

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District
School Administrative Unit #26
May 15, 2017
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room**

Present: Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Schneider, Board Members Guagliumi, Thompson and Schoenfeld, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell, and Student Representative Sernik.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

3. Focus on Student Voice and Inquiry at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School

Chair Barnes invited Principal McGill and other honored guests to the table.

Principal McGill opened the presentation by stating that the students would be sharing work that involved the inquiry process. Asking the how and why questions is a key component of inquiry-based projects.

Students demonstrated research-based projects that culminated in visual presentations.

Some grade five students worked on the digestive system. They provided detailed facts and presented them on a tri-fold board.

Other grade five students shared what they had learned about the circulatory system. Their demonstration used a jar of colored water with various materials added to represent the process that results in the creation of blood.

Another science class in grade five created a Rube Goldberg mousetrap after learning about Sir Isaac Newton's laws that relate to forces in motion. The students explained their process and then gave a demonstration of their mousetrap.

A grade six geography presentation entitled "Hall of Nations" resulted in students creating African Coats of Arms that included their country name, four interesting facts, and the flag. Students used books and online resources and a graphic organizer during the information gathering process. Samples of the finished work were presented to the school board members.

The Tech Book Club allowed students to work collaboratively to create a PowerPoint on a book of their choosing. Various jobs included media detective, vocabulary detective, illustrator, quiz master, discussion poster, and trait catcher. Office 365 software was used by the students in the creation of their project.

Bookworks is a collaborative art and writing opportunity available to grade six students. Students learned that each discipline enhanced their understanding of the other and were proud of their finished products.

Grade six Social Studies students studied South America, Central America, Canada, and the five themes of geography. They gathered their facts into a Jeopardy Game and demonstrated the rigor level of the questions by showcasing various questions and responses.

The final presentation was on the Enterprise City trip to Dover, New Hampshire. Grade six students attended a mock job fair and experienced real world situations. They created resumes, interviewed for jobs, were hired into different shops and then ran their shops. They learned to create advertising, basic business financing, created laws and rules for their city, made business speeches, and created mayor and judge positions.

A pictorial slide show highlighted the students' experience.

Assistant Principal Morris thanked the school board for the invitation to present at tonight's meeting and asked for any questions.

Vice Chair Schneider appreciated the breadth of presentations across the curriculum.

Board Members thanked the students for their presentations.

4. Presentation regarding Primex Contribution Assurance Program

Chair Barnes invited Primex representatives Toni Flewelling and Karl Weber to the table.

Members were provided packets with information on the contribution assurance program offered in the areas of property and liability and worker's compensation.

Primex Director of Member Services Karl Weber spoke briefly about the contents of the packet.

Board Member Thompson asked if there are other companies that provide a similar program.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that the district moved from the commercial market of private insurers several years ago to Primex. In the first year of signing the district suffered losses due to Hurricane Sandy.

The Contribution Assurance Program (CAP) has been beneficial to budget stability.

There are no other companies offering this type of service. The contract has not been bid out in the past five years due to this.

Chair Barnes asked if the CAP rates are standard or based on historical claim trends.

Mr. Weber responded that the percentages have varied based on forecasting, not on the individual clients.

Ms. Flewelling spoke about the educational pieces of the Primex service. They include reviewing outside insurance contracts, legal counsel, employment related phone service, a training facility, online classes, and human resource training.

Board Member Guagliumi asked if we are taking advantage of any of these services.

Superintendent Chiafery responded that the emerging leaders program has participants involved every year.

Board Member Thompson recommended that every few years the program be reviewed on the open market to show the benefits to the taxpayers.

Mr. Weber spoke about the PRIME program that the district does not currently participate in but would benefit from with cost savings.

Chair Barnes asked how the Primex rates compare to the open market.

Mr. Weber responded that Primex is a non-profit entity and being in a pool allows the rates to stay stable.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell provided some historical background on insurance options. The commercial market options has decreased to only one provider. There are also statutory limits to liability that protect the district from potentially excessive lawsuits if enrolled in this exchange.

Chair Barnes asked if the board is ready to lock in the rates for the next three years.

Superintendent Chiafery commented that tonight was to present the information. She would like the board's decision by June 5th in order to respond to Primex.

Chair Barnes recommended putting the item on the consent agenda.

Board Member Thompson stated that he does not yet have enough historical data to make a decision to put the topic on the consent agenda.

Chair Barnes will put the item on the regular agenda for the next meeting, scheduled for June 5, 2017.

5. Update on 2016-2017 PreSchool and Projections for 2017-2018

Chair Barnes invited Director of Special Services John Fabrizio and Pre-School Coordinator Sheila Demers to the table.

Director Fabrizio began by noting the 100% compliance rate for Indicator 12: Early Transitions relative to 34 CFR 300.124: Transition of children from Family Centered Early Supports and Services (FCESS) for the July 1, 2015 to October 31, 2015 report period.

Coordinator Demers spoke about the referral process for early intervention services that usually begins just after the child reaches twenty seven months of age. There is a fourteen day window to discuss the child's needs and meet with the parents to determine a course of action. Once eligibility is determined an IEP is developed.

Director Fabrizio spoke about projected enrollment for 2017-2018. There is need for increased staffing as the number of students in the program increases every year.

Director Fabrizio requested the hiring of two additional .5 certified special education teachers, one to be placed at the James Mastricola Elementary School and one at Reeds Ferry Elementary School: and to increase the existing two .5 para educators that work in the program at James Mastricola Elementary School to full time. The total cost of this proposal is \$80,508.00.

Vice Chair Schneider commented on the blending of coded and non-coded students and would like to see more even blending going forward.

Board Member Thompson asked if the coding increase is based on more students moving into the district or more diagnosing of existing students.

Director Fabrizio responded that it is a mix of parent referrals, internal and early intervention. Over the past two years there has been an increase towards the end of the school year.

Board Member Guagliumi asked what the process is when a parent calls with concerns about a child's development.

Coordinator Demers responded with a detailed explanation of the process.

Chair Barnes noted the yearly increases in students and coding. She asked about compliance.

Vice Chair Schneider asked where the analysis and testing is done and was told it is done at James Mastricola Elementary School.

Vice Chair Schneider asked that going forward, the special services budget anticipate needs that are arising late in the school year.

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to grant approval for the district to hire the additional staffing at the cost stated by Director Fabrizio in his request to the board.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

6. Response to School Lunch Inquiry

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted that there are three distinct topics before Mr. Dziki. The first topic was the elimination of the alternative lunch for those without money in their accounts and the amount allowed to be charge.

Mr. Dziki responded that monitoring student accounts is the most challenging responsibility of the school lunch program. Students in the elementary schools are allowed to charge up to four lunches and at the high school up to three lunches. Cashiers tell students when the balances are getting low and notices are also sent home. A program called “My School Bucks” is also an option to parents.

The second topic raised was to eliminate the alternative meal as has been proposed in Senate Bill 371.

Superintendent Chiafery added that Senate Bill 371 requires that either a policy or a set of guidelines must be in place by July 2017. Both options will be brought before the school board for a decision.

The third topic is about the possibility of establishing a fund to take care of those who have gone over the charge limit. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that the school district cannot create a fund without a warrant article.

Vice Chair Schneider asked for clarification on if the fund would be for those with legitimate issues paying or for those who are temporarily behind.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell responded that any fund created would not differentiate on the reasons why accounts were behind.

Board members discussed options to more efficiently alert parents.

Chair Barnes will look into the features on the My School Bucks application.

Board Member Guagliumi expressed her concern over the stigma of the alternative lunch and the effect on the student. She feels this is an issue between the district and the parent and that the alternative lunch should be eliminated and a better solution found.

Chair Barnes commented on student privacy concerns. She then asked what the percentages of student lunch receipts are from cash payments versus My School Bucks.

Mr. Dziki responded that the My School Bucks program had received deposits of \$355,000 to date and receipts in the amount of \$265,000 through cash or check. The My School Bucks program is a more efficient way to manage the student lunch accounts.

Board Member Guagliumi would like to understand the monetary impact on the school lunch program if the alternative lunch is eliminated.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked if the district engages in hand stamping of students receiving the alternative lunch.

Mr. Dziki will double check with the individual schools to ensure that this practice is not taking place.

Mr. Dziki stated that the high school has the most overdrawn lunch accounts.

Chair Barnes thanked Mr. Dziki for attending the meeting and responding the board members questions.

7. Update on the Homework Committee's Progress

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin brought board members up to date on the progress of the Homework Committee and the processes they are following.

The district Standards-Based Report Card Committee has developed a report card for grades K-6 and is working with a sub-leadership committee comprised of administrators and department chairs from grades 7-12.

They are looking at the question of where homework fits in a student's grade.

The committee is looking to answer the questions of why homework is given (What is its purpose?), the role of differentiation of homework (different homework given to students based on the individual's needs), what is the role of homework on an academic grade (incomplete homework that lowers the grade does not paint an accurate picture of the student's content knowledge), and other ways to record homework that is not done so as not to impact the academic grade.

The committee is reviewing research and best practices with a goal of developing a protocol that provides a clear understanding of any changes that will be made.

When the work is complete it will be presented formally to the school board.

Student Representative Sernik stated that he is a strong proponent of homework. He stated that there is not enough time in the classroom to learn all of the material, that homework promotes good habits, and repetition is valuable to learning the material. Including homework in the final grade also reduces the stress on students when taking tests.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin clarified that the committee is not discussing the elimination of homework, rather the way it is counted and the type of homework assigned.

The issue of differentiating tests is not part of the homework discussion.

Vice Chair Schneider noted his approval of the way the Homework Committee is addressing the issues around homework but would like to see parents brought into the discussion.

Chair Barnes noted that in her experience the parent teacher conferences have always been structured around ability versus effort. She noted the importance of a work/life balance and that this should be part of a student's life.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin spoke about the law of diminishing returns and when excess homework becomes a negative academic experience. Homework does not equal rigor.

8. Approval of May 1, 2017 Minutes

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Thompson) to accept the minutes of the May 1, 2017 meeting.

Board Member Guagliumi requested the following change to the minutes:

Page 5, lines 230-231, Board Member Guagliumi was misquoted. Change the sentence, "Board Member Guagliumi suggested that the school board work collaboratively to construct a timeline of the skate park."

The tape of the May 1, 2017 meeting will be reviewed. The sentence will be adjusted.

The motion passed as amended 5-0-0.

9. Consent Agenda

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin presented the consent agenda.

a) Educator Resignations

- Jeffrey Capone, Merrimack High School, Videography Teacher and Technology Education Department Head
- Alyssa Grise, Merrimack Middle School, Language Arts Teacher
- Courtney Manolis, Merrimack Middle School, Grade 8 Language Arts Teacher
- Emily McElwain, Reeds Ferry Elementary School, Grade 2 Teacher

b) Educator Nominations and Administrator Nominations

- Molly DesRoches, James Mastricola Elementary School, Grade 1 Teacher
- Matthew O'Brien, Merrimack High School, English Teacher
- Rachel Schneider, Reeds Ferry Elementary School, Assistant Principal

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to accept the consent agenda as read.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

10. Other

a) Correspondence

Board Member Guagliumi had received additional correspondence from a parent in regards to the honors classes and placement at the high school. She is working with Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin on the issue.

Chair Barnes stated that the board had received a note from a constituent questioning testimony by the Merrimack School District to the New Hampshire Board of Education. The note has been addressed and answered.

Chair Barnes received communications asking if the drug sniffing dog would be implemented this year.

b) Comments

Superintendent Chiafery passed around a picture of the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School Select Chorus singing the National Anthem at the state house in Concord to the state representatives.

Superintendent Chiafery shared that the district was in receipt of a letter congratulating them on their selection into the Project GROW initiative from the state Office of Student Wellness. This competitive award comes with a monetary gift of \$50,000. The funds will go towards the district work in the areas of social and emotional wellness of students and staff.

The Student Wellness Committee under the direction of Director of Special Education John Fabrizio and Assistant Principal Julie DeLuca applied for this award and are to be commended for their work.

Board Member Guagliumi acknowledged the hard work of the Student Wellness Committee.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin appeared before the New Hampshire Board of Education and testified on concerns in regard to the elimination of the College and Career Ready Standards. He noted the connection of inquiry to the new standards and that the student presentations are good proof of the value of the standards.

Vice Chair Schneider commented that information went out to high school students and parents on the status of the drug sniffing dog and the scenario between now and the end of the school year.

12. New Business

There was no new business.

13. Committee Reports

Board Member Thompson had attended the Parks and Recreation sub-committee on fields. Based on his personal inspection of the 40 acres of land available to the school district he advised the board to take a closer look as to its usability for new fields.

Board Member Guagliumi had attended the Merrimack Safeguard meeting on May 4th. They discussed the GROW award, canine searches at the high school and the 182 pounds of drugs that came in at the Take Back Event. She noted that despite the diminished publicity that the public appears to be aware of the Drug Take Back day.

Vice Chair Schneider added that there is now a permanent box in the police department lobby and that the amount of drugs taken back is growing every year.

Chair Barnes had attended the Healthcare Cost Containment Committee on May 3rd. They updated the screenings and biometric rates for employees, the cost savings that have been achieved through the SmartShopper services, and then discussed what more might be done.

13. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

14. Manifest

The board signed the manifest at 9:55 p.m.

Board Member Thompson moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to proceed to non-public session per RSA 91-A:3,II (a) (b) (c).

A roll call vote was taken.

Board Member Schoenfeld voted In Favor.

Board Member Thompson voted In Favor.

Board Member Guagliumi voted In Favor.

Vice Chair Schneider voted In Favor.

Chair Barnes voted In Favor.

The meeting adjourned at 10:24 p.m.