

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack Town Hall Meeting Room
April 1, 2013
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

1. Call to Order

Chairman Ortega called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Ortega led the Pledge of Allegiance

2. Approval of the March 19, 2013 Minutes

Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2013 meeting.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 4 of 14, paragraph 7, correct the spelling of copyright
- Page 10 of 14, last paragraph, the second sentence should read, “The little ticket items that the Budget Committee asked for were done upfront because they were in writing by the Budget Committee and were presented on big ticket items nights.
- Page 10 of 14, last paragraph, last sentence should read, “The large ticket items that the board wanted to discuss were put off on those same nights because there was not enough time to ask about them.”
- Page 13 of 14, paragraph 3 after the bullets, first sentence, add “JMUES” before Vocal Workshop.

Vice Chairman Powell requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 4 of 14, paragraph 3 should read “Vice Chairman Powell congratulated the group on being published and for giving.....children.”
- Page 9 of 14, paragraph 8, add “but not necessarily” after the word “idea”.
- Page 11 of 14, paragraph 1, first sentence add the word “now” after “realized”.

Board Member Schneider requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 8 of 14, paragraph 3, should read, “Board Member Schneider stated that he preferred to have Columbus Day off instead of having Martin Luther King Jr. day off.”
- Page 13 of 14, paragraph 2 after the bullets, change the voting numbers to “6-2-1”

Chairman Ortega requested the following changes to the minutes:

- Page 3 of 14, paragraph 3, change the spelling of CARROT to CARAT(two times)
- Page 4 of 14, paragraph 1, should read, “...Model went to the National level of scholarship in this area and it was judged to be worth sharing with the country.”
- Page 8 of 14, last paragraph, change “subcommittee” to “Town Center Committee”.
- Page 10 of 14, section 8, paragraph 1, first sentence, after “Budget Committee,” change “they” to “the Budget Committee.”
- Page 9 of 14, paragraph 1, second to last sentence should read “...member to work with the committee on consideration of an easement.”
- Page 10 of 14, paragraph 1, last sentence should read, “Now that deliberative sessions are done, it is pertinent to record for next year what worked well and what could be improved.”

- Page 11 of 14, paragraph 2 from the bottom should read, “Chairman Ortega stated that the process was tried and now it is going to be refined. The key is refining when certain questions are presented”.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

3. Public Participation:

There was no public participation.

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

Business Administrator Shevenell presented the following gifts/grants for approval:

- Exxon Mobil Educational Alliance Program to Merrimack Middle School for \$1,000 for math and science enrichment trips or innovative learning tools.
- AYCO Charitable Foundation to Merrimack Middle School for \$800.00 for the purchase of an IPAD3 for the Occupational Therapy Program.

Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to accept the Gifts/Grants under \$5,000 as presented.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

5. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the following consent agenda

- Teacher Nominations
 - The Superintendent’s list of educators as presented.
- Teacher/Nurse Resignations/Retirements
 - Raymond Blank, Math Teacher at Merrimack High School
 - Deborah Cushman, Social Studies Teacher at Merrimack High School
 - Jeanne Pinet, Nurse at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.

The motion passed 4-0-1 with Chairman Ortega in abstention.

6. James Mastricola Upper Elementary School: A Year in Review

Principal McGill began the presentation by explaining that the goals of the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School (JMUES) building are aligned with the District Logic Model. They strive for continuous progress in reading, math and in the acquisition and application of technology skills, all while promoting a positive learning environment. Their motto for the past several years is “Each One Up One” which is fostered in many ways through the efforts of the Professional Learning Teams. These teams meet weekly. They also meet monthly to discuss students who are struggling or need enrichment.

Last February the first “Data Talks” were held where the leadership teams meet with every teacher and every special educator in the building to discuss every student in the building.

Assistant Principal Morris stated that the music program is a huge part of the school culture. Over 300 students participate in either band or chorus or both.

Brian Moore, Music Director and Chorus Director, spoke about the music program. Highlights include:

- There are two vocal ensembles at the upper elementary school that meet once a week for 45 minutes before school from September to May. Both groups focus on enriching the National and Merrimack School District Standards for Music Education that include vocal instruction and using a variety of styles, cultures, and languages.
- The non-audition group currently has 155 students which is the highest enrollment ever at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School. This group is open to any student who wishes to participate, regardless of vocal ability.
- The Vocal Workshop is a select group of students from the Concert Chorus who audition to learn to perform advanced vocal literature. There are currently 75 auditioned students.
- All students are welcomed into the program.
- Each group has six to eight performance opportunities a year.
- The total number of students in the music program at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School is just short of 25% of the total student body.
- Mr. Moore presented a video of the Vocal Workshop, performing “When I Close My Eyes”.

Ms. Bunny Saranita, Instrumental and Band Director, spoke about the instrumental groups at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School. Highlights included:

- There are currently 200 students in the Instrumental Music Program.
- Group lessons are taught during the school day.
- Each student receives one 45-minute period of group instruction during school hours each week. They become fluent in reading and performing music in just a few months.
- There is a grade five and grade six band. They rehearse one day a week before school.
- There is also a Jazz Ensemble that meets every Tuesday before school.
- There are several concert band performances during the year including the Jazz Ensemble.
- A Recital Night is offered, which allows students to perform solos, duets and ensemble. Non-band members (students who take private lessons outside of school) are encouraged to play in the recitals.
- The recitals focus on differentiated instruction in instrumental music.
- On April 3, 2013 at 6:30 p.m. all bands in the District will perform at the high school.
- Five students performed for the board in an ensemble. Three sixth grade students who were selected to audition with the New Hampshire Directors Middle Level Music Festival also performed for the board.

Assistant Principal Morris spoke about several programs/policies at JMUES. Highlights included:

The School Attendance Team

- The School Attendance Team is made up of the school nurse, two guidance counselors, a behavioral specialist and Assistant Principal Morris.

- With the new attendance policy as their guide, the team meets monthly, review the whole school and individual student data and put action plans into place for those students who are at risk of becoming habitually truant.

The PACT (Police and Children Together) Program

- This is the fourth year of the program at JMUES.
- The program is provided by the Merrimack Police Department.
- Officer Kelleher meets with each fifth grade class for a series of lessons that speak to making good choices, especially in the area of drugs and alcohol.
- The students receive recognition at the end of the program.
- The school celebrates each year with a basketball game between the JMUES staff and the Police Department. Assistant Principal Morris invited the members of the board to take part in the next game.

PROJECT SAFEGUARD

- Project Safeguard is a one-day onsite program for six grade students and their parents to come and hear speakers about making the best choices.
- Hopefully this program will help with the transition of the students to the middle school.

PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support), or as Mr. Morris likes to call it, Positive Behavior In School.

Laurie Livie, PBIS coach, spoke about the program. Highlights included:

- Each campaign is focused on for three months.
- During the campaign, the staff pre-teach the expected behaviors, realizing that not all children know how to behave. They have to be taught.
- Teachers are given “Cool Schools” which include skits, posters, and videos that show different behaviors.
- They teach wellness, which is part of the guidance program.
- Right now they are in the middle of a responsibility campaign where children are rewarded for showing responsible behavior.
- PBIS is data driven so students can be tracked if they are not making the best choices. From these results students can be tracked as far as where in the building the poor behavior appears, the types of behavior, the time of day, etc. Then interventions are targeted for those behavior incidents at JMUES
- PBIS is positive in that good behavior is being rewarded. 85-90% of the students at JMUES, with just a little bit of direction, makes the right choices and are very well behaved.
- PBIS is building-wide. Common language is used on the busses, in the lunchroom, during recess and in the classroom.

Nicole Rheault spoke about Literacy. Highlights included:

- The philosophy of “Each One Up One” is implemented at JMUES.
- Goals are set for each student, whether it is to bring a student up to a certain level or to extend that student’s learning.

- In reading and in writing, each teacher writes a goal sheet for every child. This sheet includes goals that are based on the Bench Mark Assessment, which is done from grades K- 6, and provides data on every student.
- Each teacher confers with students on a regular basis.
- Goals are set at the beginning of the school year, prior to parent/teacher conferences as well as in the winter prior to parent/teacher conferences.
- Classroom libraries are very important and have a wide variety of texts.
- Leveled libraries (libraries in the classrooms) have been worked on. Constant attention is given to area of interest to the students, so their learning is relevant.
- “Readers’ Theater” is a program where the emphasis is on reading with feeling and emotion. An author, Kay Winters, was brought in and she had the students prepare for “Reader’s Theater” for her presentation.
- Merrimack Rotarians play a huge role at JMUES. Rotarians worked on a script with two readers. The presentation was viewed on Merrimack TV. They also work on a program called “Success is Up to You”.

Helen Fitzgerald gave a presentation about the Math program at JMUES. Her focus was on the goal sheets that are completed twice a year.

- Math Facts fluency is done three times a year.
- Students can maintain their own goal sheets, which they share with parents.
- Teachers and students like the goal sheets because they can see where there has been improvement.

Sharon Silva gave a presentation on Technology in the Library at JMUES. She gave a slide presentation of a typical week at the library, which is representative of the entire year. Highlights included:

- A lot of collaboration is done with the teachers.
- Students work in collaborative groups, developing and improving their writing skills.
- Students write in an engaging way working on the web.
- It is very important for the students to learn together and share together as a part of the whole experience.

Adam Goodman spoke about the Technology Integration through the computer lab.

- Fifth and sixth grade students engage in creative writing assignments that reinforce many of the GLEs in the classroom.
- Math is incorporated into the computer classes, including data collection, graphing and probability skills.
- Sixth grade students do a lot of research on countries. Four students, Sam Phillips, Laura Donahoe, Casey Moir and Abigail Schaefer explained the work they had done on their “International Field Trip” to Algeria.

Ms. Silva concluded her presentation with a slide show on Digital Portfolios.

Assistant Principal Morris explained that there are many wonderful activities at JMUES. One such program is the Student Council. He introduced Cathy Goodman, the fifth grade Student Council Advisor.

Cathy Goodman reported that there are currently 26 members of the fifth grade Student Council who are positive role models for all the students at JMUES. She introduces two members of the Student Council, Madison Harvey and Sarah Heimberg who spoke about the activities of the Student Council, including those that foster a spirited school community as well as sponsoring several community events.

Ms. Goodman added that pictures and information about the Student Council activities can be found on the district website.

Principal McGill spoke about other activities at JMUES. They included:

- Intramurals program
- The school musical this year was “Willie Wonka Junior”.
- The “Jog and Jaguar” was a running program
- The Chess Club has about 60 students involved.
- The Techno Jag was a computerized activity program open to all students in the building.
- The Art teachers have students making books for their “Book Works” activities.
- Lego Robotics was coordinated by parent volunteers.
- Destination Imagination continues to be an activity at JMUES.

Principal McGill highlighted the Parent-Faculty group that helps with so many activities at the school such as:

- Bring in visiting authors.
- Participate in Enterprise City Program for sixth graders.
- Project Safeguard for sixth graders.
- Bring in the Lowell Mill park rangers and docents for fifth graders for their social studies work.
- Help to sponsor Family Fun Night which brings the entire school community together.
- Help to sponsor the Field Day at the end of the school year.
- Help to support the Plymouth State Tigers Program.
- Provide numerous volunteers every day to help in the school.
- Sponsor a monthly Movie Night after school.
- Pick the art for the Arts Festival at the end of May.
- Spend time on the weekends to paint the playground.

Chairman Ortega stated that he hoped Principal McGill would convey the board’s appreciation to the students who attended and took part in the meeting in chorus and band.

Board Member Markwell thanked the Principal, the Assistant Principal and students for their presentation.

Board Member Barnes added that JMUES won the Fire Muster on Saturday. She also stated that at JMUES the children are taking on another level of responsibility which carries into the home. She thanked everyone for the highlights that were presented.

Board Member Schneider stated that the melding of three different elementary schools into the single elementary school at JMUES allows the students to meet one another and expand their friendships and their knowledge.

7. Second Review of New/Revised Policy and Policy to be Eliminated

Dr. McLaughlin explained that he and Nancy Rose had worked on the revised version of the Employee Use of Information Technology Policy based on the feedback from the board and the community. He added that the revisions of the policy includes a more explicit reference to social media and the implications of digital communication between district staff and students or the community, and the importance of recognizing those boundaries.

Ms. Rose went through the policy, referencing the changes that were made:

- In the third paragraph of the Introduction, the issue of “anytime, anywhere” communication is addressed as well as the importance of recognizing the differences and boundaries between personal and professional communication.
- Under “Cautions to Users”, item 1 was moved to the top to stress adhering to the terms of the policy.
- Under “Cautions to Users”, item 3 explains that all communication is public record and that district business encompasses much more than simply the school day.
- Under “Cautions to Users”, Item 6 explains the importance of care in communication, in all formats.
- A Social Media section has been added on page 4 to state specifically what is implied throughout the policy that governs all forms of online communication.
- There are some minor changes in the policy that have to do with wording
- Under Digital Communication Guidelines for Professional and Support Staff is an update on what previously was e-mail communication. It was broadened from just being e-mail to being on line digital communication.
- Under “Digital Communication Guideline for Professional and Support Staff, number 7 has the greatest changes. It talks about the same things that are in the policy, but any set of tools that are not provided by the district are still subject to the same employee use of the information and technology policy. Professional boundaries and levels of professionalism must be realized.
- The Digital Communication Guidelines for Parents and Community were also updated. Number 4 was augmented. This will go to the website as a caution. We are a public entity and everything we do is subject to public records.
- Under Guidelines for Staff Websites and Online Digital Content, this is an updated version before the district went to “School World”, which is the website currently used where the teacher’s sites are located. It was broadened once School World was in place to help people work within a perimeter. It was updated to broaden it to not just the teacher website, but other websites as well, that the teachers might use, which is fine as long as the follow the same procedures.
- Number 13 of the Guidelines talks about the website before something gets published. If they adhere to the guidelines, it goes to the Web Master in each building to make sure it adheres to the policy. Any questions or concerns would go to the building administrator
- Number 14 of Guidelines was added. It stated that when there is two-way communication, there is a responsibility for moderation of that communication to try and make sure that it is kept current and that it maintains the privacy of the teachers and students.

The revised Guidelines were broadened to encompass all digital communication, websites and any online digital content. These guidelines are related to staff creating sites or other online presence, staff engaging in communication with students or the community, and guidelines for the community to

recognize the implications of written dialogue within the district. By using these guidelines with the policy, there are multiple opportunities to educate the district staff and the community about all the manners of communication. Rather than creating an environment that limits or restricts technology, the policy is attempting to educate the entire community about the best way to conduct online business, protect students and their privacy, and to ensure that professionalism is exercised at all times.

Vice Chairman Powell referred to line 172, which read, “The Merrimack School District recognizes that social media, in all its forms and iterations, has become an essential tool of education and communication.” He wanted to know how social media is used as a tool of education.

Ms. Rose responded that there is online collaboration in classroom work. More and more 21st century skills refer to working with a broader audience. In the high school, at the senior level, they are doing collaborative revisions of documents in a Google group. Where the revisions are happening online, they are having a dialogue about it online between themselves and the teacher. For a lot of students, that is much more engaging. She added that a clarification on this can be added to the policy.

Board Member Markwell referred to number 6 in the Code of Conduct. The part about “private for profit business for financial gain using the digital network or internet access” has been removed from the original policy. He asked if this is included somewhere else in the policy.

Ms. Rose stated that had been removed. It was outdated because people did not have as much technology at home and they attempted to use the district resource. Now more people have their own devices. There is also filtering, so if there was a concern it could be monitored.

Board Member Barnes questioned line 176, which read, “Any two-way digital dialogue between an employee serving in their district role and a student/parent must be limited to district business”. She wanted to know if that meant that parents and children would be communicating with their teachers through a third party communication.

Ms. Rose responded that it is very possible. When a teacher is in her personal life, that teacher has to make sure that if she sends messages on social media, she is doing so as a representative of the district when she discusses anything about the district. She needs to keep her professional and personal lives separate when using social media.

Board Member Barnes stated that in the past the board had talked about FERPA (Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act) regarding the distribution of students’ records. Now that all records are electronic, this policy does not seem to address maintaining the regulations around the distribution of student records. She asked how the policy addresses these concerns.

Ms. Rose responded that this is addressed in the Student Records Policy and Retention Policy because that references paper and digitalized records. It has its own set of rules and it would be very difficult to include it in this policy.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that there is a subcommittee dealing with student records and the leadership team is working on them. It will come before the board. She added that it is being looked at as two separate entities that are very specific as to what is kept in the record, how it is transmitted, etc.

Board Member Schneider stated that in industry when participating in conversations and it is known that you are an employee, it is good to include a statement that it is a personal opinion. Perhaps this can be included in the guidelines for the district.

Ms. Rose stated that is something she and Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin would look at. In dealing with behavior, and being mindful when you are an employee of the district, you have a role as a professional and you have to recognize your role. This is mentioned in the policy multiple times. She added that we have a long way to go enacting this to get this policy in place to teach students and staff to grow as a community and to be smarter about all of this. This is the groundwork that lets us move forward.

Board Member Schneider stated that in the policy he noticed that there was no differentiation between social media and intranet vs. internet usage and behavior and the way students and teachers would interact for internal things, staying within the walls versus outside the walls of the school. He asked Ms. Rose if she saw any need for differentiation between the ways you create guidance there.

Ms. Rose stated that everyone should be mindful that things could be seen outside the school environment. Most classroom dialogues are monitored pretty heavily. Students have to realize that using social media is part of their work.

Board Member Schneider stated that sometimes the privacy you would worry about on the internet is more than on the intranet. All the other names are published so people know who you are.

Ms. Rose responded that because it is about students, the privacy piece will not be less.

Board Member Schneider said that websites are made by Booster clubs, the web presence by non-employees but on behalf of school functions. He asked if it makes sense to expose these policies in a suggested fashion to those entities that are not under control of the district but to provide them with guidelines that they could use. He added that he did not want these clubs and such to be removed from the web, but it would be good if they have some guidelines. Ninety per cent of the people who want to do things with the school district are not looking for approval. They just want to know the right way to do things.

Ms. Rose responded that the guidelines are what we adhere to and are available on line.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that the Booster clubs are primarily made up of very engaged parents and if we share with them what our intent is and what we are trying to accomplish about digital citizenship and we seek their help, hopefully they would comply with all the guidelines

Board Member Schneider stated that there may only be some adjustments needed on the policy. He added that the revisions presented were much closer to what the board wanted but didn't feel this was the time to accept the policy as revised.

Chairman Ortega stated that he appreciated all the work that went into the revisions. The third paragraph on page one of the introduction refers to communication and conversation with students. Yet in other areas of the policy we are really talking about what is with or about students, recognizing that it is really pertaining to students.

Ms. Rose responded that initially the spirit was addressing it with students, but there is no harm in saying “with or about” because it could be a parent or colleague.

Chairman Ortega stated that what was being talked about is recognizing roles as an educators and how to decide to communicate about things.

Ms. Rose responded that a lot of what is being addressed was the thin line between personal and professional communication and recognizing that boundary. Initially the spirit was addressing it with students, but there is no harm in saying “with or about”.

Chairman Ortega stated that the Massachusetts policy which was referred to when this policy was being created, stated that if you are going to be communicating on behalf of the district in your district role, a different account and identity has to be set up. It provides some level of guidance in terms of how to use social media. He added that something should be put in the policy to clarify that “district business is district business”. That may clarify some of the grey area in the current policy.

Ms. Rose stated that her only concern is that putting something like this in place there would be no way to enforce it or follow through with it. She added that we can figure out how to word it. One of her concerns is that we are trying to get to a point where people are more willing to engage in and integrate it into their classroom. Sometimes people read the guidelines and become uncomfortable and fearful of being fired. We are trying to find the “sweet spot”, which encourages the use of technology. Hopefully this policy is positive, instructive and helping to guide, not negative or causing a threat.

Chairman Ortega had a question regarding the Guidelines for Staff Websites and Digital Content. He asked if this is for more than just websites and really for any type of technology use. He stated that the use of social media should be encouraged, but that there are risks that need to be protected against. The board as a responsibility to look at the risks and avoid them

Ms. Rose replied that number 14 on these Guidelines addresses the concern that if you take on a Facebook page and don’t know how to moderate it and lock it down, it is a violation of the policy.

Chairman Ortega suggested that number 14 become number 1.

Ms. Rose replied that it could be done.

Board Member Schneider stated that he thinks that number 14 should be more clearly stated, adding that sometimes you don’t realize the impact and gravity of doing something simply and what it really means.

Ms. Rose replied that this came out of the model policy that was being used. The concept is that if you decide to go down that path, you bear that responsibility. Hopefully if you are not 100% comfortable, you are going to pick another tool such as the district web site and talk to people who can help.

Chairman Ortega was concerned with the clarity of modifications. He added that the board would have as many readings of the policy as necessary in order to make sure it is right and hopefully will end with a suitable policy that encourages use and also protects the students, teachers and district.

Board Member Schneider asked where the checks and balances are at the district level so if the district wants to create a Facebook page or a Twitter account it can be done correctly.

Ms. Rose replied that the checks and balances go through the district administration.

Board Member Barnes asked how this is going to be implemented or rolled out. She added that there are so many possibilities that checks and balances are needed. As a board, she stated, they are not here to micromanage, but they are responsible for the policy. If the policy needs to be reviewed every year to make sure the students are protected, she didn't think the board would have a problem with that.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that at whatever point we are ready to go with any version of this policy, we take the same approach to dissemination of this as is done with curriculum in the district. It will be an evolving process. It will be a living and meaningful document that will be understood by everyone.

Ms. Rose added that once this policy is complete, they will work on the student side of the use of social media. This is the first step in the multitude of steps and will require a lot of tweaking.

8. Other

a) Correspondence

Chairman Ortega noted the correspondence from Local Government Center of New Hampshire regarding a scholarship opportunity for staff and elected officials.

b) Comments

Superintendent Chiafery asked for the board's agreement of a date for a non-public session of the board for an evaluation of the administrators. This needs to be done prior to April 15th; she suggested April 8th at 6:30 p.m.

Board Member Schneider stated that April 8th is parent/teacher conferences.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she would go back and look at the district calendar and try to find a date that was good for everyone.

Chairman Ortega stated that three board members were needed for the Town Meeting on April 9, 2013 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. to certify the ballots after the election. Board Member Schneider, Board Member Markwell and Vice Chairman Powell will attend.

9. New Business:

There was no New Business.

10. Committee Reports

Student Representative Crowley reported that the Sophomore Semi was "fantastic". She also reported that last week the National Honor Society put on a Dodge Ball Tournament and everyone had a great time.

Board Member Barnes attended the Parks and Recreation meeting on March 20th. The summer concert schedule was reviewed, developments on the dog park were reported and the Easter Egg Hunt was also reviewed.

Board Member Barnes reported on the Parent/Teacher Group meeting she attended on March 27th. They reviewed the fundraising efforts and results. Merrimack Safeguard members gave a presentation on Project Safeguard, explaining their roles in the schools and the resources they offer.

11. Public Comments on Agenda Items:

There were no public comments.

12. Manifest

At 9:55 p.m. Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Barnes) to recess to non-public session per RSA 91-A:3,II (a), (b), (c).

The motion passed 5-0-0 on a roll call vote.

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Markwell) to adjourn at 10:30 p.m.

The motion passed 4-1-0 with Vice Chair Powell in opposition.