

Ashford Board of Education
Ashford, Connecticut

Regular Meeting Agenda
September 3, 2015

7:30 pm

Ashford School

District Office Conference Room 14

1. Call To Order
2. Persons to be Heard
3. Communications
4. Approval of Minutes: 08/20/15 Special Meeting; 08/20/15 Regular Meeting
5. Distribution of Administrative Reports
 - a. Superintendent
 - b. Business Manager
 1. FY 15 Audit Update
6. New Business
 - a. Approval of 2015 Medical Standing Orders
7. Old Business
 - a. Board of Education Goals
 - b. Long Term Planning
 1. Capital Improvement
 2. Three Year Plan
8. Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items
9. MEUI Local 506 Negotiations (Executive Session, Action Anticipated)
10. Review of Superintendent Evaluation Instrument
11. Adjournment

Ashford Board of Education Goals

The Ashford Board shall:

1. Initiate policies and practices, as well as devote appropriate resources, towards the improvement of Ashford students on Connecticut standardized testing.
2. Promote instructional practices rooted in the individual skills, talents, needs and performance of the student.
3. Initiate mechanisms for improved and effective communication with the community as well as town leaders and other town boards and committees.
4. Develop a three-year school improvement plan that presents, and explains, an optimal path towards educational excellence in Ashford.

All meetings, conferences, programs and activities at Ashford School are available, without discrimination, to individuals with disabilities as defined by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and/or Title II of the American with Disabilities Act.

Individuals with disabilities requesting relocation of this meeting should call the Superintendent at 429-1927 or e-mail a request to jplongo@ashfordct.org not later than 2 working days prior to the meeting. Hearing impaired individuals may communicate their request for accommodations by using the e-mail address above, or calling the State of CT TDD relay service (800) 842-2880 or the national relay service number (800) 855-2880.

Enclosures: Minutes 8/20 (2)

Ashford Citizen Article – September 2015
“What does all this talk about STEAM mean?”
Dr. James Longo

Over the course of the past few years Ashford School has been going through some significant changes in its curriculum and instruction design. We have been publicizing ourselves as a STEAM school. In newsletters, fliers, and other publications STEAM is defined as a school that places special emphasis upon science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. That definition seems almost like business as usual because that list includes pretty much all of the subjects we would expect a school to emphasize. One might ask, how does that design make us special or different? I am going to answer that question in two ways. First by describing the philosophy behind STEAM, and second by telling you about our specialized resources, faculty, and curriculum.

Before I get into the subject-by-subject highlights of our resources, curriculum, and instruction, I would like to present the complex philosophy that our school model is built upon. When we plan our STEAM curriculum, and develop STEAM lesson plans, we do so utilizing a philosophy rooted in how we can teach students to think and solve real world problems. We consider the way a scientist, engineer, artist, or mathematician thinks as we design our curriculum. For example, science is about inquiry, and we are committed to teaching our students to think like a scientist with curiosity and inquisitive minds when they are faced with solving a problem. We also believe that engineers approach problems with a unique mindset that is focused upon structure. How things are structured to be what they are, and how improving that structure can improve usefulness or effectiveness. Being able to think like an engineer is a wonderful asset when one is faced with real world situations. Furthermore, the self-expression and creativity of the artists mind has always been accepted as the key to the great inventions and cultural advances of most societies. We will also be emphasizing the artist’s mindset when we design our curriculum and write our lesson plans. That is, every student will be asked to focus upon their unique way of seeing the world, and how their uniqueness can be an asset in solving real world problems because they see and put things together in an expressive and creative way that is unique to them.

That is a quick summary of some of the key elements of the philosophy that our STEAM school is built upon, and how we strive to instruct our students in the unique way that scientists, engineers, artists and mathematicians think. Now I will examine how we expect to deliver that philosophy through a subject-by-subject analysis of our curriculum and instructional design and practice.

First, a STEAM model of curriculum and instruction is interdisciplinary in its structure. That is, a teacher designing lesson plans is supposed to be thinking about those core subjects, and integrating the essential aspects of each whenever possible. Then, when they deliver that lesson plan they are expected to point out the

interaction of those content areas whenever it is possible. The teacher highlights the math in a science concept, or the art in a mathematics problem. Interdisciplinary teaching is not a new concept, but while that is generally true, in a STEAM school it is expected to happen with most every lesson and every time it is possible. It is a matter of frequency and consistency. So, the first rule of a STEAM school is to integrate science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics whenever possible.

Second, we provide opportunities to study each of those subjects with special attention to more resources in each subject than you might find elsewhere. For example, we have science labs for use by every grade in the school. We have four rooms with special science supplies and equipment, and four teachers with special skills who deliver a real science program to all of our students. This is far beyond what a school without a STEAM design would do.

Third, we carry science even further with a real robotics program. We have a room that is a true robotics laboratory. It has all of the supplies and equipment needed for students to learn about robotics, build and test robots, and apply robotics to everyday science concepts. The robotics course is staffed by a teacher with special skill and interest in robotics, offers an after school robotics club, and is taught in a room with a real competitive robotics arena. The robotics experience that our students are exposed to ties science, engineering, and technology together in a way that few other schools do. This is another characteristic of our STEAM curriculum and instruction model that sets us apart from schools that are not built upon a STEAM design.

Fourth, Our school has technology second to none. We have several computers in every classroom for student use, two full computer labs, SmartBoards in every classroom, the full robotics lab, a special computer supported writing center in the media center, and we offer virtually any foreign language that a student may elect to study through technology in our media center. We also have carts full of laptops and IPADs available for every teacher in the school to bring technology into their classroom. We have a 3-D printer, and a fully supported electronic music laboratory for students to study music through the use of a MIDI music experience. We see technology as a great tool that every student should be comfortable and familiar with by the time they leave our school, and support that philosophy with up-to-date quality equipment. We teach the basics of technology, and fully integrate its use into our core curriculum. That is how we deliver the “T” in our steam curriculum.

Fifth, I mentioned our MIDI music lab when I was presenting our technology program. This is a classroom outfitted with seventeen workstations, each of which contains a computer, an electronic keyboard, speakers, and a special software program for the study and creation of music. The arts are the “A” in STEAM. Music is one of our premier programs. The music program at Ashford School has always been one of the best in the region. The jazz ensemble even played at the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education conference a few years ago. We have a full range

of vocal and instrumental music ensembles and boast of a top-notch music program. As part of the STEAM design it has taken another leap forward. The addition of this MIDI lab has given our music staff and students access to music in a way that will not be found in a school that has not committed to a STEAM curriculum.

The Arts are also addressed through the study of dance in physical education, drama and theater in language arts classes, and a new visual arts program that will be integrating visual arts into every subject throughout the year.

Sixth, we are offering a new daily schedule and an after school program that is designed to provide students with many options to study areas of personal interest in all STEAM content areas.

Hopefully this more detailed explanation of STEAM as a foundation for our curriculum and instruction at Ashford School has been helpful in providing you with an understanding of what makes our school special and why we are so excited about the direction our school has taken in the past few years. Ashford School is a gem that is something our community can be proud of, and a place that gives our students an exemplary education. We are excited about how we prepare them to compete in a complex world after they leave us, and move on to high school.

In closing, I once again invite you to visit our school. We will take you on a tour and show you what I have been talking about. Also, if you have any questions give me a call. I am available to answer your questions and tell you more about our wonderful school.

Ashford Board of Education
Special Meeting Minutes
Annual Retreat – August 20, 2015
5:30 p.m.

Note: Per C.G.S. §10 – 218, Board of Education meeting minutes are provided in a draft format within 48 hours of the date the meeting was held. With the exception of motions and votes recorded, these minutes are unofficial until they have been read and approved by a majority vote of the Board. Should edits be necessary, they will be made at a regularly scheduled meeting, noted in the meeting minutes, and so voted upon.

Call To Order

Board chair J. Rupert called the special meeting to order at 5:37 PM. Present were J. Rupert, K. Rourke, J. Mozeiko, J. Lippert, L. Donegan (5:44 pm), K. Warren (6:00 pm) and D. Wesson (6:30 pm). Also present were Dr. J. Longo, Superintendent, Principal T. Hopkins, Pupil Personnel Director C. Ford, Asst. Principal G. Dukette and recording secretary J. Barsaleau. Present in the audience were S. Morytko, S. Irvine, R. Haeger and D. Atkinson.

Additional materials were distributed (attached)

Public Input

Dr. Longo began the annual retreat by welcoming everyone in attendance. He continued by outlining the agenda for this meeting, the first hour dedicated to goals; the second hour to long term planning, followed by a short recess prior to the start of the regular meeting.

Dr. Longo asked for public comment:

Rebecca Haeger wondered how art was going to be implemented more? She felt the school was lacking in this area, there should be more displays of student art throughout the school.

Steve Morytko would like to see more detailed technology plan information. He reported that he has heard others complain about the budget process being rushed and short on detail at presentation time; new things that are known should be shared in advance. He stated the budget document is much improved and efficient over prior years. He has also heard residents question additions in administrative staffing - they feel there are too many administrative positions and that consolidation of services with other districts and the town should be considered wherever possible. Website communication has improved, but still needs more attention. K12 is currently the most effective means of communication; he suggested creation of a group email list to families as a means of notification.

J. Rupert stressed that attendance by members of the public sharing concerns such as these can affect positive change. Mr. Morytko has done this and provided suggestions concerning the website for example, and some of those suggestions have been implemented.

J. Mozeiko shared some questions from parents who have contacted her. They seek more communication from teachers to parents with the new trimester schedule; there was some concern that the SBAC testing falls during the spring time change and a question was posed concerning growth and development unit taught in 5th grade – do the students switch classes and learn about the opposite sex?

Mr. Hopkins responded that the testing window for SBAC is rather lengthy and the time change will be considered, and the 5th grade groups do not switch classes during the growth and development unit.

Dr. Longo encouraged those present in the audience to share with others the importance of contacting a member of the administration with any questions or concerns, as it is best to address them before they become too great.

Susan Irvine asked if there was some way to share with the community that people should contact the school administration with any questions or concerns?

L. Donegan suggested creating a “Q&A” sheet, writing about the retreat in the Ashford Citizen or other publication. Other ideas discussed were an electronic or moderated forum, a questionnaire or suggestion box at the Open Houses.

In response to overall public comment, J. Rupert noted that the Board of Education begins its annual budget process in November. Dr. Longo added that he held two public evening meetings in early October of last year for public dialogue concerning specific budget topics, including staffing and curriculum.

Mission and Goals

- **Superintendent's Goals Reports**
- **Administration's Goals Report (T. Hopkins)**

Administrative team members discussed their individual goals (attached). Each member of the administrative team elaborated upon the written goals and responded to audience and board member questions relating to the listed goals.

Dr. Longo concluded with a brief discussion of his written goals. Dr. Longo noted that he met recently with Supt. Harding from Willington to discuss ideas for collaboration between our districts. Dr. Longo attended the "Back to School" meeting for CT Superintendents earlier this week and was approached by fellow superintendents who said they have been hearing great things about Ashford School.

J. Rupert reported that he had a conversation with the Willington superintendent and he stated that he was very impressed with Ashford School, and he too, spoke of possible collaboration with Ashford.

Dr. Longo stated this is confirmation that the Administration and the Board of Education are responsive and as a result, Ashford School has improved greatly over the past six or seven years.

Further dialogue amongst the members and the audience followed concerning the goals presented and how best to communicate them to families and the community.

- **Board of Education Goals – Discussion – Action Plans**

Board members stated their thoughts for discussion in goal setting.

K. Rourke would like to see all parent forms available online to avoid repetitive filing of forms. She also cited inconsistency amongst teachers within the same grade in terms of how much homework is given.

L. Donegan spoke of goals in sustainability, conversation, recycling, environmental and global education; extracurricular and socio cultural goals, diversity and more current events.

J. Rupert feels that what we are doing is phenomenal, unique and is being done well. People are taking notice, and as time marches forward, we may be in a position to reach out and share our creation with other schools in terms of taking in students from other towns or an exchange of students.

J. Lippert would like to see a study of such an exchange of students without increasing staffing.

J. Mozeiko would like to have a policy concerning video/movie time in the classroom; IEP's for gifted students with goals that are set much like students with disabilities. Mrs. Ford responded that gifted students do have identified goals they have chosen for themselves in individualized instruction.

D. Wesson would like to see expansion of "Respect, Responsibility, Pride" for students to support each other resulting in less bullying. Mr. Hopkins responded that another program "Second Step" is being researched to address that.

K. Warren would like the budget done on time.

J. Lippert spoke of consistency with the budget, sharing of resources, streamlining and capitalizing where possible.

D. Wesson mentioned teacher exchange.

It was the general consensus of the Board and Dr. Longo to table the Long Range Planning portion of the agenda. The item will be addressed at a future meeting.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at (7:38 pm) made by L. Donegan seconded by J. Mozeiko and carried unanimously.

Recorded by:

Jennifer Barsaleau
Recording Secretary

Approved by the Ashford Board of Education:

Unapproved

Ashford Board of Education
Meeting Minutes - August 20, 2015

7:30 p.m.

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Call To Order

Board chair J. Rupert called the special meeting to order at 7:42 PM. Present were J. Rupert, K. Rourke, J. Mozeiko, J. Lippert, L. Donegan, K. Warren, and D. Wesson. Also present were Dr. J. Longo, Superintendent, Principal T. Hopkins, Pupil Personnel Director C. Ford, Asst. Principal G. Dukette and recording secretary J. Barsaleau. Present in the audience were S. Morytko, S. Lyman, R. Haeger and D. Atkinson.

Persons to be Heard

S. Morytko asked when the new traffic signs in front of the school would be placed. J. Lippert asked about placement of concrete benches as discussed in the past.

J. Barsaleau was directed to follow up with the First Selectman's office concerning the status of the DOT signage. In lieu of benches, there had been discussion of placing large boulders instead. Dr. Longo will follow up.

Communications

J. Rupert reported that he had received a flyer from CABA at home as did the other members. The Summer 2015 Employment Law Newsletter and 2015 Legislative Summary were included in the board's packet.

Approval of Minutes: 07/16/2015

Motion to approve the minutes of 07/16/2015 made by K. Rourke, seconded by J. Mozeiko and carried with the following abstentions (L. Donegan, D. Wesson and J. Lippert).

Distribution of Administrative Reports

a. Superintendent

- Budget
- School Safety
- Building and Grounds Committee
- Curriculum

b. Principal

1. STEAM Initiative Status Report

- Arts – New Emphasis on Visual Arts, Dance and Theater
- Sciences

2. Curriculum Report

- Upgrade Plans – Status
- Writing Initiative
- Directions for Action
- Closing Remarks

c. Director of Pupil Personnel

Administrative reports will be tabled until the next meeting unless there is sufficient time available to hear the report of the Principal following the business items on the agenda.

New Business

a. Approval of School Bus Specifications for RFP

J. Rupert asked bus mechanic S. Lyman for his input concerning the specifications and RFP for the purchase of a new school bus. Mr. Lyman reported that the last bus purchased has been flawless in comparison to other recent purchases, and he would ask that the board consider a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen to purchase another Bluebird bus. Mr. Lyman was asked about the status of the fleet and he reported that he has been busy, but all is going well. He will recommend the removal of bus #4 and bus #6 from service.

Motion made by D. Wesson to approve the 2015 school bus specifications and to recommend to the Board of Selectmen the purchase of a Bluebird model school bus. Motion seconded by K. Warren and carried unanimously.

b. Approval of Ashford School Bus Routes

Ashford bus routes have been posted to the Ashford school website and include high school runs. Routes are still being revised due to recent student enrollments. K-12 Alert notification of route posting will be made this Friday and next Monday. It will be noted that Ashford School does not post student drop off time information for its students for reasons of safety.

Motion made by K. Warren to approve the Ashford School bus routes, seconded by L. Donegan and carried unanimously.

c. Staff Resignation

Communication was received from driver Kathleen Makray that she will be resigning due to health concerns.

Motion made by J. Lippert to accept with much regret, the resignation of Kathleen Makray. Motion seconded by L. Donegan and carried unanimously. Ms. Makray has been employed as a driver for 30 years and will be greatly missed. The board wishes her well.

d. Staff Appointments

Pupil Personnel Director C. Ford recommended the following individuals for full time appointment to the staff of Ashford School:

Polly Borysevicz – Teacher, Special Education

Kate Conway, Paraprofessional

Lina Janosi, Paraprofessional

Motion made by J. Lippert to approve the appointments of Polly Borysevicz, Kate Conway and Lina Janosi to the staff of Ashford School, motion seconded by D. Wesson and carried unanimously.

7. Old Business

a. Second Reading: Curricular Exemptions

Motion made by D. Wesson to approve the curricular exemptions policy as presented by counsel. Motion seconded by L. Donegan and carried unanimously.

Next Meeting Date/Agenda Items

The next meeting date is September 3rd. Agenda items to include review of Superintendent Evaluation document; information concerning tuition; audit update; DOT signs and safety; goals follow up.

Mr. Hopkins was asked to present his Principal's report at this time. He asked that G. Dukette begin by providing an update on the writing program. Mr. Dukette distributed a status report (attached) of where our school is now, and where we are going with respect writing curriculum and instruction at Ashford School.

T. Hopkins reported on the implementation of STEAM based interdisciplinary learning at Ashford School. He passed out draft pamphlet outlining the STEAM approach to learning and how such learning will be implemented in phases. This is the first year and will involve a lot of professional development integrating curriculum. In the first trimester of the school year, a theme will be identified and teachers will apply this theme to standards of learning, students will work together on projects, perhaps skits or stories that will be shared. The second trimester may culminate in a STEAM day at Ashford School and the third trimester may be used to evaluate this type of project based learning,

J. Rupert suggested that ways be found to reach the community at large and invite them to partake in such events as a STEAM day. Other members suggested reaching out to the other towns in Region 19 to discuss hosting of dances or other joint events at each others schools.

Dr. Longo spoke to the members of the audience to say that with all of the great things that are happening at Ashford School that were discussed tonight, it is clear that we have a good administrative team on board. This was a great evening full of enthusiasm, the skills and presentation of this team show why it is a good investment.

Audience member S. Mortyko said he was impressed with what he heard this evening and time at meetings such as this are much more worthwhile than those surrounding the budget.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at (8:46 pm) made by L. Donegan seconded by K. Warren and carried unanimously.

Recorded by:

Jennifer Barsaleau
Recording Secretary

Approved by the Ashford Board of Education:

Unapproved