

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting October 16, 2013

7:00 p.m.
Lincoln Center

PRESENT: Atwater, Crockett, Cruz, Hagenow, Leon, Luxenberg,
Pattacini, Scappaticci, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kisiel, Assistant to the
Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks,
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Radikas

ABSENT: Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services
Matfess

A. OPENING

A.1&2. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

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

A.3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

**ADOPTED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of
Education of September 9, 2013.**

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

8/0/1 – Voted in favor. Mr. Crockett abstained.

A.4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

**ADOPTED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of
Education of September 23, 2013.**

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

9/0 – Voted in favor.

B. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

B.1. Student Representative Report

Dr. Kisiel welcomed Joseph Coyne, Student Representative from MHS.

Joseph reviewed the goings on at the high school over the past six weeks.

- LIFT program – 90 students became LIFT leaders, giving up the last days of their summer vacation to welcome the Freshman to MHS on Freshman First Day, decorating the school and welcoming the new students with music, dancing, and cheering.
- September 7th graduates of the class of 1968 celebrated their 45th reunion by touring MHS.
- The Welcome Back Dance had over 200 students celebrating a new school year.
- October 5th was the Miss MHS pageant. Michelle Hegenauer was named Miss MHS, with Erin Yates first runner-up and Lindsey Lentocho 2nd runner up.
- Homecoming is this coming weekend and the theme for this year is Board Games. The parade is Friday the 18th at 4:00 p.m. The football game Friday night is against Conard at 6:00 p.m. and the Homecoming King and Queen will be crowned at half-time. Saturday night at 7:30 is the Homecoming Dance at MHS.
- On a personal note, Joseph added that he thought the Chromebooks are a great addition to the school. One drawback, however, is that they are very fragile and he and several of his friends have already broken theirs. Personally, he feels it is just one more thing to worry about.

Ms. Cruz welcomed Joseph to his new position. She was curious how many of the class of 1968 were present for the tour. Joseph estimated 50 former class members were present.

Mr. Thames wondered how the Chromebooks are being utilized in classes. Joseph stated his teachers use them in various ways, for example in his AP History class they recently used them to look up the Constitution and took turns sharing articles they found on the topic.

Mr. Scappaticci wondered about the fragility of the Chromebooks and if Joseph had purchased the insurance. Joseph stated several of his friends had cracked their screens with the computers in their backpacks and that he had purchased the insurance.

Mr. Pattacini welcomed Joseph and thanked him for his report.

B.2. PTA President Report

Mrs. Curticia Anderson, Secretary of the Town-wide PTA, was present tonight along with Melissa King, the Vice President, to give their report. Ms. Anderson noted that the year was off to a great start for Manchester PTAs and membership has risen significantly. They are pushing this year for male enrollment as this is the state-wide initiative this year. She noted that October 29th there will be a candidate's forum held at Lincoln Center at 7:00 p.m. Also mentioned was the town-wide science fair, which will hold its 3rd annual event at Illing on January 11, 2014 for students in grades 4-8.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

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

C.1. Transfer of Funds

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

- Transfer from Illing Middle School Dues & Fees to Illing Middle School Instructional Supplies and Materials in the amount of \$100.
- Transfer from Manchester High School Administrative Office Supplies to Manchester High School Science Field Trips in the amount of \$750.
- Transfer from Manchester High School Administrative Office Supplies to Manchester High School Science Field Trips in the amount of \$1800.
- Transfer from Manchester High School Administrative Office Supplies to Manchester High School Dues & Fees in the amount of \$750.

C.2. Establish an appropriation for FY13-15 for \$1,503,607 under the Title I Improving Basic Program grant, to be funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education

C.3. Establish an appropriation for \$182,045 under the FY13-15 Title II – Part A grant, to be funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education

C.4. Extended Field Trip Request – Manchester High School – CASC Student Leadership State Conference – Crowne Plaza, Southbury, CT – approximately 10 students 11/22/13 – 11/23/13

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation to adopt Item C, Consent Calendar, in tonight's agenda.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Scott Aiken, 92 Laurel Street, expressed his happiness at hearing Mr. Geary is replacing Dr. Kisiel, though he is sad that Mr. Geary will be leaving MHS. He hopes they are able to find an "exact copy" of Mr. Geary to take his place there. Mr. Aiken stated he is beyond concerned about the future of Washington Elementary. He brought a brick from the foundation of his own home, which was built over 100 years ago in 1894, to illustrate that it is still only a brick and what is important is the family that resides inside the building. Mr. Aiken will be very disappointed if any of the Board members (especially Ms. Cruz, Mr. Thames, or Mr. Atwater – who live in the Washington district) vote to close Washington School. As the President of the Washington PTA, he would be happy to hold a forum there on why a 100 year old brick is not more important than the children in that building. He noted that when he was choosing a house to buy, he expressly chose one in the Washington neighborhood for the diversity and proximity to the school. He will campaign against anyone that votes to close the school. Mr. Aiken praised the great teachers of Washington. He notes that the teachers in the school are invested in those children's lives and often make up for the parents that may not be.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, recommended the movie *Twelve Years a Slave* based on a true story of a free black man that was put in bondage, set in 1841-1853 and coming out October 18th. He notes slavery is a stain on our country's history that should not be forgotten. Mr. Stringfellow recommended the book *Hidden in Plain View*, along with an article on slavery in December's *American History* magazine. He also pointed out an article on community colleges in the *Republican American News*. Mr. Stringfellow applauded the PTA push for male membership, noting it is important to have men involved in education, as well as non-parents such as himself.

E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART II

E.1. District Improvement Plan 2013-2014

Dr. Kisiel presented a Power Point outlining the District Improvement Plan for this school year. This was created with the advice and assistance of the district administrative team. This provides guidance for school-based improvement plans. The full presentation is available on the website.

Reduction of the achievement gap and improvement of school climate were the main focus, along with implementation of instructional best practices.

This emerges from the new teacher evaluation program. Dr. Kisiel notes we are all disappointed with our continued low performance on the CMT and CAPT tests. He reminds us we will not have this data to compare to in the future.

Dr. Kisiel also provided school attendance and arrest data for review. We have made some progress in reducing the number of suspensions, especially at the high school last year. Dr. Kisiel is not happy with the number of students who are chronic absentees (over 18 unexcused days).

Though he tried to modify the implementation of the teacher and administrator evaluation plans, his request was declined by the state. This will present a challenge for us.

Our intended outcome is to increase the level of student readiness for college and careers. That is the bottom line. We are concerned about the under-performing racial bands. Reducing the achievement gap and improving school climate is important. The low return of parent surveys, at about 9%, is a concern. We are looking at ways to increase participation.

Dr. Kisiel feels we have made significant progress over the past two years, but we need to do more. Dr. Kisiel spoke about the new testing, the NWEA and SBAC, that are being used currently. Results will be reported back to the board by Ms. Radikas in the future.

A district improvement team will be established, which is a necessary and important component of a district improvement process. This team will be made up of teachers, administrators, parents, and possibly students, along with community representatives. They will look at district-wide data and make recommendations to the Superintendent.

Dr. Kisiel reviewed the need for differentiated instruction within the curriculum and Ms. Radikas is working with the curriculum coaches on this. He reviewed the need to reach out to our parents and community in multiple messaging platforms. Dr. Kisiel also made note of our new website, which is easier to use and more attractive.

Dr. Kisiel reviewed that we have a number of students using substances of one kind or another, and this year we have a full time substance abuse counselor funded through the Alliance Grant.

Dr. Kisiel shared his visions for the classroom and what he wants and does not want to see. The main theme is less wasted time and more engaged students and teachers.

Mr. Thames asked for Dr. Kisiel to explain the difference between SBAC and NWEA. Dr. Kisiel reviewed SBAC refers to the Smarter Balanced Assessment, which is a new version of the CMT, but a national model that measures the Common Core. The NWEA stands for Northwest Evaluation Association and is a standardized assessment that is district-based and done on-line, which produces data similar to the SBAC.

Mr. Thames wondered how this will manifest in each school and he would like to hear from each principal in the future on how they plan to achieve this in the classrooms. Dr. Kisiel reviewed that last year the principals began sharing their school improvement plans to show the connections.

Mr. Pattacini was glad to hear the assessment data will be available three times a year to the Board, which is an improvement over the past. He feels the plan is encouraging and wondered when and how the District Improvement Team will come together. Dr. Kisiel reviewed that Ms. Radikas has taken on this responsibility for that and Ms. Radikas stated she is in contact with a consultant to help develop this team and a contract is in the works.

Regarding absentee data, Mr. Pattacini would like to see the raw numbers and percentages. Dr. Kisiel provided some of the numbers, which equate to about 12% of the elementary and middle school population and a bit higher at the high school. Mr. Pattacini was surprised at the high number and notes this is a problem with the parents, not so much the children.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

G. NEW BUSINESS

G.1. Bloodborne Pathogens – Policy 4114.1

Dr. Kisiel presented an updated policy that reflects changes in OSHA and State Department of Education regulations. The policy will come back as unfinished business at the next meeting for a vote.

G.2. Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace – Policy 4013

Dr. Kisiel presented an update in this policy, which combines two former policies (4011 and 4013) into one, addressing both sex discrimination and sexual harassment. This policy was updated under state law.

Mr. Pattacini wondered if the policy had been reviewed by the town attorney. Dr. Kisiel stated it was. When this policy is passed, the policy #4011 will be deleted at the same time.

H. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

I.1. Policy Committee Minutes

Ms. Cruz noted the last Policy Committee meeting was held on September 24th. The policies presented this evening were reviewed, along with several others which will be brought forward soon.

I.2. Building & Sites Committee Minutes

Mr. Crockett stated the last Building & Sites Committee met on October 3rd and heard a proposal from the secretary of the Waddell PTA, Autumn Struk, regarding a proposal for a renovation of the Waddell playground.

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

Scott Aiken, 92 Laurel Street, wondered how to make parents more engaged in their children's education. He notes his parents were engaged and so is he, maybe it's in his DNA? He wonders, with only 10% of parents responding to polls, what is the point of sending more information out, he is not sure. He has lived in Manchester for 11 years and feels engagement is about trust and relationships. He wonders how that can be established with shuffling schools and making "super" schools. Larger schools cause a loss of the community feel and Washington is just at the limit of feeling like it is too big to be a community. He doesn't want his child bussed across town, which is part of the reason he chose not to send his older child to Two Rivers in East Hartford. He questions the achievement data, noting that all kids have shades of gray, and even his own two children are different. The triad is about parents, students, and teachers. He revealed that some students at Washington come into kindergarten not knowing their colors or even the letters in their name...he wonders how that happens?

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, approved the Consent Calendar and felt Dr. Kisiel's presentation on the District Improvement Plan was good. He suggested an article on special needs students and autism in *Scientific America* magazine, October edition. He also recommended an article on bullying and another on substance abuse, noting there are new club drugs out there and Glastonbury recently had an underage drinking party busted. Mr. Stringfellow would like to hear from more parents of color. He would like the board to acknowledge recommendations from the public and get in more requested speakers.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

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 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Leon
Board Secretary