

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

March 9, 2020

Keeney Elementary

PRESENT: Gundersen, Heinrich, Pattacini, Patterson, Scappaticci, Stefanovicz, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & Special Services Radikas, Director of Finance & Management Clancy, Director of Human Resources Sone-Moyano

ABSENT: Hughes, Meggers

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Thames called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Thames.

A.3. Secretary's Welcome

Mr. Pattacini stated that as Secretary of the Board of Education, he wished to extend a warm welcome to everyone present and to the television viewers. He, along with the Board and the Superintendent, were pleased to be joined in celebrating the achievement, reviewing information, and discussing areas for growth, along with making policy decisions related to the effective operation of the Manchester Public Schools. Mr. Pattacini explained that this is a regular meeting of the Board and all items that will be discussed or voted on this evening have been posted, as required by state law.

Mr. Pattacini explained that as the Manchester Board of Education, they are here to set goals, listen to reports of the Superintendent, approve budgets, contracts, and personnel appointments, and to create policy for the district. They are not here to make management decisions or solve the problems of individuals.

Members of the public with individual concerns may contact the Superintendent directly. It was explained that meetings of the Board are open to the public, but are not meetings with individual members of the public. Therefore, comments from the audience will be confined to the time designated for the public to address the Board.

Last, Mr. Pattacini noted he is proud of this school system and appreciates the public for their interest in this evening's meeting and the Manchester Public Schools.

A.4. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of February 24, 2020. Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Scappaticci seconded the motion.

7/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Personnel & Finance Committee

Ms. Patterson reported the last Committee meeting was held February 24, 2020 with the following in attendance: Scott Hughes, Peter Meggers, Tracy Patterson, Chris Pattacini, Matthew Geary and Karen Clancy. The Committee reviewed the current status of the 2019-2020 budget. Overall, the budget is stable with a freeze still in place to address budgetary concerns with regard to special education expenditures.

A copy of the 2020-2021 Budget Development Calendar was distributed and reviewed with the Committee. The General Manager will present the recommended budget to the Board of Directors on March 3rd. On March 4th the Superintendent will present the Board of Education approved budget to the Board of Directors at its first workshop. A public hearing will be held March 11th and a second workshop for the Board of Education will be on March 19th. The

Board of Directors will approve the 2020-2021 budget for adoption on April 7, 2020.

An update on transportation was provided to Committee members. Mr. Geary and Ms. Clancy met with the DATTCO management team on February 21st to discuss transportation services and set a plan to address ongoing issues.

The status of the open Facilities & Operations Manager position was provided to the Committee. The position has been posted and applications have been reviewed. Candidates have been selected and scheduled for interviews.

On February 21st Mr. Geary and Ms. Clancy participated in a conference call with the town to discuss a municipal solar assistance program which provides upfront financing for a solar purchase power agreement, thereby allowing municipalities access to renewable energy and to achieve energy savings. The technical advisor to the program will be scheduling site visits at buildings that meet the eligibility requirements of the program.

The next Personnel & Finance Committee meeting will be held on April 20, 2020 at Verplanck Elementary School at 6:00 p.m.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented three items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

C.1. Personnel Action

Details had already been provided to the Board members with their agenda.

C.2. Transfer of Funds

- Transfer from Bennet Academy School Administration Dues & Fees account to Bennet Academy School Administration Instructional Supplies & Materials account in the amount of \$1,500.
- Transfer from Manchester High School Science Dues & Fees account to Manchester High School Science Software Licenses account in the amount of \$297.

- Transfer from System-wide Physical Education Other Purchased Services account to System-wide Physical Education Instructional Supplies & Materials account in the amount of \$4,500.

C.3. Permission to apply for the ED-244 Grant for FY 20-21 for Manchester Adult Education

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Scappaticci seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

None.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Genaro Gonzalez, III, 4 Pearl Street, feels teachers teach children to be disciplined, to learn right from wrong, to live the right way. Mr. Gonzalez was recently talking with his daughter about the ingredients in food and how she should pay attention to what she is putting in her body. He is teaching her to read ingredient labels and learn what the different ingredients are. He feels some ingredients are what makes kids so hyper and the growth hormone in milk and yogurt are making children develop faster. These growth hormones are used to make cows produce more milk faster. Mr. Gonzalez notes these ingredients are approved by the FDA even though some have been banned in Europe and Canada. He feels that teachers should be teaching students about these nutrition facts and that some of the things we feed our students is destroying our insides.

Ms. Mary Buckland, 13 Oak Grove Street, spoke on behalf of the Keeney Family Resource Center. She is grateful for Mr. Hassan Sultan, who runs the program. Her two grandchildren are impacted by the program. Her younger grandson, who is 3, attends Wednesday evening playgroups, which has contributed to his growth, independence and social skills. Her granddaughter Ella attends 3rd grade at Keeney. Mr. Sultan's sensitivity, kindness, and knowledgeable approach helps transition children

to class in the mornings. He has patience, spends time with students and families, and lends an ear. Ms. Buckland volunteers in the school and has witnessed Mr. Sultan's positive demeanor. Ms. Buckland implored the Board to be sure the FRC is a permanent fixture and not optional in the budget.

Rebecca Wallace, 61 Bush Hill Road, also spoke on behalf of the Family Resource Center and feels the activities are enriching for babies and toddlers, for the school aged children who participate in lunch bunch, and for the 3rd and 4th graders who enjoy their lunch groups. There are age appropriate topics in this judgement-free zone. Ms. Wallace feels this is a great way to get kids excited about school and give them something to look forward to to break up their day. Ms. Wallace noted Mr. Sultan is friendly and has a fun, helpful attitude.

Ella Wallace, a student, thinks Mr. Sultan is friendly, smart, caring and funny. He makes her feel happy and important. Miss Ella enjoys taking a break at the FRC and participating in lunch bunch meetings. She is currently training to be an ambassador. Miss Ella also noted her brother participates in playgroups.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, noted the importance of healthy eating and wondered if we have vegan options for students or even low-fat milk. He mentioned that he attended the State Board of Education meeting last week and heard a discussion about concussions in student athletes and new legislation regarding this. Mr. Stringfellow mentioned that Odyssey School is looking for a new location and he feels this is a good alternative to public school. Women's History Month is this month and Mr. Stringfellow recommended an article in the March 16 *TIME* magazine about Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote. Mr. Stringfellow mentioned the Bradley Air Museum was also celebrating women and their contribution to air travel. Last, Mr. Stringfellow mentioned the census coming out this month and the importance of everyone being counted, which impacts funding.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Keeney School Improvement Plan

Mr. Geary introduced Principal Ann Johnston. Ms. Johnston was joined by many staff members and her presentation is available online.

Mr. Pattacini appreciated the presentation, noting it brings the Keeney School Improvement Plan to life. He is encouraged. Mr. Pattacini asked about the connection between executive functioning and social/emotional learning. Ms. Johnston noted there is time allotted in the day for social/emotional learning. Ms. Tonzi, a teacher, noted there are similarities in the two and they try to integrate them with the same language.

Mr. Pattacini asked about the Fountas & Pinnell scores, wanting them higher for Hispanic students and wondering if this correlates to absenteeism. He wondered what type of work is being done to combat absenteeism as well. Ms. Johnston noted they partner with the Family Resource Center to make connections with families and find out why they may be out, such as cultural reasons, illness, etc. The EL tutor and district coordinator also make connections with families for whom English is not their primary language. Ms. Barnes, the Vice Principal, meets monthly with counselors and the principal. There are phone calls, home visits and other connections made. Sometimes families, especially families with a Kindergarten student, don't realize the importance of coming to school every day. Sometimes families keep students home who have sniffles, and they are educated that only more severe illness or fever should keep a student home. Sometimes the lack of transportation causes a parent to keep a mildly ill child home because if the child gets worse during the day picking them up can present an issue. Ms. Johnston pointed out that Kindergarten now is far different than in the past. It is much more academic.

Ms. Patterson asked how the cohorts were selected. Ms. Johnston stated all students in 1st grade were followed, now being in 2nd grade, not just a small sample.

Ms. Stefanovicz asked Ms. Barnes what policies and practices had they found to be inequitable. Ms. Barnes noted they are working with staff to identify any and address the issues. This is ongoing. They are also looking at activities through the PTA as well.

F.2. District Response to Coronavirus

Mr. Geary reviewed he has been coordinating with the local Department of Public Health and the State level to respond to the Coronavirus. He wants to be sure all people are washing their hands well and avoiding touching their face. If you feel ill you should stay home. Over the weekend an extra crew was brought in to disinfect schools. The bus company also performed extra disinfecting as well.

Mr. Geary noted we are preparing for possible distance learning, but there are concerns around equity, lack of internet access, parents who must work, etc. There is also a concern around food, in that many of our students rely on breakfast and lunch at school. There are tentative plans to provide for community feeding spaces if the need arises.

The Governor recently restricted out of state travel for state employees. Mr. Geary cancelled the Washington DC trip for Illing. For field trips later in the spring scheduled for Toronto and Europe decisions will be made soon and he is working to get monies refunded if trips are cancelled. Currently the state has limited assemblies of more than 100 people.

Mr. Geary participates in a daily call with the State Department and above all he wants to help maintain calm about this situation.

Ms. Tiska, a teacher at Keeney, noted some towns are talking about a two week shut-down and wondered if we would be doing that. Mr. Geary noted that the decision would be made in collaboration with the Department of Public Health and the State Department. Mr. Geary also noted there are a limited number of test kits available, so if someone tests positive they are reported to the local public health department and trace who else they came in contact with. We are also watching Washington State to see their response to this virus.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

G.1. Policy Recommendations

This was the second reading of these policy recommendations and no questions were asked.

a. Policy #5144 - Student Discipline

Secretary Pattacini moved to adopt Policy # 5144 - Student Discipline. Mr. Scappticci seconded the motion.

7/0 -Voted in favor.

b. Policy #5118.1 - Homeless Students

Secretary Pattacini moved to adopt Policy # 5118.1 - Homeless Students. Mr. Scappticci seconded the motion.

7/0 - Vote in favor.

c. Policy #5005 - Food Allergies and/or Glycogen Storage Disease

Secretary Pattacini moved to adopt Policy #5005 - Food Allergies and/or Glycogen Storage Disease. Mr. Scappticci seconded the motion.

7/0 -Voted in favor.

H. NEW BUSINESS

None.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

Mr. Genaro Gonzalez, III, 4 Pearl Street, spoke about ingredients in bread/flour that have been banned in other countries, but still used in the United States. We are feeding this to our children and it is harming the body. Mr. Gonzalez never hears anyone talk about this issue. He mentioned growth hormones in milk and yogurt and insulin growth factor injected in some foods. He feels we need to purify what kids eat so they can think right. We are hindering the process of growth in our children.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, supports the Consent Calendar, especially the Manchester Adult Education item. He recently attended the State Board of Education meeting and they spoke about college enrollment and remediation for high school graduates. Mr. Stringfellow supports the policy recommendations. As for student discipline, respect goes both ways. We don't know what happens in student's homes. Mr. Stringfellow mentioned the Coronavirus and recommended handwashing. He noted we should not blame the Chinese for this illness. Last, Mr. Stringfellow recommended the books *Indigent People's History of the U.S., Can We Talk About Race, and How to Be Anti-Racist*. Equity is important and he remembers once being the only student of color.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Monday, March 23, 2020 - Illing School Improvement Plan - at Illing Middle School

Monday, April 6, 2020 - Martin School Improvement Plan - at Martin Elementary School

Monday, April 20, 2020 - Verplanck School Improvement Plan - at Verplanck Elementary School

Wednesday, May 6, 2020 - Budget Workshop - at MHS

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Scappaticci moved and Mr. Pattacini seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary