

**Cromwell Board of Education
Cromwell, CT 06416
Unapproved**

**Student Achievement Committee
May 10, 2016
MOTIONS AND MINUTES**

Mr. Fletcher called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Attendance: Mr. Fletcher, Mr. Sousa, Ms. Fitts-Ritter (arrived at 6:05 p.m.)

Absent: None.

Administrators: Dr. Talty, Ms. Hollander, Ms. Budaj, Mr. Maloney, Sarah Turner (CHS PE Teacher), Jamie Ritone (CMS Teacher), Jane Sarnowski (CMS Teacher)

Motion to approve the agenda as presented, made by Mr. Sousa, seconded by Mr. Fletcher. Vote: Unanimous.

Public Comment: None.

Old Business: None.

New Business:

Motion to approve the minutes from the March 8, 2016 meeting, made by Mr. Sousa, seconded by Mr. Fletcher. Vote: Unanimous.

Approval of Personal Wellness Course at CHS

Sarah Turner presented a new elective offering at CHS entitled "Personal Wellness". One of the goals of the PE department is expanding the course offerings. This course will focus on a number of different topics, including weight training, pilates, group fitness, yoga and stress management. Students will spend time in the classroom learning about these topics, but will also get the chance to use the skills in the CHS fitness center. Ms. Turner anticipates bringing a follow up course to the Committee for next year. She has tentatively titled this course "Team Games". Ms. Turner is also working to apply for a grant to expand the equipment in the fitness center.

Ms. Fitts Ritter commented that she is concerned that students take a gym class all through their early education (K to 8th grade). When they get to CHS, they do not take gym in 9th grade. Students are required to take a full credit of gym to graduate. However, students take gym in 10th and 11th grades to meet this requirement. Ms. Fitts Ritter would like to see if there is a way to have the students take gym in 9th grade. The administration will discuss options to see if this is feasible.

Motion to bring the Personal Wellness course to the full Board with a recommendation from the Committee for approval, made by Mr. Sousa, seconded by Ms. Fitts-Ritter. Vote: Unanimous.

Out of State and Overnight Field Trip Discussion

A handout was provided to the members of the Committee detailing the out of state and overnight field trip requests for the 2016-2017 school year. A total of 9 trips are planned. However, the first trip on the handout, an overnight stay at CHS by the CHS football team, has been canceled for this year. Notes on several of the other trips are noted below.

For the January trip by the CHS band to Scranton, PA, members of the band will stay in hotels and will be chaperoned.

The April trip by the Band is a replacement for the annual trip(s) to Florida and Virginia Beach. Mr. Sinclair is requesting to take the band to Chicago for a music competition. The current plan is to leave after school on April 6, such that the children only miss one day of school. It is also possible that the chorus will accompany the band on this trip and take part in the competition as well.

Ms. DeAngelo at CMS is requesting a new trip to Six Flags. She plans to take the CMS Select Choir to Six Flags to compete in the Great East Music Festival. This event will take place in either May or June 2017.

Mr. Fletcher commented that, while it is great to see the band and chorus so active and engaged, he has a small concern around the potential for missed class time because children will be on field trips. The Scranton, PA trip in January occurs during exam week at CHS. Dr. Talty will review with the CHS administration for alternatives.

Summer Reading for Grades 6, 7, and 8

Ms. Ritone and Ms. Sarnowski presented a number of titles that will be available to next year's 6th, 7th, and 8th graders to read over the upcoming summer. Children who read any or all of the titles applicable to their grade can fill out a short report to earn extra credit. All books on the list have either been previously approved as summer reading materials, or were read by Ms. Ritone and Ms. Sarnowski to ensure appropriate content. As children advance into and through middle school, they are more capable of digesting more difficult content. The overall theme for this year's summer reading is "Overcoming Obstacles and Diversity". Ms. Sarnowski spoke about one choice for 6th grade students, titled *El Deafo*. This title is a graphic novel that tells the story of a deaf girl and her struggles to fit in. She takes what was perceived as a weakness and turns it into a "super power". Ms. Sarnowski commented that she loved the book, and was herself raised by deaf parents. The author is also deaf. Ms. Sarnowski also spoke about *All the Broken Pieces*, which is the story of a Vietnamese child adopted by an American family shortly after the end of the Vietnam War. The story deals with the child's struggles to fit into a new culture.

Ms. Ritone spoke about *Every Soul a Star*, which is the story of an unlikely set of friendships between a group of loners that follow eclipses. She also spoke about *Counting by 7s*, a New York Times bestseller. This is the story of an autistic child who loses both parents and has to learn to adjust.

Ms. Ritone and Ms. Sarnowski noted that the 5th grade teachers at WIS are doing a great job of getting children interested in these books, by providing "teasers" to gain their interest.

Expanded Pre-K Program

With the finalization of the Smart Start grant, the district is moving forward to expand its Pre-K offerings. For the upcoming school year, we were able to offer 27 full-day Pre-K seats to Cromwell families. A total of 51 families placed their names into a lottery for these seats. There are still more seats to be made available for half-day Pre-K classes. Additionally, it is expected that not all of the 27 families that were chosen will accept their place in the full-day classes. 5 seats were made available to Open Choice students. The plan was originally to offer 10 seats. Due to the uncertainty at the time of the Smart Start grant, the seat availability was reduced to 5.

The Smart Start grant is a \$150,000 grant. \$75,000 of this grant is to be used for renovations and operating expenses to get a new classroom ready for Pre-K children. The other \$75,000 is to be used for additional staff, currently expected to be 2 paraprofessionals. These two additional positions will be grant funded for the 2016-2017 school year, but will need to be in the CPS budget for subsequent years.

Teaching Children Real World Skills

The administration continues to work on a program to teach children real world skills, such as financial literacy (balancing a checkbook, filing taxes, filling out loan paperwork, etc). The administration will provide an update in the fall on their progress.

Public Comment: None.

Topic for Future Agendas: Curriculum Review
 Teaching Children Real World Skills

The next meeting is scheduled for October 11, 2016 at 6 p.m.

Motion to adjourn at 6:45 p.m. made by Mr. Sousa, seconded by Ms. Fitts-Ritter. Vote: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Fletcher