

# MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

## Regular Meeting

March 12, 2018

Lincoln

**PRESENT:** Conyers, Hagenow, Leon, Maio, Meggers, Scappaticci, Thames

**ALSO PRESENT:** Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & Special Services Radikas, Director of Finance & Management Clancy

**ABSENT:** Pattacini, Stefanovicz

### A. **OPENING**

#### A.1. & 2. **Meeting Called to Order**

**Acting Chairperson Thames** called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Thames.

#### A.3. **Secretary's Welcome**

**Acting Secretary, Mr. Scappaticci** extended 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. Scappaticci 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. Scappaticci noted that the full mission of Manchester Public Schools is available for view on the website. The Board of Education is here to set goals, listen to reports of the Superintendent, approve budgets, contracts, and personnel appointments, and to create policy for the district. The Board is not here to make management decisions or solve the problems of individuals. Management is the responsibility of the Superintendent. Students, parents, and families who have individual concerns should reach out to the Superintendent, who can help.

Last, Mr. Scappaticci noted he is proud of this school system and thanked 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 26, 2018. Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion.**

**8/0 – Voted in favor.**

**B. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**B.1. Curriculum & Instruction Committee**

**Mr. Conyers** reviewed the last meeting was held February 26th with the following in attendance: Mr. Conyers, Mr. Meggers, Mr. Scappaticci, Ms. Stefanovicz, Dr. Radikas, Ms. Sheehan-Burns, Ms. Ghetia, Ms. Hayes, Ms. Miner, Mr. Ruede, Mr. Casey, Mr. Dowd, Mr. Maloney and Ms. Tedesco.

The following textbooks were approved for use: AP Art History and Conceptual Physics, both of which will be supported through Board funding. Broadcast Journalism and Personal Finance will both be supported through the Perkins Grant.

Ms. Sheehan-Burns and Ms. Ghetia provided an update on the preschool curriculum at Manchester Preschool Center, Buckley, Keeney and MHS. The curriculum is an inquiry model anchored by the CT Early Learning and Development Standards.

They noted that Illing Middle School is continuing to work on implementing curriculum units and performance tasks.

It was revealed that grade 5 teaches will follow the current grade 6 model of teaching one content area and being part of a team. Plans are in place to support all grade 5 teachers with this transition.

As part of Priority District status, Manchester must provide an additional assessment three times a year to all students grades K-3. The Dynamic indicators of Basic Early Learning Skills (DIBELS) has been chosen from a menu of state-approved reading assessments. Assessment will be given before the end of the year.

Students in grades 5, 8 and 11 will take part in the NGSS Pilot, which is a state science assessment. Data will not be provided to districts as this is a pilot year.

### **C. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**Mr. Geary** presented ten 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 Elementary Enrichment Instructional Supplies and Materials account to Elementary Enrichment Dues and Fees account in the amount of \$680.

#### **C.3. Approval of Manchester High School Graduation Date for SY 17-18**

Graduation will take place Tuesday, June 19, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford.

#### **C.4. Establish an appropriation for FY 17-18 for the Extended School Hours Grant, in the amount of \$125,223**

#### **C.5. Permission to apply for FY 18/19 for the Manchester Community College portion of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Secondary Basic Grant, provided through the State of Connecticut**

**C.6. Permission to apply for FY 18/19 for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Secondary Basic Grant, provided through the State of Connecticut**

**C.7. Establish an appropriation for FY 18/19 for the Manchester Head Start, in the amount of \$601,024**

**C.8. Establish an appropriation for FY 18/19 for the Manchester Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Activities, in the amount of \$7,656**

**C.9. Establish an appropriation for FY 18/19 for the Enfield Head Start, in the amount of \$418,005**

**C.10. Establish an appropriation for FY 18/19 for the Enfield Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Activities, in the amount of \$5,568**

The Chairman called for a motion.

Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in Section C of tonight's agenda.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

#### **D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**

**Patrick Doherty** reviewed that as a winter sports athlete, he was able to experience the success of our athletic program this season. Most recently MHS had 3 athletes qualify for national tournaments in their respective sports. Both the ice hockey team and the boys basketball team were able to move into the second round of state tournament play but lost to their opponents. The amount of fans attending games this winter is a massive increase when compared to past years and even this fall.

The annual murder mystery night fundraiser hosted by the junior class had great success last weekend. Over 100 attendees went to the event, even after a

postponement, and they were able to enjoy a nice meal and play. Junior Daniella Weselowski won the free prom ticket and others won raffles from 20 different local businesses.

This week The Pulse will be taking on hundreds of other broadcasting programs in the annual Student Television Network competition. Patrick will be one of the attendees and can't wait to experience a new and insightful view into the broadcasting field.

On Wednesday, March 21st all Juniors will be taking the SAT test. Students have linked their PSAT test scores to Khan Academy to prepare for the real test.

English Department teachers have been asking students to write letters of condolence to the students at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida. One of the teachers, Ms. Wolk-Rogers sent out a social media request to fellow educators around the country, asking them to help to ensure that every student at Stoneman Douglas receives a personal, handwritten letter of condolence. MHS students have stepped up and written many beautiful, heartfelt letters.

Manchester High School will again organize students to help beautify homes in Manchester by raking, painting and planting flowers. This event, Rebuilding Together, is open to anyone interested in volunteering.

MHS administration is looking for students to facilitate team building activities for fifth-grade students who attend the Fifth Grade Leadership Conferences 2018 held at MHS. Conference dates are: 3/12, 3/19, 3/26, 4/2, 4/6, 5/25, 5/30, 6/1, and 6/4. This is an annual group of events that over 50 MHS students participate in.

On the 29th of March all Juniors will be attending the annual college fair at the Hartford Convention Center. There they will meet recruiters from over 200 universities, which will broaden their outlook on post-secondary education.

**Mr. Thames** expressed his pride in Patrick, such a wonderful representative of Manchester Public Schools.

#### **E. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ms. Stephanie Knybel, 138 Bobby Lane, is concerned about the number of snow days this year necessitating school in the hot temps of late June. As many classrooms and buildings do not have air conditioning, she proposes that we treat high degree days be made half days. If it is a policy that days over 90 degrees will be early release parents will be prepared. In addition, Ms. Knybel expressed that having a 90 minute delay is confusing to some parents and she suggested making delays a 2 hour delay so it is easier for parents to figure out the timing.

## **F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I**

### **F.1. Update on Illing Parking Lot**

**Mr. Geary** reviewed that during the last election a Road Bond was approved which included funds to revamp the Illing Parking Lot. Mr. Peter Staye, Facilities Director, reviewed the \$1.25 million plan to replace the parking lot. He showed the drawing of the new lot, which increases the number of parking spaces by 6, increasing the number of spots closer to the building and continuing to provide a separate lane for buses and cars. The plan will first be approved by the Planning & Zoning Committee and then will go out to bid.

**Ms. Hagenow** wondered how students would safely get from parents cars to the building, having to cross the bus lane. Mr. Staye reviewed that there is a staff member/crossing guard positioned there to safely cross students currently and they will continue to do so.

**Mr. Leon** noted that in the bus lane there is parking available and there should be signs there stating there is no parking during drop-off and pick-up times so there is no issue.

### **F.2. Fall/Winer Data Update**

**Mr. Geary** noted that data is provided three times a year. All the date provided is available on the data dashboard for viewing. Mr. Geary also noted that we are looking to have the Fountas & Pinnell lengthy assessment added to the state list so we do not need a separate assessment. A video of a "running record" was also shown, to explain how teachers are able to target instruction to the needs of each child.

**Mr. Leon** thought the video was great. He wondered how the coach was able to do this at all three schools he visits. It was explained by Mr. Geary that although the coach was doing the video, the classroom teacher is actually the one who does the running records for their students.

**Mr. Thames** recently attended parent/teacher conferences for his grandchildren and he would like tips on how to help the interaction between teachers, parents and children. Mr. Geary noted that at the parent/teacher conference teachers give parents advice on how to help at home. Also, the APTT (Academic Parent Teacher Teams), which are being piloted at Verplanck, Bowers and Washington, let parents know where their child is, how to help advance them, how to set goals and then come back and review progress. It was noted that some parents miss the individual conference replaced by APTT and we need to find a way to blend both.

Mr. Thames wondered how to engage parents that are not coming to the school. Mr. Geary noted that information can be sent to parents electronically. He also noted that Robertson and Verplanck are piloting Kindergarten home visits and this will help engage families. He noted that conferences are well attended.

Mr. Thames wondered, once the teacher knows where the child is struggling, how do they formulate a plan. Mr. Geary reviewed that the teacher places students struggling with the same areas in small groups to work on strategies together. They also can work individually with students as needed. Mr. Thames wondered if this information is sent to parents. Mr. Geary noted the information is reviewed on report cards. They have toyed with sending a letter home every time a child advances a level, but it seemed too overwhelming. Dr. Radikas pointed out that some schools, such as Robertson, communicate with parents easily via electronic means such as BlackBoard.

**Mr. Leon** wondered, when a particular grade is doing well on testing this year and a closer look is taken, do they look at the previous year teachers as well, noting that it may be the foundation that students entered the current grade with that helped scores. Mr. Geary notes they do take that into consideration as well.

Mr. Geary noted that the data dashboard has been around for three years. He wants to add reading unit assessments to the dashboard. This is the first year teachers have been required to integrate the Lucy Caulkins Reading Assessment. Writing assessments are likewise not on the dashboard at this time either.

**Ms. Maio** wondered if the writing assessments are timed. Mr. Geary stated they are. For math assessments, Ms. Maio wondered if they ever do untimed assessments. Mr. Geary stated they do, to see if it is a time issue or not, but those untimed assessments are not used for grading.

Regarding chronic absenteeism, Ms. Maio wondered if excused or unexcused days were distinguished. Mr. Geary stated that overall they are not, however schools do know which children may be out due to medical issues or families traveling out of the country. We no longer ask families to disenroll if they are traveling for three weeks, which does look bad for our attendance rates. Ms. Maio noted that traveling to another country provides student with invaluable experiences. Mr. Geary noted that at the school level the principal and attendance team looks at all factors and targets those families that need special attention.

**Mr. Conyers** asked for an explanation of "full court press". Mr. Geary explained that there is a social worker from Central Office that works with families that have students with a high number of absences to build relationships and offer services to help get their children to school on a regular basis. Mr. Conyers wondered if parents are aware how important school attendance is. Mr. Geary noted that a student that misses two days a month becomes chronically absent over the course of the school year.

**Mr. Meggers** pointed out the 2.0 GPA and 1000 SAT score noted by local colleges as "college ready" and hoped that is not the goal for our students. Mr. Geary agreed that is the minimum that colleges look for and is not the goal for our students, just the minimum we hope for.

**Ms. Maio** wondered what percentage of our high school graduates go on to attend college. Mr. Geary stated that 80-85% attend college with about 60-65% attending a 4 year school.



**Mr. Scappaticci** pointed out that MCC has no “minimum” requirements for entry. He did note that the College Career Partnership with high schools shows that MHS students outperform the other schools and our students earn three times the number of credits as other high school students.

**Ms. Hagenow** wondered if the data on in-school and out-of-school suspensions includes students who have more than one suspension. Mr. Geary noted the data is the percentage of students with 1 or more suspensions, so they are not counted multiple times.

**Mr. Leon** wondered if students who go on to attend a trade school instead of a traditional college are counted in these numbers. Mr. Geary noted that those students are counted under the 2 year college students.

**Mr. Thames** asked about the different strategies center around family or around students for attendance. Mr. Geary explained that when a younger child misses school it is often a family issue, while when a high schooler misses school it is more of a student-centered problem. Mr. Thames also pointed out we should be sensitive to cultural differences of our families, including those who may travel to family and come back after Labor Day.

### **F.3. Update on School Calendar**

**Mr. Geary** noted he had reduced the number of school days for students from 182 to 180, making the last two school days staff only days to provide time for teachers to pack up their rooms or participate in PD. Previously he had planned to provide these non-student days to those buildings and teachers moving (Robertson, Verplanck, Waddell and grade 5 teachers). Students last day will be June 22nd, Friday. Students are currently scheduled to attend school on Friday, April 13th, which takes one day from April break. Mr. Geary has researched the state statutes and it calls for students to have 180 sessions and 900 hours of school. Some districts in other states use a “Blizzard Bag” for work at home during snow days. Teachers may be available during specified times via email or online for help. Currently, Mr. Geary, after obtaining legal counsel, is requesting permission from the State Board of Education for these bags to be used to replace April 13th.

**Mr. Conyers** wondered what constitutes a "session". Mr. Geary stated that is unclear, though usually it means attending school in the building. The Blizzard Bag is a homework bag for the lower graders. At the secondary level it may be online work between specified hours. If the packet of work is turned in the student is marked present. If not, the student is marked absent for that day. Mr. Geary is asking permission from the legislature and the CSDE.

**Mr. Leon** wondered if we can use the bag for multiple days since we are expecting another storm to hit tomorrow.

**Ms. Hagenow** has heard of these bags and suggests actual paper packets so those that lose power do not have to rely on the internet. Mr. Geary noted that he has heard of these bags being used in New Hampshire and Rhode Island among other places.

**Mr. Geary** reviewed that if we have a snow day tomorrow the Thursday of spring break would be taken. He is proposing instead to consider making Good Friday (March 30th) a half day instead.

**Mr. Thames** liked hearing of the innovative ways to make up snow days.

**Mr. Scappaticci** liked the ideas as well and wondered if a motion is called for. Mr. Geary stated he was just looking for consensus at this time and at the next meeting there would be an official vote.

**Mr. Leon** wondered if there would be an issue with the teachers union. Mr. Geary has already started that discussion and doesn't feel there would be a problem.

**Mr. Conyers** wondered about a religious exemption. Mr. Geary noted those that have a religious need would be excused.

**Ms. Maio** is in favor of the Blizzard Bags. She wondered if Mr. Geary had any idea of how long the state will take to reply to the inquiry. She also noted that with many teachers having plans over April break, there would be less learning

with substitutes if there is school over break. Ms. Maio wondered if we could do two Blizzard Bags.

**Mr. Meggers** is in favor of school for a half day on Good Friday. He is concerned that next week we are expecting another storm. Mr. Geary noted there are no other days available to make school days as he will not propose school on Memorial Day.

**Ms. Hagenow** wondered if there would be a problem with the bus company working on Good Friday. Mr. Geary noted they already checked and that will not be a problem.

#### **G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

#### **H. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **H.1. Policy Revisions**

This is a first read on these policy revisions and they will come back for vote at the next meeting. The full revision can be seen on the website.

##### **a. Policy 4000 - Employment Checks**

This policy was added last year and this update narrows the number of years to the previous 20 years.

##### **b. Policy 1401 - School Volunteers**

This policy was also added last year and this revision simply updates the form used for consistency.

##### **c. Policy 6214 - Animals in Schools**

This policy addresses non-therapeutic animals (for example from Mystic Aquarium) in school buildings. This outlines the process to follow and outlines those animals not allowed.

**Mr. Thames** wondered if the employment check includes a criminal background check. Mr. Geary reviewed this policy is pertaining to potential employees that

have left former jobs due to an investigation who may have resigned instead of being fired. This is not a criminal background check. If we have a question on what we are allowed to disclose on the form of our former employees legal counsel is obtained. The law supersedes any separation agreements we may have.

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

Ms. Julia Leon, a student, noted that MHS is working with administration to create a walk-out on March 14th for Parkland at 9:50 a.m. The mayor and students will be speaking. Regarding the plan for snow day makeup - Ms. Leon is in favor of a half day on Good Friday. She is not sure how the Blizzard Bags will work, especially if some students have no internet. She notes that she already gets assignments from teachers during snow days via email.

**J. COMMUNICATIONS**

**Mr. Scappaticci** recently was one of the judges of the Verplanck Science Fair for grades 3-5. He saw some awesome exhibits. During the event, he toured the building and came across an "Imagine Yourself" board that exhibited pictures of all the staff when they were freshmen in college, along with the colleges they attended.

**K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS**

March 26 - Highland Park - HPS Improvement Plan  
April 23 - Lincoln Center - Academics Update  
April 30 - Illing Middle School - Illing School Improvement Plan  
May 14 - Lincoln Center - Update on Building Projects  
June 11 - Lincoln Center - Adult Education Program  
June 25 - Lincoln Center - Spring Data Update  
July 9 - Lincoln Center - Close of School Update  
August 27 - Lincoln Center - Opening of School Update

**L. ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.**

**Acting Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Leon seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**8/0 - Voted in favor.**

**Adjournment 9:17 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci  
Acting Board Secretary