

COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL OF VT
STATE EDUCATION BOARD
MINUTES
for
ANNUAL MEETING
March 2, 2005
THREE STALLION INN

State Board Members Present: Chuck Pearce, Blanche Kelley, Wilma Paronto, Dwight Davis, Don Messier, Dave Muholland & Richard Fraser

Administration Present: Robert Lucenti, Stephan LaTulippe, Maureen McIntyre & Sheila Commo

Guests Present: Pete Kelley & Caitlin Bisson-Hoyt, Betty White

Local Advisory Board Members Present: Pasquale Dilego, Ross Anderson, Carol Arner, Rita Rinehart, Monica Bettis, Louise Coates, Emily North, Bill Huestis, Jane Willard, David Luce, Joyce Marcotte, Tracy Towles

Chuck Pearce opened the meeting at 10:00 A.M. He thanked everyone for coming, especially considering the weather. He continued with introductions of the State Education Board members and Community High School of Vermont (CHSVT) administration.

1. Introductory Comments, School History & Mission:

Bob Lucenti continued the meeting by explaining the purpose of the annual meeting. The meeting is intended to energize our local advisory board members, to thank our local board members for their volunteer service and to share the school's history and mission.

Bob stated that the local board members/volunteers do not work for the school, instead work for their communities and the students who attend the CHSVT. Their work is very much appreciated by the students, faculty, staff and their communities.

He continued with some history of our school. In 1984, Bob Lucenti was hired as the Director of the Corrections Education Program. There were no classrooms in the prisons, only libraries. At this time the legal responsibility for education services, for youth in Corrections who were under the age of 22 years, was with the local education agencies (LEA). For example, South Burlington School was responsible for all the kids at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility. This was a concern for these schools, as they were not in compliance with the law, especially regarding special education services. Corrections was not alone with this problem. Brandon Training School and the Vermont State Hospital (VSH) had similar concerns as they were not able to serve the children at Brandon and the VSH, which resulted in lawsuits. Kids at Brandon and the VSH were moved and mainstreamed. However, Corrections kids could not be mainstreamed.

Concern from the public was just not there. Only the LEA's were concerned due to litigation.

At this time, Senator Edgar May was working on legislation regarding education in Corrections. As Director of Corrections Education, Bob was involved with this legislation. Bob needed help and found himself at the Retired Teacher's Association (RTA). This is when volunteers for Corrections Education began. Our volunteers started with the RTA, and then business folks became interested. This is how the advisory boards for CHSVT were formed. These volunteers felt education in corrections was the route to take. They wanted job skills, economic development, family and community betterment to be part of this education program. However, we only had libraries and no classrooms.

These volunteers began going to the correctional facilities asking questions of the facility superintendents. What are inmates doing all day? Are they getting out of bed? These questions and volunteers started the culture change within our correctional system. Today, Corrections strongly supports educating inmates. Prisons are now being built with education wings. More high school diplomas are being awarded than the GED. CHSVT is being well perceived by the students themselves.

Bob mentioned a few issues for local boards to discuss. A couple of the issues he suggested are keeping the women and the under 22 year old population in state.

2. The School Today

Stephan LaTulippe, CHSVT Principal, did a power point presentation. He shared that back in the mid 1980's, each site was doing their own thing. As time evolved, we grew and are more alike. Today, everyone is following the same procedures. The school is very uniform in its practices and outcomes. However, each site has their own creativity.

Stephen went on to share the schools outcomes. They are the Free Appropriate Public Education, employability skills, successful reintegration, living, learning & working, continued educational opportunities and proficiency requirements. He continued to list the actual outcomes which are student learning hours, credits, industry/trades credits, GED's and high school diplomas.

The school meets the outcomes by having licensed teachers, facility space, adjunct faculty, structured programs, class time, compensatory and special education services, a budget for the programs, staff development funds, student graduation plans, assessments and teacher and student hours.

Stephan continued his presentation by sharing graphs which show how many assessments, graduation plans, credits, trades certificates, high school diplomas and GED's were completed and awarded.

3. The Student Today

Bob Lucenti continued the meeting by sharing an overview of our students. They are high school dropouts, under the age of 22 years, and have a high need for employability skills. We have some that are over 22 years of age without a high school diploma. They are kids who have once been determined eligible for special education. In order to be special education eligible (IDEA-B & FAPE), students between the ages of 18 and 22 must have been receiving special education services prior to incarceration. The CHSVT does have a “child find” process. On our student enrollment form, there are questions asking them their last school attended, did they ever receive special education services and asking their permission to send for transcripts for their sending school. Ninety-five percent of the under 22 population are engaged in education, whether they were ever determined eligible for special education services or not.

A few questions followed “the student today” presentation. One of the questions was how is our school funded. We are funded by student hours. There is a funding formula which is calculated by the number of student hours. From this formula, the legislature determines how much money will be appropriated to the corrections education program. Someone asked if our school was opened only during the day from Monday through Friday, or did we offer classes in the evenings and Saturdays to allow more students to attend and this would allow for more hours. The answer is that there are some Saturday classes at some of our sites. There are also evening classes at some of the sites. It varies depending on the students needs. Another question asked was if the legislature sees us as one entity or seventeen different schools. The answer is as one entity.

THE MEETING BROKE FOR LUNCH.

4. Local Advisory Boards

Blanche Kelley, State Education Board member, provided an overview of the history of community members working together on Local Advisory Boards. She began her presentation by stating – “Why this grandmother goes to jail!”

Blanche retired from teaching in the Rutland public school system. She taught school for twenty-two years. Once she retired, she had more time to read the local newspapers. She noticed that some of her former students had gotten into trouble and were in jail, she worried about them and decided to start volunteering at the Rutland facility.

Another reason that Blanche began volunteering in Corrections was Sister Beatrice. She was an inspiration to Blanche. Sister Beatrice began working with inmates in 1970. She took the time to escort these folks to family funerals, taught them a decision making course and worked to start a half-way house, which is the Dismiss House. Another inspiration for Blanche was Beryle Gardner. Beryle was one of the first local advisory board members for the CHSVT. She would march in to the facilities and demand the inmates go to school. Beryle was integral to the mandate of the under 22 year old population attending school. Wilma Paronto was another of her inspirations. Wilma

single handedly got the Windsor facility school started. Both Beryle and Wilma were members of the Retired Teacher's Association. Blanche also mentioned the talent and energy that continued to get involved on the Local Advisory Boards. Kathy O'Dell, served on the Dale education board, and then became the Chair of the gubernatorial board for the CHSVT. Kathy took this new governor appointed board, the State Education Board, and set its direction. Kathy really cared about the welfare of this population and believed in education for them.

The State Education Board charge is to oversee the local advisory boards. Blanche asked the local board members to please send your local board minutes to central office. This will allow for all local boards to receive the minutes of all board meetings, as central office will send out the local boards and state board minutes to the chair person of each board. The minutes are our connection and will keep everybody updated on what's happening locally.

Blanche asked for ideas on how to recruit and maintain local board members and volunteers. She shared a map of all our schools and the governing by-laws for the State Education Board. She suggested that each local board write their by-laws. She also shared an updated list of the CHSVT central office staff and updated lists of all local board members.

5. Open Discussion

The last agenda item was an open discussion. Below is a list of the questions and answers.

Question:

-How many students serve on local boards?

Answer:

-The Dale and the Chittenden facility both have students serving on their boards. However, both are detainee facilities, so it has been difficult to maintain consistency of students on the boards. The St. Johnsbury Facility has two seats available for students, but has yet to have any students attend their meetings. The Rutland facility invites students to their local board meetings approximately two times a year to allow them to give the board their input. Monica Bettis, a Barre board member, said that two students from the Barre community site approached her asking her to serve on the Barre board.

Question:

-How and why was the book, "If you have a Parent in Jail, then this Book is for you," written?

Answer:

-During circle group at a Burlington elementary school, the teacher realized that a little girl was very upset. The reason this little girl was upset was because her dad was brought to jail over the weekend. This is what initiated the writing of this book. Many

organizations use this book. For example, the Rocky Horse Circle of Support use this book. Copies of this book are requested regularly by child care centers, family centers, etc.

Question:

-How do we get people to participate on the boards?

Answer:

-Ask your friends and neighbors. Ask students. Ask that it be included in your church bulletin. Attend Rotary meetings and let them know they can volunteer on our boards. We still need to get word out to the public, as some still don't know what the CHSVT is.

Question:

-Are graduations announced in local papers?

Answer:

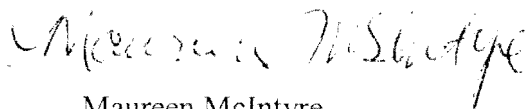
-Some are, and others are not. The responsibility lies with the local school site and/or the local boards.

Suggestions:

Notify your legislators regarding your support for the CHSVT. Let your local business leaders and local town and school boards know about us. With many of our students being under 22 years of age, our school is considered early intervention. They will have at least 35 years of work experience ahead of them, plus this will help to break the cycle for their own family and children.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00

Respectfully submitted,



Maureen McIntyre