

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack School District  
School Administrative Unit #26  
June 4, 2018  
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room  
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

**1. Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**3. Focus on Implementation of the Elementary Math Program at James Masticola Elementary School, Reeds Ferry Elementary School and Thorntons Ferry Elementary School**

Chair Barnes welcomed the various administrators, educators and students to the table.

Administrators in attendance were Principal Bridey Bellemare, Kimberly Yarlott and Michelle Romein, Assistant Principals Rachel Schneider, Julie DeLuca and Alisha Hanson-Proulx. They shared in explaining how the Envisions math program was chosen and how the staff professional development has evolved.

Kindergarten educators Kim Bolduc and Debbie Fournier and students Addie and Andre spoke about the “solve and share” portion of the math program. It connects prior knowledge with new ideas. Students observe and listen to how their classmates solved the problem. Then students watch a short interactive video and respond to prompted questions.

First grade educators Sherry Rosswaag and Laura Howe and students Aundra and Cash spoke about a complete lesson which begins with an essential question. Components of a complete lesson include visual learning, showing what you know, guided practice, and independent practice. The end result is a higher order thinking question. Educators then check student work for understanding.

Board Member Guagliumi asked how the half day kindergarten impacts the first grade math instruction because materials are based on full-day kindergarten, and what practices educators use to address this.

Educator Rosswaag responded that the year began with students needing more assistance with word problems and the independent practice was a whole group guided practice. Students eventually were able to read more on their own as the year progressed.

Second grade educator Laura Howe and student Arianna spoke about assessing and differentiating instruction to individualize instruction. Student groups are flexible and can change on a daily basis. Group One is an intervention group that used manipulatives to understand place value. Group two is the on-level group. It allows partners to discuss how they got their answers and lets students play a math game together to practice their skills. Group three is the re-teach center and is also a pictorial stage. Group four is the advanced activity center and it allows students to work at the abstract level. Students use only the numbers to explain their work.

Special educator Maryanne Sabat spoke about how the Envisions math program is used for her students. The Interventions lessons follow the same format and use the same math language as the classroom lessons. The kit also provides teacher-directed re-teaching, guided practice, and independent practice. Visuals, math tools and manipulatives are used for hands-on-learning by seeing-hearing-doing. Additional tools provided in the kit are various pre and post assessments and teachers guides.

Vice Chair Schneider asked how and when it is decided that a child needs intervention.

Educator Sabat responded that she has regular conversations with teachers that lead to a plan for intervention. There is an intervention block during each day and she also will go into the classroom to provide assistance. The key is consistency.

Vice Chair Schneider asked if the way the material is presented will result in the need for fewer interventions as they move thru the K-12 program.

Educator Sabat is hopeful that this could happen. There are many variables such as changing student populations.

Chair Barnes asked how the program has helped educators in supporting student outcomes.

Educator Sabat responded that all of the materials are provided and they align with the general curriculum; making it easier for her to provide interventions.

Third grade educator Cathy Rousseau and students William and Jill spoke about performance assessments. Students apply math concepts to real world reasoning. The students took turns reading and reasoning possible answers to a word problem out loud.

Fourth grade educator Noel Rosenswaik and student Jordan spoke about the technology piece of the Envisions math program. There are on-line math games that teach and reinforce math concepts as well as interactive quizzes that give students an immediate score so they can see what they got right and where they need more practice. The program automatically assigns activities in areas of need.

Board Member Guagliumi asked how the students take the quizzes and was told that students sign out a laptop from the assigned cart.

Chair Barnes asked how students show their work.

Student Jordan responded that the teacher has special paper to use when work needs to be shown.

Vice Chair Schneider asked if there is a bar that has been set to determine student comprehension before they move on.

Principal Yarlott responded that there are end of the year assessments and beginning of the year assessments to help determine where students are and their needs.

Board Member Guagliumi asked that the curriculum reviews continue.

#### **4. Formal Signing of the Master Agreement Between the Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association (MESSA) and Merrimack School Board**

MESSA representatives Carol Scopa, Carolyn Belfiore and Kim Gontarz and Superintendent Chiafery and School Board Chair Barnes signed the agreement. Absent from the meeting was MESSA Secretary Deb Donahue. She will sign the contract at a later date.

Chair Barnes noted with appreciation the willingness of MESSA to negotiate fairly on the new contract.

#### **5. Update on Brentwood Property**

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell introduced Brian Hansen of Team Engineering and Tony Basso of Keach-Nordstrom Associates.

Mr. Basso spoke about the survey and plot plan and how the building falls on the land. He noted that the building is on the property by one foot, but some of the parking and the fence are over the property line. It is a pre-existing non-conforming structure. The zoning board and state RSA's sometimes need to be consulted before any changes were to be made to the existing structure.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell has spoken to various town officials and found that the school district is exempt from needing a variance. He did recommend involving the fire chief in the process and as a courtesy the planning and zoning boards.

Mr. Brian Hansen spoke about the condition of the building. Expanding on the building could be challenging as it is built on a concrete slab. There is asbestos in the basement boiler room tiles and minor repairs are needed to the siding and trim.

Vice Chair Schneider asked about the asbestos tiles and if they are only in the boiler room.

Mr. Hansen responded that when the building was built, asbestos was commonly used. The tiles were probably installed for durability. The final asbestos report indicated that it is very likely that asbestos is under the tiles.

Mr. Hansen added that the roof top ventilation unit and ducts were probably installed in the 1980's and asbestos was banned by then.

Board Member Guagliumi asked that the information be put on the district website and also provided to the Planning and Building Committee.

## **6. Final Outcome on the Homework Protocol for the 2017-2018 School Year**

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum McLaughlin presented the results of the new homework protocol to the board via a PowerPoint presentation.

He began with a brief history of the evolution to the new protocol. Over the years parents have expressed concerns that there has been too much homework, that it sometimes is not connected to the subject matter being taught, not necessary and could negatively impact an average. Students have complained that there is too much homework, it sometimes isn't checked, isn't relative, or is done just for credit. Teachers have observed that it sometimes is not completed, not carefully done, isn't helping and that some students lack independence.

These issues have been brought to the administration often over the years. In December of 2016 the Elementary Standards Based Report Card Committee addressed this issue and looked for research on the topic. While there are no current plans to change the secondary report card the committee reached out for input from secondary colleagues.

A summit of K-12 educators was convened in January 2017 to discuss grade inflation/deflation, increasing the alignment between grades and actual performance, personal responsibility and independence, moving students away from teacher dependency, enhancing the predictors of future student success, increase equity, and how to ensure homework is used to modify instruction.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum McLaughlin stressed that the homework has not changed, but the protocol has changed. He read aloud the district homework policy. Homework is valued as a practice of mind, and for the building of good habits.

The decisions that were made were to conduct a trial in 2017-2018 where no homework was to be graded, and that all skills and content taught would be assessed. Students would be informed that while it would not be graded, homework was a good preparation for assessment. No specific grades would be attached to homework nor would it count towards quiz, project, test or final grades.

The trial period was assessed in the Winter/Spring of 2018. First, the homework protocol was discussed at faculty meetings and questions and concerns were addressed. Secondly, the results of the Parent/Teacher survey were presented to the School Board on February 19<sup>th</sup>. Thirdly, in May a teacher survey was conducted in grades 5-12 in the ELA and Math classes.

The communication of the homework protocol to teachers and parents will be more clearly communicated going forward as there was some inconsistencies as to its intent.

Questions remain and it is recommended that the protocol remain in place but its purpose and expectations be made clear to all involved. This can be addressed through an intensive communications strategy.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked if student grades would be looked at in general as to how they have or have not been impacted due to the homework protocol; specifically last year and this year's junior classes.

Vice Chair Schneider commented that it appeared to him that some teachers might not have accepted the intent of the protocol and this needs to be addressed. He would like to see a slightly modified version of the protocol going forward.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum McLaughlin responded that he expects all teachers to make an honest attempt to implement the protocol. His recommendation is to continue to engage in dialogue with educators, students and parents to help them better understand the protocol.

Vice Chair Schneider would like more regular updates if this initiative continues and understands optimization will be ongoing and communication can be improved.

Board Member Guagliumi expressed her support for the homework protocol. She would rather see the district forge ahead innovatively than sit stagnantly.

Chair Barnes agreed that teacher buy-in is very important and August Academy would be a good opportunity to speak to all of the teachers about the intent of the homework protocol.

Vice Chair Schneider asked that a strong effort be made to raise teacher buy-in for the homework protocol.

Student Representative Puzzo experienced wide variances of implementation from his teachers this past year. He would like the specifics of the protocol to be made very clear to teachers at August Academy.

Chair Barnes thanked Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum McLaughlin for his detailed presentation.

## **7. Schedule Summer Board Meeting Dates**

Superintendent Chiafery asked the board to agree to hold board meetings on July 16<sup>th</sup> and August 20<sup>th</sup> during the summer.

The dates were tentatively accepted.

## **8. Request to Hire At Will**

Superintendent Chiafery asked for permission to offer conditional contracts to potential candidates over the summer.

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to allow the superintendent to hire at will over the summer months.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

## **9. Approval of School Board Minutes for May 21, 2018**

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to approve the minutes of the May 21, 2018 meeting.

Student Representative Puzzo requested the following change to the minutes:

Page 5, line 202: Change the sentence to read: “Merrimack High School junior....”

The motion passed 4-0-0.

## **10. Consent Agenda**

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum McLaughlin presented the consent agenda for approval.

### **• Educator Nominations for 2018-2019**

Carissa Ackroyd, Grade 4 Teacher, James Masticola Elementary School  
Kyle Morrill, Social Studies Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

### **• Educator Retirement/Resignations**

Susan Retelle, Family and Consumer Science Teacher, Merrimack Middle School  
Carolyn Johnson, English Language Arts, Merrimack High School  
Gregory Butler, Science Teacher, Merrimack High School

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

The motion passed 4-0-0.

## **11. Other**

### **a) Correspondence**

Chair Barnes read aloud the names of the candidates who have applied to fill the open position on the school board. They are Brandi Nunez, Jason Brodsky and Nicole LaPorte. Plans are to hold interviews on June 18, 19, and/or 20<sup>th</sup>. The interviews must be held in an open public forum.

Chair Barnes will look to schedule the Memorial Room and will reach out to the candidates to confirm interview dates.

### **b) Comments**

There were no comments.

## **12. New Business**

Board Member Guagliumi would like to see a future agenda item that looks at the summer schedules, specifically for band and sports and have it posted in a more timely manner so parents can plan their summer activities.

## **13. Committee Reports**

Chair Barnes attended the Grater Woods sub-committee meeting on May 29<sup>th</sup>. They are looking for a Scout who might want to work on the outdoor classroom for an Eagle Scout project.

Chair Barnes attended the District Parent Group meeting, also on May 29<sup>th</sup>. There was a review of the fund-raising activities for the past year. All agreed there was a need for more volunteers.

## **14. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

There were no public comments.

## **15. Manifest**

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:04 p.m. Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to move to non-public session per RSA 91-A:3,II (a)(c)(d).

The motion passed 4-0-0 on a roll call vote.

At 10:15 p.m. Vice chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to adjourn the public meeting.