

TO: Board of Education Members

FROM: Michael H. Graner

DATE: February 28, 2014

RE: Board Notes

I'm delighted to report that I submitted the Board's 2014-15 school budget to Mark Oefinger this morning. The document is a reflection of an enormous amount of work that was done by the district staff and Board members over the last eight weeks. Please see Rita's cover letter (attached). I think it provides a very good overview of the proposed budget and it positions the Board for the series of upcoming meetings with the Town Council and RTM.

Shelley, Joey and I attended the Groton Parent Council on Wednesday night and we had a good opportunity to discuss the budget in more detail with those present. Bruce Flax shared a few questions that he knew had arisen among the Town Councilors and I was able to provide some detailed answers. His primary concern involved the class sizes at the high school. I explained that the high school offers 587 classes and that the vast majority of those classes have approximately 20 students. There are, however, 182 classes that have fewer than 15 students. Joe Arcarese, Erin McGuire, the Director of Guidance, and I did a detailed analysis of the class enrollments and we were able to determine that the lower class sizes fell into the following categories:

- Category 1: The first category consists of approximately 38 classes that provide services to students at the basic level who struggle with literacy and numeracy. Such courses as ELL Tutorials, SRBI support periods, and basic level academic courses fall into this category.
- Category 2: The second category consists of 49 courses that have low enrollments because the classes are Advanced Placement, IB, UConn ECE, and a few honors level courses.
- Category 3: The third category is for classes that result from computer unbalancing; for example, 34 students are enrolled in a particular course and the computer schedules 22 students in one section but only 12 students in the other class. Having the two sections is appropriate; however, the one class of 12 appears to be low.
- Category 4: The fourth category are those classes where Joe, Erin, and I will adjust next year's staffing plan to best meet the needs of the school and the district. Those classes can be adjusted either by an adjustment to the schedule or to the staffing plan.

Over the last couple of weeks, I've been working with Bill Robarge to file the paperwork needed to receive reimbursement for the two portable classroom projects at West Side Middle School and Cutler Middle School. The paperwork was filed electronically yesterday and hard copies of the documentation are being sent to the state department today. I will brief the Facilities Committee on these projects at the next meeting.

Andrea and I attended a very interesting Legislative Breakfast this week. The big topic that generated the most interest was the teacher evaluation plan. Several Board members and Superintendents voiced concerns about the plan in terms of its cost, the amount of time it

requires administrators to invest, and what many people felt was the relatively low return on such a large investment of time. The legislators were very receptive to these comments and I think the dialog will be helpful as we move forward.

I spoke to Rita this week about the protocol for handling news media requests. We both agreed that all requests from newspaper reporters should be referred to the Board Chair or to the Superintendent. I know that in the past reporters have contacted Board members and requested comments; that practice can result in real confusion. What Rita would like to do is have the Board speak with one voice; so politely referring the reporters' requests to Rita would be the best practice.

Last night I attended a very inspiring ceremony at Catherine Kolnaski Magnet School. Awards were presented to parents who completed a seven week literacy training program conducted by Debbie West and Shannon Foley, who both teach at Catherine Kolnaski. The program is entitled, "The Child, the Home, and the School: The Reading and Writing Connection." Chris Dauphinais explained to me that the program is a component of our Title I program and provides training for parents to understand how to assist their children in early literacy as well as helping parents become better partners in their child's education. Last night was the final session of the course and I was deeply honored to help present the certificates to the participants.

Calendar Notes

March 1 – Common Core Forum	8:30 a.m.	Norwich Inn & Spa
March 3 – Curriculum/Policy Committees	6:00 p.m.	Central Office, Rooms 19 and 11
March 5 – CAFE's <i>Day on the Hill</i>	8:30 a.m.	The Bushnell, Hartford
Town & City Council/BOE/RTM	5:30 p.m.	TBD
March 6 – Negotiations Committee	5:00 p.m.	Central Office, Room 5
March 8 & 9 – Robotics Competition	9:00 a.m.	Fitch High School
March 10 – Special BOE Meeting	6:00 p.m.	S. B. Butler
COW Meeting	7:00 p.m.	S. B. Butter