More interpreters available.
 - School Safety and Social Emotional well-being of the “Whole Student” and our school staff. Opportunity to investigate programs to support students and staff. Formal opportunities to get to know their teachers and peers better. More after school activities.
 - Remote Learning Staff Development, and the Digital Divide. All families are connected that need to continue DL. Need to further invest in technology.
 - School Facility Repairs and Improvements. Better ventilation and make sure we have more space to spread our students. This will be the main focus to be able to come back full in the 21-22 Academic Year.
 - K. Walston described the Grant Process relating to the District Level Planning Committee. Each priority convenes a stakeholder group.
 - Feedback from families, constituents and community members is vital.
 - Host listening forums and surveys.
 - District level panel group takes the data to inform the activities, programs and strategies that will be funded. Final approval by CT State Dept. of Education
 - The Community Engagement Sessions included student focus group (16), Teacher Survey (355), Teacher Focus Group (10), Family Survey (129), Family Listening

- groups (127), emails from groups (46) and Admin Focus group (50). K. Walston thanked all involved with the Forums.
- Restrictions of Funds-Funds cannot be used to supplant or pay for regular district expenses. Must be directly related to remedy issues that are an outcome of the pandemic.
 - C. LeBoriosis reported on the amounts of the Coronavirus related funding 2.6M and the timeline to use the money.
 - Esser I (Cares Act) \$ 2.3 M-this was already spent.
 - Esser II (Coronavirus Response & Relief Act) \$ 11.2 M (Revised) due 4/19/2021. Expires in 2023.
 - Esser III (American Rescue Plan) \$25.6 M (Not passed yet) need to draw these funds by 9/2024.
 - DPS is still working on all funds being distributed. These resources are one-time funds that can be used over a specific time period. C.Leboriosis explained the funding is multiyear use.
 - Dr. Pascarella stated that a Finance Committee Meeting is needed and requested a meeting be scheduled.
 - A.Russo stated that if we have 11 M to mitigate educational gap, we can make a big dent.
 - Dr. Pascarella said based on the guidelines we need to work on re-opening and working with the city. We feel that we presented a fair budget and are waiting to hear from the city on funding.
 - J. DaSilva asked if the ESSER money is in addition to the regular budget, not to replace or reduce the current budget? C. Leboriosis responded it is in addition, not instead of.
 - R. Chaleski stated that she was a little confused about how the money is supposed to supplement not replace money. Conflicting messaging is confusing.
 - Dr. Pascarella agreed and explained that this funding is not really a part of the budget. This funding is not supposed to supplant, and we will still have to submit a proposal to the state for approval.

INFORMATION

BOARD CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Mrs. G. Cooper stated that the next BOE meeting will be 4/7 at 7 pm.

BOARD REPORTS, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

J. DaSilva moved, seconded by Al Russo that the Board of Education adjourn its Meeting of March 24, 2021 and the meeting was adjourned at 9:16 pm.

Kathleen Molinaro, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)