

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

Monday, April 9, 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 Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Richardson, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Matfess

ABSENT: Assistant to the Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks

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 March 26, 2012.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0/1 – Voted in favor. Ms. Luxenberg abstained.

B. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

B.1 Martin Elementary School Highlights

Dr. Kisiel explained that Martin is a part of the HOT School Artist in Residence Program and the focus this year is different ways to count to 100 involving the new math program.

Ms. Catherine Colavecchio, Principal of Martin Elementary, that it is a tradition that each year one grade level works with the HOT School Artist. This year Ms. Tomisina Levy worked with the Kindergarteners, integrating art, music, and physical education around the new Common Core mathematics

curriculum. For five weeks, twice a week, the children worked on this program, along with their teachers, Alison Eagleson and Linda Bride.

The Board was then entertained by the Martin Kindergarteners, who put on an interactive performance about counting. It was quite entertaining!

Ms. Walton thought the children did an excellent job! She thanked the teachers and artist and exclaimed that this is why we do this!

Mr. Pattacini also thanked the Martin staff, Ms. Colavecchio, and Ms. Levy for the work they do with the children. Mr. Pattacini told the children he was very proud and impressed with them, and they had acted like first graders!

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion to have a short recess.

9/0 - Voted in favor. Recess 7:17 p.m.

Manchester Board of Education back in session 7:22 p.m.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Dr. Kisiel presented three 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. Transfer of Funds

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

1. Transfer of \$275.00 from System Library/Media Equipment Repair to System Library/Media Professional Development account.
2. Transfer of \$1,000.00 from Manchester High School Library/Media Equipment Repair to Library/Media Audio Visual Supplies/Materials account.

C.3. Extended Field Trip Request – Manchester High School – VEX Robotics World Championship – Anaheim, CA. April 18, 2012-April 23, 2012

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation to adopt Item C., the Consent Calendar, as outlined in the agenda.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Eileen Sweeney, 86 Hawthorne Street, stated that she was a produce of Manchester Schools. She wants to see justice for all and for Nathan Hale students to be allowed to stay in their neighborhood school. Ms. Sweeney feels the meetings regarding this issue should have been held in the neighborhood, that it is only right and decent to meet where the constituents affected can access the Board's ears. At the last meeting, Ms. Sweeney understood that it was not the Nathan Hale boiler that was the main issue, but the heating pipes. She has heard from engineers she knows that this issue could be fixed quicker than 6-8 months. She feels if there is political will that it can happen. She pointed out Synergy School in East Hartford, which had been closed, was reopened because everyone rallied around the issue. Ms. Sweeney feels that by relocating the Nathan Hale students they will be missing out on before and after school activities, academic help, be separated from neighborhood peers and classmates, and lose the stability of familiar teachers and building. She also pointed out the dinner program at Nathan Hale, which was talked about on NPR today. She states that the families in that neighborhood lack resources such as transportation and child care. With the building closing, the polling location has been moved, making it difficult for that neighborhood to vote as well. Ms. Sweeney feels the children will now have less opportunity to work and play because of being bussed. Many have asthma, and she feels the bus fumes are detrimental.

Jackie Sweeney, 86 Hawthorne Street, is also a product of Manchester Schools and attended Nathan Hale. She stated there are great teachers at Nathan Hale in a beautiful environment. As a teacher candidate doing field work, she had recently spoken to people who had been in the relocated Bentley School and they had expressed dismay, sadness, and disturbance at their relocation. She points out a lack of school pride and to remove students was a terrible disservice. They feel alone in the transition and this defines their sense of self. She feels the Board should uphold the mission of a good neighborhood school for everyone.

Stephanie Knybel, 138 Bobby Lane, inquired if there was a firm graduation date and location for this year's graduating class. She also would like a prom date and location as well, to aide in planning. Ms. Knybel offered her support of the Illing dress code pilot. She ultimately would like to see uniforms start

in elementary school as well, though she understands at this point having a uniform at the high school is not a good idea, as they have problems even enforcing the ID badges currently. She was impressed with Illing's quiet climate in the halls, peaceful classrooms, and properly dressed students on a visit there. As for the students not in dress code, she feels it is up to the parents to make sure students are properly dressed. She agrees with Dr. Kisiel, parents, faculty, and staff must all be on board. She also pointed out that in Southington they recently decided to institute a prom dress code!

Susan Stepanski, 83 East Eldridge Street, supports the Illing dress code. She has been approached by business owners commenting on how sharp and professional looking the children look. As an Illing teacher, Ms. Stepanski has noticed an increase in her instructional time as less time is spent enforcing proper dress with the students. She feels the uniform is preparing them for the real world in which employers will expect them to dress properly and points out that most parents wear a "uniform", whether it be a suit, scrubs, coveralls, or a logo shirt. Many businesses also require a uniform or dress code, including DQ, Wendy's, Highland Park, and other companies. She feels it is getting students ready for the real world. Ms. Stepanski also asked that we all support the Illing Middle School Washington D.C. Scholarship Fund by attending the lasagna supper for \$8.00. Details are available on the website.

Melody Stoner, 78 Durant Street, feels uniforms at Illing are a great idea. She feels they do decrease the amount of inappropriate behavior in the school. There is no longer room for girls to wear revealing clothes or for boys to wear sagging jeans, or either to wear shirts with inappropriate logos, pictures, and phrases.

Cathy DiLeonardo, 78 Durant Street, supports Illing uniforms. She thinks they instill a sense of pride and belonging. She states that at approximately \$13.00 each, the polo shirts are cost effective and high quality. She talked about the fact that the focus on 129 students, when there are 830 students in the school did not make sense. Doing the math, there are 135 instructional days, multiplied times 830 students that is 112,050 days – making 129 a drop in the bucket, approximately 1/1000th of the time spent in ISS – most of which were not even for a full day. The actual number of minutes out of class is miniscule. Ms. DiLeonardo thinks it would be a dangerous precedent to eliminate the uniform so quickly. She feels it would send the message that rules don't matter and if you disobey them then eventually the rule will disappear.

Kevin Mack, 259 Fern Street, who is Vice President of the Manchester Educator's Association, spoke wearing his Illing uniform top and supports the pilot for another year. Mr. Mack states that we need to have two full years of the pilot so we can compare "apples to apples". He sees overwhelming

support from the other teachers in the building. He stated that the one "dress casual" day that Illing had reinforced in him the fact that uniforms are a good idea. He talked about how difficult it is as a male teacher having to point out the "two-finger" rule for tank straps, or having a child tell him to stop "looking at my butt" when he requested sagging pants be fixed. He knows there are a few problems with the current pilot, but they can be easily addressed and it can be made to work.

Virginia Schneider, address not given, had three children go through the Manchester schools. She feels the effect of a uniform is to level the playing field and help take the focus off the various levels of income. Her daughter recently visited from NYC and helped in Ms. Schneider's class at Illing and expressed that her life would have been much less stressful had they had uniforms when she attended. She spoke about the stress she had as a teen trying to impress the others and that this is just one reason that uniforms are a good idea.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, spoke about the 1862 Bloody Battles in the Civil War, and Gideon Wells from Glastonbury. He stated it was not just a white man's war.

Mr. Stringfellow reminded us April 22nd is Earth Day and he would like for someone from the Conservation Commission or Audubon Society to speak about green living at a future meeting.

Mr. Stringfellow pointed out an article regarding Conn. Academy in *Education Next* magazine, spring edition.

As far as Nathan Hale goes, Mr. Stringfellow hopes it works out best for all the students and that the Nathan Hale children will be welcomed in their new buildings.

Ray Ziminack, of Green Road, has three girls in Manchester schools. He is not in favor of the dress code. He also feels that the agenda of the meeting tonight was not well-publicized and he only found out five minutes before the meeting that the uniform issue was on the table. He claims the majority of parents do not want a dress code and that in a democracy everyone should get a say. He states that because the parents were not informed about the meeting, they did not get their say, and he is totally against the dress code policy.

E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART II

None.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

F.1. Illing Middle School Pilot Program Dress Policy

Dr. Troy Monroe stated that this is his 6th year in town and that when he first arrived blending the two middle schools into one was his greatest challenge. The school underwent a significant climate and culture change and he feels uniforms are just another step in that process. Dr. Monroe presented a Power Point presentation detailing the discipline and surveys surrounding the dress code. He also showed a short presentation of the students at Illing, giving us a glimpse of the community that was being discussed. He asked for another year for the pilot to accurately gauge whether a dress code was a good idea or not. Dr. Monroe's Power Point is available on the Board of Education website.

Mr. Scappaticci appreciated the additional detail Dr. Monroe provided, and asked about a child dressed as a candy bar in the video. Dr. Monroe answered that the child was participating in the Odyssey of the Mind State Competition and that recently three of four Odyssey Teams came in 1st and 2nd and earned the privilege to compete in the World Finals in Iowa.

Ms. Walton thought the presentation was responsive to her questions. Her concern remained with how the lower income families would be aided in purchasing uniforms and that she felt not enough of the families were receiving vouchers. She also feels that while discipline is needed for violators, out of class time is not the answer and is often a reward for a child, as opposed to a punishment.

Ms. Cruz thanked Dr. Monroe for his presentation and asked if the policy on dress violations was similar when there was simply a dress code versus a uniform. Dr. Monroe stated that the policy was indeed the same, though of course more attention was being placed on the issue this year.

Ms. Luxenberg thanked Dr. Monroe for his presentation and stated that he and the staff at Illing deserve a lot of credit for taking on this new approach. While there were some 1st year hiccups out of Dr. Monroe's control, Ms. Luxenberg had an opportunity to visit Illing and there was definitely a tangible climate difference. It may not be sufficient to "count", but the staff and students see a change. As for the voucher program, Ms. Luxenberg inquired about an 8th grade "give-back" program. Dr. Monroe stated they were working on some type of reward for 8th graders turning in gently used, laundered uniform tops at the end of the year, possibly earning themselves a dress-down day that would be an 8th grade privilege. Ms. Luxenberg also inquired if the home room teachers are the ones that mainly enforce the uniform. Dr. Monroe stated they are the first adult to address the issue.

Ms. Kidd had made a list of pros and con's, and overwhelmingly the pro's won. She liked the idea of prizes for homerooms that were 100% in compliance and stated that it might make students think twice about being "the one" that is out of uniform. She also agrees with Ms. Walton that she does not like to see a loss of instructional time as a punishment.

Mr. Leon had voted for the pilot originally and liked the idea, but he felt torn that the initiative is just at Illing and that no other administrators in the District were in favor. He struggles with the fact that it's a two-year school and the uniform is not carried through, and wonders if it makes sense for just one school to have a uniform. Dr. Monroe reminded Mr. Leon of the large amount of parental support, and that it is not appropriate to force this initiative on other schools.

Mr. Crockett thought it was a good presentation and he will support a 2nd year, though he was not in favor of subsidizing uniforms for low-income families. He feels there are social services available to help the families in need, and if we start subsidizing clothing then what?

Mr. Pattacini asked for clarification on the 21 repeat offenders. He was excited to see the school climate observations and asked for a motion.

Ms. Kidd moved for the Board of Education to pass the pilot program for dress code for a 2nd year at Illing Middle School. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Mr. Walton was conflicted in two areas, the time out of class and putting parents in a position of creating a policy they cannot afford.

Mr. Leon was conflicted; pointing out that later we would be discussing the fact that instituting a uniform policy for the high school was deemed inappropriate. He would like to see uniforms throughout the District or not at all.

Dr. Kisiel stated that while he understands and appreciates Mr. Leon's comments, the reasons for not instituting a uniform at the high school are quite different and that the administration supports Dr. Monroe's pilot for a second year.

Mr. Cruz reported that while campaigning the previous year, constituents expressed support for uniforms. She feels the glitches can be ironed out and hopefully start to talk about rolling out uniforms District-wide in the future. She is in full support of the pilot.

Mr. Crockett supports this pilot, stating that 7 months is not long enough to evaluate and it should be given another year.

Mr. Pattacini offered his support of the 2nd year dress code pilot and expressed his appreciation to the administration at Illing. The information seems to indicate a culture change and he would like to continue to see that and seven months is not long enough to evaluate the dress code. As far as extending the dress code to upper or lower grades, those are separate decisions. In his view, middle school is a critical age for students, when they are trying different things, growing, and experiencing things and ground rules help them make good decisions. At the high school age the children are making their own decisions and dealing with those consequences. As well, Dr. Monroe is doing a good job of making the program successful at Illing, building support in the community, staff, and with students and parents, whereas the support from the high school, staff, students, and parents, is mixed, and that plays a significant role is whether to implement the policy.

Chairperson Pattacini called the vote:

9/0 - Voted in favor.

F.2. Nathan Hale Student Relocation Plan

Dr. Kisiel stated he was interested in listening to the public comments at the hearing the other week and he appreciated those community members and students who participated in that discussion. The decision to suspend Nathan Hale was difficult and he understands the concerns, but we need to respect the information provided regarding the condition, time factors for repair, and costs that have not yet been fully identified or approved yet. It is in the best interests of the students for the coming year to relocate them. He recommends approval of the current relocation plan.

Secretary Leon moved for the Board of Education to adopt the Nathan Hale Student Relocation Plan as outlined in previous meetings by the administration. Ms. Cruz seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Ms. Walton pointed out that this is a temporary arrangement for the Nathan Hale students. She stated that the long-term planning will be accomplished by the SMARTR Committee, who will consider all options and what is best for Manchester as a whole.

Mr. Pattacini stated suspending Nathan Hale is an unfortunate decision that had to be made, but that it is in the best interest of the children and he looks forward to the SMARTR long-term plan.

Mr. Leon pointed out that we cannot put a time limit on this short-term plan, because we do not know how long it will last. It is not ideal, but it is the best we have.

Ms. Kidd agreed that it is a temporary plan.

Chairperson Pattacini called the question.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

G. NEW BUSINESS

G.1. Textbook Adoption – Social Studies (MHS) – *The Earth and Its Peoples*

Dr. Richardson presented a new text book, *The Earth and Its Peoples*, for consideration for the 10th grade AP Social Studies Course. Mr. Maloney, the Chair of the Social Studies Department at MHS, was present to discuss the text that he presented to the Curriculum and Instruction Committee and to answer questions about this above-grade-level text that will prepare the students for the AP exam.

Board members discussed the text, which weighs approximately 8 lbs and is intended to be left at home for student use, not carried back and forth. The text comes with a DVD that the teacher uses in class and has a 5 year license to do so. The children can also access their texts on computers in the classroom. Mr. Maloney also stated that the books are expected to last approximately 5-6 years and cost \$140 each. Approximately 60 texts will be purchased, to accommodate the number of students expected to register for AP Social Studies.

Mr. Pattacini stated the approval of this purchase will come back to the Board at the next meeting for approval.

G.2. Head Start Policy Committee

Ms. Cruz asked the Board for approval tonight on The Manchester Head Start Program policy on impasse and/or mediation as well as the recruitment plan and selection criteria. Information on both items was provided to Board members.

Ms. Walton had some questions for Ms. Matfess about the number of children in the Head Start program identified as special needs. Ms. Matfess

stated that very young children often are not yet identified as special needs and are involved in SRBI before being placed in the Special Education Program as they get older and are officially diagnosed with needs.

Mr. Pattacini clarified for the Board that these are not Board of Education policies, but Head Start policies, therefore they do not have to come back at another meeting for a 2/3 vote, but can be approved tonight to manage the Head Start program. Dr. Kisiel added that Ms. Cruz is representing the Governing Board of Head Start tonight. Mr. Pattacini recommended the motion be "approved" and not "adopted".

Secretary Leon moved for the Board of Education to approve the Head Start policy and the Manchester Head Start selection criteria form, as well as the recruitment plan as recommended by the governing board and outlined by Ms. Cruz. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

9/0 – Voted in favor.

H. COMMUNICATIONS

H.1. Manchester High School Dress Code

Mr. Ziogas and Dr. Kisiel drafted a memo regarding the proposed Manchester High School uniform dress code for the 2012/2013 school year. Approximately 700 people responded to the survey done earlier in the year and it was approximately a 50/50 split on the question of whether a uniform dress code should be implemented next year. Of the 310 staff members, only 145 replied to the survey, and only 104 supported the initiative. While both the reasons for and against the policy were good reasons, it is the recommendation of the administration that the issue be tabled at this time. Dr. Kisiel spoke about the policy in East Hartford and how much time administration takes each day for uniform checking. He stated there are other items the high school administration needs to address before uniforms that will improve climate, among which are increasing graduation rates, reducing the number of students that fail courses, improving teacher evaluation and supervision policies, improving building maintenance and cleanliness, restructuring of the administrative staff and leadership positions within the high school, involving faculty and students in the governing issues of the school, improving the school's image in the community through improved communication and participation in the life of the school. If we can focus on those issues we will be in a better position to talk about looking at school uniforms. Dr. Kisiel also stated that there is no evidence in all the available research on school uniforms that uniforms in public schools improve climate, discipline, or attendance. Mr. Ziogas added that having uniforms at

MHS sets up a negative climate for the incoming principal, Mr. Geary, who starts this month. He also discussed the difficulty in enforcement of the uniforms in an open campus situation like Manchester has, with students coming and going throughout the day.

Dr. Kisiel stated that the Board can still place this issue on the agenda if they would like, but the recommendation at this stage from the administration is as stated above.

Several Board members then took time to thank Mr. Ziogas for stepping in last year when he was needed and in turning the building around, as well as for staying much longer than anticipated until a new administrator could be hired for MHS. Both the students and staff agree that the improved climate at the high school is due in large part to Mr. Ziogas' leadership. Mr. Ziogas thanked the Board for his enjoyable time in Manchester and stated what a wonderful school MHS is, with wonderful programs, great staff, and wonderful kids with bright futures.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

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

Stephanie Knybel, 138 Bobby Lane, thanked the Board for supporting the dress uniform pilot at Illing for a second year. She suggests that a possible option for supporting students in need is to ask the Illing PTA to add that as a line item in their budget. She agreed that she was not in favor of uniforms at the high school, but that the current dress code rules should be enforced as it is hard to instruct students who are dressed provocatively. If there seem to be too many offenses, then look at implementing a uniform at a later date. She also stated that in-school suspension at Illing is not about sitting in a room for a day, but that the students that are sent there are given assignments to work on and a teacher is called down during their free period if the student needs help.

Mary Angeli, 65 White Street, thanked the Board for passing the year 2 dress code pilot at Illing. She has been an educational consultant and for seven years she was a substitute in Manchester and South Windsor and in that capacity she knows about self-esteem. She stated that children without self-esteem are unfocused and cannot learn and teachers cannot instruct a child with low self-esteem who is distracted. By implementing a uniform, it helps raise the self-esteem and puts everyone on equal footing. She understands that right now, with the transition of a new administrator, it is not the time to implement uniforms at MHS.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, offered his support of the consent calendar, especially the extended field trip of the Robotics Team to California.

He also supports the dress uniform at Illing. As for Head Start, he feels it is good to have a collaborative with them. In regards to the MHS dress code, Mr. Stringfellow feels positive peer pressure and respect for everyone is important and he wishes Mr. Ziogas well and states that he did a good job. Mr. Stringfellow informed the Board he supports the new text for Social Studies and commends Mr. Maloney for his selection. Last, Mr. Stringfellow pointed out an article in National Geographic October 2011 issue on the teenage brain and Bridgeport's school discipline policy for the Board to review.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Ms. Kidd would like to see a proposal for uniforms at Bennet.

Ms. Walton asked for an update on the SMARTR Committee.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 9:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Leon
Board Secretary