

**WESTPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING**

AGENDA *

(Agenda Subject to Modification in Accordance with Law)

SPECIAL NOTICE ABOUT PROCEDURES FOR THIS ELECTRONIC MEETING:

Pursuant to the Governor’s Executive Orders No. 7B and 9H, public participation for this meeting will be held electronically and live streamed on westportps.org and shown on Optimum Government Access Channel 78 and Frontier Channel 6021. Emails to BOE members can be sent to BOE@westportps.org. Comments to be read during the public comment period must be submitted to the meeting’s Googledoc during the submission period. Please see the following link for instructions and guidelines:

https://www.westportps.org/uploaded/Procedures_and_Guidelines_for_Public_Participation_in_Remote_Board_Meetings.pdf. We will use our best efforts to read public

comments if they are received during the public comment period and if they state your full name and address. Meeting materials will be available at westportps.org along with the meeting notice posted on the Meeting Agenda page.

PUBLIC CALL TO ORDER

6:00 p.m., Held Remotely Via Zoom Pursuant to Executive Orders 7B and 9H

Instructions to listen to call to order:

Phone: +1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 817 8799 3790

Passcode: 597903

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Discussion Concerning the Resignation of the Long Lots Elementary School Principal

RESUME PUBLIC SESSION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (7:30 p.m.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM BOARD AND ADMINISTRATION

PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS (15 MINUTES)

MINUTES: February 1 and 4, 2021, *pages 1-3*

DISCUSSION

- 1. Health Update Ms. Suzanne Levasseur
- 2. Updated Health and Medical Insurance Review with Board of Education Insurance Consultant, Lockton Companies LLC Mr. Tim Hasselman
- 3. FY 2021 Second Quarter Financial Report Mr. Elio Longo

DISCUSSION/ACTION

- 1. FY 2022 Proposed Budget of the Superintendent of Schools, (Encl.) Mr. Thomas Scarice
pages 6-13 Mr. Elio Longo

ADJOURNMENT

* A 2/3 vote is required to go to executive session, to add a topic to the agenda of a regular meeting, or to start a new topic after 10:30 p.m. The meeting can also be viewed on Cablevision on channel 78; Frontier channel 6021 and by video stream @www.westportps.org

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WELCOME USING THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES:

- Public comment will be accepted via a Google doc and the comments will be read aloud at the meeting. A link will be provided on Monday, prior to the meeting.
- There will be no in-person public comment due to public health concerns.
- A maximum of 15 minutes will be provided for public comments.
- Comments on agenda items are limited to 1 minute each.

It is the policy of the Town of Westport that all Town-sponsored public meetings and events are accessible to people with disabilities. If you need assistance in participating in a meeting or event due to a disability as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact Westport's ADA Coordinator at 203-341-1043 or eflug@westportct.gov at least three (3) business days prior to the scheduled meeting or event to request an accommodation.

WESTPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION

Board Members Present:

Candice Savin
Karen Kleine
Elaine Whitney
Jeannie Smith
Youn Su Chao
Lee Goldstein
Liz Heyer

Administrators Present:

Thomas Scarice
Anthony Buono
Michael Rizzo
Elio Longo
John Bayers

Superintendent of Schools
Asst. Superintendent, Teaching and Learning
Asst. Superintendent, Pupil Personnel Services
Chief Financial Officer
Director of Human Resources and General Admin.

PUBLIC CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: 7:01 p.m., Held Remotely Via Zoom Pursuant to Executive Order 7B and 9H

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM BOARD AND ADMINISTRATION

PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

MINUTES: January 25, 2021

Elaine Whitney moved to approve the minutes of January 25, 2021; seconded by Jeannie Smith and passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION

Health Update

Teaching and Learning Update: Youth Arts Collaborative

FY 2022 Proposed Budget of the Superintendent of Schools

System for Public Comment

COVID-19 Surveillance Testing Program

DISCUSSION/ACTION

FY 2021 – FY 2022 Capital Soft Cost Appropriation Request – Asphalt
No action was taken

Discussion of Capital Projects in Rank Order of Priority

Be it Resolved, That upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accepts without revisions the FY 2022 - FY 2026 Board of Education Five -Year Capital Forecast.

MOTION: Candice Savin

SECOND: Jeannie Smith

Lee Goldstein moved to amend the motion to move forward the replacement of aluminum windows at Long Lots School from FY 2024 to FY 2023.

MOTION: Lee Goldstein

SECOND: Liz Heyer

RESULT: Passed

VOTE: 5-2 (Candice Savin and Jeannie Smith opposed)

Vote on motion as amended:

Be it Resolved, That upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approves the FY 2022 - FY 2026 Board of Education Five -Year Capital Forecast, as amended at the meeting of February 1, 2021.

RESULT: Passed Unanimously

VOTE: 7-0

ADJOURNMENT: Jeannie Smith moved to adjourn at 10:49 p.m.; seconded by Liz Heyer and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Whitney, Secretary, Board of Education
(minutes written by Lisa Marriott)

WESTPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION

Board Members Present:

Candice Savin
Karen Kleine
Elaine Whitney
Jeannie Smith
Youn Su Chao
Lee Goldstein
Liz Heyer

Chair
Vice Chair
Secretary

Administrators Present:

Thomas Scarice
John Bayers

Superintendent of Schools
Director of Human Resources and General Admin.

PUBLIC CALL TO ORDER: 5:52 p.m., Held Remotely Via Zoom Pursuant to Executive Order 7B and 9H

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Board Consideration of Legal Counsel

Candice Savin moved at 5:52 p.m. to enter into executive session to discuss Board Consideration of Legal Counsel; seconded by Jeannie Smith and passed unanimously. All Board members were present; Karen Kleine and Liz Heyer joined the executive session at 6:00 p.m. Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools, and John Bayers, Director of Human Resources and General Administration, participated in the executive session at the invitation of the Board.

ADJOURNMENT: 9:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Whitney, Secretary, Board of Education
(minutes written by Lisa Marriott)



WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

THOMAS SCARICE
Superintendent of Schools

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To: Westport Board of Education Members
From: Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools
Re: February 8, 2021 Board of Education Meeting
Date: February 5, 2021

Provided below for Board consideration is an overview of the meeting agenda items for February 8, 2021. As we have done for previous meetings, the meeting will be held remotely with public access through live streaming and public comments and questions submitted electronically.

Discussion

1. Health Update

Sue Levasseur will provide her regular health update on COVID-19 cases. There have been some initial reports that the State Department of Public Health will look to prioritize the Johnson and Johnson vaccine for public school educators for a variety of reasons. The ease of storage and portability compared to the other vaccines are primary reasons. This could make school-based vaccine clinics much easier to administer.

2. Updated Health and Medical Insurance Review with Board of Education Insurance Consultant, Lockton Companies LLC

The team from the Lockton Group, led by Tim Hasselman, will return to provide the Board with an update on the responses to the Request for Proposals (RFP) which was issued a couple of weeks ago. As you are aware, this is a significant part of the operating budget. Although we are currently operating with a fully insured model under the Connecticut Partnership Plan, Lockton solicited bids for a potential change to a high deductible plan. These bids will be consequential to the Board's adoption of the 2021-2022 operating budget. Although the bids and associated budget projections will be firmed up on Monday and finalized for the Board meeting, the initial reports show potentially substantial savings to health insurance costs. Tim and his team members will be available to answer questions on the two forecasts as well as current year trends.

3. FY 2021 Second Quarter Financial Report

Elio will provide the Board with the second quarter financial report prior to sharing with the Board of Finance at their next meeting. Given the time he has spent on the operating budget, the facilities projects and the health insurance responses, he will not have the report ready for the Board until the end of the business day on Monday February 8.

Discussion/Action

4. FY 2022 Proposed Budget of the Superintendent of Schools

The budget process culminates at the Board of Education level with the adoption of the 2021-2022 budget before advancing to the Board of Finance level. Following an initial recommendation of a 4.98% increase over this year's budget, the Board requested models of a reduction of approximately \$2.5 million. The Board considered these models shared by the administrative team. Three tiers were provided by the administration. Again, I highly recommend that the Board do not make reductions in the Tier 3 category. Furthermore, I advise the Board to carefully consider any cuts as the current services budget, along with the impact of COVID, and making up for the use of carryover funds for technology, totaled a 4.69% increase over last year. As a result, almost all of the reductions that are being recommended to reduce the increase to a level of 3.0% consists largely of current services.

Additional questions were submitted by Board members. On behalf of the administration I would like to share that we are appreciative of the opportunity to shed some light on these areas. Responses to these inquiries have been provided in this Board meeting packet. The administration will be prepared to support the Board's deliberation in anticipation of adopting a budget Monday evening.

For further consideration, in light of potential savings in the initial reports from our health insurance consultant, the Lockton Group, I advise the Board to entertain the idea of tabling the budget vote for later in the week so that Board members can process this potentially consequential information. Of course, the action item remains on the agenda so that the Board can move to adopt the 2021-2022 budget if preferred.



Responses to Board of Education Budget Questions

1. Which SHS teachers are on the tier 2 cut list?:

This is yet to be determined.

Decisions will be made based on course requests, elective offerings, class sizes and implementation of contractual language that allows for additional responsibilities and course coverage.

2. Is there a way to determine cost savings if Elementary Spanish is offered just once a week k-5?

Although this is not something the administration would recommend, theoretically it would be a reduction of $\frac{2}{3}$ of the program, resulting in a reduction of between $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of our current staff. This variation exists because the reduction would likely require additional travel between schools. Based on a reduction of $\frac{1}{2}$ of the FTEs (4.5) associated with the current elementary world language program, there would be a cost avoidance of approximately \$422,465 (this includes salaries and benefits).

3. Can the soon to be implemented Raptor visitor system be used to help with attendance at high school level if GLAs are eliminated (this was mentioned as a possible extension of the visitor system)?

Student attendance is not a component of this product.

4. Can detail be provided of what/how responsibilities are split when there are 2 APs in an elementary school vs 1 AP at a building? What specifically is sacrificed with a reduction in the building administration?

See attached memo from elementary principals.

- 5. How are educational support staff allocated at Elementary level? Right now it is distributed equally across the schools but the question has been raised as to whether it should be enrollment based. We have received conflicting answers to this at recent meetings as to how this is currently managed in the district so would appreciate clarity.**

Below is the current allocation of support staff at the elementary schools:

Literacy Coaches - 1 FTE per school
Science Coaches - .5 FTE per school
Math Specialist/Interventionists - 1.5 FTE per school
Reading Interventionists - 1 FTE per school
Gifted - .5 per school

An equal number of FTEs are budgeted for each school for the above positions. Modifications to assignments are made based on need and enrollment in specific programs. For example, if one school has a particularly large number of students receiving math interventions, resources may be shifted to that school to provide additional support. Although this is not a common occurrence, student to teacher ratios are regularly reviewed and discussed and when necessary adjustments are made.

- 6. Please send the Board the current pertinent information on our administrative structure related to teaching & learning (regular and special education). Please send the information in whatever form you have most readily available, given the timing (past budget or board presentations, etc.), though a summary would be particularly helpful. In particular, please outline:**

- Current counts of T&L-related administrators by building and function (in table)
- Current counts of T&L-related quasi-administrators by building and function (i.e, teachers filling curriculum-related roles, etc.) (in table)
- The timing of the additions and reductions of key administrative functions - for example:
- The change in the AP levels at the elementary level (in table)
- The addition of coaches in literacy, math and science (narrative below)

- The redeployment, addition, or reduction of positions in curriculum coordination and related functions (i.e., department chairs, team leaders, curriculum coordinators, etc.)

1999-2000	2000-2001	2019-2020	Current	Proposed Cut
5.0 Principals	5.0 Principals	5.0 Principals	5.0 Principals	5.0 Principals
5.0 Assistant Principals	10.0 Assistant Principals	9.0 Assistant Principals	9.0 Assistant Principals	8.0 Assistant Principal
6.0 Curriculum Resource Teachers	1.0 Math / Literacy Curriculum Resource Teacher	1.0 Literacy Coordinator	1.0 Elementary Curriculum Coordinator	1.0 Elementary Curriculum Coordinator
2.6 Special Education Coordinators	1.0 Director of Elementary Education	1.0 Math/Science Coordinator		
18.6 positions	17 positions	16 positions	15 positions	14 positions

104 - Teachers Support

- Literacy Coaches (5.0 FTEs) are instructional positions and were added in the 2015-16 school year.
- Math Interventionists/Specialists (7.5 FTEs) have been in place for approximately 10 yrs.
- Science coaches (2.5 FTEs) were added in the 2016-17.



Coleytown Elementary
School



Greens Farms
Elementary School



Kings Highway
Elementary School



Long Lots Elementary
School



Saugatuck Elementary
School

February 5, 2021

Dear Mr. Scarice, Dr. Buono & Mr. Rizzo,

It is our understanding that the BOE is strongly considering an elimination of an assistant principal position at the elementary school level. Although we are sympathetic to the demands of the budget, we would like to ensure that you and the BOE understand the ramifications of such a decision.

First and most important, we feel the decision to have two Assistant Principals in each building has benefited our students, families, and staff in a number of ways. This approach has allowed for one AP to dedicate a large percentage of his/her time and effort to servicing special education students and families. This AP's attention to the special education program has been instrumental to student growth and well being, as this individual collaborates with families and staff members ensuring that each student's program meets the complex individualized needs of each child. Simultaneously, the second AP oversees our Response to Intervention (RtII) Program, which is focused on supporting regular education students experiencing social emotional or academic struggles; 504 plans which are part of the Americans with Disabilities Act; he/she serves as our School Testing Coordinator overseeing the implementation of NWEA, OLSAT, and SBAC testing at each school; and this individual oversees the gifted program in each building.

Consistent with the recommendations from Cooperative Educational Services (CES) in 2017, our model of a full time special education assistant principal and regular education assistant principal provides distinctive lines of accountability for instructional leadership, special education, and supervision and evaluation of staff. The 2017 CES report also commended Westport for "the consistency of special education services delivery demonstrated by the school based special education administration model." They also found the model to be "cost effective as it provides immediate customer service, thus decreasing litigation and out of district tuition, as indicated by the District Reference Groups. This model allows the district to provide an unparalleled and personalized academic experience for students with needs." *It is important to understand removing a regular education assistant principal will impact the special education program and its long standing benefits.*

To decrease the regular education assistant principals would have programmatic implications for the district as a whole. The further reduction of assistant principals would restructure and reallocate programmatic oversight. For example, to distribute the immense responsibility of RtI coordination and oversight, existing building administration, including the individual overseeing special education, will be required to undertake and acquire many other responsibilities. This will likely impact the administrative team's ability to work with families and teachers to build understanding of student needs and IEP implementation, address intervention needs, facilitate PPTs and meet the variety of increasingly complex needs our students face. The number and complexity of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Response to Intervention Goals (RtI), and 504s has increased significantly in the past five years. Families are drawn to Westport because of the tremendous support their students receive from these programs, and with the impacts of the pandemic, we anticipate this trend will only continue to accelerate.

Furthermore, we have seen a significant impact on students' functioning with the pandemic and that impact is only beginning to emerge. The number of students who require additional classroom support (RtI Tier 1) and intervention (Tier 2 and 3) has increased significantly because of the deficits accumulated during the time at home and over the exceptionally long summer. Similarly, this RtI impact has resulted in additional referrals to special education with increasing testing and identification. Next year, we are anticipating an even greater number of students in need of support, both academically as well as socially and emotionally. We are deeply concerned that the disruptions of this year will be compounded by cuts to people that play critical roles in supporting our neediest students and these programs. For example, the regular education assistant principal plays a vital role in leading building based teams through data analysis that results in identification of students that would benefit from additional support or enrichment. This cut impacts an effective long-standing model that has strong community support. A departure from this model is a move from a strategic, systematic approach to one driven by the parsing out of essential duties.

The elementary administrative structure has been consistently reduced over the last several budget cycles. A history of the elementary administrative structure since 1999 is included in Table 1. In 2018, the district moved from having Directors of Elementary and Secondary Education to an Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. While providing additional vertical oversight, this move reduced the time dedicated to coordinating elementary education. This was further exacerbated by the reduction of the Math and Literacy Resource teacher who served in a pseudo administrative role assisting the Director in completing elementary curriculum work. To compensate, the positions of Math and Literacy Coordinator were created and at the

same time an assistant principal was cut. Last year, the position of elementary literacy coordinator was eliminated and those immense responsibilities were absorbed by the math and science coordinator. To help offset the impact of this move, principals with two assistant principals have worked alongside the elementary coordinator to advance curriculum in literacy and mathematics. This work would not be feasible if further cuts are made. Westport has always prided itself on its commitment to not only remaining current in curriculum and instruction, but leading. This important curriculum work will surely be compromised.

Two of our schools have been operating with reduced administrative staffing for three to four years. The principals in these schools are going to great lengths to absorb the impact of these cuts, but we are collectively concerned that the impact of these reductions will be seen and felt by students, teachers, and the community. These principals must prioritize meeting the needs of teachers, students, and parents throughout the school day. This can lead to a more reactive and less proactive approach with little time to collaborate with and involve teachers in decision making. Collaboration is critical for change and continuous growth. Additionally, a principal at one of these two schools has shared that teachers are noting the lack of time with the principal to build relationships, brainstorm ideas about meeting student needs, and talk through tricky situations. Our principals serve as instructional leaders among their many other roles, and instructional leadership takes time. Instructional leadership is complex and cannot be reduced to a simple list of duties and responsibilities. Over time, the lack of space for building strong professional relationships will erode school culture and climate, causing us to call into question the sustainability of this model.

It is often said that Westport is an outlier in having two assistant principals at each building. While true, this is misleading. There is little to no evidence throughout our DRG of a model that employs a principal working solely with a designated special education assistant principal. Models for several districts in our DRG are outlined in Table 2. In almost all cases, there is a principal, assistant principal, and a special education designee. In some cases, this designee is a lead teacher. Darien, for example, has found the teacher designee to be lacking in efficiency and accountability and is currently advocating for the addition of special education assistant principals in each elementary school. If passed, their model would emulate Westport's original 2.0 assistant principal model. In other cases, the designee is an elementary special education coordinator. As noted in the 2017 CES report, this model does not afford the same level of oversight as district wide special education coordinators are not as intimately involved in the implementation of a child's IEP as our assistant principals. A further reduction of an AP will result in additional responsibilities for the remaining administrators, including the principal and assistant principal currently designated as

the Special Education AP. At the end of the day this puts a strain on our ability to provide the level of attention and service our families have come to expect.

In closing, we urge the central office administration, in collaboration with the leadership team at large, to evaluate any such significant structural modifications in conjunction with the established and future vision for elementary leadership. A cohesive plan with adequate supports will go a long way in ensuring that our schools continue to serve as exemplary educational institutions. Without this vision, diminishing the structure that provides instructional leadership, programmatic oversight, accountability and that is responsive to the needs of students, teachers, and families will have unintended consequences and will hamper Westport’s educational outcomes and standing.

Sincerely,

Janna Sirowich, Principal, CES

Kevin Cazzetta, Principal, GFS

Lou DiBella, Principal, KHS

Kim Ambrosio, Interim Principal, LLS

Beth Messler, Principal, SES

Ali Moran, K-5 Curriculum Coordinator/Interim Assistant Principal, LLS

Table 1: History of Elementary Administrative Models

1999-2000	2000-2001	2019-2020	Current	Proposed Cut
5.0 Principals	5.0 Principals	5.0 Principals	5.0 Principals	5.0 Principals
5.0 Assistant Principals	10.0 Assistant Principals	9.0 Assistant Principals	9.0 Assistant Principals	8.0 Assistant Principal
6.0 Curriculum Resource Teachers	1.0 Math / Literacy Curriculum Resource Teacher	1.0 Literacy Coordinator	1.0 Elementary Curriculum Coordinator	1.0 Elementary Curriculum Coordinator
2.6 Special Education Coordinators	1.0 Director of Elementary Education	1.0 Math/Science Coordinator		
18.6 positions	17 positions	16 positions	15 positions	14 positions

Table 2: Other Districts in DRG

Town	Structure
Darien	1 Principal 1 Assistant Principal Teachers as Sped Team Leaders* <i>*Current proposal to add 1 Sped Admin to each school in place of the Sped Team Leaders</i>
New Canaan	Principal 1 Assistant Principal 1 Sped Administrator for Elementary Schools
Wilton	1 Principal 2 Assistant Principals
Weston	Principal 1 Assistant Principal 1 Assistant Director for Special Education (PK-5) Teachers as Sped Team Leaders