

# MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

## Regular Meeting

**Monday, September 10, 2012**

7:00 p.m.

Lincoln Center

**PRESENT:** Crockett, Cruz, Hagenow, Kidd, Leon, Luxenberg, Pattacini, 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, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Matfess

### **A. OPENING**

#### **A.1&2 MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Chairperson Pattacini.

#### **A.3 ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**ADOPTED** – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of August 27, 2012.

**Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.**

**9/0 – Voted in favor.**

### **B. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I**

#### **B.1. Inter-Active White Board Demonstration**

**Dr. Kisiel** announced that the ribbon cutting for Highland Park Elementary would be held this Saturday, September 15 at 9:00 a.m., followed by a tour of the like-new facility. Highland Park is now the most technologically equipped school in our community, which enhances instruction and student learning. This would not have been possible without the support of the community, the Building Committee, and above all the direction and leadership provided by Dr. Bob Pease for the technological specifications for the school.

In response to an inquiry by a board member, asking for a demonstration of white boards, Dr. Bob Pease was present tonight to discuss this interactive technology. Dr. Pease noted that many people use the term "Smart Board" for all interactive white board, because the first company to pilot the product was Smart Technologies. However, there are several other companies that produce different types of white boards, including Bright Link, which can turn a wall into a white board, and Epson, which uses a special pen for its own white board technology. These different types of technologies all vary in cost and have their own pro's and con's. Dr. Pease introduced two teachers from Highland Park to demonstrate the only portable white board we have available, Liz Klemonski and Laura Kowaleski. Ms. Klemonski and Ms. Kowaleski were able to demonstrate several different ways they use the white board to make learning fun and interactive for the students.

**Ms. Walton** inquired of the administration, how many classrooms in the District have smart board technology? Dr. Pease stated that all of the Highland Park classrooms were outfitted with white boards. For the other schools in the district, each year every school is allocated a per pupil amount for technology and schools are free to use that money for the technology they desire, some use it for white boards, some do not.

Ms. Walton wondered if the new technology plan suggests an increase in smart boards throughout the district? Dr. Pease stated it does not. Smart boards are expensive to purchase and install. In the last three years he has been putting more money into the infrastructure, which was needed. He went on to say that interactive white boards are a teacher center tool that make for a more enriched technology environment. They allow teachers to be more tech-savvy and increases technology use in the classroom, making lessons more engaging for students. However, to improve student scores, Dr. Pease feels purchasing items that students use individually is a more wise investment. Ms. Walton asked for an example and Dr. Pease suggested laptops, tablets, and desk top computers, where students get direct, one-on-one feedback. Ms. Walton stated she had fun watching the teachers, who were excited to share with the Board.

**Mr. Leon** thanked the teachers for their demonstration and wished that the entire district could have this technology. He asked Dr. Pease to estimate the cost of one installed board. Dr. Pease stated the different technologies vary, but stated the approximate cost of an installed board is \$4,000-5,000.

**Dr. Richardson** added that there are white boards throughout Bennet and Highland Park, as well as in the Illing math department, and at the high school in the math and English departments, as well as in some computer labs throughout the district. Teachers have reported enhanced learning experiences, making learning come alive.

**Mr. Scappaticci** asked about the popular myth that when learning is made so interactive and exciting that students may not want to read books. Ms. Klemonski replied that there is an Ipad feature which can be used by a hand-held reader and that gets the kids excited about reading. Some of the teachers share their personal Ipads with the children and those do encourage the reluctant readers to get excited about reading.

**Mr. Crockett** thanked the teachers for their enthusiasm. He wondered if movies can be played on the white board. They can. He then asked if the cameras installed in a white board could be aimed to view the class from a remote location. It was noted that the cameras used in a white board are all aimed at the board itself, to "read" the touches, and they do not face out to the classroom. However, a webcam can certainly be utilized for that type of viewing if permission were given, which would be useful to communicate with other classes in a pen-pal situation.

Mr. Crockett wondered if you can take a lesson home with a smart board? Dr. Pease replied yes, that a lesson can be put on-line. There is also a printing feature.

**Mr. Pattacini** thanked the teachers for presenting and noted they were passionate about bringing this technology to life.

## **B.2. SMARTR Committee Update**

Three of the four public members of the SMARTR Committee were present to update the Board, including co-chair Megan Alubicki, Jason Doucette, and Alan Strong. Ms. Alubicki presented a Power Point that first restated the charge that the Committee was given by the Joint Meeting of the Board of Directors and Board of Education on January 30, 2012. The full Power Point can be accessed on the district website.

Next, Ms. Alubicki outlined the guiding principles that were established by the Committee to meet the charge. She reviewed the leadership of the committee, the three major phases the charge had been divided into, and the working internal timeline that suggests a potential November 2013 referendum.

Ms. Alubicki outlined what the Committee has accomplished over the last several months, which included touring all 14 school facilities, hosting several outside speakers, reviewing research and data, as well as establishing a website that contains all of the meeting minutes and materials reviewed by the Committee, to ensure transparency in the process. The website link is on the town website or can be accessed directly at:  
<http://smartr.townofmanchester.org/smartr/>.

Ms. Alubicki outlined five findings the Committee has achieved, including:

- The viability and sustainability of the current neighborhood school concept is questionable;
- A significant capitol investment in buildings that will house elementary grades will be required, participate in our Title I schools.
- There is a need to develop a response to the projected shift in enrollment and its impact on facility demands.
- There is a need to investigate alternatives to the current grade configurations, with consideration given to school size and reduction of transitions; and
- There is a need to explore options that allow for Manchester Public Schools to remain competitive, given the region's many school choices.

Ms. Alubicki outlined the Committee's requests to the Board of Education, which included:

- What curriculum and instructional considerations should the Committee be aware of moving forward?
- Are there facility considerations of which the Committee should be aware of?
- Are there topics the Board would like SMARTR to investigate?
- Are there options that the Board feels it would not support? and
- Will the Board be able to respond to these findings at the next Board meeting?

**Ms. Kidd** stated that as a Board member she would like time to think about this presentation and submit questions, as well as ask parents their thoughts.

**Mr. Pattacini** stated questions could be asked tonight and then we can talk about how to proceed. Board members could then give feedback to the administration.

**Ms. Walton**, a member of the Committee, noted that the SMARTR website was available and all the materials the Committee has reviewed could be found there. She felt this might help the other Board members, who are not on the Committee, understand the findings. As noted, the link is on the town website.

**Ms. Walton** noted that there has been rich dialogue at Committee meetings and experience brought to the table from many different purviews and based on evidence, research, and student achievement scores.

**Ms. Cruz** questioned what type of survey the Committee was considering. Ms. Alubicki stated it had been discussed to survey stakeholders, including teachers, community members, and parents. Ms. Cruz noted that surveys

have been utilized in the past and had not been very successful in getting feedback from the community.

**Mr. Crockett**, all a member of the SMARTR Committee, pointed out that over 900 Manchester students are opting to attend school outside of Manchester Public Schools. He questioned the financial impact of that. Mr. Doucette noted the payment to CREC for the students attending those magnets was approximately \$1.3 million per year.

**Dr. Kisiel** noted there was also an indirect cost to our charter school, which is state funded. Two hundred and thirty of the 900 students talked about are attending the charter school, Odyssey.

**Mr. Leon**, another member of SMARTR, stated perception has been discussed at the Committee meetings, and how important it is to change the perception of Manchester Public Schools and how we go about doing that.

**Ms. Alubicki** stated that magnet schools and other choices are not going away. Students will continue to make choices that are not Manchester Public Schools, however the Committee has found that we need to remain competitive with those other options.

**Ms. Kidd** wanted to point out that the survey was not currently available and that there is no current link on the website for public feedback. Mr. Doucette stated there currently was no survey available, but that the Committee has divided the charge into three phases, educational program model, facility impacts, and architectural design. The Committee was hoping to have public input at each stage of that and they would be developing a method by which to have public and stakeholder input at this juncture.

**Mr. Pattacini** thanked the Committee members for their presentation of this significant undertaking. He appreciates their time and their coming to the Board for clarification, which will make the ultimate recommendations more successful. As for the request to respond by the next meeting, Mr. Pattacini suggested that Board members can provide feedback to the administration, who could then prepare a document for review and adoption at the next meeting to then present to the Committee. Mr. Pattacini was hopeful that could be done by the next meeting, and if not the one after. Mr. Pattacini inquired if there was a specific timeframe goal that they should be aware of. Mr. Doucette stated it would be helpful to have direction as early as possible and reminded the Board of the ultimate goal of a November 2013 referendum.

**Dr. Kisiel** noted that five members of the Board (who are not SMARTR members) were not familiar with the work of the Committee. As Ms. Walton

had said, these findings were based on research and he suggested the other Board members take time to look at the website information to formulate their own opinion and addressed the questions that have been raised.

**Mr. Pattacini** again stated Board members should send their answers and any questions to the administration and then the administration will compile them for the next Board meeting to present to the Board to discuss. If the Board is amenable to the guidelines, they can then be adopted. If an additional meeting is needed that can certainly be an option.

**Dr. Kisiel** stated that in planning for our next Board meeting it was important to devote most of the attention to discussing this topic. He suggested that the next meeting agenda be limited to focusing on this topic.

**Ms. Walton** asked that efforts be made to get the word out to the community to partake in the discussion as well, and to not limit the notice to a line on the agenda. She again reminded everyone of the website: <http://smartr.townofmanchester.org/smartr/>.

**Secretary Leon moved for the Board of Education to add item 4 to C. Consent Calendar, "Extended Field Trip Request for Verplanck 5<sup>th</sup> Grade to Attend Camp Woodstock". Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.**

**9/0 - Voted in favor.**

### **C. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**Dr. Kisiel** presented four items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

#### **C.1. Personnel Action**

Details had already been provided to the Board members in their agenda folders.

#### **C.2. Permission to apply for Bilingual Education Program Grant for FY2012-13 in the amount of \$5,856**

#### **C.3. Transfer of Funds**

- Transfer from Illing Middle School Intramural/Sports Field Trip to Illing Middle School Sports Supplies/Materials account \$9,400.

#### **C.4. Extended Field Trip Request – Verplanck 5<sup>th</sup> Grade to Attend Camp Woodstock**

**The Chairman called for a motion.**

**Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation for the Board of Education to approve the Consent Calendar, Item C., with the addition of item #4.**

**9/0 - Voted in favor.**

**D. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, spoke about the Emancipation Proclamation and the 150 year anniversary of that being signed into law by Abraham Lincoln. He mentioned that prior to the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, Thomas Jefferson and eight other Presidents were slave owners. Even Francis Scot Key, who wrote the *Star Spangled Banner*, was a slave owner. Mr. Stringfellow also spoke about Latin America's liberation and independence from Spain and Brazil from Portugal in 1822. Mexico did outlaw slavery in 1829. Mr. Stringfellow talked about the Civil War, *North and South* magazine, talked about financing the war, as well as an article about the Confederate Navy. Mr. Stringfellow pointed out a *Boston Globe* article that talked about the importance of school breakfast in this morning's paper and about poverty that is widening throughout the country. *Religious and Ethic News Weekly* is a program that came out 17 years ago on PBS, and they talked about the Mormon religion recently. He suggested the book *Handy Religion Answer Book* by John Renard and also spoke about a bullying article in last Sunday's *Hartford Courant*.

**E. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

**F. NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**G. COMMUNICATIONS**

**Mr. Scappaticci** attended a meeting at Manchester Community College recently where the College Careers Pathways Program reported that MHS earns the most credits of any participating school in their program. Last year 626 MCC credits were earned by MHS students, covering 191 classes. At approximately \$133 per credit, that equals \$83,258 in FREE MCC credits that Manchester High School students earned last year! Mr. Scappaticci is pleased with this great partnership and commends the high school for that.

## **H. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **H.1. Building & Sites Committee**

**Mr. Leon** reported that the last meeting was held August 23<sup>rd</sup> at Highland Park School. The committee took a tour of the facility, which was noted to be ready to open on time. They also discussed the status of Nathan Hale and agreed to refer the issue to the Board of Education to determine the future use of the school. The next meeting will be held October 4<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. at Central Office.

### **H.2. Personnel & Finance Committee**

**Mr. Leon** reported that the last meeting was held August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mrs. Brooks had reviewed the FY2011-2012 end of year report. Nathan Hale was also discussed at length.

## **I. PUBLIC COMMENTS** (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, enjoyed the white board demonstration, which he felt makes science interesting and hands-on. Mr. Stringfellow was also impressed with the SMARTR Committee update. He pointed out an article in *Parade* magazine on August 12<sup>th</sup> about rebuilding America's schools. Mr. Stringfellow noted he has seen advertising recently for parochial schools and noted that he himself was a public school graduate. He urged parents to get involved. Mr. Stringfellow recommended the book *Smarter Budgets, Smarter Schools* for the upcoming budget season. Mr. Stringfellow stated it is good to get involved with math and there was an editorial in *USA Today's* July 10<sup>th</sup> edition about why kids hate math, and how to get them more engaged. He also pointed out an article, *School is Too Easy for Student's* report about getting above average students interested in AP courses. He again requested a presentation by Dr. Eastlake before the Board.

## **J. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS**

**Mr. Scappaticci** noted that although it may be too early for this feedback, he would like to hear how the new SWIPE system at MHS is working. Mr. Pattacini did hear that the system will sing *Happy Birthday* to anyone swiping in with a birthday that day!

**Ms. Kidd** had the same request as Mr. Scappaticci.

**K. ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.**

**Secretary Leon moved and Ms. Cruz seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**9/0 - Voted in favor.**

**Adjournment 8:31 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Leon  
Board Secretary