

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
INFORMATIONAL SESSION  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MARCH 19, 2024**

**Call to order**                   President Aidee Nieves called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

**Attendance:**                   Aidee Nieves, City Council President; Scott Burns; Matthew  
  McCarthy; Tyler Mack; Dasha Spell; Aikeem Boyd;  
  Jeanette Herron; Michelle Lyons; Mary McBride-Lee;  
  Richard Ortiz; Alfredo Castillo; Maria Valle; Maria  
  Pereira; Eneida Martinez; Ernest Newton

**Other:**                             Dr. Carmela Levy-David, Bridgeport School Superintendent

**Re: School infrastructure concerns and consolidation efforts**

**Information Session:**

The following presentation can be found on: <https://www.bridgeportedu.net/risingtogether>

Dr. Levy-David thanked everyone for joining the information session and shared that over the past few weeks they have begun the process of sharing with the community the proposed plan of closing schools within the district to allow students of equitable learning opportunities and meeting the future needs of the 21st century students. The initiative is called rising together which is organized in a 36 month plan from closing to redevelopment. The schools under consideration are Edison, Hall, Bridgeport Learning Center, John Winthrop, Bridgeport Military Academy, Bassick High School, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Wilbur Cross, and Bryant Elementary. Two of the buildings are recommended to be used for other purposes. Bridgeport is the 4th lowest performing district in Connecticut and these schools were selected on the basis of assessments and their low performing results. They are organizing for the next school year to prepare and better educate the students enrolled in the district.

Dr. Levy David went over each school's current conditions and reasonings for closing.

- Hall School located at 290 Clermont Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06610

Built in 1914 hasn't had any renovations since its original opening. Academically their testing results have been declining the last 10 years. The building is not ADA compliant, there is a lot of asbestos, running on a steam heating system with no mechanical ventilation system, the bathrooms are all in the basement, the electrical system is at capacity, and it does not have a fire sprinkler system.

- Edison Elementary School located at 115 Boston Terrace Bridgeport, CT 06610

Built in 1935 there has never been any renovations made since the original openings. Academically the students do not meet the minimal standard for reading and math. The building is not ADA compliant, there is asbestos within the floors and plumbing, running on a steam heating system with no mechanical ventilation, the electrical system is at capacity, and it does not have a fire sprinkler system. Along with no parking available on site.

- Bridgeport Learning Center located at the 280 Tesiny Ave Bridgeport, CT 06606

Built in 1895 this building has 47 students enrolled with special needs and learning disabilities while it was built to accommodate 400 students. The current scores are also not up to par. This building is not ADA compliant, there is asbestos within the building, running on a steam heating system with no mechanical ventilation, the electrical system is also at capacity, and it fails to have a fire sprinkler system.

The three schools mentioned above will transfer their students to continue their education at Thomas Hooker, Beardsley, Luis Munoz Marin, and Jettie S. Tisdale School. These buildings are in better condition with the capacity to accommodate all the students, also being ADA compliant. Although a few of the buildings do not have Air Condition systems. Besides Harding High School, Geraldine Johnson and Cesar A. Batalla that are at full capacity, the rest of the schools in the district have availability to take enrollment for students. Dr. Levy- David stated they have studied the mobility rate of students, 25% of students are transferring during the school year and others are moving out of the district. The Bridgeport School District can have anywhere from 1,900 to 2,500 students enrolled within any given year. With the initiative they will lower the mobility rate and create first century learning spaces that are equipped for all types of students and will cause no harm between health and safety.

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- Bryant School located at 230 Poplar Street Bridgeport, CT 06605

Built in 1912, currently only 313 students attend the school while it holds the space for 500 students. With a renovated job completed in 1997 that was not up to code, they have been spending thousands to fix and make repairs on the building each year. The bathrooms and outside walking spaces need a renovation, and there is limited parking. Also, the retaining wall from the back of the building is collapsing, hallways walls need resurfacing, and the cement steps are falling apart due to moisture.

- Dunbar Elementary School located at 445 Union Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06607

Built in 1984 with no renovation ever being made, it currently has 403 students enrolled and performance is low. The vision is to repurpose the building into an adult learning facility for parents and adults looking to learn English, continue higher education, and seek community resources. 70% of students speak another language outside of English at home and many families are moving into Bridgeport from different countries. Bridgeport is said to have the largest adult learning program, which is funded by grants, they would like to include a welcome center and bring back the parent center as well. Dr. Levy-David believes this location is perfect for the resource center as there is a clinic and YMCA closely located.

- Wilbur Cross School located at 1775 Reservoir Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06606

Built in 1969 and renovations completed in 2012, the current enrollment is 324 students. The issues at Wilbur Cross are low attendance and student achievement scores. Dr. Levy- David proposes they use the building as a specialized learning center for students with special needs. They are currently sending over 300 students out of town to receive the appropriate education services. Bridgeport currently spends \$100,000 dollars to \$1.5 million dollars on one student to receive transportation, food, and special learning service each year. Within the proposal they would like to also use the facility as an exclusion center and other cities within southern Connecticut are interested in out of district space being held for their students to receive services as well.

Dr. Levy-David closed her proposal by stating students should be kept in the district so they do not lose inclusion from the community and the opportunity to graduate with school children their age. With the proposal for Wilbur Cross and Dunbar they will be able to keep students in the district, not spending money on for profit education and keep students from being displaced in the community. They currently spend \$24.2 million dollars keeping the six schools in operation, with the initial closings they will be saving \$7.2 million. Employment is said not to be a factor in the proposal, no layoffs will be occurring and this budget plan will not impact the 2024-2025 budget plan as it will be factored in for the 2025-2026 budget year.

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Dr. Level-David thanked everyone for listening and opened the floor for any comments and questions from the city council.

Council member Lyons asked during the time of the renovations, how many students will be in each classroom. Dr. Levy-David replied they have planned for 22 students in each classroom with one educator, the maximum is 29 students to one educator. With the proposal they can create team teaching, co-teaching opportunities, and intervention programs with the surplus of educators available.

Council member Lyons asked with the Winthrop renovation, where would the student go and for how long. Dr. Levy-David answered they will be hosting the students from the new Bassick High School location as they will have two new buildings and the old Bassick location can be used as swing space to teach students. They would only need to coordinate transportation for the students.

Council member Castillo shared he is in shock of the data he just saw as most of the schools listed are in minority areas. It doesn't sit right with him sending students to old buildings with no Air conditioning to learn. Bridgeport is always the last to receive funding from the state. He would like to support the plan as a father who has a daughter going to a Fairfield school, he had a choice but many families don't. He would like to support the plan as much as possible. Dr. Levy-David replied thank you so much.

Council member Pereira added she has attended all the forums and wanted to express a forum as a place or situation where people exchange ideas and discuss issues. Although some parents were allowed to speak at Edison, at the Hall forum only the Board of Education was allowed to speak. She even saw two Dunbar parents leave due to the one sided conversation.

Council President Nieves asked council member Pereira if she could skip to the question.

Council member Pereira asked Dr. Levy-David does she believe forum is an exchange of ideas, perspectives and point of view. Dr. Levy-David replied in any forum it required someone to actually speak and if she can recall, council member Periera was bringing disorder and chaos to some of the meetings.

Council member Pereira said her definition of a forum is where you listen to different perspectives. She added the reason for the turmoil is due to the BOE demanding the PACT president at Edison school to leave the meeting.

Council President Nieves said to council member Pereira this is not a debate, we need to be cognitive towards the other members of the council as there is a committee meeting coming up. Everyone must be mindful.

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Council member Newton said to Dr. Levy-David he is so sorry for the disrespect she has to endure. He asked when was the last time any of the schools went through a thorough assessment to understand the damages and repairs needed for the buildings. Dr. Levy-David replied the last building assessment occurred in 2012 but should be occurring every two years.

Council member Burns asked with regards to the buildings being vacated can she speak more on that. Dr. Levy-David replied the buildings will be properly decommissioned. The city owns the buildings and the BOE only manages them. Once they are decommissioned they will be turned over back to the city, they have no further explanation as to what will happen to them.

Council member Burns followed up by asking about the special education cost, for example bringing in outside consultants, dealing with lawsuits and lease restrictions, and savings. Dr. Levy-David said for the special education program they have been using outside consultants to get an understanding of what the curriculum should look like for both teachers and students.

Council member Herron asked a question about the welcome center and hiring more bilingual staff for newcomers as it is currently falling on the reception staff to complete the work. Dr. Levy-David said they are planning hiring interpreters but it is difficult to recruit any positions. They need to be provided affordable housing and competitive wages in order for any education or translation to be accepted. Council member Herron added with the advanced technology that can also help and followed with asking about the suspension center, is there a cost benefit yet to bringing other districts and students from other towns to be enrolled in the Bridgeport public school system. Dr. Levy-David replied they have not made any cost analysis in regards to district students being brought in for education services.

Council member Pereira asked if there had been a school board committee set up for the final closings as there is a detailed school closing procedure that includes a board committee. Dr. Levy-David said she is not sure but she has made it clear they are in the beginning stages of the proposal. Council member Pereira added they held a press conference on March 6, 2024 to announce the six schools were closing. Where is the relevant information, minutes, or agendas?

Council President said for clarity this is a proposal.

Council member Mack asked in regards to the low achievement scores, what is contributing to that and how does the school closing fix that. Dr. Levy-David said positions have been critical upon budget cuts. They are trying to intervene in the tier 1 issues occurring but it is difficult without the proper training, protocols, and staff size. For example, custodians are being overworked and many teachers aren't receiving the proper support staff needed. Council member Mack asked with the savings due to the closing what is the plan. Dr. Levy-David replied with the 161 positions that will

be available, they will scatter the staff across every school to support smaller student to teacher ratios and meet intervention at an early stage for students.

Council member McBride-Lee said every custodian should be fired. For example, Hall school was not being serviced correctly. She mentioned you would not find a school in those conditions in Black Rock, Fairfield or anywhere else. She asked a question about the layoffs. Dr. Levy-David said any reduction in staff will not occur from layoffs, they will be capitalizing on upcoming retirements and those leaving the district.

Council member McBride-Lee added she appreciates the attention they are giving to special education because they deserve an opportunity to stay within the community and to learn in the area they live in.

Council President Nieves asked for all members of the Contracts committee to be dismissed for the meeting that was to begin at 6:30 p.m.

### **Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted,

Vianca Rivera  
Telsco Secretarial Services.

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