

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
Monday, April 15, 2019**

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

7:00 P.M. – PUBLIC SESSION

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.

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. School Board Reorganization

Chair Barnes noted the meeting was the first meeting since the recent election and there would be a reorganization of the School Board.

Chair of the School Board

Board Member Nunez moved (seconded by Board Member Schoenfeld) to nominate Ms. Shannon Barnes for the position of Chair of the School Board.

There were no other nominations.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

Vice Chair of the School Board

Vice Chair Schneider moved (seconded by Chair Barnes) to nominate Ms. Cinda Guagliumi for the position of Vice Chair of the School Board.

Vice Chair Schneider stated that he had the opportunity to serve as Vice Chair for the past two years and it was a great honor to do so. He said he thought Ms. Guagliumi would do a fine job in the role of Vice Chair.

There were no other nominations.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

3. Commitment to Board Code of Ethics (Attached to Meeting Agenda)

(Chair Barnes)

Chair Barnes mentioned at the first meeting after every election, the School Board read and signed a Code of Ethics. Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Guagliumi, Board Member Schneider and Board Member Schoenfeld read aloud from the Merrimack School Board Code of Ethics. The members of the Board then signed the Merrimack School Board Code of Ethics. The members of the Board then signed the Merrimack School Board Code of Ethics.

4. Public Participation

Mr. Robert Bevill, 12 Blair Road, addressed the Board and noted there was a large crowd in attendance which was related to other items. He said he wanted to point out that the agenda did not have a dispensation upon the recent voting on Article VIII, the Homework Policy and said he was hoping it would be discussed and covered during the meeting.

Chair Barnes asked if there were anyone else present who wished to make public comments.

Mr. Finlay Rothhaus, 14 Kittridge Lane, addressed the Board and stated he was present to quickly touch on the vote at the School District Deliberative Session that pertained to the Homework Policy. He said he graduated in 1975 from Merrimack High School and understanding how they graded in education for him was that homework was counted. He further said if there was a student who was having a bit of difficulty and not quite passing but could gain a few a points by counting their homework assignments they would pass but would still no nothing. He also said conversely, if the student was very bright, who did not have to do homework because they were like a sponge and absorbed everything and then points were taken away, it was a disservice.

Mr. Rothhaus commented he felt the difficulty was that people like him and Mr. Bevill, being dinosaurs, knew the punitive way that children used to be educated and wanted them to presently have the greatest opportunities. He said in order to do that with competency-based education, which gave them opportunities to re-take a test, or do other things which could help them learn the material so they could pass or learn it better as they moved better in the future. He said he felt that homework should be used as a tool or a practice piece of learning and felt it should not be counted as a grade but used as a learning tool.

Mr. Rothhaus said he saw the Warrant Article as being comparable to if the townspeople were to set policy for the police department and he did not see that as a good precedent to set.

Mr. Rothhaus pointed out the biggest thing that bothered him about Article VIII at the School District's Deliberative Session was that it cost the town approximately \$33,000 which is around the same cost as a first-year teacher. He said it bothered him immensely and he suggested that the School Board should contemplate putting together a committee so there was an understanding of comprehensive-based education could be greater for the school district as well as for the public. He further said if the School Board took the time to do that, he thought everyone would have a better understanding and they would not be fending themselves off against unnecessary lawsuits. He said that was his suggestion and he appreciated the Board's time.

Chair Barnes noted that the **agenda would be taken out of order** and the Board would hear public comments on agenda items next.

10. Other

b) Comments

Chair Barnes acknowledged the petitioned Warrant Article regarding the Homework Policy passed by a vote of 1,770 to 1,463. She said they had reaffirmed with the district's counsel that their opinion was that the Article was advisory only.

Chair Barnes said the first thing the Board had to do was to decide whether or not they felt it should be immediately acknowledged and if there were any adjustments that needed to be done in the current year. She further said it was her opinion that there were only eight weeks left in the school year and it would be irresponsible to change course with the way they had been doing things for thirty-two weeks and said she was hoping the will of the Board would affirm that.

Chair Barnes commented that the Board needed to decide, based on it being advisory, whether they wished to review and possibly revise the policy for the new school year. She further commented, to be clear, that the Board always intended to review the homework protocol annually since they rolled it out the first year. Chair Barnes said the Board would also take the voting results into account as part of their discussion at an upcoming meeting but it would not be done at this meeting. She pointed out that the agendas for all School Board meetings were posted on the district's website.

5. Focus on James Mastricola Upper Elementary School

- The Compass Program, a Social-Emotional Learning Skills Program for Fifth and Sixth Grades
(Ms. Marsha McGill, Mr. Bill Morris, Ms. Laura Livie, Ms. Laraine Fay, Ms. Erin MacLean, Ms. Marissa Fogg and Students)

Ms. Marsha McGill, Principal at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, addressed the Board and shared that there were a group of educators who had been working to build a system of care that actively involved every member of the building, including students as well as adults. She said the group was formed from members of their Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Universal Team and the series of lessons developed was called Compass Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).

Ms. McGill said the lessons were designed to be implemented by classroom teachers and to actively engage all students. She introduced the members Ms. Laura Livie, Behavioral Specialist and Group Facilitator; Ms. Laraine Fay, grade 5 teacher; Ms. Marissa Fogg, World Language Spanish teacher and Ms. Erin MacLean, grade 5 special education teacher and Mr. William Morris, Assistant Principal. She noted that Mr. Matthew Bigelow, Guidance Counselor, was not able to attend the meeting.

Ms. McGill introduced students, Logan Kosko, grade 6; Olivia Corga, also in grade 6; Michael Landmesser, grade 5 and Braelyn Andris, grade 5.

Mr. Bill Morris, Assistant Principal at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, addressed the Board and stated through various data they had discovered that students had deficits of basic social skills, the ability to resolve conflict and being able to successfully self-regulate. He noted these soft skills were very important to navigate through life.

Mr. Morris said at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School they used the PBIS Program (Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports) to reinforce the behavior expectations of respect, responsibility and safety. He said they took it one step further with the Compass Program by explicitly teaching social and emotional lessons that were engaging and interactive.

Ms. Laura Livie, Behavioral Specialist, addressed the Board and stated that social and emotional learning was based on the "CASEL Wheel" which was indicative of five competency areas which were self-awareness, self-confidence, responsible decision making, relationship skills and social awareness. She said they took one competency per month and focused on it by creating engaging lessons for the students by explicitly teaching them social and emotional skills. She further said research showed that brain development required frequent looping, teaching the same content over and over but in different ways.

Ms. Livie reported students who participated in social and emotional learning gained approximately 11% in academic achievement. She also reported there was data which

showed those students who participated in social and emotional learning eighteen years later had fewer conduct issues and better relationships with peers.

Ms. Laraine Fay, fifth grade teacher, addressed the Board and stated that she was a member of the Compass Committee and they met for a half day once per month to plan the lessons for the next month. She said the fifth graders did their lessons on Monday morning and the sixth graders did their lessons on Friday morning. She further said they introduced the language on a weekly basis through the announcements and referenced it often.

Ms. Fay commented that they received the lessons from research-based articles and used video clips at the beginning of the lessons to engage the students right away. Ms. Fay said one of the goals was for the students to make and maintain healthy relationships in their classrooms as well as the adults in the building.

Braelyn and Michael, students at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, addressed the Board and shared their positive experiences in learning how to properly communicate with each other.

Olivia and Logan, also students at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, addressed the Board and shared their positive experiences in learning about self-awareness.

Ms. Erin MacLean, grade 5 special education teacher at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, addressed the Board and read aloud some of the feedback from teachers:

- Students were taking responsibility for regulating their behavior and their interaction with each other.
- Compass was a welcomed and much-needed addition to the curriculum. Unless students were ready with a social and emotional foundation, the academics would not sink in.

Ms. MacLean also read aloud some of the feedback from students:

- A sixth-grade student said he/she liked the Compass Program because it really taught kids to be positive and kind.
- Another student said he/she liked Compass because he/she got to address his/her feelings and see that he/she was not alone.

Mr. Morris stated that one of the definitions of Compass was to grasp mentally, understand and comprehend. He further stated that the hope was the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School students would be better able to grasp, understand and comprehend the skills needed to be successful lifelong learners.

Mr. Morris shared that the word Compass came about as a result of the feeling that the program would guide the students to a path of success.

Chair Barnes asked if there were questions from members of the Board.

Board Member Schoenfeld commented she was excited to see how the program would roll out. She asked the students which lesson or game they liked the most. Logan replied "Your Ticket to Self-Confidence" was a movie in which the star was the student. He said it allowed them to express themselves and the teacher got to know the students better as a result. Oliva said she like the lesson on self-control. Braelyn said she liked when they created a necklace where everyone got to choose their own beads which represented how everyone was unique.

Vice Chair Guagliumi pointed out that the work which had been recently done for the district, on behalf of the Mental Health Committee chose the Second Step Program for kindergarten through grade 5. She asked how the Compass Program interacted with that and also, after grade 5, how would they move forward with these types of exercises and soft skill development. Ms. Livie replied she felt it definitely ran alongside the Second Step curriculum. She further replied one of the benefits of having the Second Step curriculum was the common language that would happen year over year. She said no matter which elementary school the students came from they would all have the same emphasis and understanding of how to solve problems, how to solve conflict and how to make friends.

Ms. Livie stated they did not yet have any districtwide curriculum for the sixth grade but they were going to continue with Compass for another year. She further stated that students needed the skills explicitly taught to them because they were not born knowing the skills. She said the skills needed to be taught and the classroom teacher was the ideal person to teach them because the lesson was reinforced all through the week.

Board Member Nunez commented that she felt being a very well-rounded teenager was having a lot of the skill sets and to be able to start at such an early age was great. She thanked the staff and the students who spoke but said the students did a great job!

Chair Barnes thanked the staff and students as well and said seeing the presentations helped the School Board understand what the day-to-day life was like for students.

- An Introduction to Universal Design for Learning
(Ms. Marsha McGill, Ms. Nicole Rheault, Ms. Cathy Goodman, Mr. Mark Tyers,
Ms. Nancy Romero and Ms. Helen Fitzgerald)

Ms. McGill stated that the second group of people present were part of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) team. She said the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School had decided to take a deep dive into UDL practices and how they could be applied to their daily work at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School. She introduced Dr. Nicole Rheault, Language Arts Coordinator and Team Facilitator; Ms. Nancy Romero, Special Education Coordinator; Ms. Helen Fitzgerald, Technology Integration Specialist and Math Facilitator; Ms. Cathy Goodman, grade 5 teacher and Mr. Mark Tyers grade 6 special education teacher.

Ms. McGill said team members unable to attend the meeting were Ms. Nicole Prinz and Ms. Courtney McDonald, both of whom were grade 6 teachers as well as Mr. Dan Varela, special education teacher. Ms. McGill added students in attendance were Matthew Brown and Emma McGrath.

Ms. McGill, referring to a slideshow presentation, said the first slide showed a picture of Mr. Bill Wilmont who was the CAST Implementation Specialist who served as an individualized coach for the school. She said CAST was the acronym for the Center for Applied Special Education Technology and they were contracted by the New Hampshire DOE's (Department of Education) Bureau of Special Education to provide New Hampshire educators with professionalized, customized learning opportunities. She said the team was involved with three network meetings; one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. She further said the meetings included educators from across the state who were involved in the same program. She also said the team was involved with three instructional rounds where Mr. Wilmont visited the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School and all of the team members were observed, data was collected and goals were set for the next meeting. She said in addition to that, the team met on a monthly basis to complete learning modules that were designed by CAST to help reach their individualized school goals.

Ms. Helen Fitzgerald, Technology Integration Specialist, addressed the Board and stated that UDL did not propose a single one-size fits all solution but rather a flexible scaffolding of support that met individual needs. She further stated the UDL was an approach to teaching and learning that helped provide all students with an equal opportunity to succeed in school. Ms. Fitzgerald said it encouraged flexibility in ways that students could access materials, participate in their learning and demonstrate understanding.

Ms. Fitzgerald commented that an easy way to provide multiple means of expression in the classroom was to have a diverse portfolio of assessment practices. She said a CAST

Professional Learning team had a game called “Operation” from the game “Operation” in which they worked on PEMDAS (Parenthesis, Exponents, Multiplication and Division, and Addition and Subtraction.)

Ms. Fitzgerald said whatever was presented needed to be adjustable by the learner which included providing multiple means of receiving the new information.

Dr. Nicole Rheault, Language Arts Coordinator, stated that UDL allowed them to plan ahead for all of their different learners. She further stated that in using UDL they tried to figure out what the barriers were and try to remove them from the start of the planning.

Ms. Nancy Romero, Special Education Coordinator commented in their quest was to develop students who would turn into expert learners who were purposeful and motivated; resourceful and knowledgeable and strategic and goal-directed. She said they had a menu of things they could think about in planning to make those things happen:

- Provide multiple means of representation by giving students options for perception. We will offer ways of customizing the display of information, for example, options for language and symbols.
- Provide options for comprehension by activating background knowledge or supplying it.
- Provide multiple means of action and expression by giving students options for physical action, such as varying methods of response.
- Optimize access to tools and assisted technologies.
- Provide options for expression and communication by using multiple media and use multiple tools for construction and composition.
- Provide students with options for executive functions, such as guiding and appropriate goal setting and supporting planning and strategy development and enhancing the capacity for monitoring progress.
- Provide multiple means of engagement by giving options for recruiting interests such as individual choice and autonomy.
- Provide options for effort and developing persistence by heightening the meaningfulness of goals and objectives.

- Provide options for self-regulation by promoting expectations and beliefs which optimize motivation and developing student self-assessment and reflection tools.

Ms. Cathy Goodman, grade 5 teacher at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, addressed the Board and said UDL supported teachers by encouraging them to be flexible. She said she started doing the work with UDL in the first SNHU (Southern New Hampshire University) Cohort.

Mr. Mark Tyers, grade 6 special education teacher, commented that as teachers they needed to anticipate the barriers and address learner viability.

Ms. Goodman noted that another way UDL supported teachers was to look at the “GPS analogy.” She said a GPS allowed multiple ways to get to where you were going and teachers offered multiple pathways to assist their students to reach their goals.

Mr. Tyers stated that a teacher’s toolbox contained a variety of different assessments for content areas which involved the integration of a variety of methods and materials for students to expand their learning and understanding.

Ms. Goodman commented that she enjoyed attending the networking conferences that were held. She said one of the lessons she enjoyed was the “Seven-Ten Split” which could be found on YouTube. She further said the lesson centered around supporting and benefitting all of the students.

Matthew Brown and Emma McGrath, both grade 5 students, said they were present to talk about how they had choices in their class. Matthew said they could write, draw or talk about what they were learning and thinking about. Emma said for an upcoming book project they went to a restaurant for a book tasting and then got to choose one.

Chair Barnes asked if there were questions or comments from members of the Board.

Board Member Schoenfeld pointed out that UDL was not new in the district but it looked as though a framework was provided which allowed the staff to do things a little bit differently. She asked what this model was specifically doing that was different from ways UDL was previously looked at. Dr. Rheault replied that one of the things in participating with CAST was to help them to understand explicitly what the UDL guidelines were. She said one of the things they shared with teachers was that it was not a new initiative. She further said that one of the things the team decided to do was to provide a presentation for each module.

Vice Chair Guagliumi asked if there were any best practices regarding planning or what advice would be given to a teacher who was not familiar with the program or was reluctant

to use it. Ms. Goodman replied she was more conscientious about how she got the information across to her students. She said she really liked the new math program because it had an audio/visual piece to it along with the manipulatives so the kids had the hands-on experience and could go back and re-watch videos if they needed to.

Ms. Goodman commented that another thing they had learned was that best practices did not always come from teachers. She further commented they had learned that talking with the students, getting to know the students and having the students help them problem solve was a wonderful practice to put in place. She said a new teacher who might be wondering what the best practices were had a wealth of resources in his/her classroom.

Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin added they frequently tried to point out ways in which one initiative in the district related to another. He said the educator evaluation model was predicated on the idea that a classroom that was influenced by student's voices was a really effective classroom. He further said the highly effective teacher was one who was sort of like a silent maestro. Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin said the days of just delivering what they thought they knew, absent of knowing how a student would receive it best, were over. He also said the educator evaluation rubric that had been in place for a few years had, in some respects, laid the groundwork for some of the work currently happening.

Vice Chair Guagliumi said some other dots she saw being connected was the parent part of the equation and how they participated and contributed to the classroom. She further said they contributed feedback as to how their children learned best and that feedback went back to the teachers which created districtwide communication between the schools, the parents and the students.

Vice Chair Guagliumi stated that she felt the program also builds into soft skills that the students would carry year over year and into adulthood. She thanked everyone for coming and speaking about it.

Chair Barnes asked if there were any other questions from members of the Board. There were none.

6. School Board Committee Assignments

(Chair Barnes)

Chair Barnes noted that the Board had their current committee assignments as well as the description of the assignments. She asked the members of the Board to take a few weeks to think about which assignments were of interest to them and if they had the ability to be able to serve on the committees.

Chair Barnes commented that she knew Board Member Nunez could not attend the Parks & Recreation Committee meetings on a regular basis because of other commitments. She said she would attend the meeting the following Wednesday and assume the primary role from that point.

Chair Barnes stated the committee assignments would be redistributed at the first meeting in May.

7. Approval of School Board Minutes

(Chair Barnes)

- April 1, 2019, Minutes

Chair Barnes asked if the Board members had edits or questions. There were no edits.

Board Member Schoenfeld moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to approve the April 1, 2019, minutes.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

- April 8, 2019, Non-Public Minutes

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

Vice Chair Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the 2019, minutes, as amended.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

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

(Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell)

- American Heart Association to Thorntons Ferry Elementary School in the amount of \$500

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that the \$500 donation from the American Heart Association was received for the Kids Heart Challenge. He said the \$500 would be deposited into the Physical Education Supply Account and it was accepted by the principal of the school.

- Hannaford Helps Schools Program to Thorntons Ferry Elementary School in the amount of \$75

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated the Hannaford Helps Schools Program donated \$75 and the school would use the money for educational supplies.

Vice Chair Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to accept the gifts, with gratitude.

The motion passed 5-0-0.

9. Consent Agenda

(Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin)

Educator Retirements

- Mrs. Susan H. Cloutier, English Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Ms. Debra Akbulut, Math Teacher, Merrimack Middle School

Educator Nominations for 2019 – 2020

Administrator Nominations

- Ms. Bonnie Painchaud, Assistant Principal, Reeds Ferry Elementary School
- Mr. John Fabrizio, Assistant Superintendent-Elect for Curriculum

Approval of Social-Emotional Learning Skills Curriculum (Grades K-5)

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

The motion passed 5-0-0.

10. Other

a) Correspondence

Chair Barnes stated that she received an e-mail from a parent who asked what the vote meant which was commented on earlier in the evening because she was not in support of

the result. She said the parent wanted things to remain as they were and asked what impact the vote would have. Chair Barnes noted she replied to the parent that she would get back to her after the meeting to let her know what the short-term and long-term discussions would be and she would keep her up-to-date.

Chair Barnes also stated she received an e-mail from a parent of a student at the James Masticola Upper Elementary School who had some questions and concerns and she brought the e-mail to the attention of the building administration and asked them to address the concerns directly with the parent.

11. New Business

There was no new business.

12. Committee Reports

Board Member Schneider said the SERESC (Southeastern Regional Education Service Center) Board of Directors had met and he reported that the business was viable and lucrative and the services being provided to the districts around the state continued. He added they would be expanding in the area of psychology due to the need in the state.

Board Member Schneider also said the Board of Directors for SERESC was interviewing candidates for a Program Director to work with the Executive Director.

13. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

14. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

15. Adjournment

At 8:12 p.m. Board Member Schoenfeld moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to adjourn the public session.

The motion passed 5-0-0.