

Connecticut State Board of Education
Connecticut Technical High School Committee
Minutes of Meeting
June 16, 2009
10:30 a.m.
Bristol Technical Education Center (BTEC)

Pursuant to notice filed with the Secretary of the State, the Connecticut Technical High School committee, the “committee” met on June 16, 2009 at The Bristol Technical Education Center, Bristol.

Committee Members Present: Mrs. Beverly Bobroske, Chair
Ms. Theresa Hopkins-Staten (arrived as noted below)
CTHSS Staff Present: Ms. Linda E. McMahan
Dr. Abigail L. Hughes, Superintendent
Mr. Robert Lombardi, Assistant Superintendent
Dr. Ceferino Lugo, Assistant Superintendent
Ms. Patricia Ciccone, Assistant Superintendent

- I. Chairwoman Bobroske called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.
- II. Executive Session: None
- III. Consideration of the May 13, 2009 Minutes
The minutes were unanimously approved.
- IV. Public Participation
 - 1) Mrs. Bobroske welcomed the public participants, and stated the State Board of Education (SBE) has never closed a state technical school in Connecticut. She further commented the action taken by the SBE at its December meeting was a recommendation to suspend all operations at Wright Tech for two years. Mrs. Bobroske went on to say that BTEC offers a unique program for many different towns without technical programs. Mrs. Bobroske strongly supports the BTEC program.

At this point, Ms. Hopkins-Staten joined the meeting.
 - 2) The Mayor of Bristol, Mr. Arthur Ward said that everyone was concerned with Bristol TEC; the existence of which is extremely needed. The Bristol school system does not offer any technical training. Bristol TEC offers an alternative to students who are not college bound. BTEC is a shining example of a regionalization success story. Mr. Ward strongly advocated not closing BTEC.
 - 3) Mike Suchopar, Chief Professional Officer of the Boys and Girls Family Center of Bristol stated that his whole career has been based on youth development and he has seen

- how BTEC provides kids in public school with success. Mr. Suchopar said that if the doors to BTEC are closed kids will make unhealthy choices and become burdens to society. He spoke about the success of the 2008 summer program at BTEC. Mr. Ward strongly hopes that BTEC facilities remain open and continue to provide students the opportunity to obtain their future dreams of becoming productive members of society.
- 4) Dr. Distasio, from the Plymouth Board of Education, stated that BTEC provides a program that is not available at public schools. Dr. Distasio stated that they send approximately 10-15 students to BTEC each year. Students who get “saved” because they can’t make it in traditional high school excel at BTEC. Dr. Distasio completely supports BTEC.
 - 5) Ted Schindele, top aid to Mayor Festa of Plymouth, said that BTEC was a viable part of the community. This type of school turns students around and helps them get great jobs through the training it provides.
 - 6) Michael Nicastro, Bristol Central CT Chamber President, said that from a business prospective, Bristol and surrounding communities have a huge manufacturing base and need of trained personal. Mr. Nicastro stated that the drive in school is to have students go on to college from high school, but that people ignore the first year drop out rate. BTEC provides a supply of skilled workers. Mr. Nicastro commented that closing BTEC will not really save money because there will not be any lay-offs. Mr. Nicastro said BTEC was a critical asset.
 - 7) Cindy Scoville, Greater Bristol Chamber of Commerce/NESMA, said that during a difficult financial time BTEC should not be closed. All technical schools are “gems.” Ms. Scoville stated that the Chamber and NESMA work with BTEC like “brother and sister.” Ms. Scoville mentioned the 2008 summer program and how it was funded with donated money from local private companies and NESMA, who support BTEC.
 - 8) Jim Murdock, a local retired electrical contractor, said that he was in business for 43 years and when he needed an apprentice he came to BTEC to recruit good help.
 - 9) Curtis Sirois, BTEC student, said that he has been at BTEC two years and loves it; BTEC gave him opportunities. Curtis stated that he has learned so much more than at Bristol Central. Curtis said that he will be attending community college next year.
 - 10) Joshua Martin, BTEC student, an electronics student from Farmington said that he will be entering the Navy as an electronics technician and it is all thanks to BTEC.
 - 11) Representative Hamzy, stated that during difficult economic times, BTEC is achieving its objective. He went on to say that BTEC is a priority and that he supports the school. The two year program is an advantage. Students are more mature to make decisions.
 - 12) Pat Keavney, Vice President of the State Vocational Federation of Teachers, stated that there is no saving money by closing BTEC because the staff remains employed for the

next two years. Ms. Keavney stated that BTEC is a unique school that caters to a special niche of students.

Mrs. Bobroske asked that all concerned with the proposed closing of BTEC to please write to Governor Rell.

V. Consent Agenda – None

VI. Items Requiring Action

A motion to approve the dedication of the BTEC Cafeteria to honor Andy Grandy, former CT State Legislator who was instrumental in establishing BTEC as a school within the CTHSS.

VOTE:	In Favor:	Bobroske, Hopkins-Staten, McMahon
	Opposed:	0
	Abstained:	0

VII. Items for Discussion

a. Mr. Robert Lombardi, Data Management, Research, Nutrition & School Meals

Mr. Lombardi spoke of his 32 years in the technical high school system. He began at Prince Tech as a counselor, spent 15 years as a department head and supervised adult education. In 1995 he joined Central Office as a consultant. His responsibilities: NOCTI and CAPT. In 2007 he became Assistant Superintendent. His responsibilities: SASI-Power School, website maintenance, and Data Driven Decision support.

Ms. Hopkins-Staten asked Mr. Lombardi if parents are able to access student information like attendance on Power School. Mr. Lombardi said that Power School was an internet based product with over 12,000 users. The program would give parents access to their children's school records.

Mr. Lombardi stated that 7,000 free and reduced lunch applications are submitted yearly and they require screening. All state schools are inspected to ensure that they are providing healthy and safe food for all students.

b. Mr. Ceferino Lugo, Facilities Management, Adult Education, Health & Safety

Dr. Lugo has been in the system for 19 years. He started as assistant principal at Wright Tech, Eli Whitney and Wilcox Tech. He joined Central Office in 1998. He is responsible for overseeing the facilities and the adult programs. During his time in Central Office, seven new schools have either been built or totally renovated. Dr. Lugo stated that there are plans for the rest of the technical high school system but, over time, funding of the projects has become more difficult. Eli Whitney and Ellis Tech are the next priority.

Ms. Hopkins-Staten asked Dr. Lugo to address the issue of cost overruns on relative to school renovations. Dr. Lugo said that by law all building and specifications have to go through the Department of Public Works (DPW). Dr. Hughes further explained that the architects responsible for the building have contractors and subcontractors involved and that there needs to be more oversight by the DPW. Ms. Hopkins-Staten asked if there was any state level committee that oversees the contractors. Dr. Hughes said there was not.

c. Pat Ciccone, Curriculum and Instruction

Ms. Ciccone stated she was previously an assistant principal; principal and central office consultant for professional development and has been in her most recent position since January 2009. Ms. Ciccone stated the CTHSS goal is to have the best technical programs in the United States. Curriculum had to be updated with measurable goals and standards. The mission is to have instructors teach better, making students more independent and stronger. They have implemented teacher, administrative and consultant coaches. The curriculum will be revised and updated over the summer including “green” components when relevant. Ms. Ciccone stated that there would be training on how to capture kids’ hearts. She further stated that we needed to have respectful schools and are providing professional development to all school administrators.

Ms. Hopkins-Staton stated that she had attended the graduation ceremony at Eli Whitney Technical School and had been asked about the fashion curriculum, noting some feel that trade is not getting much attention. Dr. Hughes said that the new Fashion Merchandising Program was very much on the radar screen and that they would be the new shining star.

VIII. Report of the Superintendent

a. Retirements

Dr. Hughes stated that the internal transfer period process was now finished.

- 108 teachers and 12 principals have officially retired and there would be more retiring.
- Wright Tech had 40 staff members, 30 of them either retired or transferred.
- Due to the SEBAC agreement, there will be no lay offs for two years.
- All teachers’ positions need to be filled; limited by class size due to the teachers’ contract that stipulates that there not be more than 18 students per trade teacher.

Two recruitment fairs were held with over 300 attendees. Dr. Hughes stated that no positions could be filled until OPM gives their approval. Dr. Hughes commented that next year will be a great challenge because in the past OPM has given one to one replacement for staff. Dr. Hughes further said that technical education is part of the state budget and that we can’t wait because on August 27, 2009 we have to be ready for students to start school. Dr. Hughes commented that there are 600 more students enrolled for next year creating a larger challenge that has to be met. Dr. Hughes stated that Tom Murphy was at a press conference at Wright Tech and addressing similar comments like the ones heard here at BTEC today. Dr. Hughes stated that the SEBAC agreement was new territory and she had been working closely with Karen Shaw from Human Resources. She thanked everyone for all their support.

Ms. Hopkins-Staton and Ms. Bobroske both complimented Dr. Hughes on all of her accomplishments during her tenure, and wished her the very best as she prepares to retire.

IX. Other Matters: - None

X. Public Participation: - None

XI. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 12:27 p.m.

Submitted by Darlene Aresta-DaSilva

Minutes approved at the August 11, 2009 Meeting