

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

Monday, January 23, 2012

7:00 p.m.

Lincoln Center

PRESENT: Crockett, Cruz, Hagenow, Kidd, Leon, Luxenberg,
Scappaticci, Walton

ALSO PRESENT: Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kisiel, Assistant to the
Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks, Assistant
Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr.
Richardson, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Matfess

ABSENT: Pattacini

A. OPENING

A.1&2 MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Acting Chairperson Leon.

A.3 ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

ADOPTED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of
January 9, 2012

**Acting Secretary Crockett moved and Ms. Luxenberg seconded
the motion.**

8/0 – Voted in favor.

B. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

B.1. Bowers Elementary School Highlight

Dr. Kisiel welcomed Dr. Mary Lou Ruggiero, Principal of Bowers Elementary School. Dr. Ruggiero spoke about Bowers initiative to encourage independent reading which in turn encourages life-long reading. She introduced Tracy Clarke, Bowers Curriculum Specialist, and Lindsey Solito, a 4th grader at Bowers who was accompanied by her mother, Gail Solito. Dr. Ruggiero spoke about how children now have such ready access to technology that their reading skills are falling behind those of the previous generation. Aliteracy, which is the state of being able to read but

uninterested in doing so, is more of a distressing problem in our country, than illiteracy.

Ms. Clarke described the enhanced, 90 minute reading block that Bowers has begun. The theory behind this is that more reading makes better readers. Ms. Clarke detailed that the 5th Grade Data Team focused on kid's attitudes and behaviors when it came to reading. A few key ways Bowers has tried to foster a love of reading throughout the school includes exploring different genres, doing a school-wide "timeout to read", and initiating a "Guys Read" book club to encourage the young men in the school to become better readers.

Each month at Bowers Mrs. Clancy, the Media Specialist, has helped to highlight a different genre. Children post recommendations of books on the walls of the hallways for other children to read, and hopefully spark an interest.

The "Time-Out to Read" program at Bowers occurs every few months during the first 20 minutes of school. Everyone in the school, from maintenance staff, to visiting parents, to children, and yes even the principal, are invited to read along and are provided copies of the current book being read. This program fosters a community of readers and encourages reading just for the love of reading.

"Guys Read" is a program run by Media Paraprofessional Mrs. Quaglia. The boys really seem to be enjoying this group, which focuses on more boy-friendly books, such as graphic novels.

Mrs. Solito commented that until a few months ago her daughter did not enjoy reading and it was a struggle to get her to read. The extra help that this initiative at Bowers has provided has boosted Lindsey's confidence and now her daughter is really enjoying reading, sometimes reading "too much"!

Lindsey added, "I like to read books." She said she used to feel stressed about reading and she didn't like it and never wanted to read before.

Dr. Kisiel questioned Lindsey about what sparked her interest in reading this year and Lindsey replied that seeing the other children reading and hearing about what they were reading sounded interesting. Mom also pointed out that finding a book series ("My Weird School Days") that interested Lindsey also played a role in her newfound hobby.

Ms. Cruz thanked everyone for coming tonight to tell us about Bowers and especially to Lindsey, commenting on how "brave and nerve wracking" it can be to come speak to a group.

C. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Kevin Mack, 259 Fern Street, Vice President of the Manchester Education Association, presented copies of the book *The Death & Life of the Great American School System* by Diane Ravitch to the Board members. The book is about how testing and choice are undermining education. Ms. Ravitch has changed her thinking on *No Child Left Behind* over the years and the MEA believes it is important for the Board to know about that. Mr. Mack also extended an invitation from MEA President Nicholas to the Board and the public to join them in a book discussion on March 1, 2012 at Whiton Library 5:00-6:30 p.m. Mr. Mack also extended an invitation from President Nicholas to the Board members to shadow an MEA officer for a day.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, informed the Board he is not going away, whether you agree with him or not! Last Thursday he attended the forum about Education Incarceration. It was a well attended forum, including Dr. Kisiel and other staff members, but he was disappointed that there had been no media coverage that evening. Mr. Stringfellow added that troubled youth are everyone's problem and they can turn their lives around with help.

Mr. Stringfellow again recommended the movie *Red Tails*, a World War II film that is currently in theaters and was highlighted in this month's Ebony Magazine.

Mr. Stringfellow went on to recommend several articles for the Board to review, including: Time magazine this week had an article on replacing the *Leave No Child Left Behind Act*; Diverse magazine, *College Success During the Middle School Years*; Attitude magazine Fall Edition, *Success at School* about special needs children; Family Circle magazine had an article about student grading and homework in the most recent edition.

Mr. Stringfellow pointed out an article in the 1/19/2012 Reminder about the East Side Center that has been started in the old firehouse across from Nathan Hale School on Spruce Street.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Due to Mid-Terms this week, the Student Representative Report by Ashley Mills has been moved to next month.

E. CONSENT CALENDAR

Dr. Kisiel informed that Board that although they had previously agreed that the Consent Calendar would no longer require an oral presentation, tonight there was one item on the calendar that required individual approval and to that end each of the three items would be presented individually for Board approval.

E.1. Appropriation for Education Special Projects - \$2,000

FY 2011-2012 Higher Order Thinking (HOT) Schools Program Grant at Martin Elementary School.

Acting Secretary Crockett moved and Ms. Cruz seconded the motion to approve item E.1 on the Consent Calendar, Appropriation for Education Special Projects of \$2,000 FY 2011-2012 Higher Order Thinking (HOT) Schools Program Grant at Martin Elementary School.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

E.2. Appropriation for Education Special Projects in the amount of \$95,000

FY 2011-2012 Adult Education College Transition Pilot Grant.

Acting Secretary Crockett moved and Ms. Cruz seconded the motion that the Board of Education approve item E.2 on the Consent Calendar, the appropriation of \$95,000 awarded to the Adult Ed College Transition Pilot Grant for the years 2011-2012 school year.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

E.3. Educational Specifications – Verplanck Elementary School Asbestos Abatement Project #TMP-077-VPJF

Acting Secretary Crockett moved and Ms. Cruz seconded the motion that the Manchester Board of Education adopt item E.3 on the Consent Calendar, the Educational Specifications for the Verplanck Elementary School Asbestos Abatement Project and authorize the Superintendent to request the Manchester Board of Directors to: 1) Establish a building committee for the project; 2) Authorize the preparation of schematic drawings and outline specifications for the project; and 3) Authorize the Superintendent to file an application for a School Construction Grant.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART II

F.1. Board Policy #3270 – Closing a School

Dr. Kisiel outlined the policy that was adopted in April 2011 regarding the closing of a school. The question at hand was that, based on this being an emergency situation related to the state of the facility, does the Board have to follow this policy?

Ms. Luxenberg pointed out that the policy was in regards to permanently closing a school, and since the current proposal was to only take Nathan Hale "off-line" until a long-term plan was in place, would the policy still come into play at this point?

Dr. Kisiel outlined the three options they were currently facing:

1. Taking the school off-line for minimum repairs, which would taken 6-8 months;
2. Closing the school until a "like-new" renovation could be accomplished; or
3. Closing the school permanently.

Dr. Kisiel continued on that he believes if we are only considering taking the school off-line for the minimum required repairs that the policy would not apply, but the longer-term closing of the facility for a "like-new" renovation or a permanent closing would fall under the policy guidelines.

Ms. Luxenberg pointed out that the policy is only a guideline and not a requirement and that because of the state of the facility, the school would likely be closed for at least 6-8 months. Ms. Luxenberg went on to question whether Wednesday's upcoming Budget Workshop to which the public has been invited to voice their concerns about Nathan Hale would qualify as a "public hearing" as outlined in the policy.

Dr. Kisiel stated that Wednesday's meeting would not be a "public hearing" because sufficient notice had not been given, but would be a public comment opportunity.

Ms. Hagenow, who had not been at the last Budget Workshop, asked for a summary of the discussions at that meeting.

Ms. Cruz reviewed the choices of taking Nathan Hale off-line or closing the school. To her, "off-line" implies that we foresee the available funding to repair the school and bring it back "on-line". She is concerned about that implication as she does not foresee the available funding for that. She feels that the Board has to decide what they are looking for; do we intend to close

the school for repairs, or are we looking to close the school because we will not be able to secure the funding necessary to repair the facility.

Ms. Hagenow expressed her concern that there are several schools in town that need repair and questioned whether we should close the three oldest schools.

Ms. Walton weighed in that to her "off-line" does not guarantee the school will be brought back "on-line", but it does allow the Board time to take a look at a long-term approach to the situation. She continued that now is not the time to make a decision on permanently closing the facility, but it is time to vet out a long-term plan for our school system and figure out what we need to do to provide a diverse, quality education that can be competitive to our regional choices.

Ms. Cruz stated that based on the detailed Facilities Critical Assessment report presented by Facilities Manager Ziegler, the situation at Nathan Hale has made that school the primary concern at this time, versus other buildings in the District that are not as bad. She reviewed that just to make the necessary repairs to the heating system it will cost more than \$1 million. Ms. Cruz stated that the Board cannot be negligent in continuing to keep the school open next year knowing that each day poses an increased risk of a safety issue to the children (i.e., the possibility of no heat). She stated that we cannot guarantee that we will have the funds to make the necessary repairs.

Mr. Crockett stated that a long-term solution is needed and that the Board of Education is meeting with the Board of Directors next Monday to discuss this. Other issues to consider in closing the school are the businesses and neighborhood that would be effected, both positively and negatively, in this situation. Mr. Crockett does not want to mislead the public by using the term "off-line". Decisions need to be made quickly, as the budget needs to be voted on in the coming weeks. He also questioned where the Nathan Hale children would be relocated to, possibly Highland Park School, leaving the Highland children in the schools they are occupying this year?

Ms. Luxenberg has some concern about formulating a long-term plan so quickly, in order to get the budget approved by February 14th. Her position is that placing the school "off-line" takes some of the pressure off in creating a long-term plan. Her belief is that Nathan Hale will not open next year, but that this is a community issue, not just involving Nathan Hale, and she wants to take the time to make a long-term plan that is comprehensive and that cannot happen immediately.

Ms. Kidd is interested in meeting with the Board of Directors before making any decisions. She also very interested in hearing from the community and their feelings on closing the school and the possibility of a spring referendum, allowing the community to make the decision.

Mr. Scappaticci stated that he does not want to wait and reminds everybody that they were elected to make decisions, not to defer to the Board of Directors. He states that based on the report given by Mr. Ziegler, we know that the pipes will go within a year and then it is "game over for the building". They need to do the responsible thing for the students in the school and in the District.

Mr. Crockett agreed that the school probably will not open next year, but that we need to know when we will have a plan.

Ms. Kidd reiterated that the school has to close, either permanently or for repairs. It is in the best interest of the students, but the question becomes, what happens to the Nathan Hale children?

Ms. Walton stated that it is the job of the Board to guide policy, make sure policy is followed, but that it is the job of the Administration to make decisions regarding their plan for the students, and to present that to the Board for approval.

Dr. Kisiel stated that a plan will be in place by the end of February to address the relocation of the students and the impact it may have on the Racial Balance Plan. He stated that they do need a definitive word from the Board to move forward with this plan and that in his opinion, "unequivocally the building needs to be closed next year". He reminded us that in addition to the students, personnel issues needed to be addressed as well.

Mr. Leon reminded the public that the building is safe at this time. If the pipes were to give out the students and staff would be moved to alternate locations. He also stated that the policy is a guideline to follow as closely as possible, and that although the proposed meeting coming up at the Budget Workshop on Wednesday is not an "official public hearing", the majority of the meeting will center around public comments on the issue. To Ms. Hagenow he answered that yes, there were other buildings that also need attention and hopefully a plan would be in place soon so no other school becomes as critical a situation as Nathan Hale is currently in. Mr. Leon stated that he felt it would be irresponsible of the Board to keep Nathan Hale on-line next year, knowing that it may not make it through another year. He is not prepared to vote tonight, but at the next meeting he would like a vote to take the school off-line.

Ms. Cruz inquired what would be required to schedule a public hearing on the issue.

Mr. Leon stated that ten days notice would be sufficient. He reiterated that Wednesday, January 25th at 6:00 p.m. at MHS, Room 293 will be a time for public feedback so that the Board is able to hear from the public prior to the scheduled January 30th meeting with the Board of Directors.

Mrs. Brooks noted that Attorney Nab has stated that there is actually no set number of days notice required for this type of public hearing and that the public comment session scheduled Wednesday is sufficient.

Ms. Cruz stated that she would like another meeting prior to adopting the budget on or before February 8th, since Wednesday's meeting will center on the public comments and not a dialogue with the community.

Mr. Leon stated that Wednesday's meeting is an informal Budget Workshop run by the Personnel & Finance Committee, so that meeting can be made more interactive and a dialogue can be had in response to the comments made that evening. That satisfied Ms. Cruz' desire for another meeting.

Dr. Kisiel also stated that we have scheduled February 1st, originally a "snow date" for the Budget Workshops, as another meeting date to discuss the budget. Dr. Kisiel also told the Board that he had sent a letter to all Nathan Hale families, in both English and Spanish, informing them of the issues and inviting them to Wednesday's meeting to share their concerns.

G. OLD BUSINESS

G.1. Board of Education Policy Changes and Revisions

Dr. Kisiel stated that two items were revised from the last meeting:

- Item G.1.C.(b), Policy #1400 Parent Involvement, has been altered to state "to the greatest extent possible, communicate in a language that is predominantly spoken at home".
- Item G.1.C.(c), Policy #4120, has been changed to state "all schools" instead of listing the current schools in town regarding the need for staff to wear ID badges.

A. Deletion of Existing Policies:

#5122 Assignment of Teachers to Classrooms

#5131 Vandalism

#5145 Period of Silent Meditation

#6112 School Day

#6141 Physical Education

#6145.5 Organizations

#6145.6 Organizations – Student Assembly

#6152 Grouping

#6162.4 Community Resources

#6161.1 Lending of Textbooks

B. New Policies

#9000 Bylaws: Use of Board of Education Issued iPad Tablets

#6141.3 Migrant Students, which even though we currently have no migrant students, is required by Federal Statute under No Child Left Behind

C. Recommended Policy Revisions:

#4114 Employment Medical History and Pre-employment Physical Examination Record

#1400 Parent Involvement

#4120 Wearing of Identification Badges

#5141.3 Health Assessments and Immunizations

Acting Secretary Crockett moved that we delete the following existing policies: #5122 Assignment of Teachers to Classrooms; #5131 Vandalism; #5145 Period of Silent Meditation; #6112 School Day; #6141 Physical Education; #6145.5 Organizations; #6145.6 Organizations – Student Assembly; #6152 Grouping; #6162.4 Community Resources; #6161.1 Lending of Textbooks. Ms. Cruz seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Acting Secretary Crockett moved that we adopt the following new policies: Policy #9000 Bylaws: Use of Board of Education Issued iPad Tablets; and Policy #6141.3 Migrant Students. Ms. Luxenberg seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Acting Secretary Crockett moved that the Board accept the policy revisions in Policy #4114 Employment Medical History and Pre-employment Physical Examination Record; Policy #1400 Parent Involvement; #4120 Wearing of Identification Badges; and #5141.3 Health Assessments and Immunizations Ms. Cruz seconded the motion.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

H. NEW BUSINESS

None.

I. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Leon gave an update on the search for the new Superintendent. Dr. Jakoby and CABE are underway in the search. They are seeking input from many different groups. There is also a survey currently being conducted on-line. So far they have met with about thirty people, including administrators, teachers, and community members. This is all posted on the website and the process is on schedule to hopefully name a Superintendent sometime in April.

Mr. Leon reminded the public of the Budget Workshop scheduled for this Wednesday, January 25th, to be held at MHS, Freshman Wing - Room 293 at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed the community to come share their concerns about Nathan Hale.

J. COMMITTEE REPORTS

J.1. Curriculum & Instruction Committee

Ms. Cruz outlined the last meeting, held on January 10, 2012. The following people were in attendance: Dr. Richardson, Ms. Cruz, Ms. Kidd, Ms. Hagenow, Janice Uerz, Deborah Weinberg, Marsha Testa, and Cathy Mazzotta.

Ms. Uerz discussed a new 9th grade course in the Family Consumer Science area, "Getting the FaCS", to help students regain credit. Funds for this course are available through a Perkins Grant. This course will be held during second semester this school year.

Ms. Mazzotta reviewed a new Calculus course that will begin next school year. The course is an AP UCONN Calculus BC course, offered to 12th grade students. There is no cost associated with this course and the current text will be used.

Ms. Weinberg spoke about the need for a Creative Writing course. Originally this topic was offered as a club, but the high attendance indicated the need for a proposal to turn this into a course. The course would be available for all levels and as an elective optional writing experience for seniors. Requirements for senior enrollment would be a teacher recommendation, completion of all English requirements, and achievement of highly proficient status on the CAPT testing. There is no cost to the program. This course will run next school year, 2012-2013, and will be aligned with the Common Core.

Discussion of the Exit Survey took place and a report was requested regarding the letters recently sent to families, as well as further data updates. It was noted that 357 students withdrew last school year. The exit survey

will be tweaked at the next C&I meeting, because it was felt the survey was very lengthy.

The next Curriculum & Instruction Committee meeting is scheduled for February 6th.

J.2. CREC Report

Ms. Walton is Manchester's representative for the Capital Region Education Council (CREC). The last meeting occurred on January 18th.

CREC currently has four capital funds projects underway, including: a Reggio Magnet School of the Arts building construction, International Magnet School of Global Citizenship in South Windsor, another Reggio Magnet School construction, and the Public Safety Academy in Enfield. We are one of the participating districts.

Also shared at the meeting were legislative updates from CAGE, as well as the Connecticut General Assembly Session overview, presented by Rome, Smith & Lutz. The 2012 legislative session is going to be a short session beginning the first week of February, ending in May. Governor Daniel Malloy's focus will be on education reform. A new Commissioner of Education has been appointed. For the first time it has been stated by the Commissioner that he will report to the Governor, rather than the State Board of Education, though he will be working very closely with the State Board of Education. This is a different dynamic in our State education system.

On February 16 there is a CREC Legislative breakfast to which the Board is invited and encouraged to attend.

Representative Fleischmann has requested Districts to review and give feedback on unfunded State mandates that are challenging for Districts to meet.

Board members will be given the agenda and notes from this meeting for their review.

K. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, commends Bowers for the reading program they outlined tonight, especially regarding the boys reading club. Engagement in literacy helps prevent drop-outs.

The Misunderstood Child is a book he recommends that deals with student learning and family dynamics.

Mr. Stringfellow was pleased with the Board's and Administration's clarity to the public regarding Nathan Hale.

Mr. Stringfellow wanted to remind everyone about the February 1st meeting at Illing Middle School and the February 2nd meeting at Verplanck regarding the Superintendent search. He believes we need a Superintendent that respects diversity and equity in the District.

Mr. Stringfellow informed us that February 1st is National Girls and Women in Sports Day (more information can be found at: aaahperd.org). This is the 30th anniversary of Title IX and he would like a report given from the person involved with that, along with the Athletic Director. Break the Cycle is a national organization that promotes healthy teen relationships. The book, Have You Filled Your Bucket Today? is a guide to daily happiness for kids.

Mr. Stringfellow spoke about East Hartford and Synergy Alternative School.

Mr. Stringfellow did attend a Manufacturing Forum at MCC January 13th. It was well attended, including by Diane Kearney and James Spafford.

Mr. Stringfellow wished the Board good luck and told them they are taking the right direction by getting the public's input.

L. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

M. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Leon, Acting Chair, wanted Mr. Pattacini, Board Chairperson, to be aware that with Mr. Leon running the meeting tonight we started on time and are ending before 8:30!

Mr. Leon called for a motion to adjourn.

Acting Secretary Crockett moved and Ms. Cruz seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

8 - Vote in favor.

Adjournment 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Crockett
Acting Board Secretary