

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting February 10, 2014 Lincoln Center

PRESENT: Crockett, Cruz, Hagenow, Leon, Pattacini, Pazda, Scappaticci, Stafford, Thames

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

ABSENT:

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. Approval of Minutes of Budget Workshop

APPROVED – Minutes of Budget Workshop of the Board of Education of January 22, 2014. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

9/0 – Voted in favor.

A.4. Adoption of Minutes of Previous Meeting

ADOPTED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of January 27, 2014. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.

9/0 – Voted in favor.

B. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

B.1. PTA President Report

Town-wide PTA President Jackie Madore reported that the third annual Science Fair held on January 11th was a success. Forty-two students participated in the event, which was for students in Grades 4-6. Ms. Madore thanked the judges, Kevin Derby, Jill Miller, and Rachel Haddock.

On January 14th 79 students participated in the visual arts program at Cheney Hall, "Reflections". Several students have moved on to the state level.

Ms. Madore reviewed a new way to show support for the town PTAs. Now you can join all 12 PTAs for \$70.

Mr. Pattacini thanked Ms. Madore for her efforts, especially with the third successful year of the Science Fair.

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 with their agenda.

C.2. Transfer of Funds

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

- Transfer from Keeney Language Arts Periodicals to Keeney Admin Postage account in the amount of \$700

C.3. Increase in an appropriation for the FY 13/14 Head Start USDA by \$3,334, which brings the total appropriation to \$102,267

C.4. Change the BOE Meeting Dates in April from April 14th and April 28th to April 7th and April 21st, 2014

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in Section C in tonight's agenda.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Stephanie Knybel, 138 Bobby Lane, wondered if there had been any thought given to increasing the school calendar one day for every 8 early dismissals or late starts. She feels we are losing instructional time and this would be a good solution. She also implores the public to please shovel your sidewalks so that children may walk to school safely.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, recommended a book on bullying, *Bullying No More, Understanding and Preventing Bullying*, by Barons Publishing Co. Mr. Stringfellow noted that Black History Month started a week ago Saturday and he recommended the book *Blacks in Latin America*, by Dr. Henry Lewis Gates, reviewing that blacks have a presence all over the world. Regarding the Common Core, there were two articles in the *Hartford Courant* this past weekend that he suggested and he noted that we are on the cusp of doing something new and we all need to get on board. There was a student enrichment contest noted in the *Reminder* February 6th edition.

Sandra Dunn, 58 Steven Street, stated that for two years the Board and SMARTR Committee had time to grapple with changing demographics, state mandates, much needed school building improvements, and cost to taxpayers. The outcome has been Plan A, and she wonders why there is no Plan B. She wonders how Plan A will remove Manchester from the list of the 30 lowest performing school districts in the State. She wants to know what documented studies show removing students from small neighborhood schools where personnel can track the children and making them a number in a larger school improves the education process. She wondered what criteria are used and how it is determined which schools will close or be renovated. She wants to know the effect this will have on home values. Ms. Dunn notes that too often the needs of schools get delayed and piecemealed and passed on to another Board to deal with at more expense to the taxpayer. Ms. Dunn feels we need to change that. She wants all the plans, options, costs, proposals and data on the table to we can make informed, timely, and responsible decisions. She has lived in Manchester 45 years, was employed as a registered nurse in town, and raised two children here. She notes the Board is asking for her vote and since it affects her tax dollars, she is asking for voting options of Plan A, B, and C. Without this her vote will be no.

E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART II

E.1. Status Report on Teacher Evaluation Procedures

Dr. Kisiel reviewed that the State Department of Education is recommending changes to the State Board of Education in regard to the teacher evaluation procedures. The changes presented clearly came as a result of teachers concern about the implementation of a new Common Core curriculum plus evaluations based on state assessments that have not yet been created. Administrators are having

difficulty implementing the current plan as it is very time-consuming and almost impossible to implement. Governor Malloy has announced changes will be made.

Next month recommended "opportunities for flexibility" will be shared and possibly adopted by our Board. Tonight Dr. Kisiel clarified some of the items that will be reviewed and possibly changed at that time. His presentation is available on the website for review. The Teacher Evaluation Committee will review the recommendations that are made by the State Department of Education.

Ms. Pazda was curious about indicators of academic growth in SLOs, asking if this goal was a specific percentage or just overall growth of the class. She notes this creates angst among teachers and wonders how we are providing professional development to support teachers. Dr. Kisiel stated the objective is by percentage or a number of students successful, some measurable means. As for professional development, efforts are in place in schools with curriculum coaches in math and literacy to work with teachers to work through problems with Common Core and help find success with students.

E.2. Smarter Balanced Test Update

Dr. Kisiel reviewed that next month students will take a "test of the test" which is required by law to begin to establish a set of reliable and valid test items to measure Common Core curriculum.

Ms. Radikas presented a Power Point, which is available on the website, reviewing the testing, which will be for grades 3-8 and 11. The testing will take place between March 15-April 4 for grades 3-8 and April 7-11 and April 21-25 for grade 11.

Mr. Thames wondered about students knowing how to manipulate the software for this online testing. He is concerned this ability may affect test results if students are not comfortable with the procedure. Ms. Radikas reviewed that both whole class and small group instruction has been done around this type of testing and with NWEA the students have already been exposed to online assessments. She also noted that the media specialist at Waddell has created a list of helpful hints that she has shared. Mr. Thames questioned if this was an untimed test. Ms. Radikas stated it was, though there are estimated time limits.

Ms. Pazda wondered what kinds of questions are on the test and where are we with using Common Core units developed and being used in classrooms. Ms. Radikas reviewed this is in progress by Dr. Oliver with the math units. The units cannot be modeled to the test, but the performance tasks will be the same throughout the town. We will have professional development by Shelby Cole, who is the Director of Smarter Balance.

Mr. Leon wondered if the district has enough computers to accommodate the online testing. Ms. Radikas stated we do, however headphones were a concern at one point for 6th-11th grade. Mr. Leon wondered if there was any concern regarding splitting testing for 11th grades to before and after the vacation prior. Ms. Radikas stated that the school chose those dates among several options.

Mr. Pattacini wondered, with testing now being online, would we be seeing results any faster. Ms. Radikas reviewed that this is not the actual assessment, but a "test of the test" at this point. Once the testing actually goes live we do not yet know what the turnaround will be.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

F.1. Action on Grade 5-6 School Proposal

Mr. Pattacini stated that the Board had met in a workshop setting on Saturday to review the feedback from the public forum last week. Two objectives of the meeting were to determine the viability of the 5/6 proposal and whether the Board was comfortable proceeding with the project.

The Board reached consensus that the 5/6 project is a viable option if coupled with a plan for the remaining elementary schools.

The board agreed to direct the administration to develop additional options to consider regarding the elementary schools, both with and without a 5/6 academy plan. Some items to consider will be educational outcomes, swing space, and cost among others. At that point the Board can make decisions regarding the options and revise the schedule.

Mr. Pattacini noted the next workshop meeting will be held on March 8th at 8:30 a.m. to review options and data from the administration. Following that, more public forums will be held to review the options and recommendations. Dr. Kisiel pointed out a new timeline for Board members was emailed to them and is posted on the website.

Dr. Kisiel noted the goal is for the Board, by their April 7th meeting, to have completed their work. This will provide the opportunity, both before and after that date, for public input regarding the school facility projects.

Ms. Pazda responded to Ms. Dunn's comments earlier in the evening, noting the Board shares her concerns and are looking for answers and the plan is to provide details.

Mr. Pattacini felt the Saturday meeting was very productive.

G. NEW BUSINESS

None.

H. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

I.1. Buildings & Sites Committee

Mr. Stafford reviewed the minutes of the January 27th meeting. The agenda for the public forum was discussed.

I.2. Buildings & Sites Committee

Ms. Pazda reviewed the minutes of the February 6th meeting. Mr. Ziegler presented a draft of the revised Critical Assessment Report and Capital Improvement Budget for review. It was also decided to hold off on a decision regarding the solar project at this time.

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

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, commented on the teacher evaluation, noting a lot rides on how we reach students and deal with parents. He pointed out that not all of this is academic and he wondered about the understanding of the cultural background of students. He states as there is no equity program currently, he would like Ms. Rhonda Philbert give a presentation on this topic as a lot rides on cultural perspectives. He suggested an article by Jennifer Alexander in the Courant regarding achievement. He previously recommended the book *1000 Best Teacher Survival Secrets* on how teachers can reach out to students with special needs. Regarding the Smarter Balance test update, Mr. Stringfellow thought that was a good presentation, though he commented on the fact that some students are good test takers and he wants all students to learn, but he is tired of pitting racial groups against each other if the test scores are not up there. He wants the best for all students. He thinks the Board is doing a good job. Mr. Stringfellow recommended the following books, *Radical* by Michelle Reed, *Reign of Error* by Diane Ravage, and *Social Media for School Administrators* by Brian Dixon. Mr. Stringfellow feels there is an unconscious bias and as a person of color he sometimes feels invisible or that people talk over him. He hopes persons of color are welcome members of the public.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Mr. Scappaticci pointed out that the Board of Directors only has one public comment session and wondered why we have two. He would like the Policy Committee to look into this.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Leon moved and Mr. Scappaticci seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Board Secretary