



**Monthly Meeting**  
Avon Board of Education  
34 Simsbury Road, Avon, Connecticut

**Mission Statement**

*Our mission is to inspire in each student a joy and passion for learning and a commitment to excellence, personal integrity, and social responsibility.*

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**Tuesday, December 19, 2023, 7:00 pm**

Avon High School Library

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Avon High School  
510 West Avon Road  
Avon, CT 06001

**Minutes**

**Attendance**

**Board Members Present:** Jackie Blea; Debra Chute, Board Chair; Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Board Secretary; Lynn Katz; Nicole Russo; Thej Singh, Board Vice-Chair; Laura Young

**Board Members Absent:** Sarah Thompson

**Administration Present:** Dr. Bridget Carnemolla, Superintendent of Schools; Jess Giannini, Assistant Superintendent; Roberto Medic, Assistant Superintendent; Susan Russo, Business Manager

I. **Call to Order**

***Ms. Debra Chute, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.***

A. Roll Call

II. **Pledge of Allegiance**

III. **Mission Statement**

IV. **Recognition** - The Board recognized two retiring Board members, Ms. Jackie Blea and Ms. Laura Young who served on the Avon Board of Education for 8 years. Each Board member said a few kind words about them, and thanked them for their service.

V. **Approval of Minutes**

A. Board of Education Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2023

***Ms. Katz made a motion to approve the BOE Regular Monthly minutes of November 14, 2023***

***Ms. Blea seconded.***

***Motion Passed 7-0-0***

VI. **Communication from Public-** There was no communication from the public

VII. **Items of Information and Proposals**

A. Student Representative Report – Lillian Peng and Nikolai Meltser  
Miss Peng began:

AHS: Interact Club had their first service project of the year, Operation Cares 2023- Boxes to Boots

School Play- Triangle when smoothly and performances were amazing  
Band and Choir performances of their winter concerts  
More than 750 students are on the honor roll and all grades that took the PSAT scored higher than the state average  
Sierra club and Fashion Club are holding a used clothing drive  
Over \$1,000 raised for childhood cancer from PJ day  
BOE Chair Ms. Debra Chute spoke at the NHS about leadership  
The Camarata singers caroled at all schools and Central office

AMS: Toy Drive for the children

According to US News and World Report is ranked # 6 in the state!  
PJ Day for Childhood Cancer

TBS: March of Dimes Town Meeting

Newly Recognition rewards “Rokko’s rewards” was instated  
Parent/Teacher Conferences were held the week after Thanksgiving  
PJ Day for Childhood Cancer

Mr. Nikolai Meltser continued:

RBS: PJ Day for Childhood Cancer  
Winter concert was held

PGS: PJ Day for Childhood Cancer

Big thank you for the donations for the Turkey Trot Collection for the month of November  
Scholastic Book Fair was a huge success

- B. Financial Report – Susan Russo, Business Manager - Ms. Russo began with the November Financial Highlights; the month of November ended at 7.52% or just over 5M unencumbered. The variances were seen in our administrative salaries, as well as some certified staff variances with retirements and onboarding for those retirements. A positive balance remains as there are still some unfilled stipend positions. Non Certified staff variances have occurred in the custodial area with leaves as well as paraeducator needs for the district. Utility usage was up in copiers as well as the water usage at the middle school due to the flooding (and the subsequent cleaning up from the flooding). SPED costs have increased due to all the contracts being done and submitted, as well as the increase in transportation costs for SPED for wheelchair needs. All of these variances can be found in the transfers within this packet. There is a pause in spending at this point, to make sure we can meet our obligations for the year.

## VIII. Committees & Liaison Reports

### A. Committee Reports

- Curriculum & Professional Practices – There was no meeting this month.
- Finance – Lynn Katz, Chair - Ms. Katz stated the Finance Committee met on December 12th and the financials are in this monthly meeting packet.
- Negotiations – Deb Chute, Chair - We are not actively negotiating with any one at this time.
- Policy – Laura Young, Chair - Policy meeting was held on November 28, 2023 and the policies are looking to be approved tonight.

### B. Liaison Report

- Capital Region Education Council – Jackie Blea, Board Representative  
Ms. Blea stated that there was no meeting this month.

## IX. Chair’s Report –Ms. Debra Chute, Board Chair

- A. Board Chair Update - Ms. Chute began by saying she was asked to speak at the National Honor Society meeting on Leadership and she was incredibly touched to be asked. The students were engaged and it was an honor to speak.

Ms. Chute continued by saying she and Ms. Nicole Russo were a part of a new Holiday Card tradition. Dr. Carnemolla had the kindergartners from both schools craft artwork on a piece of paper with a winter

theme, where one from each school would be chosen to make the Avon Public School holiday card. The hard part was deciding between all the children's artwork! Dr. Carnemolla as well as some Central Office staff, Ms. Russo and I went to the schools to surprise the kindergarten student whose artwork was chosen, they were surprised and excited to learn their artwork had won (parents of the students were present as well, when the students were told their artwork had been chosen).

Ms. Chute then wished everyone a happy and healthy holiday break and wished 2024 for all will bring something hopeful.

X. Superintendent's Report – Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla

A. Hiring Report - Mr. Medic began by saying they were pleased to introduce 2 new educators to fill 2 retirements that occurred in November and one this Friday the 22nd. Mr. Mohanad Elserafy to fill Ms. Michelle Gladue's 4th grade position at PGS (Ms. Gladue retiring after 30 years of teaching) and Ms. Tia Smith to fill Ms. Sara Parson's position for SPED at AHS. There was a great pool of candidates for the SPED position, and they are pleased to welcome an Avon Alum to the district.

B. Enrollment Report-

Dr. Carnemolla stated we are creeping up slowly in enrollment, but not far off the numbers of last year at this time.

C. Strategic Plan Update -

Dr. Carnemolla stated that she had received many questions/requests on the status of the Science of Reading Waiver so she asked Mr. Giannini to put something together to show where we were, where we are, and where we are going for a helpful recap for everyone.

Mr. Giannini started by recapping the drivers for the reading curriculum, stating that in 2018 the *Center for School Change* (when reviewing our Avon Strategic Plan) suggested the need for cohesive teaching practices. At this point, Dr. Carnemolla clarified that one of the goals she was tasked with when she became Superintendent was to work with an outside agency to help develop a new Strategic Plan. Our current Blueprint for Excellence for Avon was created with the help of the *Center for School Change*, and one piece of that was having a cohesive plan for the reading curriculum, and that part of the Blueprint is being carried forward to today.

Mr. Giannini continued that in order to boost those teaching practices, and continue the K-12 vertical alignment, key components had to be put in place. The Workshop model was selected as the delivery model and the Teacher College Units were chosen to be the resource, along with Avon writing much of their own curriculum. The Right to Read law was passed in 2021 and it made the Curriculum Committee review the curriculum for what worked and what did not. Along with this came the legislative decision to have all schools in CT use either one of the 11 reading programs that the State of CT Department of Education provided, or to submit a waiver to 'defend' that the reading program in place at a district meets the requirements set forth by the State.

In February of 2023 the Science of Reading Waiver was submitted and in the beginning of December we were told we had partial approval.

The resources we need to revise are comprehension and vocabulary. Ms. Katz questioned the fluency aspect and Mr. Giannini answered that our Geodes is acceptable to the state for fluency. Dr. Carnemolla spoke to a rebuttal letter that Avon and many other districts submitted to the state, per the advice of counsel. This rebuttal letter is saying that the many districts are not in agreement with the process that was followed for the Reading Waivers. The partial waiver indicates that the Workshop and Teachers College does not meet the standards for the State of CT.

Dr. Carnemolla stated that Avon disagreed with the State that our comprehension and vocabulary programs did not meet the standards or we would not have submitted the waiver. That said, if it is the right thing to do by the students, we will choose another program (from the list approved by the state), those programs are being researched now.

Mr. Fleischman questioned if Avon students surpass the state average in testing, and our curriculum is stellar, why do we need to revise with a program chosen from a list the State has given us. Dr. Carnemolla agreed our curriculum meets the standards, which is why we submitted the waiver. Mr. Fleischman also

voiced concern over our legal counsel and their involvement with the state as their counsel, and Dr. Carnemolla suggested that would be a conversation to have with our Legal Counsel.

Ms. Katz asked if it was specifically the Workshop model that the state disagreed with, and Mr. Giannini answered that we used the latest update of the Workshop model, and that was what the state reviewed, but still was unacceptable to them. Mr. Giannini continued to say that we are still unaware what their issue is with our comprehension and vocabulary model, and that is what will be discussed going forward with the State.

Mr. Fleischman had inquired if we, as a district, did nothing at all, didn't change or revise our curriculum and Dr. Carnemolla stated that the legislature gave the State Department of Education the 'right' to mandate reading curriculum, so not complying with the law would not serve Avon well.

She added that there was a Right to Read Grant, and we did apply for it and need to use it for any new program needing to be purchased. Any changes need to be partially implemented by July 1, 2025 which means we can pilot any new programs (for comprehension and/or vocabulary) and see what works for us.

Mr. Giannini wanted to reiterate that if the changes come, to remember it is still our curriculum and matches our mission statement.

D. Updates -

Dr. Carnemolla wanted to say how wonderful it was to go to the schools and see the students whose drawings were chosen for the holiday cards. She had wanted to do something to showcase the students, and could not have been happier with the turnout. (Dr. Carnemolla then went on to show the two versions of the cards that were given out).

Dr. Carnemolla also thanked Mr. Michael Renkawitz for working with us as an interim Assistant Principal. He has been a huge asset to Avon and we are extremely grateful and appreciative.

XI. Consent Calendar -

A. 23-24/19 - Budget Transfers

B. 23-24/20 - TBS PTO Donation of \$4,400

***Ms. Chute moved to have the consent calendar approved as is, Ms. Blea seconded***

***Motion passed 7-0-0***

Ms. Chute wanted to thank the TBS PTO for their generous donation

XII. Old Business -

A. 23-24/17 Approval of Primary Instructional Material: Patron Saint of Nothing by Randy Ribay

Ms. Chute mentioned that this component (approval of Primary Instructional Material) was on the last agenda.

The 30 day review period has passed and it is at the point of approval.

***Ms. Blea made the motion to approve the primary instructional material The Patron Saint of Nothing,***

***Ms. Young seconded***

***Motion passed 7-0-0***

XIII. New Business

A. 23-24/ 21 Policy 5145.4 - Nondiscrimination (Student)

Dr. Carnemolla stated the changes to this policy pertain to legislative changes to definitions within the policy.

It was confirmed that all the changes are from Shipman and Goodwin model policies

***Ms. Laura Young made the motion to approve revised policy 5145.4 Nondiscrimination (student),***

***Ms. Katz seconded***

***motion passed 7-0-0***

B. 23-24/ 22 Policy 4118.11 - Nondiscrimination (Personnel)

These changes are the same as the above Nondiscrimination policy as well as prospective employers being allowed to ask about erased criminal history.

***Ms. Laura Young made the motion to approve revised policy 5145.4 Nondiscrimination (student), Ms. Thej Singh seconded motion passed 7-0-0***

- C. 23-24/ 23 Policy 4118.235 - Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children or Reports of Sexual Assault of Students by School Employees

Change made to the legislation regarding sexual contact with a deceased person.

***Ms. Laura Young made the motion to approve revised policy 4118.235 Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children or Reports of Sexual Assault of Students by School Employees, Ms. Singh seconded motion passed 7-0-0***

- D. 23-24/24 Policy 6148 - Improve Completion of FAFSA

The new legislation for this policy includes the FAFSA being completed as a requirement for graduation, starting with the class of 2025. There is a provision for a waiver if a form can not be filled out.

***Ms. Laura Young made the motion to approve revised policy 6148, Improve Completion of FAFSA, Ms. Blea seconded motion passed 7-0-0***

- E. 23-24/25 Policy 9325.2 - Construction of Agenda

Dr. Carnemolla stated that this is an update requiring all information produced at the BOE meeting must be published online; this is the packet that is given to the board before the Board meetings.

***Ms. Laura Young made the motion to approve revised policy 9325.2 Construction of Agenda, Mr. Fleischman seconded motion passed 7-0-0***

- F. 23-24/26 2024-2025 High School Course of Studies

Dr. Carnemolla stated that this comes to the Board for approval every year, mostly for the reason of having something approved online for colleges to refer to when needing to reference a prospective student's transcript.

A board member questioned the Course of Studies and the curriculum that aligns with it and a conversation ensued.

***Ms. Jackie Blea made the motion to approve the High School Course of Studies for the 2024-2025 school year, Ms. Young seconded Motion passed 7-0-0***

XIV. Communication from Public

There was no communication from the public.

XV. Communication from Avon Board of Education Members- There was no further communication from the Board

XVI. Adjournment

***Ms. Jackie Blea made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:12 p.m., Ms. Laura Young seconded Motion passed 7-0-0***

Minutes prepared by Christine Sardinkas, Board Recording Clerk

Minute respectfully submitted by Jeffrey S. Fleischman, Avon Board Secretary