

Concord School District
Board of Education
Meeting with Commissioner Frank Edelblut
May 22, 2017

Board members: Pam Wicks, Maureen Redmond-Scura, Tom Croteau, Jennifer Patterson, Nathan Fennessy, Alana Kimball, Clint Cogswell

Others: Terri Forsten, *Superintendent*, Donna Palley, *Assistant Superintendent*

Board President Cogswell opened the meeting by welcoming New Hampshire Commissioner of Education Frank Edelblut and asking him to highlight his day in Concord public schools. Commissioner Edelblut reviewed his day, noting that he was impressed with the new Christa McAuliffe and Mill Brook Schools. Commissioner Edelblut noted how impressed he was at the elementary schools being among the most forward-thinking schools he has visited in the state. He said he could see personalization in the elementary schools, as teachers and students worked closely together on the breadth of their studies. Commissioner Edelblut spoke to challenges at the middle school with what he described as fairly traditional instruction in some classrooms. He said that he was very impressed by the educational opportunities for students at the high school. Superintendent Forsten described the Commissioner's observation of the middle school sea perch program, underwater robotics, and the high school robotics team, as they described their adventure at the World Championship for Robotics.

Mr. Cogswell asked what Commissioner Edelblut thought of the ethnic diversity in Concord schools. Commissioner Edelblut said he knew that Concord has a high percentage of students from a variety of backgrounds. He noted that he views students as students, and simply connects and talks with students on his school visits. Jennifer Patterson shared a video she had taken on her iPhone of students during International Night at Concord High School last week, and shared that with the Board.

Commissioner Edelblut said that his greatest surprise was how many of Concord schools are doing a great job with students – teaching and learning is happening on an impressive scale. He wondered how this level of performance could be achieved across the state.

Pam Wicks commented that the PACE initiative was supportive of competency education, teaching and learning, and connected the way the state funds education to the quality of that education. Commissioner Edelblut referenced a soon-to-be-available study that examines school funding in New Hampshire. Ms. Patterson spoke to the challenges that communities are experiencing with declining enrollment as they work to support public schools. Commissioner Edelblut spoke to the Croydon issue; that School Board wanted to send students to a local Montessori School. Nathan Fennessy asked whether New Hampshire is examining the process of improving funding through

legislation. Commissioner Edelblut spoke about charter schools and how they may support public schools (citing the North Country Charter School as an example). Mr. Cogswell asked whether charter schools would have to enroll all students, including students with special education needs. Commissioner Edelblut spoke to the increasing number of special education students and costs of special education. There was a conversation about the challenges of mental and behavioral health and substance misuse, impacting schools locally and statewide.

Tom Croteau asked the Commissioner about his statement asking how to get everyone where they need to be in schools and in classrooms. Commissioner Edelblut spoke about professional development and training being a great and critical support. Mr. Croteau talked about BEST School and PBIS training and initiatives that had been part of leadership from the New Hampshire Department of Education. Commissioner Edelblut spoke to the limited funding for professional development at NH DOE. There was a conversation about how professional collegiality in the state has been facilitated and has happened in small ways; for example, with PACE and school/district visits. Maureen Redmond-Scura spoke to how teachers talk with students about “failing forward” (the idea that not all theories turn out to be true – but by experimenting, and not being deterred by the “failure” of a theory or approach, students and staff become more confident in their ability to learn), and that it is a positive aspect of learning and school culture. Alana Kimball spoke to one of the positive components of PACE being that educators can assess when students are ready and when lessons are most suitably connected to instruction.

Board members thanked Commissioner Edelblut for his time.

Clint Cogswell asked for a motion to adjourn.

The Board voted (motioned by Ms. Patterson, seconded by Mr. Croteau).

The meeting adjourned at 6:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Croteau, *Secretary*

Terri Forsten, *Recorder*