

**Merrimack School Board Special Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
June 20, 2022**

Present: Chair Rothhaus, Vice-Chair Peters, Board Members Hardy, Halter, and Martin. Also present were Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Yarlott, and Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Rothhaus called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Heather Robitaille, 45 Springfield Circle addressed the Board and as the school year was ending, she thanked all of the district's staff as well as the School Board.

Regarding the Discipline Policy that was on the agenda, Ms. Robitaille said she would like to hear more discussion regarding the lack of an appeal process for the parents.

3. RECOGNITIONS

There were none.

4. INFORMATIONAL UPDATE

a. Superintendent Update

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen thanked Principal Steve Claire, Assistant Principal Peter Bergeron, Assistant Principal Rich Zampieri, Director of Guidance Deb Barker, and all of those at the high school who implemented a wonderful graduation day. He also thanked the School Board for all of their support.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen announced Ms. Sue Bradford, Teacher, Masticola Elementary School had moved forward to the second round for the "New Hampshire Teacher of the Year."

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen noted the district had floating substitutes who worked on a weekly basis. He expressed his sincere appreciation and hard work to the following floating substitutes: Irene Count, Deanna Person, Brian McKenna, Tracy Beaurgard, Tom Prentice, Devin Crowley, Kiera Crowley, Kerry Byers, Sara Pearson, Melissa Dalton, Gisella Mendrala, Charlotte Gill, Jhoana Easterling, Cassidy Downs, Frank Bishop, Deborah Holman, Don LeGay, Jennifer Lane, Beth Ferguson.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen congratulated the Director of Student Wellness, Ms. Fern Seiden who was the honored recipient of the NAMI (National Alliance for Mental Health) Educator of the Year.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said it was Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Yarlott's last School Board meeting as she was moving on with her career after 17 years with the Merrimack School District. He wished her all the best.

The School Board collectively thanked Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Yarlott for her service and wished her all the best.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen informed the Board that the Department of Education reported the Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee voted to appropriate \$10 million to school systems across the state for school security.

b. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Update

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Yarlott said she put together a transition plan for the future Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum. The goals for the summer would be working in four content areas. She said they would set up a year-long plan to do curriculum mapping K through 12 in the area of English Language Arts, the math committee would look at some of the assessment tools being used and make sure there was alignment among the three elementary schools in terms of assessments. She also said science and social studies would continue to be updated via the EduPlanet21.

c. Assistant Superintendent for Business Update

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said it was his pleasure to have worked with Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Yarlott. He also said the roof at Thorntons Ferry would be worked on during the summer as well as finishing work on the ventilation system.

d. School Board Update

Chair Rothhaus said the School Board's goals meeting would be held on June 28th beginning at 9:00 a.m. at the middle school and would be open to the public. She said the graduation went great, and the School Board, the Budget Committee, and the Building & Planning Committee would be participating in the Fourth of July parade.

e. Student Representative Update

Student Representative Vadney relayed some date reminders regarding "Student Week."

5. OLD BUSINESS

Board Member Martin commented how impressed he was with the saxophone choir that performed at the previous meeting.

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Middle School Student Highlights

Mr. Adam Caragher, Principal, Merrimack Middle School, addressed the Board and reviewed the 2021 – 2022 school year. Ms. Nichole O'Brien, Interim Assistant Principal was also present.

Mr. Caragher highlighted the Flex Program. The Flex Program provides interventions and extensions for all students which are available three days per week for 30-minute blocks.

Mr. James Costa, Digital Learning Specialist said Merrimack Middle School TV was one of the flex programs offered.

Jocelyn, a student who was very involved in the program said she thoroughly enjoyed it and was learning a lot. The middle school team shared a video with the School Board that described the flex programs available to the students.

7. POLICIES

a. Student Behavior, Conduct, Discipline, and Due Process (JICD)

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said they had spoken to legal counsel regarding the policy. He said discipline policies were ruled in large part by state statute. He said the policy before the Board articulated the expectations of student behavior, it indicated there needed to be in-school support, the consequences for the discipline needed to be graduated as a result of various behaviors, and the criteria for what constituted a short-term suspension versus a long-term suspension as well as some degree of due process. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the policy had various categories of suspension and expulsion. He said most of it was not new and added a little bit of common sense went a long way when working with children and families as there may be some underlying reasons why a student was misbehaving.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said legal counsel had specified that there was no appeals process because they could potentially have a Board meeting every week to hear appeals for short-term suspensions.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen commented that he inserted language on pages 7 and 8 that stated after the sentence “a suspension of five days or fewer is not appealable, however, the administrator is encouraged to speak with the students’ parents or legal guardians to determine if there is an underlying reason that may have contributed to the suspendable offense. Based on this conversation, the administrator(s) may decide to alter the length of a suspension and may decide not to suspend a child.” He said they would never abandon the constitutional right of due process and wanted to be fair and understanding to perhaps take a more restorative approach.

Chair Rothhaus said they received clarity on the RSA. She said the Board wanted to leave parents with a voice.

Board Member Halter asked if the School Board had a policy strategy and if they were organized in the way they approached policy creation. She further said they wanted to ensure that parents were not shut out of the process, and it could possibly be reflected in other policies and how the

policies could work together as a whole. Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said he felt they needed to create a formal policy sub-committee.

Board Member Martin said he agreed with the added verbiage in the policy and felt a policy sub-committee was also a good idea. He said a suspension was the last step and hoped parents would be involved in every step up to and including that time.

Board Member Hardy said Merrimack had implemented MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) which meant students were provided with support when and where they needed it.

Vice-Chair Peters said there was a long set of conversations and support prior to an administrator issuing a suspension.

Interim Chief Educational Officer Olsen said the leadership team would meet with the district's attorney who specialized in civil rights and special education issues multiple times during the year.

Chair Rothhaus asked for a report to be provided to the School Board that reflected data surrounding each suspension.

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to approve the Student, Behavior, Conduct, Discipline, and Due Process (JICD) Policy, as presented. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. May 21, 2022 – Public Minutes

MOTION: Board Member Halter made a motion to approve the public minutes from May 21, 2022, as amended. Board Member Martin seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

- b. June 6, 2022 – Non-Public Minutes

MOTION: Chair Rothhaus made a motion to approve the non-public minutes from June 6, 2022, as presented. Board Member Halter seconded the motion.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 1. (Abstained – Board Member Martin)

9. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Educator Resignations

- Ms. Mikayla Ramsdell, Math Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Ms. Danielle Jordan, Science Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
- Ms. Zoe Schwalje, Language Arts Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
- Mr. Jace Lamarre, Math Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
- Ms. Anders Benson, Music Teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School

b. Educator Nominations

- Mr. Ryan Barry, Physical Ed. Teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
- Ms. Heather Niebel, Grade 6 Teacher, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School
- Ms. Amber Murphy, Physical Ed. Teacher, Merrimack High School
- Ms. Deborah Bass, World Language Teacher, Merrimack Middle School
- Mr. Matthew Szopa, Physical Ed. Teacher, James Mastricola Elementary School
- Ms. Danielle Long, Special Education Teacher, Reeds Ferry Elementary School

c. Administrator Nominations

- Ms. Brooke Ross, Assistant Principal, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

d. Administrator Renewals

- Principals, Assistant Principals, Central Office Administrators - Districtwide

MOTION: Board Member Hardy made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda, as presented. Chair Rothhaus seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

10. OTHER

a. Committee Reports

Board Member Halter noted she attended the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting on June 15th where they discussed the summer activities and noted there were a few job openings.

b. Correspondence

Chair Rothhaus said she received correspondence regarding how well the graduation went, correspondence about the Discipline Policy, and concern regarding parents' rights. She said she also received correspondence regarding naming things in the Merrimack School District. She added if there was a group of people that would like to name something the Planning & Building Committee was the entity that made the recommendation to the School Board.

Board Member Hardy said she thought the entire Board received correspondence regarding clean school rebates being available.

c. Comments

Board Member Hardy expressed her thanks to Merrimack TV for a job well done. She added Merrimack TV donated computers to the middle school for the Merrimack Middle School TV program. She also said graduation was great but asked why there were no chairs placed on the field. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell replied only 200 chairs were allowed per the local fire code.

Vice-Chair Peters also said she felt graduation was outstanding.

11. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Cinda Guaglumi, 22 Ministerial Lane, thanked Ms. Kimberly Yarlott, Mr. Peter Bergeron, and Ms. Marsha McGill for their years of service and wished them the very best. She also thanked all of those people who were retiring.

Ms. Heather Robitaille, 45 Springfield Circle, thanked the Board surrounding the discussion on the Student Behavior, Conduct, Discipline, and Due Process (JICD) Policy.

12. ADJOURN

MOTION: At approximately 8:22 p.m. Board Member Martin made a motion to adjourn. Board Member Hardy seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.