

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack High School Cafeteria
April 18, 2011
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

PRESENT: Vice Chairman Thornton, Board Members Barnes, Ortega and Swonger, Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, Business Administrator Shevenell and Student Representative McLavey.

1. Call To Order

Vice Chairman Thornton called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

Vice Chairman Thornton led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice Chairman Thornton noted that Chairman Vaillancourt was excused from the meeting.

Vice Chairman Thornton announced that School District Clerk Heinrich received a request for a recount of the School Board election. She explained that the School Board membership would remain unchanged until the recount results were known.

2. Approval of April 4, 2011 Minutes

Board Member Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Swonger) to approve the April 4, 2011 minutes.

Board Member Barnes requested the following changes to the minutes

- Page 4, paragraph 2, change the word “Art” to “Arts”
- Page 3, Section 5, Catherine Jerszyk’s position should reflect that she is a second grade teacher

Board Member Swonger requested the following changes to the minutes.

- Page 4 of 7, last paragraph, change the word “Collaborate” to “Collaborative”.

Vice Chairman Thornton requested the following changes to the minutes

- Page 3, last paragraph, should read “... Debbie Hodge is from Merrimack Middle School, ...”
- Page 4, last paragraph there should be a period after the word curriculum.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

3. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

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

- a) From Walmart to Thorntons Ferry Elementary School for \$250.

Business Administrator Shevenell reported that the money would be applied to the wellness program at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School.

- b) The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society to Reeds Ferry Elementary School for \$50.

Business Administrator Shevenell reported that the money will fund a pizza party for the students at Reeds Ferry Elementary School as requested by the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

Board Member Ortega moved (seconded by Board Member Swonger) to approve the Gifts/Grants under \$5,000.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

5. Consent Agenda

- a) Teacher/Administrator Resignations/Retirements

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher and administrator Resignations and Retirements:

- Timothy O'Connell, Assistant Principal, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Susan Robinson, Physical Education Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Kathleen Goetz, Special Education Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School
- Susan Matthews, Language Arts Coordinator, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Deborah Woodhull, English Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
- Patricia Perkins-Wiley, Math Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

- b) Teacher Nominations

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin announced the following teacher nominations. He noted that the two teachers are being recalled.

- Susan Retelle, Family Consumer Science, Merrimack Middle School
- Danielle Coplin, Science Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

Board Member Swonger moved (seconded by Board Member Ortega) to approved the Consent Agenda.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

6. April 12, 2011 Professional Day Outcomes

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin provided highlights of the April 12th professional day events. The topic of student engagement was the focus of discussion for the K-12 participants. He explained that data sweeps are efforts among teachers and administrators to develop a "snap shot" of a moment in time in which our schools' progress is assessed. He said that the sweeps are not about individual teachers, but instead they are about school-wide profiles. He stated that it is appropriate that this fairly new initiative begins at the elementary level and that it is the next step in the Collaborative Assessment Project. Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported that teachers at the middle and high school levels explored a deeper understanding of curriculum standards. At the middle school the teachers worked on the standards in the content area that they are required to teach. At the high school level, the teachers worked on competency development. The instructional leaders and department heads displayed a consistent effort to incorporate the philosophy of self-sustaining maintenance in our district.

Another initiative on April 12th was to provide K-12 teachers, para-educators and day custodians with anti-bullying training. Bully-free zone certificates will be issued with the intent that they will be displayed in the schools.

Board Member Ortega stated that he was glad to learn of the goal to increase internal capacity within the team. This will eliminate the use of consultants. Board Member Ortega asked for examples of types of data that was collected to demonstrate a level of engagement.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that student achievement cannot be accomplished until there is certification that the students are properly engaged. The “sweepers” observe actions in the classrooms and then share their observations with the teacher. For example, a student, sitting at his/her desk, has a writing assignment. The student is asked to use words that are not part of his/her normal vocabulary. There is normally a “word wall” posted in the classroom. If this is not clearly posted, then engagement, which is active participation of the students, will not happen. The sweeper would note this and share his findings with the teaching teams and administration.

Board Member Ortega stated that he previously thought student engagement was actually measuring the individual or classroom level of engagement. Instead he realized that engagement has more to do with the environment in which something is being taught, and how the instructor is operating.

Board Member Ortega expressed an interest in the anti-bullying training, during which his questions concerning what is being presented, and how it is being presented will be answered. Hopefully this will be future board topic.

Board Member Swonger was pleased that the assessments are being done in a non-threatening way. He asked Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin to elaborate on the standards in the schools.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin explained that “unpacking” is required of everyone when working with curriculum documents. The “unpacking” gives clarity to what a document is asking. We have state standards for the content areas in K-12 in writing and reading, writing and literacy, social studies, and the study of numbers and operations. The unpacking effort is to operationalize the standard so it drives the teacher to accomplish the goal. Assumptions in the standards are now clearer and more defined.

7. 2011 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Status Report

District Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and District in Need of Improvement (DINI) designation

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin explained that the District Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is calculated for students in the aggregate for whom the district is responsible. The district is comprised of two levels -elementary/middle and high schools. He continued to explain that the District in Need of Improvement (DINI) designation is made when a district does not make AYP in the same content areas for two consecutive years. The DINI designation is removed once the district makes AYP for two consecutive years in the content areas that caused the designation.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin explained that the requirement of the DINI designation is that all districts must develop a plan that will be in effect for a two year period, 2012 and 2013. DINI designation can be removed when Adequate Yearly Progress is reached for two years. Merrimack has been designated a DINI in the areas of math and reading, specifically in the sub-categories of Educational Disability and Economic Disadvantage.

Board Member Swonger asked that of the three criteria for AYP (participation rate, attendance and index targets), which were the areas that were missed.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that it was the index targets that were missed. He reviewed the index target percentages for the last two years.

Board Member Swonger reviewed Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin's report, finding that as a district, Merrimack is making progress. He noted that there are still areas that need work.

Superintendent Chiafery added that Merrimack has put plans in place, which has resulted in increased scores. When Congress reauthorizes the Elementary & Secondary Education Act, these plans may change. There will be a different assessment, different index targets, and different benchmarks.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated that Superintendent Chiafery often says to "stay the course". Merrimack has been less reactive to individual yearly fluctuations in scores, but rather has tried to develop a long-range view of what is smart and good instruction.

Board Member Barnes asked about our DINI status relative to the two sub-categories of Educational Disability and Economic Disadvantage. She questioned if there has been any shift or changes in the student population that would have an effect on scores. She related it to the local economy now, as opposed to a few years ago when the economically disadvantaged may have been a smaller group.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin replied that he did not have a historical answer and therefore did not have an answer to her question.

Board Member Barnes asked if private schools are under the guise of No Child Left Behind.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that private schools must adhere to No Child Left Behind.

Board Member Barnes questioned the process for students placed out of district.

Assistant Superintendent Mclaughlin responded that students placed out of district are counted as Merrimack School District students.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the economy is not the determinant. She feels the benchmark is increasing and becoming more challenging. She added that we will get to those benchmarks, it just may take a little longer.

Vice Chairman Thornton added that the majority of the district is making progress, but questioned the status of the two sub groups.

Business Administrator Shevenell reported that as a district, Merrimack is fine. The small number of students in the sub-categories may bring the school and district numbers down, but that is not a true reflection of our progress. He suggested we keep the focus ahead and not be distracted by the anomalies.

8. Other

- **Correspondence**

Vice Chairman Thornton announced that the Merrimack Master Plan Steering Committee is asking for ideas from the public. Members of the public are invited to attend a meeting on April 26th from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. in the Town Hall meeting room.

- **Comments**

Board member Barnes announced that she attended the high school performance of Urintown and found it very entertaining. She reported an understudy replaced Mitchell Bull, who was unable to perform due to a medical emergency. She wished Mitchell Bull a quick recovery.

9. New Business

Superintendent Chiafery referenced the February 28, 2011 School Board meeting which included a visit from the Legislators. She explained that Representative Chris Christenson offered to attend a School Board meeting in preparation for bringing the Board's policy concerns to the respective group at the state level. Superintendent Chiafery cited the anti-bullying training as one example.

10. Committee Reports

Board Member Barnes reported that the Grater Woods Subcommittee met and came up with a final plan. This final plan will be voted on and signed off this week. Then it will go to the Conservation Commission. Board Member Barnes noted that the Conservation Commission will meet with interested abutters, not the Grater Wood Subcommittee as previously reported. She stated that she felt comfortable with the plan.

Board Member Ortega asked if there was a copy of the Stewardship plan for review.

Board Member Barnes responded that it is a public document and offered to put it on the District's web site.

Board Member Swonger reported that the Technology Committee is revising its technology plan.

Vice Chairman Thornton reported that she attended a Southeastern Regional Education Service Center (SERESC) meeting last Thursday. She explained that SERESC is looking to expand to allow for more outside groups to utilize the facility. Dr. Ayers, the acting Executive Director, reviewed the future direction of SERESC.

10. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Tracy Bull of 5 Independence Drive thanked Board Member Barnes for the get-well wishes to her son, Mitchell Bull. She clarified that freshman Gerald Reynolds (not an understudy, just a "theater kid") took over Mitchell's acting position hours before the first performance.

13. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 8:45 p.m. Board Member Swonger moved (seconded by Board Member Ortega) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 4-0-0.