

**Regular Meeting Minutes
Fairfield BoE, December 14, 2021, 7:30 PM**

NOTICE: A full meeting recording can be obtained from Fairfield Public Schools. Please call 203-255-8371 for more information and/or see the FPS website (under Board Meeting Minutes) for a link to FAIRTV and FPS YouTube.

Detailed Minutes Voting Summary

Call to order of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Education and Roll Call

Chairman Christine Vitale called the Regular meeting to order at 7:45PM. Present were members Bonnie Rotelli, Jennifer Jacobsen, Carol Guernsey, Jessica Gerber, Christine Vitale, Nick Aysseh, Jennifer Maxon-Kennelly, Jeff Peterson and Crissy Kelly. Others present were Superintendent Mike Cummings, members of the central office leadership team and approximately 35 members of the public,

Old Business

Approval of African-American, Black, Latino and Puerto Rican Studies Course

Mrs. Gerber moved/Mrs. Guernsey seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the African-American, Black, Latino and Puerto Rican Studies course”

Mrs. Jacobsen moved/Mrs. Rotelli seconded to amend the main motion to read “that pursuant to Connecticut public act 19-12 the Board of Education approve the African-American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino Studies humanities course as developed by the State Education Resource Center (SERC) and received by the State Board of Education, inclusive of the title, course description, scope, sequence, and objectives including SERC’s recommended prerequisites of U.S. History and Modern World History.”

Motion passed 6-3 (Mrs. Rotelli, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson, Mrs. Kelly in favor; Mrs. Guernsey, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale against).

Main motion, as amended, passed 8-1 (Mrs. Rotelli, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Guernsey, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson, Mrs. Kelly in favor; Mrs. Gerber against).

During the discussion of the African-American, Black, Latino and Puerto Rican Studies Course, Mrs. Jacobsen moved/Mrs. Rotelli seconded to suspend the rules and extend the meeting to midnight.

Motion passed 8-1 (Mrs. Rotelli, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Guernsey, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson, Mrs. Kelly in favor; Mrs. Gerber against).

Approval of Accounting II and Business of Travel Courses

Mrs. Jacobsen moved/Mr. Peterson seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve Accounting II and Business of Travel Courses.”

Motion passed 9-0.

Approval of 2022-2023 FPS Calendar

Mr. Aysseh moved/Mr. Peterson seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the 2022-2023 FPS Calendar.”

Approved 1-11-2022

Mr. Aysseh moved/Mr. Peterson seconded to amend the 2022-2023 proposed calendar to include a February break, moving the February 16th Early Dismissal PK-12 PD to February 17th and having no school February 20-24 thus extending the last day of school to Thursday, June 15, 2023.

Motion failed 4-5 (Mrs. Rotelli, Mr. Aysseh, Mr. Peterson, Mrs. Kelly in favor; Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Guernsey, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly against).

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved/Mr. Peterson seconded to amend the 2022-2023 proposed calendar and move the Professional Development Day from September 23 to September 2. Following discussion, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly withdrew her amendment; the Board agreed.

Main Motion Passed: 9-0

New Business

Authorize BoE Chair to Execute Form SCG042 for the RLMS Roof Replacement Project

Mrs. Jacobsen moved/Mr. Peterson seconded the recommended motion “that the BoE Chair be authorized to execute form SCG042 for the RLMS Roof Replacement Project.”

Motion passed 9-0.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Guernsey moved/Mr. Peterson seconded the recommended motion “that the Board of Education approve the 11-17-21 6:00PM and 7:30PM special meeting minutes.

Motion passed 9-0.

Adjournment

Mr. Peterson moved/Mr. Aysseh seconded the recommended motion “that this Regular Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn.”

Motion passed 9-0.

Meeting adjourned at 11:42PM

Detailed Minutes

Student Reports

Mr. Aniket Martins and Ms. Reed Childers reported for Fairfield Ludlowe High School: The Candlelight concert will take place in the auditorium on December 21; the FLHS Choir performed at Radio City Music Hall during the Christmas Spectacular; 50 orchestra and band students were invited to perform in the CMA Western Region Festival; all students signed the “No Place for Hate” pledge last week and parents were also invited to sign; sophomore parents are invited to attend an information session with Mr. Hatzis; winter sports have begun; the Compassion Committee is sponsoring a cash and card drive to support those in need; PE teachers Ms. Kiley and Ms. Mayeran recently presented at a state conference; and happy holidays to all.

Ms. Emma Fekete and Mr. Lin Sunil reported for Fairfield Warde High School: The FPD reviewed lockdown procedures with students; information on College Board was discussed in an extended homeroom class; winter sports have begun and athletes are anticipating a winning season; a clothing drive was held for the Bridgeport Rescue Mission; the annual Carillon concert takes place next week; and all were wished a happy holiday season.

Public Comment

Jennifer Leeper, State Representative: Supports the B/AA/PR/L course as a US History credit course. This is an opportunity to show that all recounting of historical events happens through a lens. As a previous Board of Education member, voted in favor of graduation requirements that allowed students more choice and autonomy.

Ava Barahona, TMS student: Is co-leader of the Beloved Community Club. Strongly supports the B/AA/PR/L course as a US History course and believes it would help prevent unconscious bias and racism. If offered as an elective, it would likely not reach as many students.

Gracelyn, Math Academy student: Loves Math Academy and it should not be stopped because it helps stimulate the brain. Accelerated math helps students stay interested and focused. Research shows gifted students need faster paced instruction and more advanced content. (Handed a petition to the Board.)

Randi Cohen, FPS Parent: Supports Math Academy. Without Math Academy, advanced learners are told to be still once their work is finished. The forced idleness causes frustration and anxiety, especially over time.

Maya Henry, Warde student: Students need perspective to succeed. Please vote yes for the B/AA/PR/L course as a US History credit.

Laila Henry, student: An anti-racist action would be to vote yes for the B/AA/PR/L course. Be the Board that does what is right.

Shannon Messina, FPS Parent: Supports Math Academy. It is a great way to foster and encourage confidence in girls that love math.

Melissa Baker, FPS Parent: Supports Math Academy where her daughter is thriving and academic self-confidence has returned. Previously, teachers could not provide the needed differentiation. Was told that only students behind in math were eligible to receive assistance.

Tina Brown, FPS Resident: After leaving Fairfield, found out what bias and racism were. Hadn't been instructed on racism and believes that the school system needs to give true examples.

Riley Donald, FLHS junior: Supports B/AA/PR/L course. It will provide much-needed perspective and act as a stepping stool for the future.

David McKinnis, FPS Resident: Sees the B/AA/PR/L course as the first of many to provide a diverse curriculum.

Jennifer Ellwood, FPS Resident: Read a statement from Selectwoman Nancy Lefkowitz in support of the B/AA/PR/L course. Personally stated she also supports the course as a US History credit.

Frank Sahagian, Retired FPS Teacher and Fairfield resident: Raised questions on the middle school block schedule; did teachers participate in planning and is there buy-in? The proposed new schedule is a dramatic change.

Ahadi Gitari, Math Academy student: Please do not deny others the amazing opportunity to fit in and to excel.

Colleen Sousa, FPS Social Studies Teacher: Supports the B/AA/PR/L course as a US History course. When students depart from her classroom, she wants them to feel valued as well as to know how to read and write critically, and ask the right questions.

Presentations

Math K-12 Presentation

Dr. Rasmussen and Mr. Wakeman presented. The process to review and revise the curriculum began in 2019. The committee used the FPS Vision of a Graduate and essential skills for future jobs as guides.

Elementary curricula will remain consistent with minimal changes and will also maintain the current resource, Bridges 2nd edition. Additional supplemental resources will be added to provide enrichment. Professional Development will focus on equity and Vision of a Graduate. Overall budget implications equal \$48K.

Middle school curricula will remain consistent with minimal changes. The EdGems instructional resource is recommended for adoption and will cost \$190K for a 6-year license. Professional Development will focus on equity and Vision of a Graduate.

High school curricula changes include updating several courses, removing Trigonometry and Math Modeling courses, adding several new courses and adopting new instructional resources. Budget impact is approximately \$481K for resources and \$50K for Professional Development. The high school course sequence was reviewed and the new courses were introduced:

- Modern Mathematics is an application-based course for students leaning towards liberal-arts and political science fields and the recommended resource is *Excursions in Modern Mathematics* (Pearson). Topics include Mathematics of Social Choice, Management Science and Shape and Form.
- Transition to College Mathematics (TCM) is a course to provide support to students who have not met the college readiness expectations. Recommended resources have been developed through the University of Texas – Dana Center and Agile Mind.
- Advanced Mathematical Decision Making is a course to provide students with an opportunity to use mathematics to make effective decisions. Resources have been developed through the University of Texas – Dana Center and Agile Mind. Topics include statistical information and summaries and data modeling.

Dr. Rasmussen and Mr. Wakeman responded to Board questions:

- The current resources have been used since 2013. The independent resource evaluator, EdReports, was very useful and led to an informed decision on the new secondary resources.
- The proposed courses to be discontinued are currently running 1 section at each high school. The focus has been on a calculus route, but students should be asking themselves what they want to do in the future.
- Elementary enrichment opportunities include challenge math for 4th and 5th graders and additional resources embedded within each unit to support small group instruction. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said the Board's expectation was to have a replacement acceleration program rather than enrichment.
- The new secondary resource leads to improved course alignment through a better understanding of standards expectations.
- The new high school curricula is FTE neutral. Mr. Cummings added that staff would be redistributed.
- The new high school courses are full-year, single-level courses and provide more options for students to obtain needed skills. Advanced Mathematical Decision Making is already recognized and respected by colleges; the Transition to College Math was developed in 2020. It is anticipated that all 3 new courses will be NCAA approved.
- The Transition to College Math is intended as a 4th year course and will target current juniors who have already taken Algebra 2. Current juniors are the first class impacted by the new graduation requirements. There is always a commitment to provide support and intervention for struggling students.

- The new textbooks include a digital and print version. There is very little cost savings in choosing the digital-only option. Mr. Cummings added that the digital text license cycle is 5-years; the hard copy text does not have a recurring cost. There are some limitations in viewing the digital text on a Chromebook.
- Student readiness and support issues will be discussed at a future presentation of the middle school schedule. One of the core objectives is to build in interventions at an earlier age.
- Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly requested comparative data across the district that supports remaining with the elementary text, Bridges. Mr. Cummings said the elementary focus and time were better spent on deepening the work rather than investigating a new text.
- The focus on elementary PD is to challenge strong students with deeper content as well as to provide struggling students with access to grade level content.

Middle School Schedule Presentation

Dr. Parrish, Ms. Tiley, Ms. Banick and Mr. Formato presented. The current schedule does not fully support the expectations of adopted curriculum. The guiding principles of the proposed block schedule include increasing overall instructional time, providing longer instructional periods and flexibility to meet students' needs. The process to create the new schedule began in 2018 and included a review of 12 middle school schedules, student interviews, a parent survey and staging with the IC consultant. The current year implementation timeline includes PD, communication to students and families, pilot days and a finalized schedule in June 2022. Each block is 67 minutes, and there is also a 33 minute 'What I Need' (WIN) period. WIN periods occur once per day and allow students to receive supports, meet with teachers and have small group instruction. Grade-level sample schedules were reviewed; each with 5 blocks per day in a 7-day rotation.

The group responded to Board questions:

- Pull-out music lessons will continue under the new schedule; some students may use WIN for music lessons.
- Mr. Cummings said instructional time should be defined as what a student needs. WIN provides time for intervention as well as extension; extension and enrichment will need to be further defined and are equally important as interventions.
- New material will not be introduced during the WIN period, but content may be studied in more depth.
- Staff and community feedback will continue to be collected and a parent information session is scheduled in January.
- Teacher planning times will need adjustments. Curriculum implementation guides may need some modifications but will not require a complete overhaul.

Mrs. Gerber said the block schedule works very well for high school but was not sure how well it would work with young 6th graders. Mr. Cummings said the elementary level essentially operates in a block-type schedule. The key for the middle school block schedule is PD on variations and instructional strategies.

Ms. Guernsey said the block schedule clearly benefits students needing interventions, but she was not clear on how it benefits other students. Significant considerations are (1) WIN takes away from instructional time that moves students forward, and (2) consistent schedule of morning core courses would no longer be possible.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly recognized many benefits in the block schedule and thanked staff for all the work. She disagreed with including the WIN period as instructional time; expressed her concerns that WIN would become a study hall for those students who do not need interventions; and hoped there was some way to reduce music lesson pull-outs from core studies.

Ms. Kelly said she felt the new schedule cuts back on movement breaks, which students need very desperately, particularly 6th graders.

Old Business

Approval of African-American, Black, Latino and Puerto Rican Studies Course

Mrs. Gerber moved, Ms. Guernsey seconded that the Board of Education approve the African-American, Black, Latino and Puerto Rican Studies course.

Mr. Cummings thanked everyone that was involved with the process. He said he was very proud of the students that came forward to voice their opinions and he thanked staff and parents for their commitment. The dialogue is a shift from the focus of the pandemic to deep thinking on learning, race, what this district stands for and what this district wants to promote. Mr. Cummings also thanked the Board for their consideration and time to engage with staff and the public.

Mrs. Vitale restated that the course offering is required per state statute; FPS will follow the SERC curriculum document and added a dual purpose to fulfill the US History requirement.

Mrs. Jacobsen offered a point of clarification; the piece on the graduation requirement is not a voting item and is not contained in the document.

Mrs. Vitale said the understanding is that the course will be considered a US History credit requirement, even though not specifically included in the document. Mr. Cummings confirmed the expectation is that it will fulfill a US History requirement.

Mrs. Jacobsen moved, Mrs. Rotelli seconded to amend the main motion to read “that pursuant to Connecticut public act 19-12 the Board of Education approve the African-American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino Studies humanities course as developed by the State Education Resource Center (SERC) and received by the State Board of Education, inclusive of the title, course description, scope, sequence, and objectives including SERC’s recommended prerequisites of U.S. History and Modern World History.”

Mr. Cummings stated that the amendment removes the US History equivalency credit and ensures the course fulfills a humanities requirement.

Ms. Guernsey said she does not support the amendment and expressed extreme disappointment and disgust in the amendment; the course is an opportunity for FPS to be leaders in terms of responsive needs of the community. The amendment is a new twist that adds confusion to what is being voted on and to pass it will cause harm and will send the message that this perspective is not valued.

Mr. Aysseh said many voices need to be heard and there is much to address. Mr. Aysseh said it is clearly government overreach for the state to mandate that all districts implement a new course with very little leeway; this work should be done at the local level. Mr. Aysseh said he supports the course content and the amendment; he hopes the course is a springboard for many other groups including Asian Americans and indigenous people.

Mrs. Jacobsen moved, Mrs. Rotelli seconded to suspend the rules and extend the meeting to midnight.

Motion Passed: 8-1

Favor: Mrs. Rotelli, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Guernsey, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson, Mrs. Kelly

Oppose: Mrs. Gerber

Mrs. Vitale said she will not support the amendment and agrees with the way the course was presented. Mrs. Gerber agreed and said it is troubling that the US History credit is being edged out through a technicality. The course, as it was presented, was supported by history teachers and many others.

Motion Passed: 6-3

Favor: Mrs. Rotelli, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson, Mrs. Kelly

Oppose: Mrs. Guernsey, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale

Mrs. Jacobsen said the general assembly was overreaching in mandating this course; it conflicts with existing statute on local BoE's approving curriculum. It is a precedent setting vote. Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly agreed and said the government overreach in Hartford was appalling; the legislature needs to let local districts do their work.

Ms. Guernsey and Mrs. Vitale said the Board had a unique opportunity and were sorry to see that the course will not be recognized as a US History course.

Public Comment

JD Fitzpatrick, FPS Student: Ned Lamont is the reason the course exists; none of the Board members, none of whom are non-white, would have proposed this course and it is therefore irresponsible to accuse the government of overreach.

Mr. Aysseh said he felt a need to address the comment and respectfully disagreed. The Superintendent, supported by the Board, hired a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Director. It is a first step in incorporating different voices.

Mrs. Gerber said the Superintendent also recommended the US History credit fulfillment; it would have sent an additional message if approved.

Main motion, as amended, Passed: 8-1

Favor: Mrs. Rotelli, Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Guernsey, Mrs. Vitale, Mr. Aysseh, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly, Mr. Peterson, Mrs. Kelly

Oppose: Mrs. Gerber

Approval of Accounting II and Business of Travel Courses

Mrs. Jacobsen moved, Mr. Peterson seconded that the Board of Education approve Accounting II and Business of Travel Courses.

Mr. Cummings said there is no impact to FTE and there is flexible criteria for minimum enrollment.

Motion Passed: 9-0

Approval of 2022-2023 FPS Calendar

Mr. Aysseh moved, Mr. Peterson seconded that the Board of Education approve the 2022-2023 FPS Calendar.

Mrs. Vitale noted the new calendar has been updated to reflect an April break that matches Bridgeport's calendar.

Mr. Aysseh advocated for a full week of February break for the mental well-being of students as well as to clear out any lingering viruses in school buildings.

Mr. Aysseh moved, Mr. Peterson seconded to amend the 2022-2023 proposed calendar to include a February break, moving the February 16th Early Dismissal PK-12 PD to February 17th and having no school February 20-24 thus extending the last day of school to Thursday, June 15, 2023.

Mrs. Gerber said Juneteenth may further impact the calendar.

Mrs. Jacobsen disagreed with extending the calendar into the week of June 19.

Mr. Aysseh suggested reducing the number of snow days added to the end of the year, and instead adding those to school breaks instead, thereby reducing the break.

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said there is a tremendous difference in the quality of learning in June vs. February.

Mrs. Vitale said childcare challenges during a long February break are difficult for working parents.

Motion Failed: 4-5

Favor: Mrs. Rotelli, Mr. Aysseh, Mr. Peterson, Mrs. Kelly

Oppose: Mrs. Jacobsen, Mrs. Guernsey, Mrs. Gerber, Mrs. Vitale, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly moved, Mr. Peterson seconded to amend the 2022-2023 proposed calendar and move the Professional Development Day from September 23 to September 2.

Mr. Cummings said PD is more impactful in late September.

Public Comment:

Bob Smoler, FEA President: The first week of school is chaotic; a PD session during this time would not be constructive.

Following discussion, Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly withdrew her amendment; the Board agreed.

Main Motion Passed: 9-0

New Business

Authorize BoE Chair to Execute Form SCG042 for the RLMS Roof Replacement Project

Mrs. Jacobsen moved, Mr. Peterson seconded that the BoE Chair be authorized to execute form SCG042 for the RLMS Roof Replacement Project.

Mr. Papageorge said the form acknowledges acceptance of design aspects and ed-spec criteria. The project is currently stalled at the state level due to a state official's resignation. Mr. Aysseh hoped that state representatives could step in and accelerate the process.

Motion Passed: 9-0

ByLaw Changes

Mrs. Maxon-Kennelly said she is interested in a BoE Curriculum and Instruction Committee and handed out a write-up with her rationale. Mrs. Vitale said there may be a need to hold a special meeting to discuss bylaw changes.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Guernsey moved, Mr. Peterson seconded that the Board of Education approve the 11-17-21 6:00PM and 7:30PM special meeting minutes.

Motion Passed: 9-0

Superintendent Report

Mr. Cummings reported that CSDE is requesting a racial imbalance plan timeline by January 2022, with a full report due in May 2022. A draft timeline will be presented to the Board for a first read on January 11, 2022. Mrs. Vitale said she did share the Board's sentiments with CSDE.

Committee/Liaison Reports

Mr. Peterson reported for the Finance Committee: Utility management, inventory control, budget management for FTEs and account transfers were discussed at the previous meeting. The committee plans to put together some basic ideas on defining structural change.

Mrs. Vitale reported for Board of Health: Covid numbers are going up; the Screen and Stay program is effective but creates a lot more work for school nurses. Dr. Hotchkiss was elected Chair.

Mrs. Jacobsen reported for the General Assembly: The next legislative session begins in February. Board and administrative leadership will meet with state representatives prior to the session. Mrs. Vitale requested that Board members submit questions and topics to Mrs. Jacobsen.

Public Comment

Bob Smoler, FEA President: The proposed middle school block schedule supports a longer class period, is extraordinarily hard to plan for and may impact bargaining agreements. Curriculum would need to be revised. WIN affects prep time and there is a reduction in instructional time.

Mrs. Vitale wished all a very happy holiday, thanked staff for all they do, and hopes everyone will get some much needed rest during the break.

Adjournment

Mr. Peterson moved, Mr. Aysseh seconded that this Regular Meeting of the Board of Education adjourn.

Motion Passed: 9-0

Meeting adjourned at 11:42PM

Respectfully submitted by Jessica Gerber

Fairfield Board of Education, Secretary

Written Public Comment

Gillian Applebaum (FLHS Junior): Supports the B/AA/PR/L course as fulfilling the US History credit. The course is a real opportunity to take steps towards inclusion.

Karen Wackerman, RTM District 7: Supports the B/AA/PR/L course as fulfilling the US History credit required for graduation. This is an aspect of US History that has been sorely lacking from the curricula of American schools.

Madeline DePiano (FLHS Junior): Supports the B/AA/PR/L course as fulfilling the US History credit. The course brings the lens of a continuously forgotten perspective to light.