

**Merrimack School Board Meeting  
Merrimack School District, SAU #26  
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room  
Monday, April 1, 2019**

**PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

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

**Excused:** Board Member Nunez

**1. Call to Order/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 comment.

**3. Legislative Update**

Ms. Rosemarie Rung, NH State Representative, addressed the Board and stated she was present to discuss bills that were assigned to the Education Committee as well as Senate Bills because they were in what was called “the changeover” period in the House and the bills voted on in the Education Committee were going to the Senate and Senate Bills were going to the House.

Ms. Rung said the first bill she felt was interesting was House Bill 123 which pertained to school’s emergency response plans. She further said the bill was amended to allow school districts to decide whether drills should be discussion only. She commented there were some districts who had concerns about doing live assailant drills. Ms. Rung stated the Senate recommended it to pass and it would likely go before the Governor.

Ms. Rung stated that she also wanted to review some of the Finance Bills. She further stated there were many bills which were submitted and passed the House relating to adequacy funding as well as the stabilization grants. She mentioned that HB 176, HB 177 and HB 184 were all being retained in the Finance Committee which allowed the House to re-submit them in January if there was an issue getting the budget passed. She said since the House and

the Senate operated on a biennium, if they were to retain the bills they would die because there would not be an opportunity to bring them forth prior to when the next House and Senate were elected. Ms. Rung commented the reason the bills were important was because there was a priority among the majority party to bring property tax relief while increasing the funding brought to local school districts. She also commented that she received the final numbers from the Vice Chairman of the Finance Committee and if all went well and everything passed, Merrimack could look forward to receiving \$266,628 for fiscal year 2020 to 2021 and \$287,880 the following year. Ms. Rung said she understood the numbers were a small percentage of the overall budget for the Merrimack School District but it was based on the percentage of students that were on free and reduced lunch. She said the following year the goal was to bring immediate relief to those districts that had a very high number of students who had free or reduced lunch and were really suffering.

Ms. Rung noted in the long-term, the House passed implementing a capital gains tax where the revenue was predicted to be \$150 million and would go to the Education Trust Fund at 100%. She said besides the targeted aid which would kick in the following year if everything passed, there was a long-term goal of bringing state money to Merrimack.

Ms. Rung commented that House Bill 226 passed and was awaiting the Senate to vote on it. She said it would reduce from five to three the consecutive years of teaching required for teachers to be entitled to notification and a hearing where the teacher would be reappointed.

Ms. Rung noted House Bill 329 was also waiting for a Senate vote which was to review and adopt a data security plan but would allow it to remain non-public for security reasons.

Ms. Rung stated that House Bill 383 was also passed and she felt it would pass the Senate which extended the state law against discrimination to any non-public school that received public funds.

Ms. Rung said there was a very contentious bill that had a lot of discussion on the House floor which prohibited carrying a firearm in a safe school zone. She further said one component of the bill was that it allowed School Boards the right to allow people, with their permission, to carry a gun in a school zone.

Ms. Rung pointed out that the features of the targeted aid came under House Bill 709, which was in House Finance.

Ms. Rung stated there was a Senate Bill that was about the application, education and certification requirements for school nurses. She further stated there was another bill on the same topic that passed the House where there would be a position set up at the State Department of Education for a Nurse Coordinator. She said this person would serve as a mentor for local school nurses.

Ms. Rung commented that the following Wednesday was a big hearing day for the House Education Committee and asked the School Board if there were any matters they wished her to testify to or provide a written position to.

Chair Barnes commented that House Bill 131 was a bill that would establish a Commission on Mental Health Education programs. Ms. Rung replied she hoped the social and emotional learning curriculum could be extended to the full House.

Vice Chair Schneider said the bills talked about the different ways they would allocate the money based on the towns. He further said that one of the things that were glaring to him was that Merrimack frequently compared themselves to Bedford because the budgets were fairly similar as were the demographics. He pointed out that Merrimack was going to receive approximately \$280,000 in stabilization grants and Bedford was going to receive \$2 million in stabilization grants for the coming year. Ms. Rung replied she would provide the Board with the answer to that but she believed the stabilization grants and the targeted aid were a little bit different.

Chair Barnes asked if there were further questions from the Board. There were no further questions.

#### **4. Proposed Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum for Grades K-5**

(Ms. Julie DeLuca, Mr. John Fabrizio, Ms. Fern Seiden, Ms. Kathleen Hoppa, Ms. Jamie Cordeiro, Ms. Allison MacGuire, Ms. Melissa Moyer, Mr. Bill Sawyer, Ms. Kim Kelliher and Ms. Cassandra Earley)

Mr. John Fabrizio, Director of Student Services, addressed the Board and stated the committee had done a lot of work over a long period time to speak about a social and emotional curriculum and social and emotional learning. He further stated there were some members of the committee who were not present including Holly Lubelczyk, Sarah Champigny, Jamie Cordeiro from the James Mastricola Elementary School; Kim Kelliher, Amy Deese, Kara Daly, Paula Carelli and Christopher Rheault from the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School; Kelly Chiappetta, Sarah Claire, Allison MacGuire and Kim Ross from the Reeds Ferry Elementary School and Claire Mitchell, Louis Mailoux and Bill Sawyer from the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School.

Mr. Fabrizio said the Mental Health Committee created a sub-committee to look at social and emotional learning and they were at the meeting to present their findings as well as the program they chose.

Mr. Fabrizio, recalling the initial data that was gathered, stated that the staff was spending 80% of their time with 20% of the students and they started to think about how to be proactive

rather than reactive. He stated they looked at programming and how to choose a program that was similar to other programs they had chosen in tier one. He further stated in the summer of 2017, they reviewed the Collaborative for Academic and Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the research-based curriculums and in the fall of 2017, they compared the Merrimack School District's social emotional curriculum and thought about what criteria they would need for the program. Mr. Fabrizio said the following winter, after much research, they selected two programs and began their evaluation in the spring of 2018. He said the evaluation was completed in November of 2018.

Mr. Fabrizio said if the budget passed there would be a full implementation for a social and emotional curriculum from kindergarten through grade 5 in the Merrimack School District.

Ms. Julie DeLuca, Assistant Principal at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, addressed the Board and stated that the committee was recommending a program that was a component of what social and emotional learning meant. She further stated the definition, as defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was a process by which children and adults understood and managed emotions, set and achieved positive goals, felt and showed empathy, established and maintained positive relationships and made responsible decisions.

Ms. DeLuca pointed out that CASEL was the leading clearinghouse for research, policy and programs and was the gold standard for social and emotional learning competencies. She said there were five areas of competencies, self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills and social awareness.

Ms. DeLuca reported a study was done which included 270,000 students surrounding the effectiveness of programming that promoted students' academic, social and emotional learning. She further reported the study showed on average, educational programs designed to promote social and emotional learning were capable of producing an 11% increase in academic achievement.

Ms. DeLuca stated they were teaching social and emotional learning at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School as a pilot and one of the most important pieces of feedback they received from families was they were able to use common language in their homes.

Ms. DeLuca said while it was important to discuss what social and emotional learning was, it was equally important to discuss what it was not, pointing out it was not mental health treatment. She further said it was a skilled-based program. She said it was not character education or about teaching the values of honesty and integrity, it was about conversations with families around skills and common language. Ms. DeLuca pointed out it was also not parenting at school.

Ms. DeLuca commented when the sub-committee first met in 2016, they created a statement of purpose to help guide their work and read aloud from that statement as summarized below:

*Social and emotional learning provided the foundation for cognitive growth, academic success and emotional resiliency. We are committed to delivering social and emotional competencies within a comprehensive, multi-tiered system that will create optimal conditions for learning for every student.*

Ms. DeLuca stated that social and emotional learning was only a part of the multi-tiered system of care and learning support which was the committee's overall mission. She further stated the committee stressed the importance of family and community partnerships and there were skilled counselors in each of the buildings who were trained to deliver social and emotional, academic and career instruction to students in both tiers one and two. She said district counselors also continued to offer tier two small groups for more targeted instruction on topics such as anxiety, executive functioning, problem-solving, grief or friendship skills.

Ms. Seiden noted they proposed incorporating the Universal Explicit Social and Emotional Program taught by classroom teachers. She said in the future it would provide the common language upon which all district kindergarten through grade 5 students would build upon as they grew.

Ms. Seiden commented that each school in the district had its own unique community and culture which was buoyed by a school-wide climate initiative such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PEBIS) or Responsive Classroom.

Ms. Seiden said all of the above components together represented the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum they envisioned.

Ms. Melissa Moyer, Guidance Counselor at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, addressed the Board and stated the programs they were going to evaluate had to share the tier one criteria, which was Sequenced, Active, Focused and Explicit. (SAFE) She said they also wanted to make sure they had a minimum of 18 to 20 lessons which were evidenced-based as well as to have professional development available for the teachers. She reiterated how important the family component was and wanted to make sure they were developmentally appropriate, had cultural sensitivity, integrated with the school climate and culture of the school but also desired a reasonable budget.

Ms. Hoppa addressed the Board and stated that all six of the programs were researched-based and were vetted by CASEL. She further stated that as they reviewed the criteria, two programs quickly rose to the top, Second Step and PATHS. She said the Second Step program specifically met all of their indicators quite well and it was an easy first choice to

evaluate. She also said PATHS scored high marks on all of the indicators so the sub-committee evaluated that program as well.

Ms. Hoppa addressed the Board and mentioned the rubric components included competencies, differentiation, assessments & evaluation, the learner, student and teacher resources, technology, professional development, home school connection and learner outcomes.

Ms. Hoppa said the sub-committee endorsed the Second Step program and the teachers agreed with that. She further said the five areas that were part of the units of study, which all kindergarten through grade 5 students would participate in, were skills for learning, empathy, emotion management, problem-solving and executive functioning.

Ms. Earley reiterated that the program met the criteria of being Sequenced, Active, Focused and Explicit (SAFE) and the skills built upon one another. She noted the information was shared with parents through letters home.

Ms. DeLuca addressed the Board and said the next steps would be to schedule some professional development to help the teachers truly understand what they would be implementing in their classroom, begin a home to school communication plan and begin an assessment and evaluation to meet all the needs of the students.

Ms. Kim Kelliher, kindergarten teacher at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, addressed the Board and said she taught the pilot program as well as the Second Step program and said the kids in her class were benefiting from the program.

Ms. Allison MacGuire, grade 3 teacher at the Reeds Ferry School, addressed the Board and stated she was looking forward to using the Second Step program.

Mr. Bill Sawyer, grade 5 teacher at the James Masticola Upper Elementary School, addressed the Board and stated he was quite surprised about just how engaged the students were and said he felt it was important to see the students start to understand that people have different points of view. He said he had been a teacher for a long time and this was one of the most important things he had ever seen the district take on.

Chair Barnes asked if there were Board members who had questions or comments.

Board Member Guagliumi asked what the difference was between tier one and tier two.

Ms. Fern Seiden, Guidance Counselor at the Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, replied tier one was the core, what every student would receive and tier two and tier three became more targeted. She said an example of tier two might be a small group of students who needed to work on paying attention or self-regulation.

Board Member Guagliumi said as she understood it, there was data to support that if there was more time spent on tier one then tiers two and three would be minimized which was part of the reason the program was chosen. Ms. DeLuca replied they had already collected data at the kindergarten through grade 4 levels which indicated there were more “helpers”, which included nurses, counselors and assistant principals, working at the tier one level and less on the higher levels. She further replied the difficulty was how they were going to capture the time the teachers spent at tier one because the teachers would be the primary provider at tier one just as they were with reading, writing and math.

Board Member Guagliumi noted the program was not only about student readiness to learn but it was also about preparing them for a successful future, while they were in the school district and as they moved on. Board Member Guagliumi commended the members of the sub-committee for all of their work.

Board Member Schoenfeld commented that she really liked the way the sub-committee did not treat it as a one-shot inoculation model but it was built over time. She asked how the program accounted for the students that came and went or moved from grade to grade. She further asked how it was the same and how it was different across the years as topics were addressed. Ms. Kelliher replied at the kindergarten level it was more about teaching students to identify emotions and in grade 1 it was more about teaching them how to handle emotions. She further replied the skills stayed the same over time but the tasks the students were asked to do became more difficult.

Board Member Schoenfeld asked where the skill of executive function fit into the program. Mr. Sawyer replied that in his class they looked at how the students were feeling and to speak up when they needed help. He further replied those two components were built into all of the lessons and he said in his opinion there was no question that the program was valuable.

Chair Barnes stated that the operating budget came in below the default budget and this was the first budgetary item that was asked for from the Mental Health Committee. She further stated it was doing exactly what it needed to do because students could not learn in an environment that did not allow them to thrive. She said they were all focused on the end game which was to produce a well-round student who could function in the workforce or in higher education learning.

Board Member Guagliumi requested that the presentation be placed on the website.

Superintendent Chiafery commented that they would put the item on the consent agenda for the April 15, 2019, meeting. Chair Barnes replied she was in agreement.

## **5. Department of Education Compliance Report for Special Education Indicator 11 – Timeliness of Initial Evaluations**

(Mr. John Fabrizio, Director of Special Services)

Mr. Fabrizio said the State of New Hampshire's Department of Education was mandated by the United States Department of Education to look at the initial evaluations of students. He said it was part of their State Performance Plan.

Mr. Fabrizio commented the state was audited a few years prior and they were told the one-time yearly reporting was not enough. He said some of the other indicators had to do with finance and pre-school outcomes.

Mr. Fabrizio stated the data was collected from August 15, 2018, to November 15, 2018. He said it measured what parents gave consent to evaluate their children if they evaluated the children within the 60-day requirement and within those 60 days if they met and talked about whether the child had a disability or not. He further said the federal target for compliance was 100%.

Mr. Fabrizio noted there were three major factors looked at when considering Indicator 11, referral, evaluation and determination of eligibility.

- Any person may refer a child under the age of 21 years old to an IEP team.
- The school had 15 business days of that referral to have a meeting which was called a disposition of referral meeting and was required by law. There were two things discussed at the meeting, if the concerns raised by the referral could be addressed using existing supports and services and whether additional evaluations were needed.
- The team would then look at the assessments of the child, functional information, development information, the academic history and any interventions that were already attempted. They looked at information the parents provided as well as information from a physician. The team then determined whether a child had a disability or required specifically designed instruction.
- Parents must give consent to move forward with the evaluations.
- The process must be completed within a sixty-day timeframe.
- Determination of Eligibility – Upon completion of the administration of all assessments, the team would meet with the parents.
- The law required all assessments to be provided to the parent five days prior to the meeting. He pointed out the 60-day timeline "clock" started running as soon as it was



determined further evaluation was needed. He said the assessments needed to be done prior to the five-day limit in order to mail them to the parents which then limited their time to at least seven days prior to the 60 days being up. He further said then a 10-day notice for a meeting needed to be given which backed them up even more, pointing out that the 60 days very quickly became only 45 to 50 days to stay in compliance.

Mr. Fabrizio stated that it was a proactive process and took many educators to be involved in the process and he commended the teams and building leaders were the ones who made it all happen.

Mr. Fabrizio noted that all of the data was pulled from the New Hampshire Special Education Information System (NHSEIS) and family participation was very important. He said a lot of training was required to use NHSEIS.

Mr. Fabrizio noted there were three levels of compliance:

- Universal – 95% to 100% of compliance
- Targeted – 94% to 65% of compliance
- Intensive – 65% or lower

Mr. Fabrizio pointed out that the Merrimack School District was 100% in compliance and there was no action needed.

Board Member Guagliumi asked how the number of initial evaluations came about.

Mr. Fabrizio replied the data was collected from August 15, 2018, to November 15, 2018, and in that time, they had 27 brand new referrals and initial evaluations and they were 100% in compliance with all referrals and evaluations within that time period.

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she wanted to emphasize the importance of the report as well as others from the Bureau of Student Support (the Bureau) relative to special education because it took so many people working together in our district to be 100% in compliance.

**6. Board's Response to Proposed 2019 Voters' Guide for the School District Warrant**  
(Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell)

Chair Barnes stated that the School Board had a copy of the 2019 voter's guide and it was reviewed by Legal Counsel.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that as in the past, the voter's guide contained the Articles which would be placed on the ballot in an easy to read form. He asked

the members of the School Board if they had any modifications prior to it going out for final print.

Vice Chair Schneider commented that one of the points that was missing from the summary on Article #7 was the fact that not only was it a parent petitioned Article, not only were they looking to appropriate the sum of \$1.2 million but he felt it should also mention the parents who did the petition were looking at ways to offset the cost through fundraising and sponsorships. Chair Barnes replied she felt that was something which was publicly vetted and discussed at multiple School Board meetings.

Chair Barnes declared the consensus of the Board was to add language to Article #7 regarding offsetting the cost of the turf field through fundraising and sponsorships.

Vice Chair Schneider pointed out that using the amount of \$200,000 as an example of the tax impact was not necessarily viewed as genuine by some people given the fact that the average sale of a house in Merrimack was over \$300,000. He said they could either use a \$300,000 house as an example or say it was the impact for every \$100,000 a house was evaluated at.

Chair Barnes suggested the word “dollars” be deleted where there was a “\$” sign preceding the numbers where applicable.

Vice Chair Schneider, referring to Article #5, stated that the sentence be changed to “This Article will bring the total available for emergencies to approximately \$245,000” be changed to “This Article will bring the total available for emergencies up to approximately \$245,000.”

Board Member Guagliumi suggested using “\$0.35” format in the instances of referring to cents rather than “\$.35 cents.”

Board Member Schoenfeld commented that she felt the vast majority of people would not know what “by petition” meant and suggested there be a brief description of what it was. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell suggested putting an asterisk (\*) next to Article #7 and Article #8 and at the bottom provide a short explanation such as “petitioned Articles were created by registered voters of the Town of Merrimack upon receipt of 25 or more signatures.

Board Member Guagliumi commented that at the next joint meeting with Town Counsel she wanted to discuss combining the voter’s guides because she felt it was very confusing for the general public.

**7. Third Review of Proposed 2019 – 2020 School Calendar Including Question Regarding Presidential Primary Date**

(Superintendent Chiafery)

Superintendent Chiafery stated that she had a conversation with Ms. Lynn Christensen, School Moderator, regarding the Presidential Primary and it was noted on the 2019 – 2020 school calendar that “School will be cancelled on the date in January or February set by the Secretary of State for the Presidential Primary.” She further stated there would be an additional day of school in June and if there was no inclement weather the last day of school would be on June 16, 2020.

Board Member Guagliumi suggested perhaps school should be in session on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day to avoid adding an extra school day at the end of the year. She suggested adding a question to the next parent survey in which the Presidential Primary would have an effect on the school calendar.

Board Member Guagliumi made a motion (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to accept the 2019 – 2020 School Calendar as amended.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

**8. Approval of March 18, 2019, Public Meeting Minutes and March 25, 2019, Non-Public Meeting Minutes**

(Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin)

Chair Barnes asked if the Board members had edits or questions.

Page 3, Line 90 – was changed to “At initial thought, Board Member Guagliumi commented that she too thought the lines should be permanent and not painted but wanted input from those closer to it in the district like maintenance and the Athletic Director.”

Vice Chair Schneider made a motion (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to approve the March 18, 2019, minutes, as amended.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

Board Member Guagliumi made a motion (seconded by Vice Chair Schneider) to approve the March 25, 2019, non-public minutes.

The motion passed 4-0-0.

**9. Consent Agenda**

(Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin)

**Educator Retirements/Resignation**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated the following staff was retiring/resigning:

- Ms. Ann Bergeron, Family & Consumer Science Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
- Ms. Janet L. Brown, Math Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Ms. Nancy Sumski, English Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

**Administrator Resignation**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated the following staff was resigning:

- Ms. Bridey C. Bellemare, Principal, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

**Administrator Nomination**

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin stated the following was an administrator nomination:

- Ms. Julie DeLuca, Principal-Elect, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

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

The motion passed 4-0-0.

**10. Other**

a) Correspondence

Chair Barnes commented the Board had a copy of a letter from Attorney Kathleen C. Peahl from Wadleigh, Starr & Peters, P.L.L.C. which answered the question as to whether the School District was within their right to charge for student parking at the high school.

Chair Barnes further commented that the letter verified the district was well within their right to charge a fee for student parking.

Chair Barnes noted if parents had questions, they should call the district office.

b) Comments

There were no comments.

**11. New Business**

There was no new business.

**12. Committee Reports**

Board Member Guagliumi said she attended a Program Evaluation and Review Committee (PERC) meeting and the subject of the meeting was on social and emotional learning which had already been discussed at the meeting earlier in the evening.

Student Representative Puzzo reported the Cavalcade of Bands occurred the previous week which went very well and the Robotics Team participated at the University of New Hampshire District Event and they were chosen for the Sixth Seat Alliance and won the Industrial Design Award.

Vice Chair Schneider stated the Planning & Building Committee was supposed to have met to go over some of the updates regarding the SAU/SPED building research. He further stated that Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell was working with a vendor to get an updated quote and specification on what a reconstructed building on the Brentwood site would be. He said once the Planning & Building Committee received that report they would meet and compile the data to share with the School Board.

Chair Barnes commented that as a parent she received a communication survey regarding preferred methods of communication about things like what things were going on in the classroom in emergency environment situations as well as the timeliness of the communications. She further said she felt it was very well done and prepared and she thanked the Communications Committee for their work.

**13. Public Comments on Agenda Items**

Ms. Rosemarie Rung, addressed the Board and stated that she was very impressed by the presentation regarding social and emotional learning.

Ms. Rung commented that she agreed with Vice Chair Schneider regarding how they could

communicate the tax impact better on the voter's guide. She also commented that she agreed with Board Member Guagliumi in that it would be great if the voter's guide could be combined into one document.

Ms. Rung also commented that she had recently completed shepherding two petition Warrant Articles through the Water District and the language she used to explain it to people was "petition Warrant Articles appear on the ballot by petition of 25 registered voters."

Mr. Rung shared that a high school student, a senior at Merrimack High School, Robert DeFelice, served as a page at the New Hampshire State House and the following day, Kalyn McFarland sang the National Anthem. She also said at the next session she would make a special announcement to commend the Merrimack High School Science Olympiad team and they would receive a special commendation from the Speaker of the House.

#### **14. Manifest**

The Board signed the manifest.

#### **15. Adjournment**

At 8:45 p.m. Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to adjourn the public session.

The motion passed 4-0-0.