

**BRANFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION
Communication Committee Minutes**

DATE: September 18, 2024
LOCATION: Walsh Intermediate School, Collaboration & Innovation Center, Room 112,
185 Damascus Road, Branford, CT
SUBJECT: Communication Committee Meeting

ATTENDANCE

HERE	ATTENDEE	AFFILIATION
Y	Laura Troidle, Committee Chair	Board of Education
Y	Judith Barron	Board of Education
Y	Peter Berdon	Board of Education
Y	Meaghan DeLucia	Board of Education
Y	Adam Greenberg	Board of Education
N	Ellen Michaels	Board of Education
Y	Ram Shrestha	Board of Education
N	Marie McNamara	Board of Education
Y	Dr. Christopher Tranberg, Superintendent	Central Office
Y	Allison Moran, Assistant Superintendent	Central Office
Y	Blaize Levitan, Chief Operating Officer	Central Office

Others present: BOE Student Representatives; Grace Grammatico, Carson Jarvis and Nneoma Obi

BUSINESS ITEMS

ITEM DESCRIPTION

CALL

01 Meeting was called to order at 6:02 PM by Laura Troidle.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chris Fee, District parent, spoke about advocating for free play in elementary schools, why he chose Branford to live in, the definition and benefits of free play, growing up in the 80s and 90s and his sons' experiences playing sports.

John Kessler, Branford resident, read an email that he sent to Mr. Berdon, proposing that they name the BHS gymnasium for Thomas Murray. Mr. Murray taught at BHS from 1967 to 2011 and was the head basketball coach from 1968-1987. BOE member, Shawn Tiernan, voiced his support of Mr. Kessler's request.

RECOGNITION

A. John Tureen, Chartwells Director of Dining Services/Executive Chef

BOE Chair, Peter Berdon and Superintendent Tranberg presented John Turenne with a proclamation thanking him for his service. Mr. Turenne retired at the end of August after many years of service.

APPROVE MINUTES

02 MOTION (Barron/Greenberg) to approve the minutes from the May 15, 2024, Communication Committee Meeting.
APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Continued...

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DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

03 Community Updates

In his report this evening Superintendent Tranberg began with a reminder to parents to download the ParentSquare app if they haven't already and the benefits and uses of the ParentSquare app. Dr. Tranberg also discussed dates for upcoming flu clinics.

04 Transportation Update

Among the items that Dr. Tranberg discussed this evening were; Zum working on improving efficiencies, Infinite Campus (IC) being our student data warehouse (the fields available in IC do not align with all of the fields that are on Zum (in part it ties in with tradition and culture of a very customized service), unique transportation needs (Branford has 450 requests), trying to accommodate requests providing they are in the route, many requests being received by the Zum Branford, General Manager (Charlotte) before school started or on the first day of school, being technology heavy and seeing everything in real time (formerly this was an Excel document on-line (now you can see where your child is in realtime), routes not necessarily matching up with what the app was saying (resulting in more questions), possible complaints about too many Zum communications, the call center (one of the initial challenges we faced were calls going to Zum nationwide HQ troubleshooting and they were pushing everyone back to Central Office), Branford does not have a transportation coordinator (part of the RFP was Zum would be doing it), calls now go directly to Branford Zum (once resolved helped with efficiencies), having representatives from Zum come in once things settle in another month or so to do a more robust presentation (how things are going and showing some data).

05 Cell Phone Usage

Prior to this evening's discussion on cell phone usage, Superintendent Tranberg welcomed this year's new BOE student representations; Nneoma Obi, Carson Jarvis, Grace Grammatico and asked them to introduce themselves.

Laura. Troidle began by stating that collectively the Board decided to read the book, *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt, and meet to talk about what they might want to do for the District regarding cell phone usage. Ms.Troidle also discussed and gave a brief summary of the book and how it specially discussed cell phone usage and its effect (the correlation in a spike in depression and anxiety) specifically regarding Generation Z.

Among the questions that were asked by Board members this evening were:

- What is currently the policy (standard practice) at BHS on technology – not just phones, Apple watches, etc.
- Is it possible (on a voluntary basis) to ask students to share their phone data usage, and for "us" to cross tabulate that with student performance (maybe over a 2 week period). Then have a discussion or education around it. Track/tie it into past student performance to understand what students are doing.

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- Regarding student handbooks, is it being followed?
- Are teachers spending class time enforcing that rule?
- At BHS devices are put away during instruction time, but are they available when it's not instruction time. How well does that work for people?
- Is it a problem getting them to put their phones away when class begins?
- Is it a problem when people are not in class, are they focused on their phones and not focused on all the people around them?
- How do students feel about it?
- Would like to know more of what's going on at the high school level. Would like the students themselves to say what they see and what they like (how's it playing out in the real world)?
- Should we be looking at disciplinary data and whether or not there are any correlations there?
- What if we posed the questions to students, if we were to ban (where the phone is not out at all). If there is a policy made, how they feel about it after it's in place.
- Would it make sense to have focus groups (students selected at random, representative sample from each grade). We can hear directly from them. Included in this question was the follow-up that "we" need to address parents as well (find out their opinion) - add them to the focus group (they may be anxious about not being able to get a hold of students).
- Is there something we as a Board could do in terms of sponsoring further community access/discussion around the topic (making more copies of books available, more accessible to people in places where they go)?
What is the cost of pouches and the staff who unlocks the pouches?
- Ask teachers if they feel supported to enforce whatever the policies are.
- Can there be a mandatory class to learn what it's doing to their brains and what issues are globally.

ADJOURN

06 MOTION (Greenberg/Barron) to adjourn.
APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Ms. Troidle adjourned the meeting at 7:03 PM.

The next Communication Committee Meeting will be held on
October 16, 2024 at 6:00 PM at Walsh Intermediate School Collaboration & Innovation Center, Room 112

Respectfully submitted,
Meaghan DeLucia
Secretary

Prepared by,
Kerry Eyrich