

The Mission of the Litchfield Schools, in partnership with parents and the Litchfield community, is to provide and develop a complete education program of the highest quality that enables students to develop intellectually, socially, physically, emotionally and be capable of adapting to a changing world and its technology. The School Board recognizes this mission statement as its guiding principle. (1994)

LITCHFIELD SCHOOL BOARD
APPROVED MINUTES
March 14, 2007
PUBLIC SESSION
(approved as amended 3-21-07)

Present:

Mrs. Cindy Couture, Chair
Mrs. Dot Beauregard, Vice Chair
Mr. Ralph Boehm, Board Member
Mr. Dennis Miller, Board Member
Mrs. Pat Jewett, Board Member
Ms. Catherine Hamblett, Superintendent
Mr. Stephen Martin, Business Administrator
Ms. Amanda Lecaroz, Director of Curriculum & Instruction
Mr. Michael Parent, Principal, CHS
Mrs. Michele E. Flynn, School Board Secretary

1) Public Session – Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance – 5:00 p.m.

Mrs. Couture called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. She explained that the meeting time had been adjusted to accommodate the Winter Sports Awards event at the high school.

2) Review and Revision of Agenda

The following revisions were made to the agenda: under Superintendent's Report: the removal of the Measuring Aspirations Executive Summary; under New Business: the FY08 Approved Budget was moved to Recommended Action.

3) Presentations to the Board

> CHS Program of Studies

Mr. Parent presented a draft of the 2007-2008 CHS Course of Studies to the Board. He explained that he worked with Mr. Grieve and made revisions. He highlighted the major changes:

- English and Social Studies - the addition of American Studies Honors Level for sophomores, changing World Studies to Honors Level; the addition of World English for Juniors; the addition of Honors English (a Pre-AP course) that replaces Shakespeare Honors; the addition of It's A Mystery, which will replace Short Story II; a grade change to AP English; the addition of World History for juniors, which is a State mandate; and the addition of AP US History for seniors.

Mrs. Couture suggested that AP course prerequisites be consistent stating that admission to the course requires a Grade of B+ or above in all previous courses [in that content area] or permission of the instructor.

Mr. Parent continued highlighting changes to the course of studies:

- Math – there were minor changes in the wording in course descriptions, but there were no changes in the math curriculum.
- Science –the addition of Basic Earth Science on the recommendation of the education team [from grade 8] and this course would be team taught; Basic Physical Science, which will benefit students and help them learn science in a different way; a change in the title of Engineering & Design to Principles of Engineering as well as changing the prerequisite to include 'the successful completion of Drafting'.

Ms. Hamblett suggested the notation of Project Lead the Way Courses.

Mr. Parent continued highlighted changes to the course of studies:

- World Languages – changes include lowering the grade prerequisite in French III & IV (declining numbers) and ‘permission of instructor’; offering Spanish V and AP Spanish after noticing a decrease in numbers in AP Spanish [Mr. Parent would like to see what the students prefer when they make their course selections and what the enrollment would be before making a final decision on these course offerings];
- Business Applications & Computer Education: the addition of Advanced Web Site Design Honors Level.
- Family & Consumer Science: a change in the title of Child Growth & Development to Human Growth & Development, also amending the curriculum to include human growth across human life span; the addition of a grade requirement and prerequisite to Creative Cooking.
- Health & Physical Education: Mr. Parent reported that the Dance Class course was moved from Physical Education to Fine Arts.
- Music: changed Advanced Chorus to Concert Choir; and added Musical Theater Workshop for budding actors and actresses.
- Visual Arts: the removal of Advanced Graphic Arts; and moving Graphic Arts out of Visual Arts and into Technology.

Mr. Parent indicated that Vocational School Courses have not changed. He reported that additional credit offerings at CHS include Project 230, a federally funded program that provides enrichment and intervention for students who struggle academically and have an insufficient number of credits. It is designed to help students learn, graduate and prepare for the future. This program will run after school.

Ms. Hamblett suggested that the wording be changed under Extended Learning Opportunities to reflect that ‘these alternative opportunities may **only** include...’.

Ms. Lecaroz noted that the wording be added to the prerequisite for World Geography reflecting that ‘this course is a requirement of all juniors not taking World History’.

Mrs. Beauregard made a motion to approve the 2007-2008 CHS Program of Studies. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

> Classification of Students

Mr. Parent proposed that starting in the 2007-2008 school year students will have to earn a certain number of credits before being promoted to the next grade. Also sophomores must complete their project by the end of their sophomore year to be promoted to junior. Students will remain in their current grade until they reach the credits they need to move up to the next grade. Current students with insufficient credits will remain at their current grade level. Mr. Parent also indicated that advisories will be restructured next year as well.

Ms. Lecaroz commented that it will not give students a false sense of accomplishment by expecting them to have earned enough credits to move up to the next grade. Mr. Parent indicated that this is an impetus for students to pass. Mr. Grieve agreed stating that this philosophy is a huge motivator.

Mr. Miller was concerned that the number of credits freshmen have to earn before classified as sophomores is not meeting the rigorous standard we are setting. Mr. Parent indicated that these numbers are subject to change and it is only a starting point.

Ms. Hamblett suggested that the wording under Graduation Requirements be changed to reflect that ‘all students attain 24 credits’ and that we drop the title Diploma of Distinction. Ms. Hamblett gave a brief history of graduation requirements from past Boards noting that there was never supposed to be a choice of diplomas as we have currently [the lower credit diploma offered in individual planning with students], and that this Board discussed and previously decided that every student attain 24 credits to graduate from CHS. Ms. Hamblett suggested the Board confirm their intentions for CHS graduation requirements. Board members felt that if the Governor’s bill on the compulsory age of attendance in high school is passed, the Board would then reconsider graduation requirements.

> High School Failing Grade Revision

Mr. Parent explained that during the NEASC accreditation evaluation we looked at the high school mission statement and it states that we provide rigorous and diverse educational opportunities that challenge and engage all students. In keeping in line with these standards, we are proposing to raise the passing grade level from 60 to 65 at the high school only. We surveyed 60%-70% of the high schools in the State and they have implemented a similar grading system. Over 90% of the high school faculty supports the new grading scale. Mr. Parent also indicated that he held two student forums on this issue and there is student support. He added that as a faculty we felt that a passing grade of 60 doesn't meet our current mission statement. There is a concern about struggling students, but the faculty felt if we are going to challenge students to meet rigorous standards then we have increase the rigor we expect students to reach.

Mr. Boehm raised a concern about the requirement for participation in athletics. Mr. Parent indicated that a student must pass five courses in order to participate in athletics, a higher standard than required by NHIAA.

A concern was raised over at-risk students who may be unable to reach this standard. Ms. Hamblett indicated that there is a commitment to provide support to these students such as supports through Project 230 to help students reach these goals. Mr. Parent commented that there is a consideration to reinstitute the Homework Club as a support. He added that the Librarian finalist is eager to make the CHS library accessible to students from 7:00 am – 4:00 pm.

Mrs. Beauregard noted that when working with parents on the Mission Statement Committee, many parents expressed that Study Skills be offered. Ms. Hamblett indicated that study skills can be offered in Homework Club and we also have SAT preparation classes that are offered as a support. She added that study skills would be an area for the new reading specialist to address.

Mrs. Jewett shared an experience of a student who went on to college and testified to having a difficult time making grades in college. She agrees that the standard should be raised.

Mr. Parent indicated that raising the standards and academic rigor will make students responsible for their own actions or inactions. Mrs. Couture commented that with Project 230 and basic core subjects being implemented it is reasonable to raise our expectations of the students. She added that we want those students, as well as those who fail to challenge themselves, to be able to take high level courses that will prepare them for college. Raising grade expectations is appropriate and it would be surprising if we see students struggling with all the supports we have to offer.

Mr. Miller asked if the past year's grades were researched to see what would have been affected if this standard were implemented. Mr. Parent noted that most of the students who received a D would have received an F instead, though he hadn't analyzed it formally. He added that for a school this size with this diverse a curriculum, student should excel. This standard is designed to push those students to work a little harder. We have to make sure we are providing the number and types of assessments for students to pass those classes and that we are not setting students up to fail. Mr. Parent concluded by stating that if this initiative is approved it will go into effect in September 2007.

Mr. Miller mentioned that EdLine is a great tool and many teachers have embraced it. It would be helpful for students to use it to monitor their progress as well.

Mr. Boehm made a motion to approve raising the passing grade at CHS to 65, with any score below that failing, to go into effect in September 2007. Mrs. Jewett seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

4) **Recommended Action**
a) **Business Affairs**

- 1) Draft School Board Minutes:
 - a) Public Minutes of January 31, 2007

A minor correction was made to the minutes.

Mrs. Jewett made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Mrs. Beauregard seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

b) Public Minutes of March 7, 2007

Mrs. Jewett made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Mrs. Beauregard seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

2) Business Administrator's Report – February 2007

Mr. Martin reported that a new draft of the required District Safety Plan was issued for review by the Safety Committee, Primex3, and the Superintendent and a final draft is expected to be completed by March 21 and presented to the Board in early April; problems are continuing with MUNIS and we are at the point where we do not have 100% confidence in the system, which has prompted staff to research potential replacement products; the latest forecast is showing an under spend in salaries and benefits. Forecasted spending in utility accounts has been reduced by \$35,000, which freed up funds to cover shortfalls in water, telecommunications, CHS library books, and GMS repair accounts. Spending of Special Education out-of-district tuition and transportation is running under budget because fewer students placed in outside programs. Mr. Martin also reported that we are forecasting a year-end balance of \$410,000, which consists of an estimate of \$300,000 in under spent Special Education tuition and transportation accounts and \$110,000 in excess revenues, which would be returned to the town as in past practice. Mr. Martin added that a \$19,000 under spend in the self-funded yearbook program was not included in the forecasted year-end fund balance. He is proposing to use that money for the electrical testing at GMS.

The Board agreed to use \$19,000 that was budgeted [as a credit class] for yearbook production for the GMS electrical testing.

Mr. Martin continued with his monthly report noting that the installation of the CO monitoring and internal alarm system has been completed and tested. The GMS walk through with the Building Committee has been completed and some serious concerns were identified with the electrical grounding system. An electrical contractor performed a complete test of the grounding system and preliminary tests show the system is mostly grounded, but seriously out of code. A detailed report will be issued identifying any areas of potential safety concerns that need repair. Any safety problems will be repaired as a priority.

Mr. Martin reported that the telecommunications bid has been awarded to the current vendor, PaeTec. The new contract will save the District \$3,000 - \$5,000 per year. He also reported that we are still waiting for approval on the E-rate program. Mr. Martin noted that we are analyzing the Food Service revenues as they appear to be up, but are waiting for the account reconciliation. In Transportation, we have completed revisions to the district transportation policies and procedures that are currently being reviewed by the Superintendent and First Student. The revised policies will be presented to the Board at the April policy meeting. He added that he is still waiting for First Student to respond to the non-Alvirne out-of-district vocational transportation situation.

3) Election Results

The Board briefly reviewed the Election Results report noting that the budget article, GMS roof article and CHS chimney exhaust article passed, but the security systems at GMS/LMS article, LMS emergency access road article, geotechnical review to dewater GMS article, CHS track article, and GMS swales article failed. The Board discussed the articles that failed, trying to draw conclusions from the voters' responses. Mr. Martin added that although the GMS swales article failed, he is still moving forward with the permitting process for the work as it is valid for five years.

4) FY08 Approved Budget

Mr. Martin distributed calculations for the MS-22 and reviewed proposed adjustments to the budget as well as the Budget Committee's recommendations. Mr. Martin also mentioned that the MS-22 will be presented to the Board at the next meeting for signatures. The Board can discuss an approved operating budget in early April.

5) Manifest

The manifest was circulated and signed by the Board.

5) **Community Input**

There was no community input.

6) **Superintendent's Report**

a) New Hampshire School Approvals

Ms. Hamblett reported that she will be submitting her response to the Minimum Standards for School Approval for all three schools. She reminded the Board that the District has been listed as conditionally approved and there are ten policies that need to be addressed. She added that areas that the District has not met include: food service staff sanitation certification (several employees are certified, few are not); a comprehensive guidance plan; Health Education articulated program for K-12; and a K-12 articulated career education program. Ms. Hamblett noted that the District can apply for a waiver for classrooms designed for content area Music and Art as instruction is given from a cart; however, the requirement is classrooms designed for that purpose.

7) **Adjourn**

Mr. Miller made a motion to adjourn at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Boehm seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

8) **Upcoming Meetings**

>Litchfield School Board: March 21, 2007 – Campbell Media Room – 6:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michele E. Flynn
School Board Secretary-