

# MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

## Regular Meeting

**Monday, September 24, 2012**

7:00 p.m.

Lincoln Center

**PRESENT:** Crockett, Cruz, Hagenow, 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

**ABSENT:** Kidd

### **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 Chairperson Pattacini.

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

**ADOPTED** – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of September 10, 2012.

**Secretary Leon moved and Ms. Cruz seconded the motion.**

**7/0 – Voted in favor. (Ms. Walton was not yet in attendance.)**

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

#### **B.1. Alliance Grant Update**

**Dr. Kisiel** reviewed that the district became aware of the grant in July this year. On August 15, 2012 a grant plan was submitted to the State Department of Education. On September 10<sup>th</sup> the district received written notification of the grant proposal, asking for more information. Most, if not all, districts that submitted proposed grants were asked for further information, so Manchester was not alone.

One of the questions that was asked was to explain how we plan to monitor achievement. Dr. Kisiel outlined the following techniques in place to monitor the plan, including: data teams, benchmark assessments, software testing, frequent administrator/principal/data team meetings, teacher evaluation plan – being sure teacher growth plans are reflective of the plan, and informal observations in classrooms with principals.

The state appreciated our desire to reduce the number of disciplinary referrals, but felt our desired reduction was too drastic and asked us to reconsider those percentages. We identified a reduction of 22% to 14% in five years, which was more in line with their initial recommendations.

The state also wanted to know how we will be combining town funding with district funding, which we identified will be accomplished by partnering with the Parks & Recreation Department for the extended school year summer program.

The state also asked for reassurance that the Superintendent had met with the President of the Teacher's Association regarding the grant and they were reassured that has been done and he was supportive of the plan.

Regarding the planned summer Pre-K experience with Kindergarten teachers for the 30% of students without a Pre-K experience, Dr. Kisiel outlined that if there are more applicants than spots available, a lottery will be utilized. We will advertise the program through town agencies, the School Readiness Council, private Preschools for their waiting list applicants, and in other ways throughout town.

Dr. Kisiel also reviewed that we will be moving away from the standard CEU concept and identified a major focus of job-imbedded professional development instead of unrelated workshops for our teachers.

We were asked to be clearer on how the district will approach different schools. We had to identify our schools in different tiers. Tier 1 schools require the least oversight. Tier 2 schools require moderate oversight. Tier 3 schools – of which Manchester has none – requires considerable oversight. Dr. Kisiel reviewed that principals will be given more autonomy in Tier 1 schools in making decisions on how to achieve the district goals and Tier 2 school principals will be monitored more closely by the Assistant Superintendent and the Director of Teaching & Learning in how to achieve the goals.

Dr. Kisiel felt that the issues the Department of Education outlined were clear and relevant to provide more clarity to the grant. He felt we should hear back about the status of the grant within a few days.

**Ms. Walton** asked for clarification on how we will select and screen students for the summer Pre-K experience. Dr. Kisiel revealed that there will be 18-20 spots in each school, which should provide sufficient space for those desiring the experience. He reviewed we will ask local preschools for their waiting list applicants as a start to who may be targeted, and advertise heavily in the Spring in various ways to get the word out about this program.

**Mr. Scappaticci** inquired if the summer literacy program would be mandatory for underperforming students? Dr. Kisiel stated we cannot mandate more than the regular school year for students, but by tying the program in with the Parks & Rec Department it will make the program more appealing for both parents and students. Dr. Kisiel expects 700 children to be impacted by this program.

Mr. Scappaticci inquired about what the day's schedule may entail. Dr. Kisiel reviewed that there would be approximately 3 hours of academic work along with 3 hours of recreation, though an actual schedule has not been created as of yet. Dr. Kisiel pointed out that Hartford has an excellent model and CREC also has some examples we may want to look at, and of course we need to coordinate with the Parks & Rec department. The plan is for Highland Park to house this program for grades K-2 and Bennet to house grades 3-6.

**Ms. Cruz** wondered if the Special Education students, who already are on an extended program, will be incorporated into this new program or continue with their own IEP plan. Dr. Kisiel prefers that they be integrated in the regular education program, making sure of course that their own IEP component for the summer is satisfied.

**Mr. Pattacini** thanked the administration for their efforts in putting this plan together and stated that he looks forward to the State Board of Education accepting this grant proposal and moving forward.

### **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. Appropriation to increase the Manchester Head Start State Day Care Program for FY2012-2013 in the amount of \$80,000, bringing the total appropriation to \$530,000.**

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

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

- Transfer from Illing Middle School Language Arts Instructional Supply/Material to Illing Middle School Language Arts Dues & Fees account - \$920.00.

**The Chairman called for a motion.**

**Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation to approve the Consent Calendar, as outlined in the agenda.**

**8/0 - Voted in favor.**

### **D. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, spoke about Hispanic Heritage Awareness Month, which runs September 15-October 15. On NBC the ALMA awards were on last week, which recognize Hispanics that have done well in many endeavors. He pointed out that six Hispanics won Olympic medals this summer in London. Mr. Stringfellow recommended *Teaching Tolerance* magazine. He also suggested a book by Chris Wise Tiedemann, *College Success for Students with Physical Disabilities*, giving advice to students in asking for accommodations, when to ask for help, and what may be due to them under Federal law. Mr. Stringfellow pointed out that in the presidential race Romney is a Mormon and that Joseph Smith, who ran for president in the 1840's was also a Mormon. He feels that Mormons have contributed to our country's society in different ways. Mr. Stringfellow suggested *American History* magazine and an article on Thomas Jefferson and his 600 slaves. He suggested a Shop Rite magazine that had recipes and information on Hispanic Heritage Month.

Ms. Jackie Madore, 45 Northfield Street, stated that she thinks Highland Park School came out absolutely great. She realizes it is still a work in progress, as the gym floor is just being installed currently. She works there as a noon aide and her one complaint is that after all the money that was spent there, the columns in the cafeteria were never sanded down, but merely painted over and you can see the dark blue paint beneath the white. She would like to see them properly sanded and painted.

Scott Aiken, 92 Laurel Street, is very concerned with one statement the SMARTR Committee made regarding neighborhood schools being in question. He finds that statement itself questionable. There is no secret that he was displeased with the Board's vote to close Nathan Hale, how quickly that decision was made and how little notice was given to the public about the vote to close the school.

He doesn't understand why the question wasn't tabled at that meeting, especially since some Board members had misgivings about the vote. He is now incredibly protective of his neighborhood school, Washington. He is concerned about Dr. Kisiel's idea about schools being community centers for education. He wonders how parents without cars can have a community center in another area of town. He is very concerned with where the SMARTR Committee is going with elementary schools in this town. He is not saying take all ideas off the table, but is asking to understand what a school means to a neighborhood. He asks us to review the 2020 plan that is coming out this week. He expresses how important neighborhoods are and focusing on community events. He feels it will be a sad socioeconomic experiment in the East Side neighborhood now that they have a closed school. They have a brand new community center, located across from Nathan Hale, that is no longer linked to the school. He asks that in the future, before votes are taken, the community needs plenty of notice on what is being considered. These are community decisions, not just decisions of 13 people and two boards.

**Mr. Pattacini** pointed out that there is a punch list for incomplete items at Highland Park. He is unclear if the columns are on that list, but the school system and the Building Committee are working with the builder on many items.

## **E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART II**

### **E.1. Board of Education Response to SMARTR Committee's Findings & Inquiries**

**Dr. Kisiel** presented a memo to the Board of Education regarding the questions raised by the SMARTR Committee at the last meeting. The full memo is available on our website, and outlines options relating to curriculum and instruction in general that the SMARTR Committee should be considering when considering the school facilities that they recommend to this Board and the community. The memo was compiled after Dr. Kisiel met with district and building administrators to consider a range of ideas. While the memo outlines some examples and possibilities, racially balancing our schools must be kept in mind when the SMARTR Committee comes up with their recommendations. Clearly no matter what is decided in the future, pre-school needs to be part of the decisions. Equal opportunity for students to be exposed to technology is also a key factor. Facility needs in our Title I schools must be addressed.

**Mr. Leon**, who sits on the SMARTR Committee, felt that both Pre-K and an extended day program are very important as those are two key elements families may choose magnet schools for. He also noted that our three Title I schools, Washington, Verplanck, and Robertson, are in dire need of renovations, in that order. He feels that regardless of the programming, the building conditions need to be addressed.

**Ms. Walton** noted that the Board spends six Wednesdays plus board meetings to go over the budget process and she suggests a similar process to respond to the SMARTR findings. While Ms. Walton feels that this list is an excellent start, she feels we need the process to set priorities while hearing from the town as well. She feels the only way to go forward is with the support and input from the town. Mr. Scappaticci supports this idea.

**Mr. Pattacini** reminded us that the SMARTR Committee requested feedback as soon as possible, at this meeting if at all possible, and if we need to take more time to reply we would want to be sure they are aware. This is a complex problem, so there may be items that can be agreed to now so the committee can continue, yet be thoughtful in answering some other items. Mr. Pattacini suggested possibly using the Board retreat to work through some of these issues.

**Mr. Leon** agreed that community input is important to the process, but the basic needs of the facilities need to be addressed and there is a timeline required to get this issue to referendum, then there is time needed to actually do the renovations. He reminded us that we can't wait that long and we need to move quickly.

**Ms. Walton** agreed with Mr. Leon and commented that Board members have taken time to look at the SMARTR website. She doesn't feel we need a six week process like the budget process, but does feel we need to dialogue and hear from the community members that want to be involved in this process, at least in hearing how the priorities are being set. She states we need to know if Board members are in full support of this punch list, and doesn't feel we can address each item on this list and ask if each Board member is in favor of that tonight. The SMARTR Committee is asking us, as an entire Board, what do we want and what do we know we don't want. In looking at this memo from Dr. Kisiel, she is guessing there are some items that not all Board members would be in favor of. Those things need to be flushed out in the near future.

**Mr. Pattacini** wondered if we go through the list one by one, if that would be helpful. Therefore, if there is full support on some items we can send those forward, and for others we may need to resolve other items. In that way we can give SMARTR as many answers as we can, and at the same time recognize that we need to follow a thoughtful process.

**Dr. Kisiel** was unsure if this was the right forum for that tonight. He suggested discussing this at the Board retreat on October 6<sup>th</sup> and noted there was time in that agenda to discuss this issue. Once the Board comes to a consensus, they could then bring it to the community.

**Mr. Pattacini** clarified that it is the administration's recommendation to address this item at the retreat?

**Dr. Kisiel** stated that initial dialogue, which would take a couple of hours, is needed to determine where there is support and where there is not.

**Ms. Luxenberg** stated she would be uncomfortable discussing this issue at the retreat without community transparency. She supports discussing this in the public eye, like the budget workshops.

**Dr. Kisiel** suggested we could do both, initially on the Board level at the retreat, and then a workshop with the community. He further stated that the community expects Board leadership, but we could follow up with a community forum.

**Ms. Cruz** asked if there had been an agenda developed for the retreat. Dr. Kisiel stated there was an agenda and there was room in the afternoon to add this subject. Ms. Cruz supports discussing this at the retreat to start the conversation and then opening it up at a community forum to follow.

**Ms. Walton** also suggests they do both, dialogue at the retreat and follow up with a workshop that week after the retreat.

**Mr. Pattacini** also liked this idea and wondered if the Board meeting the Wednesday after the retreat (October 10<sup>th</sup>) would be the time to discuss the issues in public?

**Ms. Cruz** supports Ms. Walton's recommendation but points out there is a Policy Meeting prior to the Board meeting that week already, making it a tight schedule.

**Mr. Crockett** stated the plan was fine with him and that the SMARTR Committee needs some direction and while he thought that would be forthcoming tonight, he looks forward to addressing that at the retreat.

**Mr. Pattacini** asked the SMARTR Committee members on the Board to comment on the timing. Mr. Leon noted that we are trying to get to a November 2013 referendum. We need to plan programming, then architecture estimates, in order to get on that November 2013 referendum. We do not have much time at all for that.

**Mr. Crockett** was confident that we can push for a Spring referendum if we cannot meet the November referendum deadlines, rather than rushing.

**Mr. Pattacini** restated that the topic would be discussed at the retreat and then at the October 10<sup>th</sup> Board of Education meeting for a final recommendation to SMARTR.

**Ms. Luxenberg** questioned why we could not have a workshop on the issue prior to the Board meeting. Mr. Pattacini proposed the “workshop” would effectively be at the retreat, with public feedback at the Board meeting that week.

**Ms. Cruz** clarified if there is public input at the Board meeting on October 10<sup>th</sup>, the draft responses to SMARTR presented by the Board would not be final as we would want to include public feedback into the recommendations.

**Mr. Pattacini** noted if the public feedback was not in line with the recommendations that would be considered and that some items from the Administration may move along and others be reconsidered at that time. Ms. Cruz respected that consideration. Mr. Pattacini went on to say that based on that community feedback further recommendations may take an additional week to expedite.

**Ms. Luxenberg** was still concerned with meeting at the retreat and then the Board meeting, with no time for the public to absorb the information. She feels the public needs time with the information presented.

**Ms. Walton** stated that the SMARTR findings were presented two weeks ago at the last Board meeting and all SMARTR meetings have been made public. She feels that the public has had adequate notice and adequate time to weigh in on the subject. This agenda topic was posted and that she feels tonight is the night to weigh in. She feels more damage than good would come from postponing the deadlines. She notes that the timing between achieving funding to repair Nathan Hale versus closing the school was only one year and she feels we may face the same fate with Washington School if we wait.

**Ms. Cruz** wondered if it was possible to hold a workshop for the public on October 9<sup>th</sup> to discuss the retreat findings before the October 10<sup>th</sup> Board meeting?

**Mr. Pattacini** stated the document presented by Dr. Kisiel tonight is a public document. He feels comfortable with 80% of the administration’s recommendations and feels we can look at possibly holding a forum October 9<sup>th</sup>, or simply addressing the issues October 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Ms. Cruz** noted nothing would be delayed by holding a workshop October 9<sup>th</sup>. It gives the community the opportunity to hear what comes from the retreat and absorb that information prior to the October 10<sup>th</sup> Board meeting.

**Mr. Leon** was frustrated that the Board just spent 23 minutes talking about when we are going to talk about this. He felt we could have been talking about these items now and not delaying further. He is disappointed.

**Mr. Pattacini** said based on the feedback presented tonight, we can spend some time discussing the issues tonight and then they can be discussed at the retreat and then either October 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Ms. Walton** pointed out her concerns about Dr. Kisiel's recommendation to consolidate grades 5 and 6 in one location. She noted SMARTR had looked at transitions and the importance to minimize transitions, not prolong them. She also questioned the elementary enrollment maximum of 400, wondering if that was an absolute number? She feels comfortable with a higher number if the building capacity can handle that.

**Dr. Kisiel** responded that his recommendation about consolidating grades 5 and 6 is to reduce transition in the curriculum. He feels the Cheney Building across the street from Bennet might be useful. He stated it would reduce instructional transition time. Regarding the 400 student capacity for elementary schools, he stated that is the targeted maximum enrollment in Pre-K through grade 5.

**Mr. Leon** noted that it is extremely important to relocate Bentley to a separate site as they are taking up space in a crowded high school. He feels it is an important program, but needs a separate facility.

**Ms. Walton** questioned the use of the Nathan Hale building and would like to discuss that at the retreat. She thinks it is important for the public to know that the Board has plans for that building.

**Mr. Pattacini** stated that they would need to look at ways consolidating grades 5 and 6 could work and look at the benefits of that in greater detail. The administration can present more details at the workshop.

## **E.2. CMT Report**

**Dr. Richardon** presented a Power Point on the most recent CMT data. The full presentation is available on the website.

**Ms. Walton** was disappointed in the presentation. She had asked several times in advance for the achievement gap and trends going back 5-6 years. What she is seeing is a cumulative trend broken down by ethnicity.

**Dr. Richardson** pointed out she did go back five years, in slide 13. Ms. Walton stated that this showed only cumulative growth, not trends. She wants to see if the gap is widening or closing from year to year.

Dr. Richardson also pointed out slide 10 and while Ms. Walton did like that visual, seeing cumulative growth makes it harder for the Board to see how we are doing from year to year.

Dr. Richardson suggested breaking down slide 10 into ethnicities. Ms. Walton agreed that would be good and wants the Board to see simply and know that the leadership is looking at the achievement gap in a way to identify trends, rather than a cumulative growth over time alone. Ms. Walton assumes there are some categories where the gap will be shown to be closing and others where it is widening. We cannot be assured we are using data in the way we should be unless we are looking at the data in that way as well.

**Ms. Walton** presented several questions that may or may not be able to be answered tonight and if not for the future. She wanted to know what the most notable gaps are in looking at 2012 achievement data, specifically with race and ethnicity and our sub-populations of special education, ELL, and free/reduced lunch. Are we seeing gaps there and if so what are the most notable ones? How do the gaps compare to the history that we have seen in the last five years. What are the grades we are seeing the widening or closing of the gaps? What are the contributing factors to these trends? What interventions are in place that have been proven successful, what opportunity is there to increase interventions? Are there areas we remain stagnant in or decline in progress? What is being done to address that and how are we using data to address that? Ms. Walton wants the Board to be provided with a simplified overview of how we did last year, where we have made growth, where there are opportunities for growth, and be able to understand the data in context of state comparisons of the achievement gap and of district trends according to our District Improvement Plan. This presentation provides pieces of that, but is not presented in a way that the audience can understand what this data is telling us. We cannot assess how we are doing as a district unless we can understand how to look at the data.

**Dr. Kisiel** wondered if the data was put in a bar graph fashion, in a simplistic way, would that be more desirable? Ms. Walton stated it would. Dr. Kisiel stated that Dr. Richardson would present the information in that fashion at the next meeting for the CMTs and also present the CAPT data that way as well.

**Mr. Pattacini** stated looking at slides 14 and 15 he sees notable growth except for in ELL. He points out the same with ELL and SPED in slide 19.

Understanding those things is helpful in strategies. In slide 17 he observes that grade 4 had a good jump and wonders what we may be doing right in that grade and is that even the right question to ask? He wondered if we can cast this data in the terms the state will cast it at the end of the year, with the new points method? Dr. Kisiel noted that looking at the Alliance Grant, those goal targets are identified.

**F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

**G. NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**H. COMMUNICATIONS**

None.

**I. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None.

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

Scott Aiken, 92 Laurel Street, addressed Ms. Walton, noting that he considers himself well-informed, though he does not have a bachelor's degree or a doctorate, he considers himself pretty smart. He has reviewed everything that the SMARTR Committee has done, reviewed their minutes, and still has no idea where they are going. He sees lots of discussion, facts, statistics, ideas floating around, but there is no clear plan. He appreciates Ms. Luxenberg's comments and feels we need time for smart, well-informed people like himself to digest the information and see where the Board is going. He appreciates the timelines, but he bought a house in the west-side neighborhood because he saw the plan ten years ago about what was going to be done with the schools. He is still waiting on Washington. He is in engineering and information systems by trade but this is one dimension of data on one day. He notes in his own experience of testing things, if he has a system with too many variables in it, how can he make a decision based on one moment of time. In *Reader's Digest* last month there were 13 things a principal won't tell you. One of them was, "I have a student this morning who was fidgeting in his chair during his test because his underwear was on backwards. I am being tested on that student because his underwear is on backwards." Mr. Aiken feels like we are dancing around something that was studied back in the 60's. It was a study of all the dimensions that go into student achievement, and the major dimensions were socioeconomic status, involvement of parents, the neighborhood they live in and another item he can't think of. He states we don't want to talk about that because it is uncomfortable. He states it is uncomfortable for him to talk about it because he is a white male, but no matter how much he says he does not see

race, he grew up in a Navy community where the only thing that mattered was rank. He also was not happy that the literacy coordinator was taken out of Washington, who has long-time situational experience with students there, and move her to be a numeracy coordinator at another school. This was fought against a few years ago and he felt this happened without the parents knowledge and that was disappointing as she was a great teacher in Washington and he hated to see her shuffled to another school. Mr. Aiken complained that 3 minutes is not enough time.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, noted that with the CMTs there is still a problem with the achievement gap. He pointed out this week on MSNBC it is education week and there are a number of forums dealing with education. He is concerned about all students. He comes back because he cares. He hopes the new Commissioner can make a difference. He passed along some articles to Dr. Richardson regarding segregating students. He suggested an article in the *Boston Globe* on 9/16 on testing and an article in *Parents* magazine on charter schools. Mr. Stringfellow noted we are all in this together and he wants students to all learn and not feel like a number.

#### **K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS**

**Ms. Luxenberg** would like an update on the 2<sup>nd</sup> year uniform pilot at Illing.

**Mr. Pattacini** noted the revised CMT score presentation will also be addressed at the next meeting.

#### **L. ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

**8/0 - Voted in favor.**

**Adjournment 8:56 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Leon  
Board Secretary