

## **Superintendent Report – March 2019**

**Dr. Pam Vogel**

### **Regional Task Force and Area Agencies – Student, Parent and Community Outreach**

The Task Force group has been meeting to analyze the students' feedback from the HYSB focus groups. Currently, grades 8, 10 and 12 are taking the Developmental Assets Survey. (DAS) We have three other years of data from the DAS. McCall has offered to review the data and to give us summary data, making comparisons, to help augment the student focus group data. We hope to share some analysis and trends with the boards this spring.

At our Administrator's Meeting in February, we discussed having a Parent/Community meeting to talk about the Opioid problem. We had planned a similar meeting one year ago, but could not hold it due to weather. We discussed having a similar meeting on April 26. We hope to invite Ines Cenatiempos from the Department of Justice, who presented at an NCPN meeting on opioids, along with other people who can speak on the topic.

Plans are to meet with the administrators in the morning, show the video "Chasing the Dragon" to all 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the late morning, then meet with HS students in the afternoon, and finally present the information with a panel in the evening to present to families and community members.

On February 28, representatives from McCall, Northwest Corner Prevention Network, and Housatonic Youth Services Bureau met with Carl Gross and myself for a discussion on how we can collaborate together for the same purpose—to analyze our students' data and to determine how each of us can support students and families. We discussed our plans for the Parent/Community meeting and NCPN volunteered to help with the arrangements and any publicity and funding that may be needed. Our hour-long meeting resulted in our agreement to all meet monthly and to invite the administrators and counselors to discuss our needs for students and families with needs, how we can support them, either one agency or collectively, and to work together. The first meeting has been established for late March.

### **DCF information with Attorney Craig Meuser**

Attorney Craig Meuser met with our entire administrative team on February 28 to discuss several important policies and any changes with DCF. We reviewed these policies: Child Abuse/Neglect and Sexual Assault and the Regulation, Sexual Harassment and the Regulation, and Restraint and Seclusion. All of these policies will be presented to the boards in the next two months, as there are important recent changes in these.

### **EdAdvance**

This is the 2017-2018 Report for your school, describing the services that your school received.

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pLYKqDX4\\_InK1YqePtm1YI7RpSRu\\_WNS/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pLYKqDX4_InK1YqePtm1YI7RpSRu_WNS/view?usp=sharing)

### **Supt Mid Year Progress Report**

The mid-year progress that has been made on my goals was shared with the All Boards Chairs (ABC) Meeting on February 27.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/17rVdokSjcTt-dlj53Jru3UMaXwCuZ9jA/view?usp=sharing>

### **FOI Complaints, Hearings, and FOI Commission**

In April and May, I received 13 FOI requests. Beginning in May, I asked my assistant and our technology department to produce copies of the documents and emails requested in the complaint and, in May and June, I began reading these for any needed redactions. April and May were busy months, as there was a staff termination, spring break, and three principal searches conducted during those two months

Four of the FOI request were from Jessica Stedman. Eight of the requests were from Denise Cohn. One additional request was from Doug Cohn.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Lq6ZqPcuEIHDZto0gppIqpWy6k7yimJO/view?usp=sharing>

(There was an additional request from a member of Falls Village. We responded to that request, which asked for a committee to come in to the office and review invoices and payments. We responded to say that we could allow one or two persons at a scheduled time to go through files. We have not had any response.)

A letter dated 5-31-18 from Jessica Stedman, as the complainant, appealed to the Commission alleging that I had violated the Freedom of Information Act by failing to comply with her requests.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/12T4y0vrTFFKVDVm9d6R6dViccDBQhzbD/view?usp=sharing>

A letter dated 6-22-18 from Denise Cohn alleged that I had violated the Freedom of Information Act by failing to comply with her requests.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/19rpkuKS3nV6xbsiupTj0LDscb2xHrVId/view?usp=sharing>

Our school attorney spoke with one of the complainants to see if we could avoid hearings, but this request was refused by both J. Stedman and D. Cohn.

Hearing documents providing evidence of communication to the two parties:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1E3zo5Jc2\\_YvlsraDVbq-OCTXfU8ReENI/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1E3zo5Jc2_YvlsraDVbq-OCTXfU8ReENI/view?usp=sharing)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ia8oZ-E35j398Vur96aUkXN9aWVPQm2a/view?usp=sharing>

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/11NiufT\\_Un56hxTmKXZrnmKbkIeAAox0j/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/11NiufT_Un56hxTmKXZrnmKbkIeAAox0j/view?usp=sharing)

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1P7AR\\_0XT8XiLi8WVhdOkC3W25c8hqVHy/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1P7AR_0XT8XiLi8WVhdOkC3W25c8hqVHy/view?usp=sharing)

The first Hearing, which was to be the Hearing from the Complaint filed by Jessica Stedman, took place on August 2. Denise Cohn showed up in Jessica Stedman's place, but the Hearing Officer, not wanting to delay or reschedule, proceeded with the Hearing and allowed Ms. Cohn to represent Ms. Stedman. She requested the Jessica Stedman appear at the following hearing. The November Hearing was to involve both Denise Cohn and J. Stedman. That Hearing took place on November 15. J. Stedman did not attend the November 15 meeting, stating an emergency.

A Pending Freedom of Information Appeals - Summary/Update was filed on December 3 and December 10, 2018, by Attorney Natalie Wagner, from Shipman and Goodwin.

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wGuJXtMq9PjK5-VPypTxqwsr\\_Glb8SJ/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wGuJXtMq9PjK5-VPypTxqwsr_Glb8SJ/view?usp=sharing)

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TDpodMLrDpoX\\_Uo\\_fblxbKPujfdnmq3G/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TDpodMLrDpoX_Uo_fblxbKPujfdnmq3G/view?usp=sharing)

The Complainants also had opportunity to file appeals. Denise Cohn filed documents to the FOI Commission on behalf of J. Stedman and herself for finding me and the Board in violation of the Freedom of Information Act.

Information is shown here in the Post-Hearing Brief from our attorneys:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DSsFhOR0wFN2bvW4K1dteG0abJIzvW6q/view?usp=sharing>

The Hearing Officers findings:

The first report was dated January 10 and is in regards to Jessica Stedman's complaint.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1m0uhtXXRrLEi5pKgrtnFsVutxuATM3qJ/view?usp=sharing>

The second report is dated February 7 and is in regards to Denise Cohn's complaint.

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/13nFDhXHIZRCz3p5a9VatTKGu\\_RIkJm2H/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/13nFDhXHIZRCz3p5a9VatTKGu_RIkJm2H/view?usp=sharing)

Following the Hearing Officer findings, the decision then went to the FOI Commission, to determine if the Commission would uphold the Hearing Officer decisions or not. Both parties have an opportunity to appear before the Commission. We had an attorney at both FOI Commission meetings. The findings from the Commission were relayed to me through email:

February 13 Email:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/18Eh0sDHQz3SRU914KL1O7IEH5SjD6iFx/view?usp=sharing>

February 27 Email:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LH2L0ZQSIDvMBWPNfRTHuXOxSt8ikfYy/view?usp=sharing>

We have calculated the cost, in terms of time and attorney fees, that have come about from the FOIs. To date, we have estimated the following costs associated with the 12 FOIs:

**Legal bills:**

July - \$4,087.50

August - \$4,071

September - \$840

October - \$1,695.50

November - \$5,169.50

December - \$3,744.50

Total **\$19,608**

**Based on average weekly hour estimates provided by employees:**

Tina Bunce- \$47.57/hr x 3/hrs/week x 26 weeks = \$3,710

Pam Vogel - \$100.46/hr. x 3 hrs/week x 26 weeks = \$7,835

Mike Ellington - \$52.91/hr. x 6 hrs/week x 26 weeks = \$8,254

Total - **\$19,800**

**Grand Total Through Dec. 2108 = \$39,408.**

We are not finished with the FOIs, as there are a number of FOI complaints that still need to be filled. In the last month, there were about another 200 documents provided to both complainants. We estimate that

it could require at least another year or more, if 200 documents a month are reviewed for any needed redactions and this will continue to cost the region additional time and money by the staff.

### **Regionalization Testimony and Hearing**

On February 28, I submitted written testimony to the members of the Education Committee of the Connecticut Legislature. We had an opportunity to submit oral testimony on March 1 in the evening and I presented, although each presenter was given only two minutes to speak. Speakers needed to sign up to speak at 10 AM and testimony by the superintendents was to be at 5:30 PM. I spent time at the Legislative Office Building combining work with listening to CT-N streaming, in order to hear the public comments on regionalization and home schooling. Nearly all of the speakers were against forced regionalization. Here is a link to my written testimony:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/17ovzKkX11wc6YBT60J3XAgqFtLzbpFLy/view?usp=sharing>

Senator McCrory, one of the co-chairs of the Education Committee, interrupted the presentations by saying that no one was addressing the “elephant in the room”. He said that there was very little diversity in many of our schools, and that this was due to the differences in wealth across the state. He said that he had been an educator and, yet, we have not come very far from the landmark court decision in 1954 with “Brown versus the Board of Education”. There were a number of questions to certain speakers from the Senator, asking about the ethnic makeup of schools. He praised a young student who spoke earlier to say that she left a public school that was new to her, to be home schooled, and felt that the public school did not have much diversity.

I believe this is important to note. If some members of the Education Committee believe that regionalization is to save costs, but the Co-chair of the Committee believes that a primary purpose of regionalization is to increase diversity, then are the goals of the legislators aligned and will regionalization address either issue?