

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack School District  
School Administrative Unit #26  
August 20, 2018  
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room  
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

Student Representative Puzzo was excused from the meeting.

**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**

Bob Bevill of 12 Blair Road spoke to the agenda item entitled Request to Offer Teacher Survey Related to Teachers' Emotional Intelligence and Vulnerability to Stress. He asked the board not to waive the two week rule to allow people an opportunity to comment and ask questions. He expressed his concern over employment security, the privacy of teachers, an opportunity to opt-out and concern over disseminations given to outside sources.

**3. System of Care and Learning Supports Update and Considerations**

Chair Barnes introduced Assistant Principal Julie DeLuca and Director of Student Services John Fabrizio. Both serve on the district's Mental Health Committee.

The Mental Health Committee's work began in 2015. The purpose of the committee was and still is to determine what a system of care and learning support means for Merrimack. Collected data revealed fragmented resources. School counselors, school psychologists, behavior specialists and pass teachers spent most of their time working with Tier 2 and Tier 3 students. The goal of the committee is to provide an integrated multi-tiered system of care that addresses mental health concerns that are barriers to learning and to increase the resiliency of all students.

The framework chosen by the Mental Health Committee is the same framework chosen by the NH Department of Education.

Examples of areas of progress include community outreach, programs for parents, crisis intervention, engaging families, research guides for parents.

Budget implications for 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 were minimal. Funds from the \$50,000 Project GROW grant helped to pay for professional development, materials, supplies and presenters.

The Mental Health Committee now requires a point person to maintain sustainability, to outreach to the community, and a person that can work within and beyond the day.

Consideration for 2019-2020 budget include:

- Full time student wellness coordinator
- Ongoing support of home to school connections and communication,
- Funding of Tier 1 social and emotional learning programs
- Ongoing support of Regional Mental Health Cohort with Salem, Londonderry and Hudson
- Investments in professional development for all staff, the District Mental Health Committee, families and students.

Assistant Principal DeLuca asked the Board for its consideration and approval to move forward with a process for the feasibility of a student wellness coordinator. She asked the Board for feedback on information it will need in order to help the Board and the leadership team make the best decision.

Vice Chair Schneider felt it is important to be clear about the role of the student wellness coordinator. People have misconceptions around the meaning of wellness and emotional wellness.

Board Member Guagliumi would like to know the roles and responsibilities of the student wellness coordinator. She also would like tasks identified that the Mental Health Committee members are doing that are taking time away from their important work with students.

Chair Barnes noted other districts often use Merrimack School District as a role model. Emotional wellness is being discussed at the national level. She asked that the Mental Health Committee continue to let the Board know what is needed so they can advocate the decisions made. The request for a student wellness coordinator position is not an unexpected position based on previous Mental Health Committee presentations to the Board.

#### **4. Report and Updates Regarding Student Services**

Student Services Director Fabrizio stated a successful sustainable system prepares students with disabilities for independence. Evidence of Merrimack's successful sustainable system are students with disabilities who obtain a paid position within the work force and or attend college.

The current enrollment for students with disabilities is 689 students. This is consistent with previous enrollment figures. Two hundred thirty-one students attended the extended year summer (EYS) program. Eighteen students participated in the summer internship program with local businesses. One hundred forty-eight students were enrolled in the preschool program at the conclusion of the 2017-2018 school year compared to 48 students seven years ago.

Director Fabrizio proudly reviewed the FFY 2015 (2015-2016) Determination of NH District Implementation of IDEA report. Merrimack School District has met all the requirements and purposes of the IDEA for the last six years.

The Office of Students Services will:

- Build home school support
- Work with the Student Services Parent Group to reach out to more parents
- Build resources with assistance from the district's Mental Health Committee and community agencies.
- Strengthen universal design supports for all students.
- Update assistive technology.
- Repurpose iPads that cannot be updated.

Director Fabrizio reported that contracted services for speech, occupational therapy and physical therapy continue to increase in cost. Other areas that impact the student services budget are tutoring, testing and increased hospitalization due to mental health needs. The balance between cost and need is a current challenge. More details will be provided during the budget workshops.

Director Fabrizio summarized his presentation by stating all areas are needed in order to foster student independence.

Vice Chair Schneider commented that costs such as increased hospitalization due to mental health trends are required by law. He also highlighted the ongoing efforts to provide more in-district support and less out-of-district placement when appropriate. He requested more details during the budget process.

Director Fabrizio noted fewer residential placements and more local placements is a result of the district's system of care.

Chair Barnes clarified educating students with disabilities is required by law. She expressed her appreciation for Director Fabrizio's whole heart and focused mind which result in successful outcomes.

##### **5. Request to Offer Teacher Survey Related to Teachers' Emotional Intelligence and Vulnerability to Stress**

Chair Barnes explained Dr. Adam Saenz is traveling and not able to attend the meeting.

Shannon read the following email from Dr. Saenz into the record.

*August 20, 2018, 3:29 P.M., C.S.T.*

*Re: Request for Collaboration*

*Dear Merrimack School Board,*

*Thank you for your time this evening. I am writing to provide clarification regarding my request to collaborate with the Merrimack School District. I had hoped to visit with you by phone this evening, but I will be in flight from Chicago to Houston during your meeting. I hope this written communication will suffice.*

*It will be best to understand my request for collaboration in the context of current research regarding the importance of social/emotional learning in schools. A great many studies can be summarized by Joseph Durlak's 2012 meta-analysis of over 200 Social/Emotional Learning programs; he and his colleagues at Loyola University found overwhelming evidence to support the efficacy of social emotional learning as a vehicle to increase both academic and behavioral performance in primary and secondary students. His meta-analysis confirms what we've long known intuitively. Namely, that our students do their best work in the context of healthy relational environments.*

*To that end, my colleagues in clinical practice and I began to develop a social/emotional learning curriculum for both teachers (*The Heart Smart Classroom*) and administrators (*The Heart Smart Leader*). The content of both curricula is summarized in my forthcoming book, *Heart Smarts: Why Social Emotional Learning Is Essential To Student Development, and What We Can Do To Develop It*.*

*As we developed the curriculum, the psychologist and psychometrician in me began to think along the lines of assessment: wouldn't it be wonderful if we could actually measure what we were proposing to teach? I initiated collaboration with the Texas A&M's College of Education to create such a measure—a three-domain profile that assesses personality style, capacity for emotional intelligence, and capacity for adaptive stress management. These three domains represent the most essential aspects of social/emotional learning. Dr. Myeongsun Yoon of the Department of Educational Psychology will be analyzing data to establish the instrument's psychometric properties, and Dr. Gwen Webb-Hasan of the Department of Educational Administration/Human Resource Development will be consulting as to the instrument's cultural relevance and sensitivity.*

*Assessment results will inform the test taker of the strengths and weaknesses associated with their individual personality profile, the strengths and weaknesses of their intra and interpersonal skills, and their innate capacity to manage stress adaptively. Our hope is that the instrument will play a critical role in empowering educators to lead at campus and classroom levels with ever-increasing levels of emotional intelligence—a factor that research soundly validates as the most effective pedagogical strategy for students.*

*Our goal is norm the instrument only with educators, so that any educator who completes the profile will have results that compare them only with other educators. We are seeking a normative sample that will reflect the demographic findings of the U.S. Department of Education 2015-2016 National Teacher and Principal Survey.*

*The collaboration will cost nothing to any of the districts involved in the sample. What is in it for the district is that during the spring semester of 2019, teachers who take the 20-minute test online will immediately receive a report with their results, outlines of strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations for personal growth. What's in it for us is that we will grow our normative sample to establish the instrument's innate psychometric properties, such as reliability and validity. We will never ask any teacher for a name; we simply ask for basic demographic data, such as years of experience, current grade level taught, sex, and race. All*

*data we collect will be held under non-disclosure agreements for the few individuals who will have access to the resulting data set.*

*To date, we have commitments from school districts in Texas, Arizona, and Indiana. We would love to add New Hampshire to the sample!*

*On behalf of my clinical and research team, thank you again for your time this evening, and I would be happy to field any follow up questions by email or telephone later this week.*

*Best wishes,*

*Adam Saenz, Ph.D., D. Min.*

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin highlighted Dr. Saenz's credentials. Dr. Adam Saenz earned his Ph.D. in School Psychology from Texas A&M University as a U.S. Department of Education Doctoral Fellow. He completed his pre-doctoral clinical training at Harvard Medical School, and he has a post-doctorate from the Alpert Medical School of Brown University. He also earned a Doctorate of Ministry in Pastoral Counseling from the Graduate Theological Foundation with residency at Christ Church College of Oxford University. He currently serves as the clinical director of the Oak Wood Collaborative in College Station, Texas, the counseling and assessment clinic that he founded in 2003.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin explained Dr. Saenz spoke at a New Hampshire School Administrators Association June Conference. Dr. Saenz was the keynote speaker at the 2017 August Academy and was very well received by both professional and support staff. His message from his best-selling book *The Power of a Teacher* was that teachers need to take care of themselves. Teachers need to be healthy and strong to give their best to the students.

Dr. Saenz maintained contact with individuals within the district because of his interest in the Mental Health Committee's work around mental health and mental health awareness.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin reported about one week ago Dr. Saenz contacted Dr. McLaughlin to share his next project, the Heart Smart Leader.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin read the following memo into the record.

*Date: August 15, 2018*

*To: School Board*

*From: Mark McLaughlin*

*Subject: Request to Offer Teacher Survey Related to Teachers' Emotional Intelligence and Vulnerability to Stress*

*At last year's August Academy, we were fortunate to have Dr. Adam Saenz as our keynote speaker. Dr. Saenz is a professor of psychology at Texas A&M University and the author of the best-selling book "The Power of a Teacher". In the year since his universally well received keynote we have maintained contact with Dr. Saenz in the hopes of future powerful connections*

*with him and his work. He is soon to complete a professional development program for teachers called the Heart Smart Leader which includes a personality assessment specifically designed for educators that will help them gain valuable insight into their own social/emotional profiles. Dr. Saenz's goal is to empower teachers to be more effective in the classroom as they better understand their strengths, challenges, and the emotional triggers that inevitable and deeply impact performance.*

*He has asked teachers in the Merrimack School District to voluntarily take his Saenz Profile assessment to help him gain valuable data about the instrument as he concludes beta testing on the instrument before it goes "live" in mid-winter. In other words, Merrimack is one of the relatively few school districts in the country that Dr. Saenz and his team at Texas A&M are asking to work with to test the survey one final time before it goes to market.*

*The assessment will take approximately 20 minutes of teachers' time and can be completed any time during the months of September and October. Teachers will receive immediate feedback, after completion of the survey, concerning their profile and as a part of the final beta test of the instrument. Additionally, as a thank you for participation, Dr. Saenz has agreed to return to Merrimack at his expense during the upcoming school year to train our leadership team on the use and application of his newly developed tool. Given our district's focus on student's mental health, we see this as an important tool to support our educators as well, with the goal of more impactful instruction.*

*We respectfully ask the board to waive the two week rule by granting this request at Monday's board meeting.*

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin explained the reason he requested the board to waive the two week rule was due to the fact that August Academy will occur on August 29 and 30. This is the only time the entire staff will be present in one room at one time; the next School Board meeting is September 4.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated this is a voluntary opportunity for teachers to utilize and add to their instructional strategies and/or self-awareness that will help them be a more informed practitioner. There is no other reason or no other goal behind the request to waive the two week rule. There will be no way to connect a survey to an individual.

Assistant Superintendent stated that Merrimack School District is working hard to meet the challenges of every student. Dr. Saenz's assessment is another tool for teachers to use to help students.

Board Member Schoenfeld noted teaching is a high stress and high energy profession. Any tool we can provide teachers with to understand how they function benefits everyone. Her understanding is that a teacher will be given information to access a link to the survey, participation in the survey is voluntary. Participants will be asked gender, grade level taught, years of service and race. The information will go to individuals compiling the survey results who are working under a non-disclosure agreement. The school district will never receive the results of the survey including gender, grade level taught, years of service and race.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin confirmed Board Member Schoenfeld's understanding of the survey is correct.

Vice Chair Schneider noted that the words beta test indicate the survey is under development and that Dr. Saenz believes Merrimack teachers represent a good cross section of educators that understand the benefit of wanting to be involved in the Heart Smart Leader project. Participation in the survey is voluntary and Merrimack School District will not have any access to the results.

Vice Chair Schneider read the following sentence from Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin's memo. *Additionally, as a thank you for participation, Dr. Saenz has agreed to return to Merrimack at his expense during the upcoming school year to train our leadership team on the use and application of his newly developed tool.* Vice Chair Schneider requested any use and application of Dr. Saenz's developed tool come before the School Board for discussion.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the reference in his memo to training our leadership team on the use and application of his newly developed tool would be to provide guidance to the leadership team on how to articulate how educators, on their own, would utilize the tool. This is entirely a tool for teachers to use. Teachers will get information if they chose to use the tool. It will never be used as a foundation for professional development and never be used to evaluate job performance. Training by Dr. Saenz would be for those who used the tool to better understand how to use the tool.

Board Member Guagliumi stated that Dr. Saenz worked with teachers at 2017 August Academy. Dr. Saenz reached out to Merrimack, one of several districts he has worked with around the country. Dr. Saenz asked if we want to offer the beta test survey as a tools for our teachers. The information is between Dr. Saenz and his team and the teacher only. Information will never be made available to the district, never be in district files, there will not be any personally identifiable information, it is anonymous with some demographic information (gender, grade level taught, years of service and race). The intent is to explain Dr. Saenz's voluntary beta test survey opportunity to the educators during August Academy next week.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin affirmed Board Member Guagliumi's summary.

Board Member Guagliumi recommended that if the Board approved the survey that a conversation with the Merrimack Teachers Association (MTA) occur before presenting the information at August Academy.

Board Member Guagliumi asked how the survey results would get back to teachers if the survey was anonymous.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin will follow up with Dr. Saenz.

Board Member Schoenfeld added Dr. Saenz is a faculty member at an accredited university. He would have gone through a process where the institution is backing him up as far as the process he put forward.

Board Member Nunez expressed her understanding that after the survey results are given to each teacher a full report of all responses or comparison will not be generated and given to administration.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin affirmed Board Member Nunez's understanding and added there is no report other than the report that goes to the person who voluntarily elected to participate in the survey.

Superintendent Chiafery explained the reason for the request to offer Dr. Saenz's survey is a direct result of the positive response toward Dr. Saenz by educators after hearing him speak at the 2017 August Academy. The survey opportunity would never have been made available to Merrimack if Dr. Saenz had not participated in the 2017 August Academy.

Board Member Nunez asked if this opportunity is limited to right now.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded that the district would never initiate a request for information from the survey results to build a professional development plan for an individual. Teachers would have the ability to seek their own professional development off of the survey results without the district's knowledge.

Board Member Nunez asked if there will be an opportunity for educators to participate in the survey after the beta test ends in October.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin responded participation during the beta test is free for those who want to participate. At some point the survey will go to market and will most likely have to be purchased.

Board Member Guagliumi reiterated there is no cost to the district/taxpayers, no cost to the teachers and there is an added benefit of a person with high credentials working with the district at his own expense.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin affirmed Board Member Guagliumi's summary was accurate.

Vice Chair Schneider noted his major concern about this survey is that it be confidential to the person electing to participate in the survey. There is nothing more powerful than individuals receiving information about themselves to help them be more effective in their profession. The danger is when the information is used more broadly. It is his understanding that participation in the survey is voluntary, the results are for the educator only to consider the results or not. He supports the survey. There is nothing that would prevent him from waiving the two week rule.

Vice Chair Schneider expressed strongly that all board members did their own research and were very prepared to address the survey request and will or will not agree to waive the two week rule.

Chair Barnes stated each board member is hired to do a job, even to an empty meeting room. Social media is not the place to share thoughts with the Board. The Board's decisions are made based on content, data, conversation, presentation, insight and probing. They are not made on social media. The School Board represents approximately 27,000 people in the community with an open mind and clear thought. The Code of Ethics is what guides the Board in its work.

Chair Barnes supports the survey request and will waive the two week rule. She is grateful and honored that Dr. Saenz asked Merrimack School District to participate in his survey. She will continue to do her job on data not on social media. She encouraged individuals to contact school board members with questions and/or concerns. Email addresses for school board members can be found on the district's web page [www.sau26.org](http://www.sau26.org).

Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board member Nunez) to accept the offer to extend the teacher survey related to teachers' emotional intelligence and vulnerability to stress survey pending agreement with Merrimack Teachers Association (MTA) and to waive the two-week rule.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

## **6. Update on Summer Maintenance Projects**

Assistant Superintendent Shevenell reported the paving at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School is complete. Projects still in progress and expected to be completed before school begins are the Reeds Ferry Elementary School roof, water filtration, art room cabinets and cafeteria tables. The high school bleachers will be replaced after the football season ends.

## **7. Approval of July 16, 2018 Minutes**

Board Member Guagliumi moved (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to approve the minutes of the July 16, 2018 meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

## **8. Acceptance of Gift/Grant under \$5,000**

A gift to Reeds Ferry Elementary School in the amount of \$3,850 was received from the New Hampshire Society for Technology in Education.

The funds are to be used to purchase technology hardware, software, professional development and training designed specifically for students in grades K-2.

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Guagliumi) to accept the donation with sincere thanks.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

## **9. Consent Agenda**

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

### **a) Educator Resignation**

Kevin Beaudoin, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack High School  
Sophia Fowler, Preschool Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School

### **b) Educator Nomination**

Hanh Doan, Technology Education Teacher, Merrimack Middle School  
Robert Hemmer, Technology Education Teacher, Merrimack Middle School  
Alexandra McCafferty, Grade 5 Teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School  
Margaret Mills, Grade 1 Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School  
Kimberly Newcomb, Language Arts Coordinator, James Mastricola Elementary School  
Tammy O'Connor, Special Education Teacher, Merrimack High School  
Ashley Phanuef, Kindergarten Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School  
Emily Reese, Special Education Coordinator, Merrimack High School  
Tammie Robie, Education Technology Integrator, James Mastricola Elementary School  
Brenda Wygant, Half-Time Preschool Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School  
Hua Xu, World Language Teacher, Merrimack High School

### **c) Approval of Revised Job Descriptions for Merrimack Education Support Staff**

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

## **10. Other**

### **a) Correspondence**

Board Member Schoenfeld received communication from parents who had questions about the content of the high school honors summer work.

Board Member Guagliumi received an email from a community member regarding the agenda item entitled Request to Offer Teacher Survey Related to Teachers Emotional Intelligence and Vulnerability to Stress.

Chair Barnes reported she has been in contact with Town Council Chair Rothhaus regarding dates in September for the next joint meeting between the School Board and Town Council. Topics for discussion are expected to include the skateboard park and middle school resource officer.

Chair Barnes expressed a desire to have an annual joint meeting in the fall for collaboration with budget items, warrant articles and the Capital Improvement Plan.

## **b) Comments**

Board Member Guagliumi asked when bus schedule would be released.

Assistant Superintendent Shevenell responded that the bus schedule will be available very soon.

## **11. New Business**

Superintendent Chiafery reported Mr. Bevill requested a second hearing before the State Board of Education regarding the homework protocol. She was notified today that the second hearing will occur on September 13.

## **12. Committee Reports**

Vice Chair Schneider reported he attended a SERESC Board of Directors meeting on August 13. He explained that SERESC changed its structure. Formerly the SERESC Board of Directors consisted of people from membership districts only. The new structure follows a nomination process. SERESC is a nonprofit entity providing educational services to any district wanting to purchase services. Currently, SERESC does not own any real estate and is as it was years ago. The Merrimack School District purchased the Brentwood building and land on July 17, 2018.

Chair Barnes reported she attended a Parks and Recreation Committee on August 15. Two movies remain for the summer movie program and one concert for the summer concert series. Board Member Nunez will attend future parks and recreation meetings as the School Board representative. The skate park is closed while repairs are performed. The Town Council is taking responsibility for payment of the repairs. She emphasized that the skate park is not safe for use during the repair process. She encouraged the public to visit [www.merrimackparksandrec.org](http://www.merrimackparksandrec.org) for skate park updates.

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

There were no public comments.

## **14. Manifest**

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:05 p.m. Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.