



What is Happening in the Bridgeport Schools?

BCAC has been consumed with the status of the state reconstitution of the Bridgeport Board of Education. This decision came as a surprise to many of us, so soon after the Board supported Dr. Ramos' recommendation not to approve the \$215.8 million reconciliation budget. Events are unfolding at breakneck speed. We would like to share with you what we know so far.

Education Budget Crisis

- Bridgeport Board of Education (BOE) approved \$233.6 million education budget on March 8, 2011
- City Council and Mayor adopted a \$215.8 million education budget. This means:
 - 4 years of level funding by the City / 3 years of level funding by the state
 - A deficit of \$18 million between BOE approved budget and City Council adopted budget
- In order to meet the \$215.8 million budget, the BOE considered many cuts, including:
 - Eliminating over 400 positions, including approximately 40% of social workers, guidance counselors and psychologists
 - Filling each classroom to the contractual limit (29 students)
 - Combining classrooms (ex. 2nd and 3rd graders in the same classroom)
 - Closing Dunbar School

Education Budget Process

- 5 BOE Finance Committee meetings
- BOE meeting for public comment
- Board of Education special meeting held on June 16th to vote on the budget

The night of the special BOE meeting, Superintendent John Ramos presented four recommendations; Board of Education approved with a vote of 8 to 1:

1. File a complaint with the State Department of Education putting the state on notice that the reconciliation budget (\$215.8 million) will not allow the district, as an entity of the state, to educate its students in an equitable manner.
2. Continue to work with the City, the unions, the State and federal government to secure more dedicated financial resources for students.
3. Work with the community and parents to stay involved and have a collective voice to be heard as necessary.
4. Do not approve any reconciliation budget plan cuts but commit to look for cost savings (including freezing vacant positions), and carefully monitor and analyze expenses.
 - Follow up meeting to be held in mid-October. If, despite seeking additional city and state revenue, there is not enough funding to meet the budget, then cuts will be made.
 - Parent meeting held on June 28th, Cesar Batalla with 250 in attendance.

Events Unfold Fast

- On Friday afternoon, July 1st, Bridgeport Board of Education posted notice of a special Board meeting to be held on Tuesday, July 5th to vote on two resolutions:
 1. To ask the State Board of Education to reconstitute the Bridgeport Board of Education; and
 2. To ask the newly reconstituted Board to consider the recommendations from the Board of Education Finance Committee regarding budget.

- Tuesday, July 5th, Bridgeport Board of Education voted 6 to 3 to adopt resolution asking for the state to reconstitute the Board.
- Wednesday, July 6th, the State Board of Education voted 5 to 4 in support of the Bridgeport BOE resolutions.

What Does Reconstitution Mean?

The State has made it clear that their actions do not mean a “takeover” of the schools. What it does mean is that the current Board of Education members will be replaced or reconstituted.

- Reconstituted Board to be composed of 5 members, will hold a term of 3 years (possible extension) and will be selected by Acting Commissioner George Coleman. Qualifications of new Board members:
 - Ability to work as a member of a team; understand team dynamics
 - Skills to develop vision necessary to make District competitive within 5 years
 - Commitment to invest substantial time to improve the school governance structure through innovative practices and equitable and sustainable local school system redesign
 - Significant experience in managing and developing policy for complex multi-service systems, including client service, fiscal and programmatic accountability, community relations and engagement with local, state and federal governmental entities
- Resumes must be submitted to Acting Commissioner Coleman by July 18th.
- Dr. John Ramos will continue to serve as Superintendent of Schools.
- As we understand it, the newly reconstituted board will be working from the \$215.8 million budget.

What has happened so far?

Acting Commissioner Coleman held a number of meetings in Bridgeport:

- July 9th - IMA (Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance)
- July 12th - BRBC (Bridgeport Regional Business Council)
- July 12th - Bridgeport Legislative Delegation
- July 12th - Bridgeport Partnership for Student Success
- July 12th - City Council
- July 13th - Parents / Community

What has been BCAC’s Role?

- Attended all 5 BOE Finance Committee meetings, as well as public hearing and special BOE meeting
- Presented public comment at school budget hearing urging delay of budget until all options explored
- Presented public comment at State Department of Education meeting raising questions about process and lack of parent involvement
- Invited guest on WVOF and WNPR
- Partnered with PLTI, PAC, Parent Center to organize Parent / Community meeting with Superintendent Ramos on June 28th; over 250 parents attended
- Coordinated and co-sponsored Parent / Community meeting with Commissioner Coleman on July 13th (CT State Dept of Education, Bpt Parent Center, PLTI, BPEF, District PAC , National Network of Partnership Schools, State Education Resource Center, CT Parent Information and Resource Center); over 200 parents attended
- Scheduled special BCAC Board and Education and Early Care Task Force meeting on July 14th to bring everyone up to speed and discuss our position.

BCAC has been, and will continue to be, a watchdog. Our advocacy efforts, objectivity and neutrality are needed more than ever to ensure that Bridgeport schools have the resources they need to give children a quality education and that parents are engaged in the process and have a voice. We will keep you posted.