

**TORRINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING  
February 21, 2007**

CALL TO ORDER - The meeting was called to order by Mr. Cavagnero at 7:10p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Roll Call:**

Present: Mr. Broverman, Mrs. Carbone, Mr. Cavagnero, Miss Laus, Mr. Lyons, Mr. Lutka , Mr. O'Connell, Mr. Oliver, Prof. Royals, Mrs. Traub, Steve Nocera for Mayor Bingham, Dr. O'Brien, Dr. Campbell, Ms. Haynes

Absent: Mayor Bingham, Mr. Jacobs, Miss Kulesza, Miss Shugrue

**SCHOOL COMMUNITY SESSION**

No one present.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

*On a motion by Mr. Lyons, with a second by Mr. Oliver, the Board moved to approve the agenda. All were in favor.*

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

No minutes were attached.

**INFORMATION SHARING SESSION**

**Student Board Member Reports**

Dr. O'Brien reported that they are celebrating Music in Our Schools month, and that they are extremely proud of all of their musical offerings at Torrington public schools. A summary of all the different concerts and musical productions that are going to be held across the district in March was given to the Board, and they were invited to attend any or all of the music opportunities in the schools. Dr. O'Brien is very proud of their young musicians, high school musicians, and the work of their faculty as well.

**Superintendent's Report**

Dr. O'Brien reported United Way is very much involved in activities to raise funds after Christmastime, especially during the month of February. One of the things Dr. O'Brien

does for the community is she works as a United Way volunteer. One activity they had was a dress down day, and although other businesses sometimes have a dress down month, administration felt that at the school a dress down day would be the most appropriate, so they scheduled an United Way dress down day for Valentine's Day. But on Valentine's Day, there was a big snowstorm and no school. So this was rescheduled for the following day, and the schools and central office had a grand total of over \$760.00 to contribute to United Way for that one activity.

Dr. O'Brien also shared with the Board that the Food for Your Neighbors program is also a very significant one in which the Torrington public schools participate. Throughout the month of February, they collect food. Last year, the school was the Number 1 single contributor for this program. The school district contributed over 5000 cans of food. She and Dr. Metallo are now challenging people to even do better this year. She reminded her colleagues and parents to please think about participating by bringing a can of food to school. The drive is until February 28<sup>th</sup>.

Dr. O'Brien also reported that she clipped 2 articles for the Board to look at from the Hartford Current. These are very brief, but very meaningful. The first article by Stan Simpson is about getting kids reading and early. The points made are some very important ones that are relative to the deliberations tonight. Those points include the fact that it is known that if young people are not reading at grade level by the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, that is a serious indicator of future difficulty in their education. In the prison population in Connecticut, there are 18,900 people in prison. Of those, three quarters of those have no high school diplomas. They are high school dropouts and are functionally illiterate. So the need to address a high drop-out rate is very important. People who don't have a high school diploma have severely lessened opportunities for success in society. Also of note, prisons are infinitely more expensive than teachers and schools. The reading achievement of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, that percentage, is about the same as the rate of graduation in 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and it is also the same as the rate of incarceration. She challenged the Board and administration to look at their own data and see what the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade percentage is regarding children who aren't reading at level, how that compares to the dropout rate, and ultimately how that compares to the incarceration rate.

Dr. O'Brien stated she also included an obituary because she wanted to call attention to a wonderful man's life. This obituary was for a long-time teacher in Manchester by the name of John Stedman. The most important thing about this man's life is captured in his obituary. He was a teacher in the alternative program for helping young people in Manchester. He never gave up on helping kids, and he transformed the lives of students for many, many years. This certainly was a life well lived, and she thinks it speaks about the kind of teacher who is able to reach out to students who are not successful, and the tremendous impact that the right teacher in the right program can have on the lives of young people.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

### Certified Staff Resignations/Appointments

Hartley B. Connell, Language Arts-MS, retire eff 6/30/07

Thomas Craig, Social Studies-HS, resigned eff 2/16/07

Maria Moore, World Languages-MS, resigned eff 6/30/07

James F. Rinaldi, Mathematics-MS, resigned eff 6/30/07

### Notices for Home Schooling: MOUALE07

*In a motion by Mr. O'Connell, with a second by Mr. Broverman, the Board moved to approve the consent agenda. All were in favor.*

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **Approve 5-year Capital Plan**

*In a motion by Mr. Lutka, and a second by Mr. O'Connell, the Board moved to approve the 5-year capital plan. All were in favor.*

Mrs. Carbone stated that the budget committee and some additional Board members attended the meeting, and asked some very good questions of administration with regard to not only the items that pertained to the first year of the capital plan, but also the out years. They looked for explanations and justifications for every item in the plan. She thinks the explanations presented were excellent. Administration appeared to be very thoughtful in taking a long-range plan before just purchasing an item. They are looking at how to make sure that they can support the purchase and implement the infrastructure needed for the oversight of any of the purchases. So given this, it was the unanimous recommendation of the committee that the Board accept and approve the plan.

### **Receive Superintendent's Budget Proposal – 2007-2008**

*In a motion by Miss Laus, with a second by Mr. Lyons, the Board moved to receive the Superintendent's Budget Proposal – 2007-2008. All were in favor.*

Dr. O'Brien gave a presentation regarding the 2007-2008 budget proposal. Copies of the slides from the presentation were included in the Board's packet. She also informed those present that there will be budget hearings held on site, as the budget committee has approved a calendar very similar to the one from last year, where they will be having hearings at the different school sites and here at THS. As they go through the individual site plans, and the individual plans for each budget, deeper and more thorough questions can be asked by the budget committee, Board members, and members of the public.

The theme this year is the same as last year's, which is Restoring the Pride of the Torrington Public Schools. This is year 2. She reminded the Board that in the years 2000 through 2005 in the district, there was a time of really regressive budgets. By

regressive, she means that many programs were eliminated, including those programs at the middle school and high school that were hands-on programs and practical arts programs. Many staff members were also eliminated in terms of their positions. They lost all curriculum leadership. There were no departmental chairpersons at that point in time. They also lost athletic programs. The middle school sports program was cut, but then restored last year. Many art programs were also cut during that time.

It is the administration's desire, over the next 3 or 4 years, to suggest to the Board that many of those programs and positions that were cut be restored. They have also asked that significant dollars be spent restoring textbooks and library books, and that athletic and art programs be restored. Dr. O'Brien was guided in the budget process and presentation by a quote by Frederick Douglas, the great abolitionist and leader of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This quote indicates that in order to have quality in our lives and in our country, our government must act with honesty, truthfulness, and virtue. She suggested to the Board and public that this statement by Frederick Douglas was as important today as it was then. She hopes that it will be seen that this budget is based on honesty, truthfulness, and virtue. She believes every dollar in the budget is directed toward the welfare of the young people, and gives advancement to every level of the organization.

The entire budget is based on the Board of Education's goals that were adopted in the fall of 2006. The major Board goals include advancing academic achievement, addressing the NEASC accreditation process at THS, providing safe and welcoming school environments, compliance with all No Child Left Behind and special education mandates, and utilizing all resources effectively and efficiently.

From those broad goals, the Board selected several priorities which guided the entire budget. The first priority was to address the NEASC accreditation expectations. In the 10-year cycle of NEASC accreditation, for the first 8 years nothing was done at THS to prepare for the accreditation process of 2007. The faculty and administration have worked diligently over the past year to catch up on what should have been done. In fact, during those 8 years, staff members and curriculum leaders were cut, textbooks were cut, a whole range of programs that were aimed at students who were not college bound were cut from THS. So administration is really working in an uphill way to strengthen the high school to meet the expectations of NEASC accreditation. But Dr. O'Brien feels they are not out of the forest yet on NEASC, even though people are working very hard. They must keep working diligently to assist the faculty and administration in meeting the NEASC expectations. She doesn't mean the minimum standards. She does not want to risk college opportunities for the young people by allowing minimum standards at THS. So she can't impress enough that while people have worked very hard, they are not out of the forest yet, and they must keep on working very diligently to make sure they do the very best job they can on the accreditation process, the report writing process, and strengthening the curriculum. This will require being proactive and giving 150% to demonstrate to the evaluators that even though little was done for 8 years, they know what to do and how to do it. It is simply a matter of having adequate time in which to do it.

Another Board priority is reducing the drop-out rate. This has been on the Board's radar screen for probably the last 5 or 6 years. Unfortunately, during that time frame the drop-out rate has not been reduced. It actually has grown. There has been no specific successful initiative aimed at reducing the drop-out rate. Some activities have occurred in the past 5 years. Those activities include the cancellation of the alternative program at Southeast School for the special education students, all of whom dropped out of school, and some of whom are now in prison. They not only lost the program at Southeast School, which perhaps they should have corrected and implemented in a different way, but the building was also lost. And now it will cost more than \$1,000,000 should that building be regained, to bring it up to code for any kind of alternative education opportunity. The School Within a School project at THS was also a dismal failure, and resulted in the virtual dropping out of every student who was involved. Dropout rate is 20%, 3 times the State average. She implored the Board to think about the young people who are struggling. This is not only important for the quality of their lives and for the vitality and health of the community, but it is also very important for the NEASC accreditation. NEASC is going to look at these things, and ask what has been done to reduce the drop-out rate. She asked the Board to focus very seriously on that.

The third Board priority is to advance literacy attainment. The Board has done a very nice job in terms of refocusing literacy staff and programming. There are a few other additions administration would like the Board to consider to continue to advance literacy. In the article she shared, it was very clear about the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade criterion, and she feels they need to make sure that literacy is primary goal attained by grade 3.

Dr. O'Brien stated that the AYP Plan must also be advanced. Basically, it is the law and they have to comply with the No Child Left Behind requirements and they have to do it well. The district has been named a number of times to the list for deficiencies, and that needs to be corrected.

The budget has been worked on since the fall, and they reflect months and months of work by virtually everyone in the district. In October of 2006, the budget process was introduced especially for the new principals. The definition of Board goals was shared. The Board had approved the goals in September, and those goals were shared in October with administration. Ms. Haynes presented the format to be used for the budget. In November and December, the budgets at each school and at departmental level were developed with input from faculty and staff. In January, the budgets were due in Dr. O'Brien's office. Over holiday time, many administrators were still working and putting the finishing touches on the building level and department budgets. From January 8<sup>th</sup> through the 25<sup>th</sup> intensive meetings were held. All of the budgets were presented to the executive team in a hearing process in which refinements took place. On January 26<sup>th</sup>, the entire administrative leadership team met to prioritize all staffing requests. The executive team also met to finalize the staffing requests and to prioritize. On February 5<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup>, final reductions were taken, with a meeting of the leadership team as well. On February 12<sup>th</sup>, the final draft was approved by the executive team. The draft was polished and sent to the budget committee on February 16<sup>th</sup>. Dr. O'Brien received additional input yesterday from the faculty members of Torrington Public Schools, and

today she is presenting the final budget proposal from the Superintendent and administration. It was a long journey, but a very good process.

Administration suggests that the operating budget from this year, which is approximately \$56.3 million dollars, be raised to \$60.2 million dollars. They are suggesting that the capital budget remain fairly stable and have a small increase. They are requesting that the overall budget consideration go from \$56.3 million to \$60.2 million. This represents an increase of approximately \$3.8 million or a 6.8% request.

This needs to be examined in context. At this point in the State of Connecticut, many districts are way ahead in the budget process, and many Boards of Education have already approved their budgets. The average approval of Boards of Education in Connecticut for their budgets now is 6.3%. So administration is not too far off average, and she knows the Board will work diligently on this. The budget committee will spend countless hours refining this particular figure. The increase comes from the component parts of the budget request. Administration's contractual obligations which include all employee groups, their contracts, raises, benefits, and the like, account for a \$1.9 million dollar increase, which in percentage points is 3.53% of the increase. That is simply move forward. In fixed costs and supplies, they actually found some economies and that is a 0.75% reduction. Special education mandates are required by law. The district cannot depart from these mandates without breaking the law and exposing the district to liability and legal action. The No Child Left Behind mandates also have the power of law. Mandates of both laws must be filled. Those increases total around \$1.7 million, and they are really non-negotiable. Those increases represent another 3%. When you look at the mandatory obligations of the school district, simply moving things forward regarding contracts, benefits, legal requirements, and things like the fuel, light, and heat, just keeping operation going, you are looking at an increase of almost 5.8%.

The next logical question is answered immediately below. This certainly doesn't leave a lot for program improvements. However, they are suggesting 1% for program improvements, approximately a half of a million dollars. In the succeeding pages, many more improvements are going to be seen than are represented by that half of a million dollars. The way that was able to be done was to take existing resources and to reassign and realign and find economies within existing resources to give the district more improvement of programming and services using these in different ways. And the capital shows a very small increase, so when you look at that 6.8%, 5.8% of it is move forward money, and 1% is actually for program improvement.

Dr. O'Brien stated she is not trying to be political, but the governor's proposed revenue for education is a godsend in many ways. While certainly none of these things should be considered givens in the political arena, the fact is that democrats historically have always supported education and social services, and looked to increase in those areas. The fact that our Republican governor is also suggesting significant increases in those areas, she considers to be wonderful news from either side of the aisle. Education has to win in this legislative session. If you look at the governor's proposal and compare what administration is requesting with the governor's proposed increase for Torrington, the net

increase to taxpayers for all of those improvements is less than 1%. It is 0.94%, which is very low. She would also suggest that as they move through the budget process, and the budget committee, and ultimately the Board refines this budget request, that 0.94% could certainly drop to 0, and drop to no increase whatsoever, and actually direct economies for taxpayers.

What is going to be provided for that 1%? For the elementary program, they would like to suggest the following. Based on everything that they know about early literacy and its importance especially by grade 3, they would like to expand the literacy staff at both Torrington and Southwest elementary schools. Part of this is due to their increased enrollment regarding redistricting. Dr. O'Brien has promised parents that services will follow children, and administration wants to even add more service to help both Torrington and Southwest with their more diverse populations. Last year, Mrs. Theeb came to the budget process asking for a media specialist. Administration indicated at that time, that for a school with such a small enrollment and the pressing needs at THS, a media specialist could not be brought forward. However, Mrs. Theeb was promised this would not fall off the table or put aside. Administration is bringing this request back this year because now is the time for Southwest School to have a media specialist. The enrollment will be significantly increased and literacy is one of the goals and having a strong library program certainly supports literacy in the students. Going along with the literacy focus of the Board, administration would also like to expand the Summer School opportunities. They know that it is essential that children be reading well by grade 3. In the past, they have had a grade 2 Summer School, but that is not enough. They want to support children in both grades 1 and 2 to help advance literacy. They would like additional supplies, materials, and leveled reading books. Lastly, the English language learner program is in need of evaluation and improvement. They would like to add more English language learner support through teachers. There are 2 teachers in the budget. They would also like to have tighter and more coordinated supervision of the entire K through 12 program. To achieve that, they plan to transfer an existing administrator to the roll of director or coordinator of the ELL program. This is the only way to get a handle on it, coordinate it well, and be able to evaluate and improve upon that program and ultimately give better services to English language learners. This has also been pointed out through No Child Left Behind, as that particular subgroup is not achieving up to par. This is a cost neutral improvement in the supervision of that program. It does not require an additional administrator.

As far as the middle school, the Board received recommendations a few weeks ago for an emphasis on Language Arts programs for grades 7 and 8. They are looking at Language Arts 1 and Language Arts 2, which would necessitate adding 2 Language Arts teachers, 1 for grade 7 and 1 for grade 8. Those 2 positions will be cost neutral. They have economies in the budget so that both of positions can be accommodated with no increase in funding. Those positions are needed because as they project for next year's grade 7 students, 100 of them are performing below the proficient level in reading and writing. Of next year's 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 100 are performing below the proficient level in reading and writing. When you look at that percentage of young people who are not performing and reading on grade level, you can project that number and it can be a forecaster of the drop-

out rate. Currently, 30% of young people are not reading on level, and those young people when they go to grade 7 and 8 need additional support in order to get their reading skills and writing skills advanced. At the same time, because those young people would be taking a second Language Arts time block, the students who would be taking World Language and Algebra classes would be those students who could move along and master the content more quickly, and who could advance and pass the exams at the high school level and gain credit. Also at TMS, additional support for the ELL program is needed. The 2 teachers needed would be assigned in the district where they would be needed. Right now, they are called district folk, but as numbers are seen they would be assigned to help at both the elementary and the middle school. TMS needs additional library books and textbooks. Textbook acquisitions have been cut historically in the past, and the middle schoolers definitely need some improvement in their textbooks. Last year, the principal of the middle school asked for 3 special education teachers. Administration was only able to provide 1, but they have not forgotten that request. They are asking for 2 more special education teachers. This will advance inclusion which is a Board goal and priority, and it also will help achieve the No Child Left Behind goals. The district has been cited in middle school for insufficient achievement in special education. One of those teachers will be cost neutral because of economies. They are seeing many more students, many more families with needs that are calling out for support. They are seeing dysfunctional families and young people who are not able to cope with the school setting. They are asking for an additional 0.5 social worker at the middle school.

At THS, they are not out of the forest especially with NEASC. The reports are being written, edited, and improved upon. The visitation of the evaluators will be taking place in the fall of 2007. This visitation costs \$20,000. This is a typical fee for the North Central Association visit. Dr. O'Brien and Dr. Metallo are committed to the fact that the dollars for that visitation be spent in Torrington. The visitation team will be staying in Torrington, eating in Torrington restaurants and at the food service in the school, and the dollars that are spent for the New England accreditation visitation are dollars that are going to be reinvested back in the community. Two instructional leaders are also needed. Currently, there are 2 people helping to align, create, and revamp the curriculum at the high school for NEASC. The high school currently has 2 wonderful people who are serving in that role, Mary McVerry who is serving in both English and Social Studies, and Patricia Strawson who is serving in Math and Science. Administration would like to ask the Board to consider 2 more, so that Mary McVerry can work exclusively in English, and Pat Strawson can work exclusively in Math. Should the Board approve 2 more instructional area leaders, those persons will work exclusively in Social Studies and Science. Therefore, in the space of 2 years the areas for curriculum leadership will be covered, to work on improving the curriculum and preparing for the NEASC experience. The NEASC evaluation team is going to be looking for people like this. If these people are not in place, it will be held against THS. They are essential positions. Additionally, because of the size and the needs of the high school, administration is requesting an additional 0.5 social worker. This when combined with the middle school would give a 1.0 total social worker. Administration would like to hire 1 social worker and have that person split between the high school and the middle school. Lastly, the administration is suggesting for the Board's consideration the THS GOAL program as an alternative route

to graduation. It is in the agenda later on. It is still being worked on, and more information will be available at the March 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. She does not want that to fall off the table because it is a very important opportunity for the young people, and something that the NEASC evaluators will be looking for.

Restoring the Pride demands personal responsibility and individual daily efforts. Dr. O'Brien asks herself continually if the schools are doing better, and she thinks they are. She believes the corner has been turned in many ways. She believes that THS is a better high school heading in the right direction. She believes that the elementaries and the middle school are also turning the corner and getting better. But they have not arrived yet, there is so much more work to do. Last year was a very good year. In order to restore the district and make it a destination for young families with children, administration is going to have to be working at this for the next 3 or 4 years to restore the programming and the positions that were lost. The demand is that they keep moving forward. With the improved political landscape for education in this state over the next few years, and the fact that progress is being made, she thinks pride can be taken in where the Board has led this district over the past year.

Dr. O'Brien hopes the Board agrees that this budget reflects honesty, truthfulness, and virtue for the students, because they are the most important persons and the focus of all of this work.

Mr. O'Connell stated that he would certainly support receipt, but he wanted everyone to know the budget committee has not had a chance to digest the information yet. Some of this information was received last Friday, some of it was received tonight, and they will be deliberating over 5 budget hearings plus 2 further meetings scheduled after that. He doesn't say that to discourage asking questions tonight, but he encourages the Board to attend budget committee hearings to ask questions as well.

Dr. O'Brien stated she appreciates that comment. Delving into the individual pieces and the details will take place at the hearings, and administration will be happy to answer questions tonight or more specific questions at the hearings.

Mr. Cavagnero stated that for the people here the next public forum will be tomorrow night at Forbes School at 6 p.m., and Forbes, Vogel, and Southwest school budgets will be dealt with that evening.

Dr. O'Brien stated that they are looking for bad weather though, so she encouraged people listen to the radio or television to see if evening activities will still be held. The web site can also be checked, and the weather decision will be made just after noontime, so that folks will have time to realize what is going on.

Mr. Cavagnero commented that all are welcome to those meetings as there will be a general presentation and a lot of questions asked. If anyone feels the need to get involved in the discussions or the presentation or the dissection of the budget, he advises they attend as many of the meetings as they are able to.

Another Board member added that if the meeting is cancelled tomorrow night the schools that were to be done that night would be merged into other budget hearings.

Another Board member asked if they have a schedule of the dates of the hearings. Dr. O'Brien stated the dates could be emailed, and she thinks they were also included in the budget committee information.

Mr. O'Connell stated he had the schedule and those dates include February 22<sup>nd</sup> at Forbes at 6 p.m. for Forbes, Southwest, and Vogel-Wetmore budgets; February 26<sup>th</sup> at East School at 6 p.m. for East, Torrington, and Student Services budgets; February 28<sup>th</sup> at TMS Media Center at 6 p.m. for TMS and the athletic budgets; March 5<sup>th</sup> at THS Media Center at 6 p.m. for the THS site budget, Assistant Superintendent's budget, and the technology budgets; March 8<sup>th</sup> at Migeon Avenue at 6 p.m. for the facilities budgets and district Y budgets; and March 14<sup>th</sup> and March 19<sup>th</sup> will be deliberations of the budget as a committee to come up with recommendation for the Board, the 14<sup>th</sup> is 6 p.m. at Migeon Avenue and the 19<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. at the HS Media Center.

Mr. Cavagnero stated the reason they are having these meetings is to get the public's input so they welcome attendance and are encouraging it.

Mr. Broverman commented that he thought the presentation was very good. Dr. O'Brien laid out for the Board their goals and priorities, and so he thinks they have at least a focus as to where they ought to spend time looking for the next month or so.

### **Approve Schedule Modification for TMS Language Arts 2**

*In a motion by Miss Laus, with a second by Mrs. Traub, the Board moved to approve schedule modification for TMS Language Arts 2 only the Language 2 arts component. All were in favor except for Mr. Lutka who was opposed.*

Dr. O'Brien stated she sent an email to the Board indicating that the scope of the proposal for vote and consideration tonight is simply the Language Arts 2 piece. Dr. Campbell stated that the big change in this revision is that they had originally hoped to spread the unified arts out over the year, but this will go back to the way it was.

Mr. Harnett stated that currently at the middle school, the unified arts teachers operate off of a trimester schedule. The rest of the building operates off of marking periods and semesters, and there are a couple of different issues that presents. His goal was hopefully to get everybody in the building operating on marking periods and semesters, and he wanted to move the unified arts folks towards semester classes and year-long classes and have them more coordinated with the academic teachers. The problem is that there is language in the teacher's contract that limits the number of students they are allowed to see in a marking period. Given the current number of unified arts teachers and programs at the middle school, it is very difficult at this point in time to move them off of trimesters on to marking periods and stay within the confines of that language within the

contract. So for the time being, they are sort of looking at a status quo in terms of the way in which the kids see unified arts teachers. They are still wrestling with some numbers and trying to figure out some ways to possibly have at least a PE piece where the PE classes meet all year long which is one of his main goals. But many of the things that Dr. O'Brien eluded to earlier in the past, in terms of teachers and programs that were eliminated throughout the district, really hit the middle school hard as somewhere in the neighborhood of 12 to 13 teachers were let go and several programs were cut. The problem is when they try to shift towards having the kids be in unified arts classes with marking periods and semester classes, they run out of places to put them very quickly as he has 1200 kids and 2 art teachers and 2 tech ed teachers. There are not enough places for the kids to go when they are not in their academic classes. There are some hurdles to jump over, but he thinks over the course of the next couple years as the various components of the plan are pieced together, this will bring the middle school back up to what it should be to meet the needs of the kids.

Dr. Campbell stated that so what they are asking the Board to approve tonight is the Language Arts 1 and 2 for the program, and unified arts will stay as they are, and the additional folks will be brought back next year for the budget process. But when you think about adequate yearly progress and the Board's goals in the area of literacy and academic achievement, capturing kids at this age and improving their English Language Arts skills is really a core piece and will have an impact on some of the drop-out data.

Mrs. Carbone asked if the real problem is that the schedule is tied up in the contract or the number of teachers at the middle school.

Dr. Campbell stated that it is both, but they felt they did not want to get into staffing requests this year. The most important change was the Language Arts 1 and 2.

Mr. Lutka asked Dr. Campbell what year they are in with respect to the AYP for the middle school. Dr. Campbell stated the middle school is in their fourth year.

Mr. Lutka asked if according to No Child Left Behind if the parents have the ability to request tutors. Dr. Campbell stated that the middle school is not a Title 1 school, so those sanctions do not apply.

Mr. O'Connell asked what staff it would take to put the unified arts program in place the way administration would like to have it. Dr. Campbell stated they wouldn't be prepared to give what staff that would be tonight as they would need to do some analysis first.

Mr. Broverman stated that if 100 students are reading and writing below grade level, he thinks it is incumbent on the Board to do something about that, and the doubling of the Language Arts program looks like a reasonable attempt to improve the situation. He thinks that if they didn't do something like this, given the number of students affected, that would be very unfortunate. He supports the proposal.

Mrs. Carbone asked if they maintained those unified arts on the trimester schedule, how would that affect the grid that was provided at the last meeting. Mr. Harnett stated that the current time schedule that the middle school is on is going to stay the same. They are going to add the Language Arts piece, but the other thing to realize is that after homeroom in the morning right now, students have 20 minutes of SSR. That time is being pulled out, and that time is being put into the periods throughout the day so they receive more direct instruction. So there are a couple of modifications going on there, but overall the time periods in the schedule in the packet will change a little bit. But the way Band, Chorus, and Orchestra meet, the way they see art, the way they have PE, and those things are going to have to stay the same, based on the needs and things that were proposed and put forth this year.

Mr. Cavagnero asked what they are using for an assessment piece on this. Dr. Campbell responded that they will use the CMT scores because that is the gun that is at their head right now, and since they test every single student at the middle school they will use those. They are going to be watching the migration. Are they pushing more kids to proficiency? Are kids moving from proficiency to goal over time? She is aware of the fact that each year they test a different group with 6<sup>th</sup> grade. However, when they disaggregate down to the instructional level, they can tell whether Barbara Campbell made progress on developing an interpretation from the time she was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade until the time she was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Mr. Lutka asked based on the fact that they are experiencing problems with the unified arts teachers teaching more than 125 students, how is that dealt with contractually with respect to the double period that now is going to be taught by the Language Arts. Dr. O'Brien stated there are several elements in the contract. One of them defines the length of the teacher day and the contact time for teachers with their students. There is another piece that talks about a maximum of 125 teacher load, whether it is the high school or the middle school. This only affects the unified arts, but not the Language Arts 1 and 2 groups. If they are able to go to the kind of schedule that Matt suggested, the teachers would exceed that 125 number which would be a contractual violation. That is the only part that kicks in with the 125. When you think about the additional Language Arts 2 teacher for grade 7, that person's load is going to be 100. It is going to be those young people who need the double dose. So those classes will be a bit smaller than normal, and teachers will be able to individualize and differentiate more. The same thing is true with the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Mr. Lutka stated he was still having a difficult time visualizing how they increase the time spent with students without increasing the amount of teachers. Dr. O'Brien said perhaps she wasn't clear, but they are planning on adding 2 teachers, 1 Language Arts grade 7 and 1 Language Arts grade 8, but they are cost neutral. There is no impact in the budget because they have been able to find economies in FTE overall.

Mrs. Traub asked about the annual yearly progress at the middle school. The reason the middle school was cited, was it subgroups or was it specific? Dr. Campbell stated it has bounced around over the years. It has consistently been special education, but sometimes

it is free and reduced depending on the grade level and sometimes it is ELL. But the regular ed students aren't keeping up with adequate yearly progress, so there is a lot of work to do at the middle school.

Mrs. Traub stated if adding the Language Arts 2 will reach those subgroups that keep getting reported every year. Dr. Campbell stated yes it will, absolutely.

### **Receive THS GOAL Program Proposal**

*In a motion by Miss Laus with a second by Mr. O'Connell, the Board moved to receive the THS GOAL Program Proposal. Miss Laus, Mrs. Traub, Mr. Lyons, Prof. Royals, Mrs. Carbone, Mr. Broverman, and Mr. Oliver voted in favor. Mr. Lutka and Mr. O'Connell were opposed. The motion carried and the GOAL program was formally received.*

Dr. O'Brien stated that they are still investigating 3 sites. They plan to have a recommendation for the Board for the March 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. They are very close to some closure, but she can't say much because they are still in progress with the 3 variables. The educational program is pretty much what it is and the Board has seen that. As soon as they get the site nailed down, they will develop an assessment piece. She believes there was information included in the previous packet about electives and what would happen in grades 11 and 12, so they feel like they are heading in that direction. At this point, it is just a place holder on the agenda, in case any of the Board members would like to make any additional comments or requests, but administration plans to have a finalized recommendation on March 7<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Carbone commended administration for chasing down every lead. She knows that it is time consuming and frustrating. But she is concerned about the program as designed, particularly about the criterion for the students. She is concerned that they are going to be missing the mark on the students that are here at the high school in the Links Program, as she keeps hearing it said and reported that they have lost virtually all of those students that were moved here. She hears 40, but in looking at some old data that she had in her archives here, she thinks at one point it was actually presented to the Board that there were 30 students. So she is looking at those 30 students as of January of 2006, and she is looking at the 66 students that were considered to have dropped out per Dr. Campbell's report, and she thinks 50% of the drop-outs appear to be those Links students. She is concerned that the program being considered right now is not going to hit those kids, and she wonders what they need to do to get them.

Dr. O'Brien responded that they actually need 2 alternative high school programs. The one that they are presenting now is the most for the money. Links is not the most for the money. In terms of NEASC and in terms of impacting the largest number of young people who have the highest probability of success, it is these young people. This program was never designed for Links. Probably some of the Links students might qualify for this, but the criteria here are different than the SPED criteria that are part of Links. Links is a special education program. THS GOAL is an inclusion program for

regular ed young people and some special ed young people who could benefit from this environment. The bottom line is they are suggesting this program first because it will be the most cost effective and have the most immediate positive result for these 40 young people and impacting the graduation rate. Next year, they will be asking for a second alternative program that will be a SPED designed program that is much more specific in nature for these young people. At the administrative level, decisions have to be made in terms of which things come first, and programming is looked at over a period of 2 or 3 years, and it seemed to them that this was the best program impacting the highest number of young people who had the highest probability of success.

Mrs. Carbone asked about the information about the elective component. Dr. Campbell stated she thinks it was in a previous Board packet. When she and Dr. O'Brien sat down to work that through, they had students at this program who would take 2 or 3 years to get up to speed and that would be the first focus because they need those credits. Then adding the electives, they would look to build those partnerships along the way with things like martial arts academies or the dance. The original plan at a site was also to have some technology electives, but this will be very site dependent because at some sites more of that can be built in. If the site doesn't allow, they will look for alternative ways to make certain those students have elective experiences, but they do need electives to get out of THS, and that is the goal for these young people. Their graduation requirements are going to be precisely the same as for other students.

Mrs. Carbone stated that in referring to some old material back in 2002, the Board had an independent evaluation of the special education programs done, and overwhelmingly in the report she kept reading that these students really need strong vocational opportunity and training. She is concerned that this program as presented wouldn't afford them those opportunities. Dr. O'Brien responded that these are not the same kids.

Mrs. Carbone stated as she recalls 1/3 of these students would be special ed students. Dr. O'Brien stated that they estimated that it would be 2/3 regular ed and 1/3 special ed, but that was not hard and fast, and just like every environment for learning, it has to be the right environment for the young person's handicapping condition. Thinking back to experiences that she has had, this setting is really very good for those young people who have learning disabilities who might have some hyperactivity issues who need a smaller group in which to work, and who maybe need to stand up and walk around a little bit, and then come back and do their work. A person who had a hearing or speech deficit, people who are impacted that way even though they are SPED students could benefit from this environment for a number of reasons, but young people who are emotionally disturbed or psychologically disturbed are not the candidates for this particular offering. They need a different, more specialized offering. In fact, in some of the alternative programming in Dr. O'Brien's past, there was actually a component for young people of that description that involved mentoring and linkages and internships that took place during the day. These young people were over 16, and they could be in an employment setting. During the day, they might have an internship or an employment opportunity job coaching that went along with it, and then they would come back to school and do the core of their curriculum later, like in a late afternoon setting or an evening setting. That is a totally different program, but it is very appropriate for young people with that particular need.

THS GOAL doesn't serve that particular body of young people because these are 13, 14, and 15 year olds. They can't be out there in the employment setting. But this is an opportunity to save the struggling freshman and sophomores before they walk out the door the next year.

Mrs. Carbone stated she is also concerned about the Core Plus program as that is another program from which many of the students will not qualify for the GOAL, and here again she is sensing that there is a program right here that needs some attention and resources. She wonders if the some of the criterion should be adjusted so that some of these students would qualify.

Dr. O'Brien stated that the Core Plus young people were the ones who met with Dr. Campbell at the start when Dr. Campbell joined the staff here at Torrington public schools. They were the young people who told Dr. Campbell what they wanted and needed in order to be successful, and many of the things that are embedded in THS GOAL program are the things that those young people told Dr. Campbell.

Dr. Campbell stated that some Core Plus students with the support of the teachers here at the high school are doing well and succeeding in their regular classes. This is not a proposal to pull a rug out from any student, but a proposal that says they are going to focus resources on students who qualify. Their criterion are different from Core Plus. If some of the students can stay at the high school who were Core Plus students and thrive in the regular ed environment that is fine, but the Core Plus students were very clear. If they had their way and the high school had enough space, they thought the best learning environment for them was to build on a wing with their own entrance, and they were more than willing to help design what their classrooms were going to look like and help build the schedule. What they didn't want to be was in the hustle and bustle of the high school. They wanted to be apart. Some of them were fine being here, but the vast majority of them said they would like their own entrance and their own "place."

Mr. Cavagnero stated in his mind what he is uncomfortable with, which was implied in the question by Mrs. Carbone, is having overlapping programs. They are looking for efficiencies, and while he understands how students could certainly define and dictate their needs, it is the Board's responsibility to provide the funding for the most efficient use of the resources. He would feel more comfortable with fewer programs reaching 2 related types of students instead of having 3 programs. Thus far, the 2 programs in existence, neither one seems to be working or particularly effective. So he thinks that is part of what some of the reluctance and some of the questioning and dissection of this program. He thinks the Board is trying to get a handle on why 3 related programs are needed, dealing with very related sorts of students, and can they not actually roll Core Plus into this GOAL program.

Dr. O'Brien stated that they need to look at what the school has. Links is the old Southeast program brought back to THS, and it still needs work. Core Plus is an inclusionary program that has some SPED young people, and some regular ed young people. Some of them are doing well at THS, and they are in the fabric of the school.

Some of these Core Plus young people who were School Within a School students are succeeding, and administration is not going to pull the rug out from under them. They will keep on keeping on. But there is also a group of Core Plus students who are not succeeding because the large school environment is still too much for them. So administration would be taking that subset of Core Plus students and students on the waiting list for Core Plus, they would be part of this group as well. Then the other piece that Dr. O'Brien sees is that she would specifically request Dr. Metallo, the teachers, and the guidance folk to go through the entire freshman class and find out who has no credit. Who has been here for a whole semester and has failed every single class? Go through the entire sophomore class. Who has been here for 2 years and has failed every single class? They are out there. Are there young people who have been here for 2 years at THS, and have 1 credit?. The Board has seen some of these young people at expulsions. The Board has looked at some of those transcripts at expulsions, and a young person has been here 2 or 3 years and they have 2 credits. Those are some of the young people administration wants to reach out to, before they get to that state where they are in an expulsion setting. Especially those young people who have the ability, but their attendance is not good and they are disconnected. So those are the subgroups, and over time she thinks they can improve Links, but this year the Core Plus young people who are successful will stay here, and the other group will serve a larger range of students but include some of the Core Plus students.

Mr. Lyons asked if a proper venue is not found, what will happen with the program in the fall of 2007. He hates to throw it out because of the importance of what Dr. O'Brien mentioned in terms of those students, But if by March 7<sup>th</sup> there is not an appropriate venue, would there be an alternative?

Dr. O'Brien stated she doesn't think from chatting with Dr. Metallo that he has room for this kind of a program at THS. She stated from her latest conversation with Dr. Metallo, that he didn't think that there was enough available space at THS to actually do what she and Dr. Campbell are suggesting.

Mr. Lutka asked if any attempt to contact the people in Winsted at Explorations had been made to see whether or not there was the possibility of sending some of these students to that particular program. Dr. O'Brien responded that she wants to keep their students at the high school.

Mr. Lutka stated that he noticed that they send like 40 or 50 students to Wamogo. Dr. Campbell stated that they don't send them, that is the student's choice.

Mr. Lutka stated but they go and their tuition is paid. Isn't that an approved program at Wamogo?. Dr. Campbell stated that it is a state approved program.

Mr. Lutka stated that the charter school in Winsted is a state approved program also, so he is failing to see the difference between the Explorations program and the Wamogo program. Dr. O'Brien stated it is the difference between public school and charter school. There is a huge difference, and governance is one of them.

Mr. Lutka stated his only other follow up is that he wanted to make sure that this was a receipt tonight. He stated that he also went through the THS budget document that he received tonight, and he saw in there a rental for \$56,600, so he assumed that they already have a site in mind if they have that precise amount. Dr. O'Brien stated that is a placeholder, and the site for which that was appropriate is no longer on their radar screen. But she said not to write off that amount until March 7<sup>th</sup>. When these budgets were prepared and the dollars were put there, they actually thought they had a deal. So rather than pull that out and then have to add something back in, they left that as a place holder in the event that they actually do find a suitable place, given their 3 variables that they are looking at right now.

Mr. O'Connell stated that he thinks that Mr. Lutka's comment about Explorations is an interesting tie in to Mr. Lyons' question about an alternative for next year. It would be something interesting to pursue, if they don't have something else available. But he is still going to vote against this because he has yet to receive information on what this program will cost, and unless he knows what this program will cost, not the site but the program, he can't support the program.

Mr. O'Connell asked Dr. O'Brien a question about a communication that she sent to the Board earlier this week where she mentioned that one site she was looking at withdrew their site at the last minute, and she indicated that she thought that behind the scene skullduggery was involved. He wanted to know what she meant by that. Dr. O'Brien stated that she had no comment.

Mr. O'Connell stated that he would then say that in the future if she is looking to send out information to the Board, and to him in particular, that has allegations of that which she is not willing to substantiate, he would kindly ask her not to do that. Dr. O'Brien stated that she would kindly ask Mr. O'Connell to not conduct an evaluation of her in public. Mr. O'Connell stated that this was a question and not an evaluation. Dr. O'Brien stated no, that it was a very negative comment, and she shared with all Board members that this was going to be discussed with leadership with the appropriate privacy for all individuals and organizations at 5 p.m. on February 28<sup>th</sup>, and she doesn't appreciate a public evaluation of her verbiage, and she has no further comment. Mr. O'Connell stated that he would say that this was not an evaluation. She sent that information and he asked for clarification, and he doesn't think that is evaluative at all.

Mr. Cavagnero stated he thinks those are 2 positions and he thinks they should leave it at that.

Mr. O'Connell stated that he would ask the chair to rule on this. If the chair feels he made an evaluative comment then to rule on that.

Mr. Cavagnero stated that actually he doesn't believe that it was evaluative. This was regarding a letter posted to all of the Board members, and it was a question related to what was meant in that letter, and he thinks it was a totally appropriate question to ask.

Dr. O'Brien stated that she has just said, and she will say one more time, that there are individuals and organizations that have privacy rights, and she is respectful of the privacy rights of those organizations and those individuals. She is, therefore, not going to comment and violate anyone's confidentiality or privacy rights including her own. She feels she has made it abundantly clear to everyone including Mr. O'Connell, that this discussion will take place with the Board officers in a confidential setting to protect all of the people around this table and the organizations that they represent. It will take place at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, February 28<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. O'Connell stated that the communication he was referring to was a communication sent to the entire Board, and on that basis he believed that he as a Board member he had the right to ask for clarification. The communication did not go to Board leadership and if it had then it would be appropriate for Board leadership to receive that clarification. But that is not what happened.

Mr. Cavagnero stated that what he would like to do is have the Board leadership meet with Dr. O'Brien, hear what has to be said, and then they will report back to the Board, and if there are questions from the Board, they will hold executive session and Board members are certainly entitled to get answers and ask questions of their own of such a statement. So this will be done in 2 steps, but it will be done.

Dr. O'Brien stated she would also like to say as she has said a number of times that the entire package will be presented March 7<sup>th</sup>. They cannot give any details about all the financial impact until they have a site. So on March 7<sup>th</sup>, given that they have a site, the Board will receive an assessment model, answers to any other questions that are posed this evening or via email, and a full financial report in terms of the cost of this program. It is ludicrous to think that can be had tonight, when they have not finalized the site piece.

Mr. O'Connell stated he did not think his question about the budget was ludicrous. Mr. Cavagnero said he didn't either, and he would like to refrain from using descriptive adjectives like that. It was not a ludicrous question. It was simply a comment of what his vote was going to be.

Mr. Cavagnero said that he has a question about the cost of this program that perhaps could be answered tonight. The program administrator that will be assigned to this has already been identified. That program administrator was previously moved to another school, an elementary school, precisely to handle overloads particularly in SPED paperwork. Is that correct? Dr. O'Brien stated no, not particularly.

Mr. Cavagnero asked if they moved that 1 administrator who was assigned to this school to do a particular job or to help administrate at that school, and he is moved across to administer this program with 40 kids, who is going to backfill for his assignments and his work at this previous school. Dr. O'Brien responded no one because that school is losing 84 students to Torrington. The enrollment of that school is going to be 400, and it will no longer need the support from him.

Mr. Cavagnero said but if this administrator in the past year has been handling X number of students and their needs, and now they are pulling that administrator over to handle 40 kids, whether or not those kids currently exist in school A or school B, there is a finite sum of children that this administrator was servicing. Who is going to provide the services that he has been providing this year? He is just trying to get a handle on the cost neutral aspect, because he is wondering if they have to hire someone to fill in for his duties this year. Dr. O'Brien stated that they don't. Dr. Campbell stated this particular person was transferred to an elementary school to handle the overcrowding or the amount of students at an elementary school. Those 84 students from Forbes School are now going to Torrington. That school has an assistant principal so that person who was temporarily assigned to Forbes to handle the large number of students is no longer needed at Forbes. Those children will now be served by a school that has an assistant principal.

Mr. Broverman stated that the Explorations program and Winsted were discussed a few months ago, and at the time it was said that it would be a shame if we don't have our own program here at Torrington for our students. Assuming we get a program and it is up and running for the fall, do you anticipate students coming back from Explorations to the program? Dr. O'Brien stated they possibly could. As Dr. Campbell had indicated earlier, young people who go to Wamogo do so by choice. Young people who go to Oliver Wolcott go there by choice. Young people from Torrington in our attendance area who go to Explorations go via choice as well. But any student who lives in the attendance area is eligible to apply to go to our program as well. So if we have a person who is currently 9<sup>th</sup> grade, but will be 10<sup>th</sup> grade next year, and would like to apply to our program, that young person would be considered as part of the applicant pool and could be chosen.

Mr. Broverman said so it is certainly not automatic. He could go to THS regular program, but not simply because he is in Explorations would he be admitted to the GOAL program. Dr. O'Brien stated that was exactly right. All of the students have to apply, the parent and student have to sign a contract, and there is a whole set of stipulations that must be met. But clearly, they wouldn't in any way discriminate against the Exploration students who live within the attendance area.

Mrs. Traub stated she backs up the concerns of Mrs. Carbone and Mr. Cavagnero in that if there are programs in the high school, she wants to see them not bettered. And she feels if our goal is to reduce the drop-out rate, she is a big advocate for starting at the lower end and working her way up instead of starting at the top. Doing the GOAL program will definitely help these 40 students, but at the same point, she is more concerned with reaching the younger students before they get to this position where they are perhaps failing every course as a freshman. Those problems started way before 9<sup>th</sup> grade. She would like to reach those students earlier. She would like serious consideration for an alternative program at the middle school as soon as possible.

Mrs. Traub also stated she would be remiss not to mention that the communication that was sent to the Board has had her stomach in knots for days, because now basically an

accusation is out there. It could be one or any Board member that might be involved in the accusation, and now it is up to Board leadership to decide after they hear this on the 28<sup>th</sup> if this should be brought to executive session. Dr. O'Brien asked why she is assuming she is talking about Board members. Mrs. Traub stated that is the way she interpreted it. She feels the word skullduggery is a very deep word. That is a word that means intentional and that word to her was a very strong word to all the Board members, and it makes her nervous. She doesn't want people to think that she doesn't want a GOAL program. That is not the case. She is a Board member who is worried about these students and wants them to succeed. But everything does have to be in place before a Board member can make a decision.

Mr. Oliver stated that they have talked about incorporating other existing programs into this GOAL program, and now it was mentioned that students would be eligible who live in district who are going to Explorations or maybe a Montessori school for example. His concern is that if they are capping this at 40 students and it is now all inclusive, who are they actually reaching and how many students are they actually affecting. Do the facilities they are looking at have expansion capabilities so they can take on an additional 40 students if that is the goal of the program. He doesn't want to have 40 and really they are only taking 20 out of that subset, and they have still not addressed any of the needs of those other students and they are at risk anyways. That is his concern and he is interested in follow up.

Dr. O'Brien stated that the 40 students would be a number that would be both cost effective and also impactful on the drop-out rate. Admittedly, she doesn't know very much about Explorations. She doesn't know a great deal about the quality of programming, the curriculum, any of that with charter schools because she is really busy with the 7 she is responsible for. It could be that the young people are happy at Explorations as she has heard very nice things from parents and from some of the students, so she doesn't envision oodles of people coming from Explorations to apply, but the point she wanted to make is that they are certainly not excluded. They live in the attendance area and they would not be excluded. This is a good number to get the foot in the door with the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders. In other programs that she is thinking of, you want to cap them out at around 70 or 80, because as soon as this gets too big and too complex, it loses the element of the personalization and the learning environment that these young people need. What she thinks would be ideal rather than 10 students at each grade level is 20 at each grade level. But this is the first step. They don't have enough resources to do the whole thing. She knows specifically one site would have growth capabilities, which is one of the reasons why it is attractive. She will be looking at another site on Monday with David Bascetta, and the third site has growth potential.

Mr. Lyons suggested that maybe administration could recommend some schools that could be visited that have alternative programs. Mr. Cavagnero stated personally he would love to visit the charter school and Explorations and see what they have. It is his understanding charter schools are set up by the State. Mr. Lyons stated charter schools are different than alternative schools, so you are talking oranges and apples.

Mr. Lutka stated he would like to move the question.

*In a motion by Mr. Lutka, with a second by O'Connell , the Board voted to move the question. All were in favor.*

### **Receive Monthly Financial Statement – January 2007**

*In a motion by Mrs. Traub, with a second by Miss Laus, the Board moved to receive the monthly financial statement – January 2007. All were in favor.*

Mr. O'Connell stated that the budget committee recommends receipt of the financial statement.

### **Approve Budget Transfers**

*In a motion by Mr. O'Connell, with a second by Mr. Broverman , the Board moved to approve budget transfer 2007-017. All were in favor*

Mr. O'Connell stated that there is a budget transfer in the packet 16 that does not require Board approval because it is not technically a transfer under the policy, but it is in the agenda packet and he has been informed by a Board member that he would like a question about it.

Mr. Lutka stated that his question was about the transference from the Math account to the Miscellaneous account to purchase Social Studies textbooks. Does that mean that these students have been without textbooks since the beginning of the school year? Dr. O'Brien responded that this means that they have old, dilapidated Social Studies textbooks that are going to be replaced by that \$9000.

Mr. Lutka stated that in looking at the budget presentation, he thought it was very informative also, and he especially liked the fact that she moved textbooks into a mandated account. He thinks that is important because quite obviously they need to work on the textbook account especially for the middle school.

*In a motion by Mr. O'Connell, with a second by Mr. Lutka, the Board moved to approve budget transfer 2007-018. All were in favor.*

Mr. O'Connell commented that this was one of three budget transfers that show significant parts of the TAG program budget being moved out of TAG into other programs, and this was investigated and the administration provided information that clearly demonstrates that these are not instructional supplies that were determined during the year not to be needed by the new staff that were hired and it does not have any negative impact on the TAG program that is being delivered to the students.

Mr. Lutka asked about the repair equipment for the nurses. Is that placing any of the students at risk? Dr. Campbell stated that is so if something breaks they will have money to fix it.

*In a motion by Mr. O’Connell, with a second by Mr. Lutka , the Board moved to approve budget transfer 2007-019. All were in favor.*

*In a motion by Mr. O’Connell, with a second by Mr. Broverman , the Board moved to approve budget transfer 2007-020. All were in favor.*

*In a motion by Mr. O’Connell, with a second by Mr. Broverman, the Board moved to approve budget transfer 2007-021. All were in favor.*

*In a motion by Mr. O’Connell, with a second by Mr. Broverman, the Board moved to approve budget transfer 2007-022. All were in favor.*

*In a motion by Mr. O’Connell, with a second by Mr. Lutka, the Board moved to approve budget transfer 2007-023. All were in favor.*

Mr. Lutka asked what noninstructional supply for nurses represents. Dr. Campbell stated they have kept \$350.00 in the account to cover her anticipated needs throughout the year. The nurses have gone through and inventoried what they have and have submitted an order for the rest of the year.

## **SCHOOL/COMMUNITY SESSION**

Victoria Measles, 36 Forest Court – She spoke about the THS production called While the Lights are Out. She invited everyone to attend. It shows at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, and 8:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. It is a murder mystery farce and really funny.

## **COMMENTS FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER**

Prof. Royals stated that she is disappointed that none of their student representatives came tonight and they haven’t come for the last few meetings. She would like to suggest if they are not able to attend that they appoint another student to come and give their reports, or perhaps Dr. Metallo can appoint a student to come and give reports.

Mrs. Traub asked if the schools have an avenue in which to get the information to those students, or if those student reps contact the elementary schools to get information.

**Dr. O’Brien stated she thinks that is part of their responsibility as representatives, but she is not sure exactly how that takes place. She stated she will find out.**

Mr. O’Connell stated that they are continuing to struggle with communication. He does appreciate Mr. Cavagnero’s ruling on some matters tonight to clarify that so that they were resolved. However, there is one aspect of communication that doesn’t seem to be

working in terms of a process, and that is communication between meetings. Last Friday, he sent a message with some concerns about some communication that he had received because he thought that was the process. But after 5 days, he has not even had an acknowledgement that the communication was sent to Board leadership, and that is very disappointing to him. If that is the process that they are going to follow, and the process is that it takes more than 5 days for a response, some other process will have to be adopted because he can't act as a Board member or as a budget committee chair under those guidelines.

Mr. Cavagnero stated that if he doesn't respond to an email, he always responds to his cell phone.

Mr. O'Connell stated that he thinks that if the idea is that the communication is supposed to be to Board leadership that is what he did. He doesn't think it is his job to follow up with a phone call. He did what he thought he needed to do. If that process doesn't work, he thinks they need to develop a different process. He doesn't think it should be up to him to try to track Mr. Cavagnero down by cell phone.

Mr. Cavagnero stated that due to his work schedule, he is much more tied to his cell phone than to a computer, and therefore, much more accessible by cell.

Mr. O'Connell stated that one thing he thinks Mr. Cavagnero could do differently is work out an arrangement with the rest of the Board leadership so that they don't feel constrained in terms of replying in his behalf.

Mrs. Carbone stated that she did see the email, and she didn't respond to it because the salutation was addressed to Mr. Cavagnero. However, it would have been just as easy for her to just pick up the phone and say that they needed to respond to this. There is an issue and this was the process that the entire Board decided was the appropriate process. So she apologized that she didn't follow up, but she will do so from now on.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Mrs. Carbone reported they do have some policy work to do, but given the budget work that has been pressing and keeping everyone tied up, she thinks they will probably get to that in April.

Mr. O'Connell stated that on behalf of the budget committee and the administration, he encouraged attendance at the budget hearings. There will be a public comment session just as there was last year, and personally he thinks the budget committee did listen to that public comment. He thinks it did influence some of the recommendations made last year. Secondly, he reported the Board of Finance meeting has been rescheduled for March 6 at 4 p.m. A couple of things the budget committee was going to look at was the quarter report on the student activity fund in terms of trying to figure out a better way to schedule quarterly reports. He also hoped to provide some information in terms of how the district would be tackling the budget deficit. The budget committee has made a very

strong request of the administration to come up with that proposal for the March meeting. The issue is that the administration has identified that there is approximately a \$750,000 deficit by year end. If the Board of Finance provides some revenue that was not anticipated by anybody, revenue that is directly related to some of the costs that are driving those deficits, that could bring that deficit down to somewhere between \$250,000 to \$350,000. Administration has rightfully put in a budget freeze to try and keep those costs under control, but at this point there is still a fairly significant deficit. The budget committee is not wanting to make a decision in June about this, so they are looking to have the administration come back in March with its proposal for how it will balance the budget so they will know by year end that there will not be a deficit situation.

Mr. Cavagnero stated that this is not just the budget committee's concern. This is everybody's concern. This is a serious number and the way to go about tackling it falls on the administration and the Board. This will be revisited a number of times.

Mrs. Traub stated that there is a page missing from the budget about all of the site budgets. She said 75% of the budget is in those first 3 or 4 account classifications and they are not there for each site. She asked that those be provided. Dr. Campbell responded that at the back of the site budget, there are enrollment and staffing numbers that break that same information now. She will provide the first page, but in the meantime that page gives the same information as it shows last year's approved budget and this year's requested budget.

## **ITEMS FOR UPCOMING AGENDA**

Dr. O'Brien stated she has the THS GOAL finalist on March 7<sup>th</sup> with all the component parts including the site, the assessment piece, and the total cost features.

Mr. Lutka asked if that will be provided in the Board packet so the Board can analyze it before they arrive. Dr. O'Brien stated that it would.

Mr. Broverman asked at what point they are going to relook at the progress for NEASC. Dr. O'Brien said she thought at the end of March. Dr. Campbell stated that today and yesterday were professional development days, and they spent a fair amount of time finalizing the drafts of the reports. They are working on the tracking of assessment. They are in sprint to the end, and she thinks the Board's discussion when they last did their report was that if this is done too soon it wouldn't get a picture of where they landed on the sprint. So they talked about the end of March, beginning of April. Dr. O'Brien added that the consultants mentioned that the teachers did an outstanding job and they were very pleased.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

*In a motion by Mrs. Carbone, with a second by Prof. Royals, the Board moved to adjourn at 9:45 p.m.*

