

**TORRINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING  
March 7, 2007**

CALL TO ORDER - The meeting was called to order by Mr. Cavagnero at 7:05 p.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, Mr. Jacobs, Dr. O'Brien, Dr. Campbell, Ms. Haynes

Absent: Mayor Bingham, Miss Kulesza, and Miss Shugrue

**SCHOOL COMMUNITY SESSION**

**Public Participation**

Sandra Ammirato, 79 Brass Mill Dam Road – She spoke about the THS GOAL program and Forbes. She indicated she has 2 students at Forbes and have been attending a lot of Board meetings recently. She has taught at a junior high and high school for 22 years, so she is familiar with the GOAL program type of activities and alternative school things. She came to hear the THS GOAL proposal, and she would like an opportunity to ask some questions after the proposal is presented regarding some of the issues.

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

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

Mr. Broverman stated he has some difficulty with both approving and receiving the GOAL site tonight in one meeting. Policy calls for 2 weeks. He said he supports the program, but he feels this is not a minor change but a big thing. He is not suggesting they modify the agenda. He only wants to note that they do have the opportunity to table it.

Mrs. Carbone stated she agrees with Dr. Broverman. She thinks they should leave it on the agenda, but she certainly is open to tabling later on if they have to.

Mr. O'Connell stated he would support the motion to approve the agenda. He would just as soon have this issue resolved tonight if possible. As budget committee chair, he notes that if this is put off until the 21<sup>st</sup>, which is the night they are supposed to be making their recommendations concerning the budget, he thinks that makes it very difficult for the budget committee.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*On a motion by Mr. O'Connell, with a second by Prof. Royals, the Board moved to approve the minutes of February 7, 2007. All were in favor except for Mr. Lyons who abstained.*

*On a motion by Mr. Broverman, with a second by Mr. Oliver, the Board moved to approve the special meeting minutes of February 21, 2007. All were in favor except for Mr. Lyons and Mr. O'Connell who abstained.*

## **INFORMATION SHARING SESSION**

### **Student Board Member Reports**

Mr. Jacobs reported that the THS National Honor Society held an outstanding food drive during February for the United Way. Students collected over 3,300 items of food and nearly \$400.00 to donate to this worthy cause. CAPT testing began on Monday, March 5<sup>th</sup> and lasts through Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup>. Last Thursday, band and concert kicked off Music in Schools month. Also, the THS orchestra and choir concert is happening on March 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 at the middle school. On March 27<sup>th</sup>, the THS and TMS jazz bands will present a night of jazz with the Central Connecticut State University jazz ensemble at 7 p.m. in the middle school auditorium. For the 7<sup>th</sup> year, the THS band has been named to the 100 best communities for music education in America. Cabaret night is a faculty and student event with highlighted music from Broadway and Hollywood. The show is March 29<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. and tickets are \$7. The lady Raiders played Tuesday in the semi-finals of the States. This is the first time ever that the girl's basketball team has made it to the State semi-finals. The loss was a heartbreaker. The boy's basketball State tournament round 2 game is tonight at 7 p.m. here at the high school. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and tickets are \$5 for students and \$7 for adults.

The child development classes and preschool lab had a local author, Barbara Fincken, and illustrator, Vee Kausel, come to THS. Their book, Nite Nite Mares, is part of the preschool literacy base curriculum. The women first spoke with the high school students about how to write, illustrate, and publish children's books. Then the THS students planned and presented projects in math, science, dramatic play, and art to the preschoolers. Ms. Fincken and Ms. Kausel had nothing but positive complements for the high school students and their ability to teach youngsters from a piece of literature.

TMS and the elementary schools are also in the middle of their CMT testing. From Vogel-Wetmore, there will be a penny auction sponsored by the Vogel-Wetmore PTO on Saturday, March 10<sup>th</sup> from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Recently, the students attended a production of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory at the Warner Theatre. They would like to thank the Lions Club for sponsoring the program. Four Vogel students were named as winners in this year's fire prevention poster contest. They are Jennifer Borja and Renee Shields in grade 4, and Hailey Ross and Courtney Parsons in grade 5. From Southwest School, 5 very talented artists have their artwork displayed in the Best in Northwest at the Artwell

Gallery. Southwest is very proud of Dominique Carlson, Alexa King, Paige Middleton, Olivia Polanco, and Kristie Shalvoy.

Mr. O'Connell stated he came across a write up about the THS Interact Club who participated in the Penguin Plunge on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, and they were prominently mentioned and photographed. He commended them for their efforts in raising \$1300.00 for Special Olympics. He also wished there could have been some press about the authors who came to the school. This would have been good press for the preschool program which they are trying to promote, as well as for the high school in general.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. O'Brien stated that one of the things they have focused on throughout the district is gathering food for your neighbors for the United Way campaign. Last year they were recognized by United Way for contributing as a school district 21% of all the donations. At that time they contributed around 5100 items of food. She is happy to report that the district this year increased the donations by approximately 10%, and in addition to the wonderful work at THS, all other schools, as well as Migeon Avenue, brought the total to 5600 cans of food. She is very pleased with all of the activities of the students, the faculty administrators, and support staff, as everyone pitches in on this. She does hope that these actions clearly show not only to United Way, but also to the community, that the school district really cares about the community and about helping others.

She also reported that she feels like she has been a television celebrity all day. They had a mercury spill at the school today. The mercury spill was the result of a broken thermometer in a science room. It was a very small amount of mercury, only about the size of the eraser tip of a pencil. But when situations occur like this, the Fire Department is immediately called because they are the public agency that is charged with the responsibility in chemical spills and situations of this nature. The emergency plan in cooperation with the Fire Department was immediately put into action. She publicly thanked Chief Field for his swift and excellent action, and also Assistant Chief Rogers, who were here on site during the entire episode. This all started around 10 o'clock. By about quarter till 2, the building had been totally cleared, and given the okay by the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as by the group that does the cleaning. She publicly complimented Dr. Metallo for being an excellent on-site leader, leading the faculty and the students, and keeping the situation very calm and orderly. The faculty members were outstanding as well. Most of all, she thanked the students. She was on site for a couple of hours, and in the gym with many of the students. The kids were fabulous and she was very pleased with them and how they handled an unforeseen situation. The CAPT testing was, of course, put on hold and a source of happiness for the students. There should have been a CAPT test, but this will be rescheduled. The State Department of Education has understood the situation and the school has been absolved of the CAPT testing disaster today.

She also wanted to make sure that people who called her office or Dr. Metallo's office know that when they have a situation like this with a chemical spill, the Superintendent of

Schools is not the head honcho. She cooperates and does whatever the Torrington Fire Department tells her to do because they are the experts. In their municipal emergency plan, a command center is formed of which she is part, but she relies on the expertise and the training of the Fire Department in situations like this. She then called up Dr. John Metallo and Mr. Bascetta to answer any questions that the Board might have regarding the situation.

Dr. Metallo commended the students as they had to move approximately 650 students very quickly to the gym, and the student's behavior and cooperation was perfect. The school was totally calm throughout the day. The teachers and the staff members also did a wonderful job of keeping everybody where they needed to be. .

Mr. Cavagnero asked about the severity of the problem. What could have gone wrong?

Dr. Metallo stated that mercury vaporizes very rapidly and it could cause a person to be ill. Everything that the Fire Department directed them to do was precautionary to make sure that students were kept in the right places and away from the wrong places until the air could be properly monitored. Some staff members and students who were right in the vicinity were actually scanned with a device to make sure that they had no problem and then also the air quality and so on was sampled. In an emergency like this, probably the worst thing that could happen is to have concerned parents show up and want to take their kids. As there are close to 1400 kids, if half of parents show up it is a mess. The police helped to keep control of the perimeter of the school, and information was gotten out so parents knew and were cooperative with the situation.

One of the board members asked who pays for the cleanup when there is a hazardous waste incident in a school.

Dr. O'Brien stated they do. She impressed upon the students and others the importance of being very careful, especially with something like mercury, which is a toxic substance. She decided today she is personally going to run a tally to see how much this cost the City of Torrington for the carelessness with this thermometer. It is not her wish to punish anyone with this figure, but she thinks young people need to be very aware that mercury is dangerous. Various schools across the State have had difficulty with mercury, so this should have been something that should not have happened in her opinion. When they had a small mercury spill at the middle school in October or so of this past year, it cost over \$10,000 for the cleanup and that was very small compared to what happened today. She will also inform this Board as to the total costs involved.

Mr. Broverman asked if any need to update or modify the emergency plan was noted as they put the plan into effect today.

Dr. Metallo stated that he thinks the plan worked very well. They will be briefed tomorrow and go through exactly what happened, but he thinks it all worked. There are certain documents that are right at the door that the firemen can get to when they get here. The school knows the building and the kids. The firemen know what the protocols are

and decide where to put the kids and how to move them. So in a very short amount of time, decisions were able to be made. But again, they will go through it themselves, and also during a weekly meeting with our school resource officer. They will probably invite one of the fire officials to come as well.

Dr. O'Brien added she had thought about inviting the Mayor because she is sure his office received a number of phone calls today as well, and Chief Milano and Chief Field to join them over at Migeon to debrief in terms of communication among the agencies. She also appreciated was the hospitality at Oliver Wolcott Technical School. Mr. Cushman was wonderful, and there were a number of parents over there who needed information and a sense of okayness with what was going on. The Fire Marshall and Dr. Lambour were over there as well. They spoke with a number of parents and it was a very good opportunity to be able to have a command center away from the site.

Prof. Royals asked Dr. Metallo if this had gone on longer and students were not able to leave until 4 or 5 in the afternoon, what kind of additional provisions could be made for those students. Would they get some food? Would they be able to use the restroom? What other provisions are there?

Dr. Metallo responded that throughout the day students were allowed to use the restrooms. If it were to be longer, in this kind of situation, food would need to be brought in to them. In other situations depending on what the issue was, they could possibly move the students to the cafeteria. The good thing is they have the cafeteria and the gym and the auditorium, and they have some other large rooms in which they can shelter students. The placement of lavatories in the building is pretty good, as far as having access to get students to the lavatory. Also, they had some students with medical problems that did need to eat relatively quickly, and the nurses were on top of that and knew exactly what students were involved. They were able to find the students very easily and get them something because of blood sugar kind of issues.

Dr. O'Brien stated she would also like to commend David Bascetta, the Director of Facilities, who was also on site. She also added that all of the THS parents would be receiving a descriptive letter tomorrow describing what happened, the rationale, and exactly why they did what they did today. This will also be posted on the web site for any other interested parents.

Dr. Campbell stated that as far as the CAPT testing, the test that was to be given today would be given Friday. Tomorrow's test will remain the same, and then it up to the high school administration to determine when Friday's test will be given, because yesterday, today, and tomorrow are mandated days for testing, and the State tells you what you must test on those days. Friday is the science test that is not mandated. So they moved today's mandated test to Friday, and Dr. Metallo and his staff may choose another day next week to do science 1 and 2.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

### Certified Staff Resignations/Appointments

Teresa Reichen, Grade 3-EA, retire eff 6/30/07

Beth Gozdeck, Guidance-HS, retire eff 6/30/07

Irene Landry, Guidance-HS, retire eff 6/30/07

Ann Gensch, Language Arts-MS, retire eff 6/30/07

Patricia Nimchek, Literacy Support-FB, retire eff 6/30/07

Roger A. Behrens, Special Education-HS, retire eff 6/30/07

Theresa L. Doyle, English-HS, retire eff 6/30/07

Nancy Gottung, Biology-HS, resigned eff 6/30/07

Eric J. August, Social Studies-HS, hired eff 2/15/07

*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.*

## **DISCUSSION ITEM**

Dr. Campbell reported that last fall she presented to the Board the CMT and CAPT scores as they had been released by the State Department. She did a little longer presentation than she normally does because she wanted to show the difference between the calculations that she was giving in the CMT and the CAPT, and the kind of the calculation that administration would get later, probably in December, from the State and the Feds. The difference is that Connecticut had been testing with the CAPT and the CMT, and had created its own standards. When NCLB, the Federal legislation, was passed, the Feds said that they would determine whether a school was making adequate yearly progress at having 100% of its students at proficiency by 2014. The data the Board has in front of it is the Fed report produced by the State that tells how our schools have done in making adequate yearly progress. This is the data where the denominator changes. It takes 2 years to be identified as a school or a district in need of improvement and it takes 2 years to get out. So that explains why you see. For example, THS made adequate yearly progress but is still identified as in need of improvement. If they make adequate yearly progress in the CAPT they are taking right now, they will no longer be in need of improvement.

On the district report, you will also notice that there are a number of standards that administration has to meet, in math and in reading. For the high school, it is graduation rate, and for the elementary and middle schools, it is the writing proficiency rate. The graduation rate for the high school is the additional indicator that the Feds use to determine whether THS makes adequate yearly progress. In 2010, the calculation of this will change dramatically. They will compute the graduation rate by subgroups, and all of the subgroups will have to make adequate yearly progress, and the new formula will calculate the annual dropout rate for that graduating class. So they have found a way to calculate the dropout rate for that graduating class over a period of 4 years, and that will be part of adequate yearly progress.

She also noted that in some reports the subgroup size was 20 and in other places it was 40. This is because the State of Connecticut's original benchmark was if you had fewer than 20 English language learners, they did not disaggregate for that subgroup. If there were 20 students or anything higher, there is a disaggregated score for that. That remains Connecticut's standard. NCLB, by Connecticut's choice, uses subgroup sizes of 40. So when you read through some of the scores you will notice there are some indications that say "fewer than 40 students," That is the Federal law. If there are 40 or fewer students, they don't calculate the score for that subgroup and it doesn't count toward AYP, but the State still for its own standards uses group sizes of 20.

Dr. Lambour then reported concerning highly qualified teachers. Under the NCLB act of 2001, it was mandated that all elementary, middle, and high school teachers who teach 1 or more subjects in certain core areas have to be highly qualified. These core areas of instruction are English, language arts, reading, math, science, history, geography, economics, civics, government, world language, and the arts which includes music, dance, and theatre. Being highly qualified is different from being certified. The teachers have to go through Connecticut's State certification. In addition, they have to meet the Federal standards for being highly qualified. Dr. Lambour used himself as an example to illustrate this concept. He is certified in Connecticut to teach special education; however, he is not highly qualified to teach any subject because he has not taken the Praxis II exam in one of 3 areas specified for special education. He also doesn't have a major, the second way to be highly qualified. He doesn't have a major at the undergraduate or master's level in one of those subjects. What would be his choice if he would be in the classroom here in Torrington? He could be taken through what is called the "HOUSSE plan." HOUSSE stands for Highly Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation. The State said initially that each school was going to have to come up with a way of testing that the teachers meet certain State guidelines.

Dr. Lambour attended several State meetings on all this. Everyone was sitting around asking, "What are we going to do to test this and meet the State requirements?" A well-noted attorney named Thomas Mooney drafted an idea and distributed it to everyone at the meeting. It was then given to the State Department of Education who also liked it. We then took back his blueprint and drafted a Torrington HOUSSE plan. This was then submitted to the State who approved it. We then took this plan and trained all administrators on how to carry out the HOUSSE plan. We also received from the State a list of all our teachers concerning who thought to be highly qualified and not highly qualified. But after being given that list, we found out that the only way they were judging somebody as highly qualified was if they took the Praxis II. The other measure of having a major in one of those subjects, they didn't look at. So in the Summer of 2005, Dr. Lambour took every teacher's file, reviewed their transcripts, and did an analysis to see whether or not they would meet this other criteria. He then reclassified them as highly qualified, submitted to the State a corrected list, and that is where we stood with our remaining teachers who needed to go through the HOUSSE plan. Then in the year 2005-2006, the administrators implemented the HOUSSE plan on those teachers that they had to. At the end of that year, Dr. Lambour reviewed that information and whether or not it met the HOUSSE plan, and then those teachers were issued a certificate

verifying that they were highly qualified in certain subjects. This is a transportable certificate. They can go from one school district to the other with it, the same way we can accept the teachers from another district because the HOUSSE plan has been made rather uniform across the State.

So where do we stand now? At the elementary level, we're in excellent shape. We do have 3 teachers who have what is called an interim certificate, which is a certificate issued by the State of Connecticut. They are legitimately certified teachers, but the Federal government will not accept an interim certificate. They have to have an initial certificate and even that is in question by the Feds. They might want to have a provisional or professional certificate. An interim certificate means that teacher is missing something. In these 3 particular cases, those teachers still have a year within which to take the Praxis II. So by the end of this year, these teachers either will have it or they won't. If they don't have it, then we have to deal with that internally, but he is optimistic that will play out.

The other teachers that are the biggest challenge for the highly qualified are special education teachers and middle school teachers. Most special education teachers don't have majors, yet as a special education teacher you teach a lot of subjects. So they either have to take the Praxis II or go through the HOUSSE plan, or go back and get a major in each subject they teach. The State says they don't have to do this all at once. They have a period of several years. By the end of this year, they have to have the HOUSSE plan completed in at least one of those subject areas. Each principal has been given a list of their teachers who have to go through the HOUSSE plan, and they are working on that now, so that should be wrapped up this year. At the middle school, most teachers have a certificate allowing them to teach multiple subjects. Most of them like special ed, don't have a major in every one of those subjects. If they were certified a number of years ago, they didn't have to take the Praxis II. So we also had to use the HOUSSE plan on a number of the middle school teachers.

At the high school, most teachers who teach a subject have a major in it, so we are in pretty good shape at the high school. But even at the middle school, we have knocked it down to the point where Dr. Lambour thinks there are only about 3 teachers who still have to work on it, and there are some special ed teachers who are still going through the HOUSSE plan. Hopefully, that will be taken care of by the end of this year.

At the elementary level, if you have an elementary major, the State has said that covers all the subjects. Hence, you are highly qualified. If you are a special ed teacher at the elementary level, and simultaneously have dual certification in elementary ed, you are doubly blessed and you are highly qualified and can teach any of the subjects at the elementary level.

At the preschool level, it depends on the nature of your degree. It has to specifically relate to teaching preschool children. Unfortunately, a lot of the universities when they issue degrees in different parts of the country call this different things. Some call it nursery school; some call it preschool, some call it something else. So we are kind of

arguing with the State about that, and the way it is being handled so far is Dr. Lambour submits that person's transcript, the State reviews it and takes an assessment to see if it meets their basic standards for what they call a preschool program.

The State's use of the HOUSSE plan and many other states' use of the HOUSSE plan have come under scrutiny by the Federal government recently. The State was reviewed recently regarding that whole plan. It has been extended for the rest of this year and possibly into next year for certain circumstances. A special ed teacher can still continue with it. A teacher who is teaching science and next year her principal tells her to teach English, she can now go through the HOUSSE plan if she is not highly qualified in English. A teacher who returns back to education after retirement or after being an administrator and goes back into education can go through it. Then there are some cases of teachers on durational shortages, and whether or not they are going to be highly qualified. So there are still a couple of unknowns that we will be dealing with. We will get an update from the State sometime probably over the course of the summer. But the bottom line is we are in pretty good shape. Dr. Lambour has a screening he goes through with our new hires screening all the bases needed for being highly qualified. You can't get certified in Connecticut unless you have the major or take Praxis, so new people are coming in highly qualified.

Mrs. Carbone asked what a high inexperience quartile means and whether that means anything to them as a district. Dr. Campbell stated that her guess is that is because there are a lot of new teachers at the middle school.

Mrs. Carbone asked Dr. Lambour, if as HR Director he needs to pay attention to those criteria when he is looking at those schools. Dr. Lambour states he needs to find out what they mean by that. Is that less than 2 years? Less than 4 years? He doesn't think that is a bad thing as some new people coming out can have better instructional technique than some people who have been around a long time. He doesn't know that it is necessarily bad to be inexperienced.

Mrs. Carbone stated that she noticed in the text for Table 1 that it indicates that the State percentage of inexperienced teachers is about 16.6%, and we are 21.6%. She thinks that is something that we probably should be paying attention to.

Mr. Lutka asked Dr. Campbell what she thinks the chances are that the Boston Red Sox will win the World Series between now and 2014, every single year. Dr. Campbell responded that if she could answer that, she would probably retire from education and start a consulting business.

Mr. Lutka stated he was being very facetious because he thinks her chances of being able to answer that question are just about as good as her chances of being able to guarantee that by 2014, every single student in the Torrington Public Schools will be on task grade level. He thinks that is the problem with NCLB. He thinks it is totally unreasonable to expect that every single child will be on task by 2014. He believes this law needs a major revision or needs to be thrown out and started over again. He doesn't believe we are

helping kids by doing this. Just like taking teachers that are employed now and trying to determine by some abstract method whether or not they are qualified or highly qualified. How many new teachers would you hire straight out of college who are highly qualified? How many teachers by the time they get tenure are highly qualified?

Dr. Campbell stated she thinks everyone is concerned about the standard that 100% of the students can be at the proficient level. She thinks where she may see it slightly differently from Mr. Lutka is that while she thinks that standard is almost impossible to meet, she thinks the fact that somebody has raised the issue of pushing students to higher standards is a good thing. Are we asking students to push themselves academically as far as they can? She thinks NCLB has required all of us to ask every student to do as well as they can in school, and to do as well as they can in the testing because it will help them. The second thing that she sees differently is that she thinks that the data they get back they do in fact use. Each of the teachers for every single student had this aggregated data to differentiate instruction this year and when she talks to the principals about if this is happening, it is. They are taking the data and that informs them about what they are doing with kids. She doesn't want to speak for other school districts, but she needs to affirm with the Board that they are using the data every single day to help kids. It also helps the principal and the administration know that the 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers need a little more training on fluency so that they are better equipped to help kids. So she thinks in summary, NCLB is a two-edged sword. She thinks the standard is too high, but she thinks the fact that they are now asking every single student and every teacher to stretch himself or herself is a really good thing. She thinks it will make public education better.

Mr. O'Connell stated he absolutely agrees with Dr. Campbell, and with all due respect, he disagrees with Mr. Lutka. While there may be some parts of the plan that don't make sense, he thinks there are a whole lot of parts of the plan that do make sense. Specifically, what Dr. Campbell talked about in terms of stressing the students and the staff to do better and the accountability that goes along with this. And he does know that administration looks at and uses the data, and he is not at all concerned by the fact that they have mounds and mounds of data because he thinks it is useful data that the staff is using to improve instruction. Does the receipt of this report do anything to cause the administration to recommend a modification of the AYP plan?

Dr. Campbell answered that when they got the first data back, the CMT and the CAPT scores, they went back and looked at their plans. They looked at the district level and at the building level. No major modifications were needed because the plan worked reasonably well at the high school. They are in their first year out, and they made progress as a district this year. They are making minor tweaks. The Board helped them make a minor tweak last year by supporting the change in the literacy support staffing. That was a huge piece, but the major components of the plan are working, and her goal is to have good news to report next year.

Mr. O'Connell asked if the high school was more of a participation issue than a score issue in terms of their being labeled.

Dr. Campbell answered that the high school was AYP'd for several reasons, but some of the subgroups, the SPED subgroup, didn't make the proficiency standard. They weigh all of those things in calculating whether you have made AYP.

Mr. Lyons emphasized the fact that new teachers coming out of teaching colleges are more highly qualified. He says that in the sense that he sits on the State Board for the Teacher Prep program where they certify those college prep courses that are up for certification similar to the NEASC, so he sees the changes that are being made within colleges that have to come before the State Board of Education for their certification of their programs. They have been looking at just what we are saying in terms of NCLB. Can these teachers when they come out teach the students that are in our classes today? Mr. Lyons also asked about CAPT testing. He knows it is a graduation requirement, but does the Torrington district have an alternate way.

Dr. O'Brien stated there is an alternate way. Dr. Campbell stated all high schools in the State of Connecticut are required by statute to have an alternative to the CAPT. A lot of people know it as the basic skills requirement as that is the actual language in the statute. However, everybody calls it the CAPT alternative.

Dr. Lambour stated the new teachers do meet the requirements of the NCLB, and they do have introductions to an array of skills that weren't taught years ago. But he does want to stress that there are years of experience that other staff has that can only be gotten in the classroom. Although if you go farther west, they get more exposure, even starting as freshman to working with kids. The East coast still has limited in-the-classroom experience. Although he is comfortable with the new teacher's basic skills, the mentorship that is provided for 2 years is essential. The staff development that Dr. Campbell organizes allows them to grow.

Mr. Lutka asked Dr. Lambour if we hire anyone who does not have a provisional certificate. Dr. Lambour answered that most teachers come in with an initial certificate, which is the first step that they have for several years, and then they go to provisional certificate, and then to professional certificate. It is a 3-step process.

Mrs. Traub asked Dr. Campbell about making annual yearly progress in the percentages for writing on the middle school. Did she give that information?

Dr. Campbell stated that she reported 3 scores in the CMT to the Board prior to this AYP report, one in reading, writing, and math.

Mrs. Traub said she was curious to know what the percentages were the year before as according to their report they did make annual yearly progress. The reason she asks involves TMS and THS. Obviously, in the students with disabilities, low proficiency percentages are always seen. Are these students who are integrated into classrooms?

Dr. Campbell responded every single student, regardless of disability, language, or anything is tested, whether they are in or out of the classroom.

Mrs. Traub asked if they have enough provisions for the students with disabilities.

Dr. O'Brien stated they do if the Board funds their budget, as administration is asking for 2 more SPED people at the middle school and 2 more ELL teachers at district level. They have also asked for other supports. So they feel like they can move forward in these areas, if their budget moves forward. Their budget is driven by the AYP plan and the NCLB requirements.

Dr. Campbell stated that the other piece is the tie between the highly qualified and the regular classroom is the SPED teacher and the regular ed teacher. One of the reasons they have so many dollars in professional development is regular ed teachers need to know how to differentiate reading, writing and math instruction for the students in the included classrooms, and the SPED teachers need to know the same strategies as the classroom teachers. They do not come to us from any preparation institutions with those skills in place. If you look across the State, most districts will be on the AYP list, especially at the middle school and the high school, because the subgroups are going to be bigger than 40, and because the SPED population and the ELL population are the most challenging to bring to proficiency. That is why the budget was built the way it is.

Mr. Cavagnero asked if Dr. Campbell is saying that teacher colleges are not developing students to teach differentiated strategies. Dr. Campbell stated that most preparation institutions give 1 or 2 intros to reading instruction, and 1 or 2 intro to math instruction. They might do a little differentiation, but it is a semester course and they don't have real kids in front of them. Dr. Lambour stated that they get the rudiments of those procedures the same way you get the rudiments of different instructional areas of curriculum of assessment and testing, but the level of expertise that Dr. Campbell is talking about is only going to happen once a person is out in the field and gets through further training. As they go through their master's programs that you have to do once you have your initial certificate and start moving forward, they might get some more. But what they are looking for here in Torrington, for the most part they are not at the level needed when they first come in. That is why staff development is needed. We are picking up the gap between where they are and where we want them to be.

Mr. Cavagnero asked why there hasn't been a change in teacher colleges, particularly State-funded teacher colleges, to prepare our next generation of teachers. It is mind boggling to him that that they would institute these sets of protocols for the schools, and yet at the same time not anticipate and prepare the next generation of teachers to step into that situation.

Dr. Lambour stated that something that he hears at the meetings he goes to for Human Resource Directors. It is not that they are not changing or made great strides, but there always seems to be a certain time gap between the demands of the field and the state of the art instruction, and to when that gets translated into actual course instruction at the university level. Sometimes the university is depending on their area of expertise because of research, and they are putting out state of the art practices. But quite often, there is a time gap. We quite often have universities attend our meetings, and we talk

about what we need in a school and what they are doing. So there is harmony and some work between the two, but we have to pick up the gap and identify it and meet that gap through staff development, and that is where Dr. Campbell's job comes in.

Dr. Cavagnero stated he understands this, but that incurs additional costs to the local taxpayer, when the State is mandating things that the state colleges are not providing. That is very frustrating.

Mr. Lyons stated that the programs that he has seen during the Teacher Prep programs have mentors that the students can go and talk to. So it is not that they don't do anything, but it is not actual practical application type things.

Mr. Lutka stated that the highly qualified people at the State are also looking into the possibility of requiring all the regular ed classroom teachers to go back and become certified in special education. So if you think professional development is a lot of money, wait until all the teachers have to go back and get certified in special ed in order to be able to teach inclusion. Inclusion is driving this, and once again, we are going to be dumped with a problem that nobody is providing any money for.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **Approve THS GOAL Educational Program Proposal**

Mr. Cavagnero stated that before he asks for the motion, he would like to frame the conversation with the following history. The Board has identified addressing our dropout rate in the high school as one of their priorities. In doing so one of the strategies for dealing with that was coming forward with an alternative high school program which the administration was asked to provide. They have provided a number of proposals and a number of sites to house that proposal. This particular program is made up 2 components; one being the educational program itself. The specific nature of this program, in order to address the needs of this group of students, needs to be housed in a separate facility off campus from the high school itself. So on tonight's agenda, we have a discussion and a vote on the educational program first, and then we will deal with the site component to this proposal. He asked everyone to maintain their clam and conduct themselves in a professional manner as this has been in the past a very sensitive subject in discussion. What the administration has provided is a set of proposals and data to support their proposals. The Board tonight is tasked with deliberating the numbers before them, and then coming to some conclusion as to whether or not they want to approve the educational program.

*In a motion by Mr. Lyons, and a second by Miss Laus, the Board moved to approve the THS GOAL Educational Program proposal. Those in favor were Mr. Oliver, Mr. Broverman, Prof. Royals, Mr. Lyons, and Miss Laus. Those opposed were Mr. Lutka, Mr. O'Connell, Mrs. Carbone, and Mrs. Traub.*

Mr. Lyons stated that as Mr. Cavagnero has mentioned, the Board has kicked this around on various occasions, and approval for the program and the concept of the program itself have been predicated upon other issues. He wants to remind the Board that when they have multi-level learners, they have the responsibility to work with and give the best education for all the students who are here in Torrington. He thinks we have students on one side of the spectrum being the honor students and whatever, and they put money there, and they are proud of where they are going. Then on the other side of the spectrum, they have students who need additional help, and they need to concentrate on that side as well. Because they have the goals in terms of trying to close the gap, and in terms of the dropout rate, he feels that they need to look at this area in terms of these students. They are here, and the Board needs to concentrate on what they can do to get these students educated. Today, the governor addressed this same issue in terms of the repercussions of students not graduating, not having a high school education, and dropping out. He urged the Board to accept this concept of an alternative school. He knows there are accountability and success measures that need to be done, but he thinks they can approve the concept so that the administration can say the Board is behind this concept. They can then redevelop and change the plan as we go down the road.

Mr. Lutka asked if the Board approves the GOAL program would that be contingent upon approving the site. Dr. O'Brien answered no.

Mr. Lutka asked so they approve the program, would this particular program as presented in the Board packet be able to be instituted here at the high school.

Dr. O'Brien stated she has had extensive conversations with Dr. Metallo about this as several Board members had asked her if administration couldn't find a site that is cost effective, could Plan B be the high school. She and Dr. Metallo sat together and she posed the question to him. She asked him if he could find space within the walls of THS to accommodate the program, which would move out the site issue and buy some time to find a site that is cost effective. Dr. Metallo actually did a thorough analysis for her of the use of the classrooms here at THS, but given the hiring of 10 additional teachers and an additional special ed teacher last year, the space is so tight and used up at THS that virtually every classroom is used every period. There are also migrant teachers who have to go to a variety of classrooms in order to give the students those 50 extra classes that were the result of the 10 additional teachers. So while she thought surely there must be 4 classrooms they could use, from Dr. Metallo's analysis and their discussions, she is now convinced that they can't do that because of the utilization of the classrooms.

Dr. Metallo stated that he ran a room matrix for the Superintendent last week, and it bore out what he knew. Again, as Dr. O'Brien has said, a great deal of program was added this year through the staff that was added. The great majority of the rooms in the school are used every period, every day. There is a period here and a period there, but to isolate 4 rooms all day was totally impossible.

One of the Board members asked for a point of order, and Mr. Cavagnero stated that the question originated with the discussion of if the program can be done without the site, so he thinks these are clearly related problems.

Mr. Lutka added that he also thinks they are tied. He needs to understand whether or not if he approves the program if that means he is automatically approving the site. Dr. O'Brien responded that administration has analyzed the THS site and it is not going to work. The notion of the portables was their next best thought and that proposal is in the Board's packet for their consideration. Also some members of the community who are very sympathetic to the service of these young people have come forward and have offered another site. This site has a high probability for success and would be very low cost. She was supposed to visit it today, but for obvious reasons, she was not able to visit it today. She is scheduled to visit the site tomorrow at 2:30 p.m. She knows this becomes a very convoluted situation, but she thinks the educational program is something that the Board can say yes or no to tonight.

Administration may come back on the 21<sup>st</sup>, if the portable site is not acceptable, and bring forward the other site that they are investigating tomorrow.

Mr. Lutka asked what would happen to the students if the Board does not approve the program.

Mr. Cavagnero answered that if the Board does not approve the program, nothing will be in place. This particular program will not be enacted, it will not be budgeted for, and it will not go forward. It doesn't mean that another program or another solution may come forward in the next weeks or months prior to the beginning of next year. But the Board is focused on the specifics of this particular proposal tonight.

Mr. Lutka stated that he was asking first of all, whether or not the question about the site was tied to approval of the program. Then his second question was if the program is not approved what do these students have as an alternative. He stated that the lack of a Plan B concerned him. He asked if some of them are in a program right now. Dr. O'Brien stated that some of them are and some of them are not. Some of them are on a waiting list and some of them are over in Explorations.

Mr. Cavagnero stated that the Board goal is to develop an alternative high school program for these kids. If it doesn't get done here and now tonight, assuming that this remains the Board goal, administration will need to go to bat and work it again. It is the purpose of this Board to not only find and fund a curriculum and a program that is designed to help these kid's needs, but to find one that is affordable and has a high probability of success. All that needs to be taken into account tonight. That is why it has been broken down into more manageable bites. It is a large and complex issue.

Mr. Lutka stated that the reason he was asking the question was because when he got his Board packet, he was a little bit confused by the fact that the 2 were separated into 2 separate decisions; one to approve the program and another to approve the site. He thinks they are intertwined and can't be approved separately.

Mr. Cavagnero stated the alternative was to roll it into one and then have people saying that they liked this part but not that part, and that seems to be what has created problems.

Dr. O'Brien stated that she thinks it is important to separate them out. She thinks it is important to look at the educational piece separately, and see if it is appealing and it seems to meet the needs that have been recognized for these young people. If the Board likes the program, then that is at least one step forward in creating an alternative. If administration is then unable to find a suitable site, then at least they have a program. Then in next year's budget cycle, they can already have the program in mind, and can aggressively continue their search for a site. She doesn't think by saying they like the program that it commits the Board 100% to doing it for the fall of 2007. If administration then doesn't have the right site, Dr. O'Brien will not say they should do this as that would be foolish. But it is a matter of moving forward at this point in time.

Mr. Oliver stated he thought that was a great explanation. He now understands why they are separated. He also stated that there has been a lot of discussion about costs involved in the program, and the Board now had some of those figures put in front of them. He asked if Dr. O'Brien would walk the Board through how that \$461,000 becomes cost neutral.

Dr. O'Brien stated that the reason why she talked about cost neutrality is because the great majority of these costs are already in the existing budget. They don't require the hiring of 4 more teachers, an administrator, a secretary, or a guidance counselor. The cost neutrality piece for her is the notion that they are taking existing resources and deploying them in different ways. In other words, they are not asking the Board of Finance to give more money to the existing budget. As noted on their handout, they currently have an administrator who is perfectly capable of running this program and also the Links program and a number of other alternative options. There is also a secretary on board already. There is a math teacher, an English teacher, a social studies teacher, and a science teacher also. Part of the difficulty in putting these numbers together with integrity is the fact that administration knows there are certain teachers out there who have expressed an interest in working with these young people, but because the program has not been approved, they couldn't post it or publicize it and ask who would like to step forward to work in this. So what administration had to do is to simply take averages, and these are very high averages, as most of the faculty are of Dr. O'Brien's age range. Yet there are many younger teachers who might be more than happy to work with this group of young people, and this would thereby create a savings of \$30,000 to \$40,000 per person. So she gives that from a mathematical perspective of simply a high average. She also pointed out that they have a guidance person already on board in the budget who serves these at risk young people, and if portables would be acceptable to the Board, they would already have phys ed and performing arts staff who serve the student body at THS. So virtually everybody on this personnel sheet is already on the payroll.

Administration also knows from working with these young people that the typical health phys ed program is not appealing to them, and some of them have had difficulty graduating because of that feature. Last year, administration ran something of a

developmental phys ed, where they did different sorts of fitness and wellness activities. The young people embraced it, did well, and gained their phys ed credit. So her thought has always been toward traditional arts programs for a lesser amount than traditional phys ed and health. They could have partnerships with both the Warner and Nutmeg, and get nontraditional sorts of opportunities for these young people. They know through research that the arts are a very powerful vehicle to help these young people succeed. So if you look at the 2 figures regarding the health and PE, that could be replaced by a \$20,000 partnership, and Dr. O'Brien has already spoken informally with both James Patrick and Sharon Dante now for 2 years about closer partnerships, so they are aware of this. She feels this could be nailed down without too much trouble, but this has not been done yet as it would be premature to do this.

The other costs associated with this that are not already found in the budget, would be the computers. If they went to the portables and even some of the other sites that are not already prepared for technology, she and Dr. Campbell and the exec team talked about the notion of computers on wheels. Dr. O'Brien did this in Ann Arbor, Michigan in the Ann Arbor public schools back in the middle 90s. You have a large wooden case and you have laptops in the case, and basically these are called COWS, computers on wheels. These carts are then wheeled from classroom to classroom, and the young people use these laptops which are loaded with appropriate software. This takes away a great deal of the cost of hooking up the young people to the technology, and the estimated cost for the COW is \$35,000. She thinks that would give about 20 laptops which would be half the student body to start out.

It is also important to these young people to have a space of their own, and to have a different type of operation we would want to bus these young people separately. They would also come to school and leave school at a different time of day. Usually the students start a little bit later in alternative ed, around 8:30 or 9:00. The young people would then stay later and probably would end their day around 3 o'clock or so. They would get in the same requisite amount of time for the most part. The teachers would still be bound by the 7 hours and 20 minutes, but the way the day is arranged is different for these young people so it meets their learning needs and their learning styles. So a bus would be needed which would be \$42,000.

So basically, as you look at this, all of this is in the budget. Administration would want \$35,000 for the COW and \$42,000 for the bus, but all the text, materials, and supplies are already part of the high school budget because these young people are already part of the high school.

Mr. Oliver stated he thought there would be a special curriculum or different types of materials to help support their learning styles. Dr. O'Brien stated this is not necessarily needed. When you work with these young people, you want to give them the same rich curriculum that the other students have. You would be using the same literature. You would be teaching to the same objectives. You would have them do their writing and the like. The thing that seems to make alternative education work for these young people is the fact that the groups are so small, classes of 10 to 1, just like the ones in Summer

School that were so successful for helping the young people get their credits. The teachers are able to individualize more, and to do more of the differentiation that Dr. Campbell talks about. The teachers are able to teach that same curriculum, but the delivery is different. The young people get more attention, you can personalize instruction more, you can do more immediate correcting and feedback of their work, and it doesn't necessarily necessitate other supplies, materials, and textbooks. It is more the methodology and the way it is structured.

Mr. Oliver asked where the resources are being pulled from and what the impact would be.

Dr. O'Brien stated that about a year ago, when administration originally brought the MOU forward to change the THS schedule, their projection for this year for the numbers of students at THS was up around 1450. That is the figure that Terry Doyle, John Duffy, Dr. Metallo, and she used in negotiations with that MOU, and it appeared that 10 teachers would be the right number to keep us under that 25 student per class guideline with our Union. When they actually had warm bodies coming through the door in the fall of 2006, they had 1340, so there is differential there of like 110 students. So right there, we know that we are rich in terms of that original projection. If you think about these students, the teachers in this school are going to be teaching them anyway. Each one of these alternative ed students will be taking math, science, social studies, and so on and so forth. So what we are doing in effect is taking their teachers, picking them up, and moving them to another site. When we look at the enrollment at 1340, and when we look at the array of teachers who still would be augmenting THS, 6 regular teachers and a special ed teacher, it is not going to have a significant impact when you think in terms of class size. The class sizes were very attractive this year, and they will continue to be attractive next year, even with pulling those 4 teachers out.

Mr. Broverman stated he was comfortable with separating the 2 issues, but he was somewhat distressed to hear that if we go with building the portable site, we couldn't get that up and going until the middle of the year. Is that correct?

Ms. Haynes responded that this was ambitious, but they thought they could possibly get it up and going by 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter.

Mr. Broverman asked what the impact would be on the teachers and students who would start in regular classes and then after a certain amount of time go into the new alternative school. What would that do to the teaching situation? Would the second site that you are going to investigate tomorrow be able to be started at the beginning of the year? Dr. O'Brien responded that yes. Mr. Broverman stated that beginning in the beginning in the middle of the year is much more attractive to him.

Mr. Broverman also asked about the administrator's salary of \$63,250. Was that a full-time administrator? He doesn't know of an administrator in the State of Connecticut that works for \$63,250. Dr. O'Brien stated that he was absolutely right. That figure would be much closer to \$100,000.

Mrs. Traub asked if they do not have the GOAL program, what would happen to that administrative position as the Board was told an administrator was no longer needed at Forbes. Will that be a savings?

Dr. O'Brien responded that they have a number of administrative transfers that are still on the drawing board. They will not find an economy with administrators. They would simply once again redeploy existing administrators into other roles.

Mrs. Traub stated that obviously they had a benefit last year, but a flip flop could happen, and she wants to make sure they think it through. If you have a teacher who teaches 5 sections approximately, by contract 25, that is 125 students. If we are only losing 40 students, that is still 85 students or 3 sections left. Who picks up those 3 sections?

Ms. Haynes stated she will address the first part of her question that has to do with enrollment. As Mr. Harnett stated, TMS is the only school that gets everybody. Because they go to different schools once they leave the middle school that explains the difference. Every 8<sup>th</sup> grader who is graduating will not come to THS. So they feel comfortable with the enrollment number, and there enrollment number is also consistent with the enrollment numbers that the State has provided as well. In addition to our own staff projecting enrollments, they also have a consultant in the State Department of Education look at them as well and they have been very consistent.

Dr. O'Brien stated that she did an analysis of the enrollment trends over the past half a dozen years for Torrington. When she looked at those trends and the State data for those years as well as the projection, they were relatively flat. She feels if anything they are going to be losing students in the next few years. As she did the analysis, one year we would up by 1%, the next year we would be down by 2%. It was relatively a flat line, and they don't feel at this time that an influx of 100 students to THS will be happening. They feel very confident with the 1340 number. One of the benefits of being over at Oliver Wolcott today was the opportunity to ask Mr. Cushman about his anticipated 9<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment from TMS. Currently, Mr. Cushman has 63 of our middle schoolers slated to go to Oliver Wolcott. Dr. O'Brien feels confident that they are not going to have any surprises that will cause the classes to be out of balance or jeopardize the young people who remain at THS.

Dr. O'Brien also commented that she is specifically concerned about the fact that class size is an important criterion in effective teaching, and although our teacher's contracts suggest a max class size of 25, the vast majority of our classes were down at to 17 or 18, and some were even 11 or 14. Those class sizes were like dying and going to heaven. So even if there were a few more students, class size was not going to be 25 x 5. Dr. Metallo and his staff were very conscious of keeping those class sizes low, particularly for freshmen and sophomores, and for making sure that the overall class load of the teachers was extremely attractive and considerably below the 125 that it could be.

Mrs. Traub asked Ms. Haynes if technically what they are saying is that the \$42,000 is already in the busing. Ms. Haynes responded yes.

Mrs. Traub asked if the theory was that by taking these students off of their regular busing pattern now, that they were going to be able to perhaps get an extra bus in there for them. Ms. Haynes responded that it is an additional \$42,000, because it runs at a different time.

Mrs. Traub said originally they had talked about maybe some cost savings with trying to regroup some of the busing issues for next year. In one of their discussions, it was discussed that they might be able to get one or two bus savings to transfer over to this. Ms. Haynes stated she thinks her discussion on the buses was about making sure that they did the attendance area modifications in a cost neutral fashion because of the going throughout the city. Because of the nature of this program and the start and ending times being off working within the tiering system that they employ under their contract would be difficult. They would essentially have to take a bus from one of the middle or the elementary schools, and she is not sure that it could be done. So to error on the side of caution, they put an additional bus in the program for next year's budget.

Mrs. Traub asked if that was 1 bus or are they thinking perhaps it might be more. She asked how they could get all those students to school on time if they only had 1 bus. Ms. Haynes said it would be a dedicated bus and wouldn't be part of their regular tiering. Right now, they essentially own the buses, 42 buses per day. They do the high school and Oliver Wolcott together, and then after that run they do the middle school and 2 of the elementaries, and then the rest of the elementaries. So it is divided up by 3s. But because the alternative schedule doesn't fit into that, she wasn't sure they would be able to do it that way. Because it would be a separate bus, it could have a longer route than what the normal buses would have.

Mrs. Traub also asked about the COWs. Was that something that was in the budget? Administration responded yes.

Mr. O'Connell asked if they are talking about 1 bus to bring 40 students to a site. He is envisioning this bus going all over the city picking up students from all sorts of places, and he is wondering what type of time students would be sitting on that bus to get to the school, and how unattractive that could be for a student to have to sit on a bus. He states that is a concern to him, to have only 1 bus dedicated for that responsibility.

Mr. O'Connell also said he has to agree with Mr. Lutka. He doesn't know how to separate the program from the site. He thinks where this program is run is an important ingredient to the program. So without a site that has been approved, he can't support the program. He also doesn't know what this will do to the budget committee if they have an approved program but not an approved site. He feels while they have received some information about the cost of the program, they still don't know all the costs. Since January 10<sup>th</sup> when this program was first presented, he has been looking for the cost of this program and he still doesn't have that information.

Mr. Oliver asked if the \$42,000 for the transportation and \$35,000 for the COWs, were the only items not currently budgeted for, as that would be an additional expense of \$77,000 to run the program, site excluded.

Dr. O'Brien stated that is correct, but it is possible that the COWs would not be needed depending on the site. The COW is actually the worst-case scenario if a site does not have computers already in place.

Mr. Oliver stated but he sees an additional economy there if they were to develop those partnerships. Dr. O'Brien stated that was right.

Mr. Oliver commented that since there is an additional site that they might be looking at he thought it was a mute issue to talk about the portables at this point. Mr. Cavagnero stated if people wanted to table that until they get more information that would be fine. Mr. Oliver stated that would make sense, especially if they are saying it could be a better cost and a better spot.

Mr. Lutka stated that this morning he requested the dropout rates for the past 5 years. Can Dr. Campbell explain what the double numbers mean for 2001? Dr. Campbell said that the dropout rates are calculated in 2 ways. One is how many kids dropped out of THS between July 1 and June 30 of this year. That is the annual rate and that is the smaller rate, and that's grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. The cumulative rate, the double digit one, is how many students in the class of 2006 were there when they entered as freshman, and then how many are graduating. The goofy thing about cumulative is that some kids drop out and then come back, so that is why there are 2, and they are always reported that way.

Mr. Lutka stated that right now they are showing 19.7 for the cumulative rate, that is the 4-year average, and they are also showing this year's dropout rate to be a 7.2. Dr. Campbell stated that the dropout rate for 2004-2005 is 7.2.

Mr. Lutka asked if Southeast School was in operation during the year 2001. Administration responded yes. Mr. Lutka noted that in 2001, they had a dropout rate of 24.7, and an annual rate of 6.5. Southeast was a separate facility, which is basically the type of plan they are talking about now. The GOAL plan that was presented to us curriculum wise may represent a change from what was done at Southeast right, but the main foundation of the GOAL plan is to go off site and take them out of this building and put them in a separate site. But what he is saying is, based on the information here, is that when Southeast was off site it didn't seem to be that successful.

Mr. Cavagnero stated that they were different students, but the comparison Mr. Lutka is making is that there were 2 off site programs at that time. One was Southeast School which is primarily special education, and the other one was the Gateway program which was also off site but not Southeast School.

Mr. Lutka stated these dropout rates represent what an off site program provided us. The point he is trying to make with the off site programs is he realizes they didn't have the GOAL curriculum, but they had the off site thing which seems to be the main thrust of this whole program. He is seeing the same type of dropout rates with an off site building, so he is questioning whether or not the off site building really has that much of an effect.

Dr. O'Brien said he is talking about apples, oranges, and pears here. They cannot be compared. The Southeast program was designed for special ed youngsters who were heavily involved in social and emotional issues. The THS GOAL program is not that program. It does not serve those young people, and if you look at the criteria for the GOAL students, you can clearly see that they are different than the Southeast students. The Southeast students when Southeast school was disbanded came to THS, and the remnant of that program is now called Links, not Core Plus or THS GOAL. With Gateway, she is just vaguely familiar, but again that is a program that had perhaps an off site component, but to say that Gateway is synonymous with THS GOAL is also faulty reasoning. Just because a program is off site doesn't mean they are all the same, and she really has to impress that this program is a new and different design. It is extraordinarily better than the former programming which was not successful, which was why both things were closed down and why they ended up in remnant parts back at THS. And again, reflecting back on her past experience, this is the third alternative high school that she has created, and she knows this model works if you have everything in the component pieces and most importantly if you have the right students chosen with those criteria and the right teachers teaching them. It was the model that is very similar but better, than the alternative program in West Hartford for which she was the founding mother, and that program in its first year, with the most difficult students who were halfway out of the door, had an 80% success rate which is extraordinary for alternative ed. So the notion of comparing these things is flawed because these are very different things.

Mr. Lutka stated that the point he wanted to make was the fact that one of the key components to both the Gateway program and the GOAL program is an off site location. He was not here to argue because he didn't have the Gateway curriculum in front of him to be able to compare it. He did read this because he reads every single Board packet that he gets. He understands what the curriculum model is. But the point he was trying to make was that they are making a real big point that it is important for these students to be relocated off site, and the model that was done at Gateway where it was off site didn't appear to be that successful based on the numbers that were provided.

Mr. Cavagnero stated he understands where Mr. Lutka is going with this, but because they don't have a lot of this information in front of them, he doesn't think they can go much further with this.

Mr. Lyons stated that he could clarify because he was also on the Board in 2001. Gateway, first of all, was a program from which the curriculum was part of Education Connection and not part of Torrington district. It was out of district. They ran the program and we paid money into Education Connection for the students that we had slots

for. So that was not a program that was under our umbrella, as far as running the curriculum at all.

Mrs. Carbone stated she was one of the people who felt they should look at the program piece separately. She wanted the Board to discuss this to see if this was what they had envisioned when they adopted the goal to establish an alternative school. She believes in alternative education and off site alternative education. Her concern when she read the program proposal was that it was identifying a whole population that had not previously been identified as being at risk. When she adopted the goal as a member of the Board, she was thinking of the Links children that were lost when they moved them from Southeast to Torrington. She was thinking about those children that dropped out 2 days after the move, 2 months after the move, and 2 years after the move. She wanted the Board to have input into the program, get an explanation from Dr. O'Brien and her staff as to how she has identified this population, and information about why she feels this was going to be the population that would make a big change on the dropout rate. However, Mrs. Carbone is still thinking they have a Core Plus program that is holding on by a thread in which the kids don't want to leave the school, and there is a waiting list, and they have a Links program that appears to be a dismal failure. However, in hearing Dr. O'Brien say this program piece cannot run in this high school and if the Board approves the program but cannot find a site, then she may have to table this is confusing. She feels lost in this.

Dr. O'Brien stated that perhaps she made assumptions that she shouldn't have about the levels of understandings of the concepts. In conversations with some other Board members, she tried to explain it this way. If we look at special education, for example, we have probably 12 different treatments in our district for young people depending on their level of disability, their type of disability, and we are very prescriptive as the learning needs of our young people. Along that continuum of special education services, we have services for learning disabled children, hearing impaired children, and self-contained services for some emotionally troubled students. In an alternative education model, there are 3 beads on this chain that we need to cover alternative education variables in Torrington. Those 3 beads are a Links program that operates after school with an employment and job counseling component through the school day, because the Links young people are 17, 18, and 19 years old. We want to teach them to be productive citizens and skills that they can use in their future lives. The Links program needs to be totally reworked into a job-training component, job placement in the community, job coaching, and then after school components to get credits toward graduation. Core Plus is successful for many students, and should be kept for the students for whom it is successful. But there is another segment of young people who are in Core Plus who are failing. There is a waiting list of Core Plus students, some of whom are failing and are at risk students. They can be identified by their transcripts. They have been at school for almost 2 years, perhaps they are sophomores by chronology, but they have almost no credits. Their attendance is very poor and they are about to drop out of school as soon as they hit 16. Those are the young people who need to be taken out of Core, and taken off that waiting list. They may be some of our young people at Explorations who want to come back. There is that whole treatment that is different than the successful Core Plus

students and different than the Links treatment. If Dr. O'Brien had her druthers, and she could make things happen as quickly as possible, she would say THS GOAL is our best bet right now to be the most cost effective piece that will impact the greatest number of young people with the greatest probability of success. In some ways this is a hospital model where we are performing triage. What do we do first to get the most advancement for the largest number of students at the best cost? That is THS GOAL. Core Plus that is working for young people doesn't need much fine tuning at all. Leave that in place. THS GOAL doesn't impact Core Plus. Next year at budget time, after we would have had a time to design a newly formulated Links Program, we probably would want to give it another name, she would come back in budget for 2008-2009, and ask the Board to put the 3<sup>rd</sup> bead on the chain, to redevelop the Links program. But that piece is extraordinarily difficult to do right because it takes a lot of work with the community and a lot of interface with community agencies. That is why she chose THS GOAL program first because it is more direct and will get the biggest positive impact for the lowest investment and for the largest number of young people. Next year she will come back with a redesigned Links program which will be more costly and impact a smaller number of students.

Mr. Cavagnero stated he tries to look at this from multiple perspectives. One perspective is he believes we have to do something for this population, as that is why the Board made it a goal. But another perspective from a totally pragmatic point of view is they have a current budget right now at 6.8%. When the Board looks at what they have to provide, the obligatory portions of the budget are already coming to 5.8%. The Board has no control over that between special education costs and salary benefits for staff and fixed costs for energy. So the budget is at 5.8% already. He knows that a big part of the thinking going into this budget is the money that theoretically is going to come back from the State, but right now that is just conceptual. So we have to go before the Board of Finance and the people of Torrington and say this is what we are going to do this year.

When he looks at the total cost of the THS GOAL program, between the \$491,000 for staff a year and then what is proposed on the site portion of it. If you break it down, we are looking at over \$200,000. So we are in the \$700,000 range for this program for 40 students. The question he thinks is can we afford this now this year. If the Board approves this and then directs the budget committee to look at the costs and factor this in and work these numbers, and then the City doesn't come forward and the Board of Finance does not approve this budget, then we have to start looking at where we are going to find the money in the budget this year. From a practical point of view, if we waited a year to see what we really get from the State, and spent this year working on this problem and getting it the best appropriate site, then redeploying the staff that would be redeployed here to those areas in the budget where you want to find and fund additional staff members already, it seems we can then start coming closer to what our understanding is the City is willing to pay.

While he knows everybody wants to do the best for every student, he also knows we have to live in the real world of what the taxpayers are going to be able to afford this year in Torrington. Given the big numbers of a 6.8% increase in this budget, and given the fact

that we cannot guarantee anything is coming back from the State, we have to be realistic about what we are going to come forward with when we appear before the Board of Finance. This is one big ticket item that is out there that we may consider from that perspective. Do we need to do something for these students? Yes, we absolutely do. Does this program seem to work? Yes, it does. Is it expensive? Yes it is at a per pupil cost. We can argue about that, but we are talking in the neighborhood of not twice as much per pupil cost of a regular ed student, but we are getting up to that area. At what point do we say we simply can't afford this now without getting the funds from the State?

A second question he has is about the trend. If we establish this program for 40 students, will there be more students wanting to get in. At these numbers we are paying almost twice as much, and we are already obligated by NCLB mandates and by State mandates for special education to pay almost twice as much per student for that set of children in our district. We are now adding another set of children for which we may be paying almost twice as much per pupil. At what point do we say this is something that we can't afford? Those are considerations. He thinks all of these things have to be factored in this year. We are in the middle of the budget season. We have got some very large questions here and some very large numbers in front of us, and we have a relatively expensive program on the table here, and all of that needs to be factored in.

Mr. Oliver stated he believes all the Board members are dealing with exactly what you said in different ways. We are all trying to provide the best education experience possible to every student here regardless of where they have fallen in their multi-level learning. The question is always about money and timing, and he thinks for the rest of our lives we are going to be dealing with that question. He thinks they are going to know the direction when the Board of Finance says either your budget is approved or go back to the drawing board. If we have to go back to the drawing board, we have to say we don't think it is going to go this year. Then next year we are going to go back. But he thinks at least at this point we can say if we are fine with the program, but now we have got to find a way to fund it. He thinks he now understands why these subjects are separated. But he thinks they are not going to know until the Board of Finance says yes or no. So that is a mute issue right now.

Mr. Broverman said he agrees with Mr. Oliver. He has been in this business a long time, and there is always going to be more money next year. We have a number of opportunities to do exactly what Mr. Oliver suggested. If we kill the program tonight, we kill the program. If we have voted to put the program in, we have not created the program, we have just kept it on the back burner, and we certainly can kill the program when the Board of Finance or when our own budget deliberations in a few weeks occur. What he is saying is if we all agree or most of us agree that this is a good idea and we have to do something for the kids, what are we losing by theoretically approving the plan now. This is the Board's goal. We can always say it is too expensive. We can't afford it, and he would be the first one to say it has to wait. But why do that now?

Mr. Cavagnero commented that one consideration would be, again, when we heard from the charter schools, when we heard the people from Explorations. Every parent who

came forward to speak on behalf of that program was very happy, and they were asking simply for transportation to provide for those children, and for 1 year while we explore this that would be a possibility.

Administration said those are charter school, not an alternative program. Those are totally different.

Prof. Royals says she questions Mr. Cavagnero's figure of \$700,000, because Dr. O'Brien just told the Board that the estimated cost in the high school budget for the alternative program is mostly going to be cost neutral except for the computers and the separate bus, not including the site. She thinks his \$700,000 is off.

Mr. Cavagnero said what he is saying is you could take those same teachers that we are going to put into this program and use those to staff those areas in the current budget where it is recommended that we hire additional staff.

Dr. O'Brien stated she didn't say that. In her budget proposal, the only staff she is asking the Board to consider include half a social worker for the high school, half a social worker for the middle school, 2 special education teachers for TMS, and 2 English language learner teachers to be deployed as needed based on enrollment. None of these 4 teachers are certified in the areas of their need, so it is not merely a statement of redeploying these folks. These folks can't do what they need. They need SPED, ELL, and social work support. The only economy that could be gained in the model that Mr. Cavagnero is bringing forward would be if you rift 4 people.

Mr. Cavagnero stated actually he was operating on the assumption like when they had talked about redistricting or moving some of our children from Forbes to different schools. At that point in time our question was how we were going to figure out the staffing for those, and the response was typically that we had a bucket of staff that we can redeploy. So it seemed to be a fairly transparent, large bucket of people that could be moved around.

Dr. O'Brien stated that was in elementary only because they are all certified for elementary school K through 5, so they have a great deal of flexibility among all the elementary schools to redeploy certified, highly qualified people among the different buildings based on enrollment. That does not hold true with these 4 folks who are certified on the high school level as subject matter specialists in English, social studies, science, and math. We can't redeploy them as ELL or SPED or social workers.

Prof. Royals followed up by saying that this Board asked Dr. O'Brien and her administration to bring forward a proposal for an alternative education program, and they also said it was a Board priority to have her investigate the possibility of reducing the dropout rate by using this program. So the Board needs to act on what they asked her to do tonight.

Mr. Lutka clarified what Mr. Cavagnero was trying to say. He believes that saying that the staff people are cost neutral is like saying they are not costing us anything. These

staff people are in the budget right now, and we are paying for them. So that program as it exists now in this building is costing us close to \$500,000 in staffing.

Dr. O'Brien stated that she would not agree, because he is not using the definition of cost neutral that is commonly used in school district or with Ms. Haynes who has drawn budgets with her now for 5 or 6 years. When they talk about cost neutral, it is the exact same thing as taking existing staff, redeploying them in new and productive ways for no additional cost to the district. In other words, you are already paying that cost. It is already in the budget. That is the definition of cost neutral.

Mr. Lutka followed up by saying that these salaries that they are currently paying for this program that is in this building right now are part of the budget, and that is what it is costing to educate these children right now. And what this program that they are debating about tonight is going to cost them in addition is the \$311,000 for the proposed site that was in the worst case scenario for the presentation, then for the COWs, and then for the added transportation bus at \$42,000. So what he is saying is that this is the situation. We are currently educating these children in this building with a program that exists in this building for this amount of money. What you are asking us to do by approving this new proposal for GOAL is to increase that amount by \$400,000. The site, the bus, and the COW are going to cost us money in addition to what is already on there. His big problem is that he went to the TMS budget presentation where Mrs. Babcock gave the presentation on special education. When he went through the special education site budget, this was not in there, because this is in the high school budget

Administration stated that this is not special education.

Mr. Lutka responded that they just told the Board that those teachers couldn't be used in the regular school. Administration responded this is because they don't have certification in English.

Mr. Lutka said the point he was trying to make was that right now in addition to the salaries as they were presented to us, they are being asked to spend another \$400,000.

Mrs. Haynes answered that these costs are already embedded in the high school's budget for next year and for this year. So all they are doing is picking up those people and moving them to a different site. They are not planning on backfilling any of these positions at the high school, so there are no additional salary costs.

Mr. O'Connell commented that he would like to help clarify this, because he does agree with Mr. Cavagnero that it is going to cost \$766,000. He thinks what they have as a proposal in the Superintendent's budget are dollars allocated for the high school in staffing patterns, supplies, books, and materials, and they also have dollars allocated for the GOAL program. In his way of thinking, if they decided they did need the GOAL program, they still have what is asked for the high school program. So if they drop this program, they would theoretically be able to drop \$491,000 from the high school budget, which means they are spending an additional \$491,000 next year over and above what

they need for the high school. He thinks that is what Mr. Cavagnero and Mr. Lutka are saying, and he knows not everyone is going to agree with that analysis, but he thinks that is a proper analysis.

Mr. Cavagnero stated that the \$700,000 was from a rough crack he took if the Board had gone with the site. The site is going to cost us something, and since this was the most current number, he was using that. His point was simply that they needed to assess the overall cost of this, in light of all the other costs that they are incurring this budget season.

Mr. Broverman stated he would agree that if they had a school where they didn't have needy students, he would be all for rifting some of these teachers. The problem is they do need them because they are educating the students. This is not about the teachers or the classes but the students, and they have a significant number of students in our school who are failing. But they have issues here in Torrington that they don't have in some other places, and this is an opportunity to alleviate that. He thinks they ought to take the first step. If they go down that road and then find out that it becomes cost prohibitive or they have site issues or whatever, that is a different discussion and a different vote.

Mr. Cavagnero clarified his position as he wasn't talking about rifting teachers at all. He thinks the essence of education is getting good teachers and small classrooms. Everything else comes second to that. He was operating on the assumption that they could move this set of teachers just like they were talking about moving them from Forbes up to Torrington. But now he understands that technically that is impossible here. But it still gets down to having a realistic awareness and understanding about what this program is costing.

Miss Laus said that back in August, the Board said that cutting the dropout rate was their priority. With a town and high school this size, we need to have an alternative high school. She feels we can bat this around for another hour, but the fact still is that we need an alternative high school, and for the Board to ignore it or deny it is doing these students an injustice. She feels very strongly about this. They can cut dollars and cents, but in some way they are going to pay.

Mr. Cavagnero thinks everybody on the Board understands that we need a program and wants to do something to help this identified section of our student population. But it is their duty to analyze the overall cost of this or any other program, as the net result of implementing this particular program will be with them and subsequent Boards of Education for years to come, and that is why they are spending so much time deliberating it, and they will continue to discuss it as long as people have questions and comments that will facilitate and expand and hopefully enlighten the conversation.

Mrs. Traub summarized that she feels that after an hour and the discussions they have had, they have a pretty good idea of what is going on here. She wants to ask the Board to move a vote.

*In a motion by Mrs. Traub, with a second by Mr. O'Connell, the Board moved to move the question. All were in favor except for Mr. Lyons and Mrs. Carbone and Mr. Broverman who opposed.*

Mr. Cavagnero reported that the vote was 5 to 4 in favor of the program, so the Board now has an educational program for alternative ed in Torrington, and the administration can proceed with that.

### **Receive THS GOAL Site Proposal**

*In a motion by Mr. Lyons, with a second by Mr. Oliver, the Board moved to table the discussion of the THS GOAL site. In favor were Mr. Oliver, Mr. Broverman, Mrs. Carbone, Prof. Royals, Mr. Lyons, and Miss Laus. Opposed were Mr. O'Connell, Mr. Lutka, and Mrs. Traub.*

### **Approve THS GOAL Site Proposal**

*In a motion by Mr. Oliver, with a second by Mr. Lyons, the Board moved to table the approval of the THS GOAL site. In favor were Mr. Oliver, Mr. Broverman, Mrs. Carbone, Prof. Royals, Mr. Lyons, and Miss Lyons. Opposed were Mr. Lutka, Mr. O'Connell, and Mrs. Traub.*

### **SCHOOL/COMMUNITY SESSION**

Fiona Capabianca, 3 Stoneridge Drive – She spoke about being disappointed in the vote.. She feels that a lot of the Board of Education members are disassociated with how the public is feeling. She feels they are obligated to create programs for special education students, but they are not obligated to create special programs for regular education students. She feels strongly they are failing to meet the needs of the general population in Torrington, and that this is a lot of money to spend to educate so few kids. She feels the needs of the elementary school kids are not being adequately met.

Sandra Ammirato, 79 Brass Mill Dam Road – She thanked the Board for addressing a lot of the public's concerns. She suggested to the Board that they make some sort of steering committee to look into the alternatives as far as what could be done in what is currently here in the building, and in the middle and other schools.

Dr. O'Brien addressed these concerns by stating that the 40 student cost was just to get started. Using the existing staff, the numbers of students can then be bumped up and the cost per student decreases. The long-term plan for this is to make a regional alternative high school program where Torrington would control it and they could get transfer tuition from neighboring districts to pay for the program. They then would be generating more than \$100,000 a year to help pay for Torrington's program. So this will be the biggest hit right now to get it going. It will be a decreasing cost over time.

Dr. O'Brien also stated she feels the label of transition folks at the high school is a little confusing. Their job description is more like a dean of students. They do parent communication for students who are having attendance difficulties and minor discipline difficulties. They are not job coaches and they do not do liaison work of the employment nature to transition young adults into the community. There is a staff member who works in that capacity in the guidance office of the Career Center, but that is not what the transition folks do..

Dr. O'Brien feels that the notion of having some kind of steering committee is moving backward. They have already done extensive work and research. While she certainly embraces the notion of lowering class size and using teachers wisely, she thinks it would behoove everyone to realize that in the budget process, they have considered all of those things in a lengthy process.

Mr. Cavagnero reminded the administration and the Board and anyone else who was watching that the Board has identified many goals, and one of their goals as well is the effective and efficient utilization of resources, and that is where he was going with his line of questioning. **He directed the Superintendent to put some meat on the bones of that idea that they could regionalize this and expand this program to make it more cost effective in terms of putting more students in as years go by.** He thinks that would help the discussion with the Board of Finance and their own internal discussion.

Joe Ammirato, 79 Brass Mill Dam Road – He spoke regarding the THS GOAL program. He definitely agrees these children need help, but he strongly disagrees with how this program was voted in 5 minutes after they got the costs. He doesn't agree with how the educational program was passed, and yet how all the costs are really not known.

Mr. Cavagnero stated the Board is aware of what these things cost. So even though they didn't have specific numbers until tonight on some of these costs, they had a pretty good ballpark idea about what the program will cost. The Board has been talking and discussing this for the past 2 months. This was not a rash decision as many people have thought long and hard about this program for the last several months.

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

Mr. Lyons reported that CABE on the Hill was held today. He stated that the governor spoke about needing to think about funding education for the future and not just year-to-year. Four major things which were discussed included the ECS funding, preschool education, funding on a sliding scale, and construction costs that would be coming out. Basically, they encouraged everyone to talk to their legislators and get them behind this program, because this is a hefty program and there are other legislators out there who want a piece of this pie. It is going to be a tough battle to get some of this money, but they need to make a concentrated effort.

Mrs. Carbone stated that she was thinking about how Dr. Metallo said he was very proactive in getting the press here for photo ops and things like that. She was wondering

if there was a protocol for that because she does feel that was probably a missed opportunity when the writers came as mentioned earlier. **Dr. O'Brien said she doesn't know of a protocol, but she can definitely find out.**

Mrs. Traub asked Dr. Campbell about the enrollment reports. Is there anyone to add the dropout codes on a monthly basis? **Dr. Campbell stated she would find out who can do that.**

Mr. Broverman commented that some of the community people were impressed by the efforts of the students with Food Bank issue. He was a volunteer over there for a couple of days. Those are the kind of things that don't get into the newspaper, but the word of mouth kind of things are really important. He would like them to convey that to the principals in some way.

Mr. Lutka commented that the rather spirited debate that was had tonight gives him a lot of good feelings with respect to the democratic process. He thinks in following with the democratic process, he will fall behind what the majority has decided to agree upon with respect to the alternative high school. But he will also tell everyone that there is a large group of people out there who are feeling very disenfranchised by this Board because we don't listen to them. His concern is as a Board representative, he has the responsibility to represent all of the children of Torrington, not just the special interest groups. He thinks the perception out there is that the Board listens more to special interest groups than they listen to the entire community.

Mr. Cavagnero stated he would like to commend the Board and the administration for having a protracted and very difficult discussion and deliberation this evening, with everyone conducting themselves as professionals. The vote reflected the fact that there are a lot of concerns about this issue from a lot of different perspectives, and yet the decision was made and everybody has to abide by that as that is the process.

Dr. O'Brien also thanked everyone. She knows people have honest differences of opinion and philosophy, but from her perspective and after 38 years of serving young people, she believes the Board took the moral and ethical high ground and made the right decision. Whether or not we are able to do this financially is still to be determined, but in terms of philosophy and in caring for the disenfranchised young people who would drop out of school, this Board did the right thing. She would also like to mention that in terms of the NEASC accreditation, whether we are able to finance this or not, the Board's action tonight is a plus that the NEASC examiners will look at and know we are heading in the right direction. Also, our mission statement of THS says that we provide all young people with the opportunities to be successful citizens. She is committed to 100% of those young people having the opportunity to walk across that stage, not 80%, and what the Board did tonight is an important step toward making that mission a reality.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Mr. Lyons had a School/Community committee report. He stated they talked about having an area 1 workshop on special ed at some point, and at the budget meeting he accepted a challenge by Judith Babcock in reference to this. Even today, he talked to some of the individuals that were from area 1. He told them to be alerted to it and gave some dates to Dr. O'Brien. Hopefully, this will take place sometime in April, and then they will get together as a committee to start formulating that issue. So it would be Board members and special ed directors and finance directors coming to this meeting to talk about special ed, transportation, etc.

Mr. Broverman stated he would like to commend Mr. O'Connell in the budget committee for what occurred with the Board of Finance. He thinks that was tremendous and it shows good will on everybody's part, and he also appreciates the efforts of the administration. It is wonderful when the Board of Finance and the Board of Education are on the same page.

Mr. O'Connell commended the Board of Finance as they spoke very loudly yesterday in terms of their support for education, and fair and appropriate funding in that all of the dollars that are supposed to go to education will go to education. They have agreed to supplement allocation for whatever excess cost dollars come into the City in excess of what was previously budgeted by the City. We won't know the exact amount until May, but he thinks we can have good confidence in our administrators to give us a good estimate of that. The budget committee is also in the middle of next year's budget hearings. They are going well. We have one more budget hearing scheduled for tomorrow night, and then next week we are into deliberations. Next Wednesday we will have our first deliberation of the Superintendent's budget. We have to wait till May to get those final numbers as the administration is saying that they don't submit the final report until April to Hartford.

Ms. Haynes reported that the costs are all submitted based on the population as of March 1<sup>st</sup>, and then the State decides what they are going fund. We never get 100%. We do have a preliminary number which is a little over 2 million dollars that we have received from the State, but this is a preliminary number and it is capped at 96%.

Mr. O'Connell announced that the next budget hearing is tomorrow night at 6 p.m. at Migeon Avenue.

Mr. Oliver said personnel met just briefly to look at a document that Dr. O'Brien prepared for concerning baseline data relative to her evaluation instrument. He and Dr. O'Brien will be talking tomorrow around lunch.

## **ITEMS FOR UPCOMING AGENDA**

Dr. O'Brien said for March 21<sup>st</sup>, the Board requested an executive session to deal with pending litigation. We have 2 actions actually that are pending, and so Dr. O'Brien and Ms. Haynes will be working on inviting the appropriate parties to address the Board on those pending litigations.

We also have some celebrations on March 21<sup>st</sup>. The Torrington Police Department is gifting some of our seniors with computers, so we want to honor our Police Department and Chief Milano for that excellent inter-agency sharing to the benefit of our young people. We want to recognize our music educators because of their wonderful award at 1 of the 100 best communities in America. We also would like to recognize a substantial financial gift from a family to Southwest Schools for the little reading area in the library.

For discussion items, we have the NEASC update that was requested by the Board. We have the update on the TAG program that was requested. We have the monthly financial statements, budget transfers, and then hopefully receiving the budget proposal from the budget committee.

Mr. Lyons mentioned in the budget meeting about the SASI report for a future meeting, nothing priority right now. Just getting an idea of what SASI can do, what it has been doing, and what improvements have been done. The other thing that was mentioned as a good suggestion was to invite some of our legislators to our Board meeting to discuss the legislative priorities with them, and trying to do that between now and the time the budget is passed. They do advocate that they will come and be a part of Board meetings so they can talk about what their ideas are, and as some of them are not on the education committee they can also get our perspective.

Mr. Cavagnero stated there has been discussion about forming an ad hoc committee for the Board to look at our insurance rates this year, and a suggestion from Mr. O'Connell about getting a committee that represents our bargaining units together. He thinks that is a great plan. Mr. Lyons, Mr. Oliver, Mrs. Carbone, and Mr. Broverman agreed to attend.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

*In a motion by Mr. Broverman, with a second by Mr. Oliver, the Board moved to adjourn at 10:45 p.m.*