

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
May 3, 2010
Merrimack High School – Cafeteria**

PUBLIC SESSION MINUTES

PRESENT: Chairman Vaillancourt, Vice Chairman Thornton, Board Members Barnes, Ortega and Swonger. Also present were Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin and Business Administrator Shevenell.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Vaillancourt led the pledge of allegiance.

Chairman Vaillancourt announced that Student Representative Caitlin Oretga would not be in attendance and had been excused from the meeting.

2. Approval of April 19, 2010 Minutes

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Swonger) to approve the April 19, 2010 minutes.

Vice Chairman Thornton requested the following changes to the April 19, 2010 minutes.

- Page 8 of 8, Committee Reports, first paragraph, second line, change "...the when plans..." to read "...the plans..."
- Page 8 of 8, Committee Reports, third paragraph, last sentence, change "...district..." to read "...districts..."

Board Member Swonger requested the following changes to the April 19, 2010 minutes.

- Page 8 of 8, Committee Reports, fourth paragraph, change "...the Cable Advisory Council Coalition..." to read "...the Cable Advisory TV Committee..."

Board Member Ortega requested the following changes to the April 19, 2010 minutes.

- Page 7 of 8, Other, section b, change "...Chair Vaillancourt Jody..." to read "...Chair Vaillancourt..."
- Page 8 of 8, New Business, first paragraph, last sentence, change "...yearend review..." to read "...year end review..."

Chairman Vaillancourt requested the following changes to the April 19, 2010 minutes.

- Page 1 of 8, Pledge of Allegiance, second paragraph, the last sentence should read "Christopher Ortega and Student Representative Ortega was the first father and daughter team that on the School Board."
- Page 4 of 8, Request to Use School Grounds for Midway on July 4th, fifth paragraph, first sentence, change "...Town Councilor..." to read "...Town Council..."
- Page 4 of 8, Request to Use School Grounds for Midway on July 4th, fifth paragraph, last sentence should read, "She felt that if the town could not afford to pay for the midway activities and did not provide Mr. Lemos with a detail list of July 4th midway expenses, then the school district had no business offering up its parking lot."

- Page 4 of 8, Request for School District Representative on the Town Center Committee, second paragraph, first sentence, change "...reviewing walkways..." to read "...reviewing walk ways..."
- Page 7 of 8, Formal Consideration of Addition of Half Time Business Teacher Position at Merrimack High School, third paragraph, add "DECA was a co-curricular program and that the administration did not take co-curricular programs into consideration when determining staffing levels." after the last sentence.

The motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

3. Public Participation (15 Minutes)

There was no public participation.

4. Acceptance of Gifts/Grants under \$5,000

- a) Hannaford Supermarkets to James Mastricola Elementary School for \$107

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that parents participated in a program at Hannaford for educational supplies.

- b) Leukemia and Lymphoma Society to Reeds Ferry School for \$50

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that Reeds Ferry Elementary School participated in a program called "Pennies for Patients". The gift of \$50 was a thank you from the organization for a pizza party.

Chairman Vaillancourt thanked all of the Reeds Ferry School students for participating in the "Pennies for Patients" program and hoped that they enjoy their pizza party.

Board member Barnes moved (seconded by Board member Ortega) to approve the gifts and grants under \$5,000.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. Consent Agenda

- a) Teacher Resignations

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher resignations.

- Alison Farrell, Art Teacher at Merrimack Middle School
- Emily Robinson, Second Grade Teacher at Reeds Ferry School
- Danielle Guarrera, World Language Teacher at Merrimack High School

- b) Approval of Tracy Bull as School District Representative on Town Center Committee

Board member Swonger moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Thornton) to approve the consent agenda.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

6. The Four Elementary Schools: A Year in Review

Chairman Vaillancourt welcomed the Leadership Team from the four elementary schools. Principal John Fabrizio of James Mastricola Elementary School introduced the Leadership Team.

Reeds Ferry Elementary School: Principal Kimberly Yarlott, Assistant Principal Timothy O'Connell, Computer Technology Educator Steven McGettigan

Thorntons Ferry Elementary School: Principal Bridey Bellemare, Assistant Principal Sharon Putney, Guidance Counselor Julie DeLuca

James Mastricola Upper Elementary School: Principal Marsha McGill, Assistant Principal William Morris, Math Facilitator and Sixth Grade Teacher Lori Puzzo

James Mastricola Elementary School: Principal John Fabrizio, Assistant Principal Emilie Carter, Language Arts Coordinator Susan Matthews

Principal Fabrizio stated that the four elementary schools would address areas in the District Logic Model: literacy, technology, mathematics, and school climate.

Literacy

Principal Fabrizio stated that the four elementary school principals, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin and Nancy Gerzon, a consultant from WestEd met monthly throughout the year to plan and organize efforts relative to a literacy collaborative assessment project. He introduced Susan Matthews, Language Arts Coordinator at James Mastricola Elementary School.

Ms. Matthews reported that Consultant Nancy Gerzon and Consultant Kim Boothroyd offered a training session for teachers involved in the Collaborative Assessment Project (CAP). She explained that teachers were provided the opportunity to work in district teams to collaborate on writing lesson plans to be used during the school year. Teachers were also presented with a procedural model to follow for collecting and examining data connected to formative assessments. This gave teachers across the District a consistent method for reviewing their students' work. Teachers met in grade level professional learning teams, twice a month, to dialog about their students' progress in reading. Administrators, language arts coordinators, special education coordinators, special education teachers, specialists, and Title I tutors also participated in the review process.

Ms. Matthews stated that Kathleen Custer, consultant and former principal, and the language arts coordinators worked with the kindergarten teams across the District to discuss what important components should be taught in an early literacy program.

Ms. Matthews reported that the Title I program was using the Level Literacy Intervention Program (LLI). Level Literacy Intervention was designed to help first and second grade students achieve grade level competency.

Ms. Matthews reported that students in grades three through six receive support with classroom instruction in grade level expectations from the Title 1 and the MARS programs.

Ms. Matthews noted that students were looking forward to a visit from Poet Bruce Lansky who will provide poetry workshop sessions for students. She noted that many classes have been busy writing poems in preparation for Mr. Lansky's visit.

Technology

Principal Yarlott reported that progress was made in the area of technology at the four elementary schools for both students and educators. She introduced Steve McGettigan, computer technology teacher at Reeds Ferry Elementary School.

Mr. McGettigan stated that technology educators offer direct student instruction; support teachers and staff with the integration of technology in the curriculum; research and recommend purchases of equipment, software and supplies; trouble shoot hardware issues; serve on technology committees; provide curriculum integration activities; and oversee the development of the grade four electronic portfolios.

Mr. McGettigan explained that Technology Integration Mentors (TIMs) were individuals who have embraced technology and education and are eager to share their expertise with their colleagues. He explained that the use of Technology Integration Mentors has been a comfortable way for staff to receive direct one-on-one individual help from someone who understands exactly what they are trying to accomplish.

Mr. McGettigan stated that teachers are finding creative, challenging, rigorous, and engaging ways to use technology in their lessons. Students have made continuous progress in acquiring and applying technology skills to enhance their learning.

On behalf of the elementary computer technology educators, Mr. McGettigan thanked the Board, the administration and the Merrimack taxpayers for supporting the purchase of new computers for the elementary school computer labs.

Mr. McGettigan reported that teachers are finding great uses for the ten-year-old computers.

Mathematics

Principal McGill stated that the elementary classrooms continue to implement a standards-based math program. The Everyday Math program offers a minimum of 60 minutes of math instruction daily with an additional 15 minutes of work on math fact mastery or math fluency. She introduced Lori Puzzo, math facilitator from the upper elementary school.

Ms. Puzzo explained that Everyday Math ensures consistency for students across grade levels by providing a common language and instructional practices. All new teachers are provided with two days of Everyday Math training.

Ms. Puzzo explained that fact fluency and automaticity was an important focus in math this year. She explained that all elementary schools added an additional fifteen minutes of math time to their schedules. The fifteen minutes were used to focus on math facts and skills. Students in grade two and grade five participate in one minute timed assessments to determine if there is improvement with the math facts.

Ms. Puzzo reported that teachers at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School were using the Everyday Math mini assessments to group students for math centers that have been designed for intervention and extension activities. Students write about how they answered certain math problems in order to better prepare them for future assessments.

Ms. Puzzo reported that at James Mastricola Elementary School there was a focus on mathematics in connection with the literacy block and other content areas. Math has been embedded in the different content areas.

Ms. Puzzo reported that teachers at Reeds Ferry Elementary School participated in a special training session with Jennifer Quinn, an Everyday Math consultant, with a focus on the essentials of the Everyday Math program. Jennifer Quinn also focused on how to incorporate the Everyday Math games to improve the automaticity of math facts.

Ms. Puzzo reported that teachers and paraeducators at the upper elementary school also had training with Jennifer Quinn. Monthly dialogue sessions concerning mathematics provided teachers with the opportunity to collaborate.

School Climate

Principal Bellemare introduced Julie DeLuca, guidance counselor at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School who represented guidance counselors and behavior specialists across the elementary schools.

Ms. DeLuca explained that school climate includes parents, staff, community members and students. A number of practices such as consistent language, data collection, peer helping peer programs, and positive behavior programs attribute to a positive and engaging school climate.

Ms. DeLuca noted that the school bus is viewed as an extension of the school day and that bus drivers use positive expectations within the bus environment.

Ms. DeLuca stated that author visits, arts shows, book fairs, ice cream socials, plays and principal literacy nights are examples of events that invite families to be part of the school community.

Ms. DeLuca stated that wellness opportunities, cultural opportunities, after school sports activities and a year-long mentoring program for all new teachers are opportunities to strengthen staff involvement within the school community.

Decision

Vice Chairman Thornton asked what would be done with the information that was gathered from the second and fifth grade math fact assessments. She also asked if it was the first year of the math fact assessment.

Ms. Puzzo responded that it was the first year of the math fact assessment. The data would be reviewed at the end of this school year.

Vice Chairman Thornton stated that she was interested in the outcome of the math facts assessment.

Board member Barnes asked why the Everyday Math consultant only visited two of the four elementary schools.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the School District had embarked on a study to ascertain if there was a method or a number of methods that would increase students' automaticity of math facts. Each school selected a particular method to utilize. He stated that because two of the four schools were using the Everyday Math program more fully they need the assistance provided by Ms. Quinn. He noted that the outcome from the assessments should yield insight into which method was best for math fact acquisition. He stated that it might be determined that the concentrated period of time devoted to learning facts might be more important than the method itself.

Board member Barnes, requested more information about Bruce Lansky's visit.

Language Arts Coordinator Matthews reported that the parent groups supported the funding of an author on an annual basis for the elementary schools.

Board member Barnes asked how many teachers were taking advantage of the technology integration mentors.

Computer Technology Educator McGettigan responded that he could not state a percentage of teachers assisted because much of the work was done on an ongoing basis behind the scenes.

Board member Swonger was interested in knowing about intra-district communications such as the blog and how those mechanisms affected literacy efforts and/or the school community itself.

Principal Fabrizio stated that efforts were being made to increase cross talk between and among grade levels. He noted that the Collaborative Assessment Project (CAP) had brought all educators together. He stated that the blog was still in its beginning stage and that the users needed to gain trust in its use before fully embracing it.

Principal McGill stated that CAP will provide an opportunity for a lot of cross grade level discussion.

Board member Swonger stated that he was pleased that the District's Logic Model had been used as the structure for the presentation. He noted that the short term objectives were to have been completed by June 2010. He asked if there were areas of the Logic Model that needed more support or focus from either the School Board or administration to accomplish not only the short term objectives, but also, what lies ahead two years from now.

Principal McGill thanked the Board for its continued support for the wonderful professional development opportunities provided by the district. She also stated that she appreciated the budget support for materials for students and teachers as well as for ongoing curriculum revision.

Principal Bellemare also stated that she was appreciative of the Board's support and involvement in the design of the Logic Model and in the overall support of professional development. She noted that it would be helpful in the future to differentiate between what the District operating budget supports as compared to the parent teacher organization's budget and to publicize that information for the entire school community.

Principal Yarlott stated that the District Logic Model has really been a road map for educators and it is referred to frequently. She noted that the design and structure has been useful in addressing other content areas even though they are not specifically mentioned in the document itself.

Principal Fabrizio thanked the Board for asking how it could be more in support of the elementary schools' work. He noted how important it was to continue to move forward with the literacy project, how necessary it was to foster educators' professionalism, and how important it was to communicate what was going on in the schools.

Board member Ortega stated that the presentation was informative for him and he could better understand why his children at these particular grade levels were excited about school. He noted that it was obvious that educators were working together and creating positive school environments. He thanked the presenters for working hard and doing a good job.

Chairman Vaillancourt thanked the group for making the presentation. She stated that the year-end review was very valuable for the School Board. She noted that this presentation was a good vehicle for communicating with the public about what was being accomplished at the four elementary schools. Chairman Vaillancourt highlighted the importance of having members of the Leadership Team meet face-to-face with the School Board. She stated that she has witnessed a tremendous amount of growth and progress at the elementary level over her four years on the Board. She spoke about the importance of actualizing the Logic Model and providing the needed time for collaboration. Chairman Vaillancourt noted that consistency between and among the schools was more evident in this report than in the past in spite of the fact that each school has its own identity.

Chairman Vaillancourt highlighted the efforts that the Board has made to strengthen communication including the blog for literacy efforts that Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin developed. She noted that the District was trying to use technology creatively to help educators collaborate given the time constraints. She also stated through the accreditation process at the high school that she heard educators request maintenance of effort by the School Board to support technology and the training of the educators to use the technology.

Chairman Vaillancourt stressed that she would support the District's technology needs as much as possible. She provided the Leadership Team with an open invitation to make suggestions for doing business better. She also recommended that they contact the Superintendent if they had requests, insights or concerns which would be shared with the Board. Chairman Vaillancourt concluded her remarks with appreciation for the presenters' time and a thank you for their effort.

7. Update on Informational Meeting Regarding Use of School Grounds for Midway on the 4th of July

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she met with Kevin Lemos, Town Manager Hickey, Chief Milligan, Maintenance Director Touseau, and Business Administrator Shevenell. She referenced memos from Chief Milligan and Town Manager Hickey regarding police detail, portable toilets, and trash pick-up and disposal.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that Chief Milligan requested that there be barricades on O'Gara Drive and McElwain Street to ward off any vehicular traffic going on the Midway. There are no funds to pay for two police officers to man the barricades. The police department would supply designated volunteers with walkie-talkies and vests.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the town would provide trash barrels and disburse them throughout the Midway. Mr. Lemos would utilize the school district's dumpsters and pay a fee to have the trash removed via the district's carrier. Mr. Lemos also agreed to provide portable toilets, including a handicapped facility. Business Administrator Shevenell stated that jersey barriers were suggested as a way to save the police officer cost, but that would not work if an emergency vehicle needed to enter O'Gara Drive or McElwain Street.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the Board needed to respond to Mr. Lemos's request by the May 17, 2010 meeting in order for Mr. Lemos to obtain the proper permits.

Board member Barnes stated that she had concerns about volunteers manning the entry points. She felt that in the event of an emergency, the response time of police would be delayed. She requested a cost difference between two police officers compared to two volunteers to guard the barricades. She also wanted to make sure that if Mr. Lemos was going to pay for police officers, that it would only be for the time when the Midway was the primary source of entertainment.

Board member Swonger stated that he would like more information from Chief Milligan regarding potential problems that have occurred in the past relative to the barricades. He questioned the math in Chief Milligan's memo.

Board member Ortega stated that he would like a better understanding of the safety standards and the level of protection at the barricades. He asked which budget would pay for the police detail.

Vice Chairman Thornton stated that she also would like additional feedback from Chief Milligan.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that she wanted to make it very clear that the July 4th midway was not a School District event. The School Board's involvement was in the spirit of cooperation. She requested clarification regarding the cost of police detail referenced in Chief Milligan's memo. She wanted to make sure that Mr. Lemos would be willing to pay for any additional police detail needed at the barricaded area. She wanted to ask Chief Milligan about the level of safety and security and if the town would have police officers at the fireworks and barricades, if there were no midway activities.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she would like to invite Chief Milligan or Deputy Chief Doyle to the next Board meeting to discuss the Board's concerns.

8. Tentative Dates and Topics for Joint Meeting with the Town Council

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that she received a phone call from the new Chair of the Town Council, Tom Koenig, to establish a date for a joint meeting.

The Board agreed that a joint meeting with the Town Council could wait until September.

Board member Barnes suggested a joint meeting with the Town Council after finalization of state funding decisions.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that June was the month funding would be known.

Chairman Vaillancourt asked Superintendent Chiafery to contact Town Manager Hickey for a September joint meeting date.

9. Summer Board Meeting Dates

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the Board's last meeting of the 2009-2010 school year would be June 21, 2010.

Superintendent Chiafery proposed that there be one Board meeting in July and August. After discussion the Board agreed to meet on July 19, 2010 and August 23, 2010.

10. First Reading of New Policy

Drug-Free Workplace/Drug-Free Schools

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the New Hampshire School Boards Association (NHSBA) had provided a new Drug-Free Workplace/Drug-Free Schools policy which needed to be included in the District's policy manual.

Board member Swonger stated that the word "drug-free" needed to be capitalized throughout the policy. He also wanted to make sure that the collective bargaining agreements were in sync with the policy.

Board member Barnes asked why the policy didn't address an employee who uses illegal drugs outside of school but is not under the influence while in class.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she would contact legal counsel for an opinion.

11. Other

a) Correspondence

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that the Board members had received the 2010-2011 School Board committee assignments and the liaison assignments had been distributed to the respective committees.

Chairman Vaillancourt stated that she would be the School Board liaison for the Grater Woods Subcommittee. She noted that the School Board needed to be represented at the subcommittee meetings because the Grater Woods parcel is on the middle school property. She stated it was the duty of the School Board liaison to make sure the School District was properly represented and its rights were protected. She stated that a draft copy of the Forest Management Plan would be reviewed by Superintendent Chiafery and Business Administrator Shevenell.

b) Comments

There were no comments to report.

12. New Business

There was no new business to report.

13. Committee Reports

Vice Chairman Thornton stated that the Parks and Recreation Committee met on April 21, 2010. Watson Park was officially open and a grand opening ceremony was planned for Saturday, May 29, 2010. She announced that there was a community garden at Wasserman Park, the skate park opened April 24, 2010, and Naticook Day Camp was accepting registrations for one week sign-ups compared to the two week sign-ups in previous years.

14. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments on agenda items.

15. Signing of the MS22 Form

Business Administrator Shevenell asked Board members to sign three copies of the MS22 after the meeting.

16. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest and the MS22 form.

There was no non-public session.

At 9:15 p.m. Vice Chair Thornton moved (seconded by Board member Swonger) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.