



Torrington Public Schools

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School Improvement Committee Meeting Wednesday November 7, 2018 6:00PM Torrington School

MINUTES

1. Call to Order: 6:01pm
2. Roll Call: Mr. Kissko, Ms. Hoehne, Ms. Todor, Ms. Richardson
Ms. Lubomski, Ms. Fergusson, Ms. Shulte, Ms. Galullo, Mr. Skarzynski, Mr. Shannon, Mr. Marchand, Ms. Gelormino
Approval of Agenda: Ms. Hoehne made the motion to approve the agenda with the amendment to the agenda: Vandalism & Community, Ms. Richardson second. All in Favor.
Approval of Minutes: Ms. Hoehne made the motion to approve the minutes, Ms. Richardson second. All in Favor.
3. Public Participation: None
4. Discussion/Next Steps:
 - a. Host School Report: Mr. Kissko toured Torrington School, Monday, November 5th and thoroughly enjoyed his time spent with the elementary school children. The children appeared to be very happy, all adjusting to their new school. He was impressed with teachers and staff and found all students to be very engaged.
Ms. Galullo reported on Torrington School: Ms. Galullo reiterated Mr. Kissko's observations. It's been her impression that the students at Torrington have adjusted nicely to their new school community/grade level structure. Torrington has lots of new teachers, but the teams are all working well together. With more classes, it's more challenging to get together. The move over the summer was not fun. Took a little time to acclimate but everyone is being very supportive. Awesome Staff!!
Securing substitutes continues to be a challenge at Torrington. This is also a problem district and state wide. HR has intensified recruitment efforts. School as a facility is maximizing all its available space. Some rooms have been repurposed to house different programs/resources. Enrollment is down slightly since the start of school. Students have left for a variety of reasons: school choice, moved out of town, homeschooling, etc.

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Throughout the next 2 weeks, a “Gratitude Campaign” is being run. The entire community is focusing on “gratitude” and students are being encouraged to be mindful of all they have. There is an initiative to help FISH with canned goods/ donations. Administration is working with the bus company to recognize positive/exemplary bus conduct. Drivers are referring students who demonstrate good behavior on the bus. Administrators publicly acknowledge students for their efforts by mentioning them during morning announcements and by visiting their classrooms to congratulate them. Incentives are built into this process: Once 100 positive referrals have been received, the entire school community earns a reward. For example, recently a Pajama Day was held. As soon as the next 100 are received, students will have earned a “Dance Party” day. The Torrington School community is hosting a Veterans’ Day event on Tuesday, November 13th at 9:30am. The students and staff will be honoring 50 veterans during a schoolwide assembly. Ceremony will take place in the gym with a reception afterward. Recently the school held its annual Book Fair as well as an Ice Cream Social. Parents donated books to classroom libraries.

Last week, Dale Bernardoni from the SDE visited Torrington School to speak with teachers about “Fund for Teachers” – a professional development opportunity for teachers which is funded through a grant created by a generous benefactor. All TPS elementary teachers gathered at Torrington for this meeting, and the response was very positive. Ms. Bernardoni also visited THS and TMS to speak with teachers at both those buildings.

b. Communications:

Andrew Deacon has raised money to cover the cost of the Veteran’s Day event to be held at the Warner Theatre on Nov 9th. The cost amounted to \$350 for the two Sister Schools (SW and VW) to hold this event at the Warner.

S. Coolidge, P. Gaweski & S. Fergusson are setting up a “Friday Folder” on the TPS Website. This will eventually be a link on the website which will direct parents/community members to a folder containing newsworthy events related to school, PTO, community partners. The goal is to better communicate with families, streamline the amount of information that goes home, and help decrease the amount of paper being used. Looking to begin the rollout in January 2019. We will need to train parents on new communication system and as users become more comfortable, slowly phase out the hard copy system of communication. More to follow next month.

Coherence Review: the initial communication was that the team was very impressed with the district interviews and staff. The Coherence Team is preparing a report to be shared with the Board at a future time.

c. Publication progress:

Draft copies were distributed to all committee members. Mr. Gaffney is going to print within the next day or two so that the publication will be available for families at parent/teacher conferences.

d. Board Goals (Strategic Plan):

Now that the elections are behind us and new legislators are in place, it will be important for board members to act as liaisons between board and state legislature. A prime example is the cut off dates for students to be legally eligible to enroll in Kindergarten. CT is one of only 6 states in the nation to allow 4 year olds to attend Kindergarten. In CT, a child may enter Kindergarten providing he/she turns 5 by January 1st of that school year. This presents numerous challenges for the schools. Very often, school readiness

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skills are not developed at such a young age, making it difficult for the young child to fully and meaningfully participate in Kindergarten. There are strong feelings among many stakeholders that the cut off date should be no later than September 1st. Michelle Cook and Maria Horn are both in agreement and open to the ideas of the districts thoughts. The topic of snow days was also raised. Many districts around the state are considering allowing students to work from home on a day when school is cancelled due to weather. The specifics are still being worked out on the state and local levels. Additionally, a 3 hour delay/early dismissal is being considered around the region in an attempt to avoid losing a full day.

e. AP Enrollment:

Dr. Jeff Shannon presented an overview of AP/ECE Courses. Students enrolling in AP Courses has dropped from 1,100 to 850. There is a wide range of students taking the courses, many scoring 3 or above on AP & ECE college level courses. AP students in their junior year are taking the course and the exam. If taken senior year during first semester, then the test is not administered until May which poses a challenge for students. Cost for ECE and AP courses being looked at. However, our cost is much less expensive than area schools.

f. Next Gen Accountability Report for 2017/2018 will likely not be available until January (per contact with CSDE).

g. Parking Privileges:

Andy Skarzynski and Andrew Marchand researched this and in doing so spoke with 5 area schools. On average, schools charge approximately \$60 per year per student for parking privileges. Typically, spots are numbered, and spaces are determined by lottery (with preference given according to seniority by grade level). Most schools charge \$5.00 for replacement tags. Some districts do require students to disclose insurance information however this was not consistent among the districts surveyed. Districts reserve the right to revoke parking privileges. School governance, and faculty have all been asked for input into the idea of instituting parking permits at THS. Although it may be difficult to “police” the lot, having student registration/insurance information on file in the office would increase student accountability. THS security staff would spot check. Use of a google doc might be more feasible than PowerSchool which may not have the capability. Parents would need to fill out the form with all necessary details. More discussion to follow – considering implementation for 2019/2020.

h. Discussed earlier.

i. Flooded B Wing:

What are we putting in place to prevent a recurrence of this nature? What is already in place? Who is policing bathrooms? Mr. Skarzynski explained the mechanical failure that allowed an incident of this nature to occur so easily. Mr. Bascetta is working on the situation. Some of the issue is that building is aging and in need of repair/upgrade. Staff is on heightened alert, frequently checking bathrooms. This type of thing occurs in high schools all across America, however during events like this we need to broad stroke the information given to the media and the public. There are wonderful things happening every day at our high school, yet it’s the negative that sells newspapers. We’re working hard to get the good news out which will help to improve our image. Much of this work is being taken on by the Ad Hoc committee. The evacuation went very smoothly. Clear plans were in place, every necessary agency was notified and staff stepped up to assist with damage control. Feedback from students and staff was “This isn’t who we are!”

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Positivity helped considerably.

8th graders are scheduled to visit the high school on November 19,20, 21. Each team will visit on a different day. The students will spend the morning at THS to have a “shadow” experience. They will sit in on some classes, tour the building, meet the staff and administration who will address the groups in the Little Theater to answer questions and let them all know what a great school THS is. Students will then have lunch in the cafeteria and receive a few goodies embossed with THS logs.

Add items to the Board Agenda.

5. Comments for the Good of the Order:
 - Ms. Gelormino put in a plug for the upcoming THS play, “She Kills Monsters!”
 - Ms. Galullo thanked all the Torrington staff who came to the meeting.
 - Mr. Kissko thanked everyone for being at the meeting.
6. Topics for Future Meetings:
 - a. Liaison Plan
 - b. Parking Permits
7. Adjournment: Ms. Hoehne made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Ms. Richardson.
Meeting adjourned at 7:28pm.