

**GUILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2010
ADAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL CHORUS ROOM, GUILFORD, CT**

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Bill Bloss called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. Board members present were Bill Bloss, Keith Bishop, Barbara Dudley, John Ireland, Chris Moore, Susan Renner, and Ted Zuse.

Tom Forcella and Anne Keene were present. Also present were Business Administrator Andy Potochney, Accounting Manager Linda Trudeau and Facilities Director Cliff Gurnham.

2. Public Forum for Input on FY 2010-11 Budget

Jaye Carlson expressed concern over the elimination of the two Special Education Coordinators. She stated her belief that principals will not have time to address PPTs and that this added responsibility will be detrimental to both special and regular education.

John Mitzelfelt congratulated Guilford High School on receiving the Silver Medal Award from US News and World Report. He thanked Guilford teachers for making the wage concessions in 2009. He encouraged the public to support the proposed 2010-11 budget stating that any additional cuts would affect class sizes. He asked Board members if they were concerned that further cuts would need to be made to the budget.

Chairman Bloss responded that \$200,000 would need to be added to the benefits category.

Barbara Stuart expressed concern that the cuts proposed in Special Education suggest that Special Education “doesn’t count.” She asked if instructional coaches would help all students to reach their full potential.

Dr. Forcella and Mr. Bloss clarified the roles of instructional coaches.

Dr. Moore added that the instructional coaches will provide early intervention for all students.

George Becker restated his concern about the teacher to student ratio at Guilford High School based on his understanding of the increased number of Special Education students who will be attending the high school next year. He asked if another Special Education teacher would be hired. He also asked the Board to reconsider the idea of having principals and other administrators oversee PPTs. He read a list of qualifications for Special Education Coordinators. He concluded by suggesting that optional programs such as World Language be considered when making budget reductions.

Kim Becket stated that she does not trust that one teacher can manage 11 IEPs. She asked what the checks and balances will be for the new system. She recommended establishing a Special Education subcommittee to the Board of Education that would include parents. She expressed concern about the burden that will be placed on teachers with the proposed reductions in personnel. She recommended against “trading administrators for coaches.” Mrs. Beckett stated the importance of Dr. Forcella meeting with concerned parents to discuss this issue further.

Jason Malli spoke about his Music Technology program at Adams Middle School. He stated that he recently received a grant from the Technology Institute for Music Educators for the purpose of Researching Studies in the Effective Application of Technology. Mr. Malli spoke about standards and expectations for music education in grades K-8 and the history of his program. He asked the Board to consider keeping the program and concluded by playing an original composition from one of his students over the PA system in the chorus room.

Chris Moore suggested that the administration consider reducing the funding for the program while still making it effective for those students who are passionate about the class. He suggested that the program might be an extra-curricular activity.

Linda Westgard stated that her 6th grade son told her that the Music Tech program is the best class at Adams Middle School.

Brian Wylie expressed concern that cutting the Special Education Coordinators will “take out the frontline people dealing with parents.” He suggested that the elimination of these educators will increase the district’s legal expenses and decrease the efficiency of programs.

Chairman Bloss explained that the decision to reduce administrators will put more focus on teachers.

Dr. Forcella explained that highly trained instructional coaches will be hired to focus on literacy in grades K-4. This early intervention in the classrooms should help to reduce the number of children needing Special Education services down the road.

Lisa Carbone asked if there is currently a way for the district to identify children who are not performing well.

Dr. Forcella explained that assessments identify student performance. The instructional coaches will train teachers to effectively address the needs of all students.

Jaye Carlson expressed concern that the coaches will only be addressing literacy.

Dr. Forcella stated that long-term plans will be to look at other disciplines.

Chris Jones spoke in support of the Music Technology program at Adams and the importance of music education for all students.

Gus Kellogg spoke about the importance of the Special Education Coordinators and the para educators for his son both in the Pre-K program at Guilford Lakes and in Kindergarten at A.W. Cox.

Linda Sanacora spoke in support of the World Language program.

Jennifer Milano suggested that the Board add a coordinator back into the Budget.

George Becker qualified an earlier statement, saying that he was using World Language as an example of a program for the Board to consider cutting. He expressed his earlier concern about the ratio of teachers to students at Guilford High School in the Special Education program.

Mr. Zuse responded that he believes that teachers are moved into different classrooms based on need.

Kim Beckett stated that Special Education parents are not convinced that the budget decisions are the right ones. She stated her support of the instructional coaches but expressed concern that 14 positions have been cut from Special Education in recent years.

Marlene Bodnar stated her belief that the Special Education program has grown and improved at the elementary levels. She stated that inclusion becomes more difficult in the upper grades and the role of the Special Education Coordinator is more important. She added that student schedules are very complicated at the middle school level particularly for students with special needs.

Brian Wylie expressed his support for the instructional coaches and sought clarification on how they will impact Special Education students. He also asked which schools the para educators would be cut from.

Dr. Forcella explained that the needs for para educators would be evaluated district-wide and not just by individual school.

Dr. Moore noted the low voter turnout at the 2009 Budget Referendums and encouraged more people to vote this April.

Chairman Bloss referenced Strategic School Profile data on per pupil spending by school systems and noted that Guilford is significantly below the state average on spending. He also noted data on taxes per capita in towns in Connecticut.

Chairman Bloss thanked parents for their interest in the education system. He urged the public to contact Board members with any questions they may have prior to the February 1, 2010, Special Meeting when the Board will vote to forward the budget to the Board of Finance.

Upon a motion made by Mrs. Dudley and seconded by Mr. Bishop, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Lorri Hahn
Clerk to the Board of Education