

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

August 28, 2017

Lincoln

PRESENT: Caldwell, Conyers, Hagenow, Jacobsen, Pattacini, Scappaticci, Stefanovicz, Thames

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

ABSENT: Leon

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Pattacini called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Pattacini.

A.3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of July 10, 2017. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Caldwell seconded the motion.

7/0 – Voted in favor.

A.4. Approval of Minutes of Special Meeting

APPROVED - Minutes of Special Meeting of the Board of Education of August 3, 2017. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Caldwell seconded the motion.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented thirteen 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 System-wide Plant Operations Other Purchased Services account to System-wide Plant Operations Contracted Services account in the amount of \$10,000.
- Transfer from System-wide Plant Maintenance-Contracted Services account to System-wide Plant Maintenance-Maintenance Consultants account in the amount of \$8,365.
- Transfer from Manchester High School Interscholastic Sports-Sports Officials account to Manchester High School Interscholastic Sports Other Purchased Services account in the amount of \$7,500.
- Transfer from Illing Middle School Administration Office Supplies and Materials account to Illing Middle School Administration Postage account in the amount of \$192.
- Transfer from Illing Middle School Social Studies Instructional Supplies and Materials account to Illing Middle School Social Studies Dues and Fees account in the amount of \$245.
- Transfer from Illing Middle School Administration Other Purchased Services account to Illing Middle School Administration General Supplies and Materials account in the amount of \$3,209.

C.3. Establish an increase in appropriation for FY 17-18 for Manchester Head Start in the amount of \$606,975, bringing the total amount to \$1,202,048

C.4. Establish an increase in appropriation for FY 17-18 for Manchester Head start Training and Technical Assistance in the amount of \$7,656, bringing the total award to \$15,312

C.5. Establish an increase in appropriation for FY 17-18 for the Enfield Head Start in the amount of \$422,143, bringing the total amount to \$836,010

C.6. Establish an increase in the appropriation for the FY 17-18 for the Enfield Head Start Training and Technical Assistance in the amount of \$5,568, bringing the total amount to \$11,137

C.7. Establish an appropriation for FY 17-18 for Preschool Development Grant in the amount of \$243,744

C.8. Establish an appropriation for FY 17-19 for the grant award amount of \$62,049 under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 619 grant

C.9. Establish an appropriation for FY17-19 for the preliminary grant award amount of \$1,730,235, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 611 grant

C.10. Establish an appropriation for FY 17-18 in the amount of \$532,740 for the State Teachers' Retirement Grant

C.11. Establish an increase in appropriation for Fy 16-18 in the amount of \$7,000 under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 611 grant, bringing the total grant award to \$1,742,703

C.12. Establish an appropriation for FY 17-18 in the amount of \$10,801.44 to be placed in the Community Use of Schools account and made available to cover repair and maintenance costs of Bailey Auditorium

C.13. Permission to apply for grant by Manchester Adult and Continuing Education (MA&CE) for Funds from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving's Catalyst Endowment Fund for FY 17-18 in the amount of \$50,000

The Chairman called for a motion.

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

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Caldwell asked about # 8 and 9 reflecting fiscal year 17-19 instead of 17-18. Mr. Geary explained those are two year grants, noting most of the money is spent in year one, but the grants are available for two years.

Mr. Conyers asked for an explanation of the Delegate Program with Head Start. Mr. Geary explained that we are the fiscal agent for the Enfield Head Start because we are a larger district and many larger districts are asked to be the fiscal agent for smaller districts. Their money flows through us.

The vote was called.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

As school has not begun, the student representatives were not present.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, spoke a little about the Trump administration and how we should stand united. He recommended the movie *Dunn Kirk* as well as an article in *TIME LIFE* about it. There was also an article about men left behind he recommended along with an article in *American Military History* magazine about women who took part in the military in World War II.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Opening of School Update

Mr. Geary gave a brief presentation on the status of the new school year, which opens next Wednesday, September 6, 2017.

Today new teachers were welcomed to a two day orientation. There are approximately 35 new teachers, which is a lower than usual number due to the number of coaches that bumped into open positions this year.

The August 30th PD focuses on School Improvement Plans. Thursdays' PD is staff choice for both certified and non-certified staff, mostly offered at MHS. On Friday, September 1st, Convocation takes place at MHS.

Today the administration toured buildings. At Illing the Health Center is underway and nearly done, though the plan did not include opening in time for the first day. They will be ready to open once the licensing issues are taken care of.

Martin had a space created in a secondary entrance area for their Family Resource Center.

The Cheney-Bennet School had their ribbon cutting ceremony last Saturday and the building looks great. Waddell staff are all moved into their temporary home there and the Waddell building has been gutted.

The grounds throughout the district are all coming along nicely.

Mr. Geary reviewed there are still five vacant positions that have been frozen in light of the budget issues with the State of Connecticut. There are still a few vacancies needing to be filled, including a math teacher at Bennet, a 4th grade teacher at Buckley, a teacher for the behavior classroom at Keeney and a few non-certified openings as well.

Mr. Geary explained that several administrative spots have been filled with interim (in district) people to buy time during this budget crisis. The Assistant Principal at Bennet is Meghan Thompson; the Assistant Principal at Bowers is Max Ecchevaria; the Principal at MHS is Kaitlyn Miner; Lisa Young is the Assistant

Principal at MHS; Mark DeDominicis is the Assistant Principal at Keeney; and last, Mr. Geary himself, is the interim Principal at Illing Middle School.

Things with the new bus company, DATTO, are going very smoothly and the improved communication with them is appreciated.

Class sizes are all 18-22 in the elementary schools with the exception of a 3rd grade class at Buckley at 23. Some families have been redistricted from Bowers K to Martin due to numbers. Some Robertson K families have been redistricted to Buckley or Waddell, whichever school they would have been redistricted to next year, for the same reason.

Some areas of the budget have been frozen due to the uncertain and trying times of the budget crisis. However, Mr. Geary explained that we do not want staff and students to worry about the budget, but to focus on starting a great year.

September 5th is a non-student day to observe Eid-Al-Adha, which is the feast of the sacrifice. September 6th is the first school day for most of the district, with grades 8, 10, 11, and 12 beginning on the 7th.

Mr. Caldwell asked how Mr. Geary is balancing his two roles, both Superintendent of the District as well as Interim Principal of Illing. Mr. Geary noted that staff both at Central Office and Illing have been very supportive and he has good teams in both locations. This job vacancy is not frozen due to the budget, but to get feedback from parents and get a handle on what the school needs in an administrator before opening up the job for bidding.

Ms. Stefanowicz wondered if all the elementary schools now have two administrators. Mr. Geary reviewed that Keeney now has an AP borrowed from MHS, but Martin, Highland Park and Robertson do not have assistant principals. He noted that Martin and Highland are smaller schools and that Robertson is slated for closing soon.

Ms. Jacobsen wondered which positions are frozen. Mr. Geary recalled that at Illing a Math coach and ELA teacher as well as a Dean are frozen; at MHS a Math teacher is frozen and he cannot recall the 5th position off the top of his head.

Ms. Jacobsen wondered what Mr. Geary's main focus as Interim Principal of Illing would be. He noted the culture and climate of the school as well as the level of student engagement are his focus. Over the summer he met with at least 20 parents and has been getting feedback. Tomorrow about 90 8th graders will come in to train on how to be mentors to the 7th graders coming in on the 6th.

Ms. Hagenow wondered if DATTCO was doing trial runs of the bus routes to help ensure a smooth first day. Ms. Clancy noted that once they bid out their routes (to their drivers) they will do trial runs later this week.

F.2. Spring Data Update

Dr. Radikas gave a powerpoint, available online, reviewing the Spring data. Overall elementary schools showed an upwards trend and 4 of the 9 schools exceeded their ELA target and 2 of the 9 exceeded their math target. The ELL band had a solid performance. Dr. Radikas is concerned about grade 6, especially in Algebra I. She will utilize Kristen Smith, a Numeracy Specialist, more for the 5 to 6 transition.

The PSAT in grade 8 and 9 showed some dips, with grade 8 faring a bit better than grade 9. Grade 10 improved a bit and in grade 11 the black and hispanic students did not been the district average. Dr. Radikas noted there will be a curriculum review of math at MHS.

Dr. Radikas reviewed the change of Power Hour to a new Flex schedule. She explained that on Monday each student will meet with a mentor (who is a certified staff member) to review where they may need assistance. Then Tuesday through Friday the student will report to whichever subject that is during Flex time to get extra help. This system will start up about the third week in September.

Mr. Conyers wondered what a short-term solution to elementary chronic absences could be. Dr. Radikas noted that building relationships with parents is

key. Teachers can call home when a student is absent to inquire. Mr. Geary noted that Robertson, which has done K home visits which help with trust building, has had a very low attendance issue. He noted that we also have a district person that works with grades K-2 chronically absent families and calls them to help facilitate better attendance.

Ms. Jacobsen pointed out that she was proud of Verplanck as they outperformed Martin and Keeney (noting those are often thought of as “better schools”) in some areas. Dr. Radikas noted that all the elementary schools trended up in performance. Mr. Geary noted that Principal Jones at Verplanck has a strong focus on data meetings with teachers and his building has a strong sense of culturally responsiveness of their staff.

Ms. Jacobsen asked about Bennet performing better in 2016 than in 2017. Dr. Radikas pointed out that is a one year school and so they are two different cohorts of students and cannot be compared to each other. Ms. Jacobsen asked about the 6th grade math issues. Dr. Radikas noted they have trouble with decimal fluency and that is the first year they are seeing that type of math. She is working closely with Pari Ghetia to look at the curriculum.

Ms. Jacobsen pointed out that ELL students outperformed non-ELL students in math at MHS. Dr. Radikas noted that math is often not an issue for ELL students as numbers are numbers and there is less need for language in math class.

Ms. Stefanowicz asked about the special education Algebra I slide and Dr. Radikas noted that not all IEPs are alike, so it was hard to speculate on that number.

Ms. Stefanowicz was impressed with the elementary data and the percentage of kids that met the grade average was about 66%, which is not far off our target of 70%.

Ms. Stefanowicz asked about the different behaviors necessitating an ISS (In-school suspension) versus an OSS (Out-of-school suspension). Mr. Geary explained that typically a safety issue warrants an OSS, though sometimes it is due to drugs or weapons. ISS is given for serious offenses that stop short of

being safety issues. Ms. Stefanowicz noted an upward trend in OSS and feels we are not seeing a return on the restorative discipline that we hoped for. Mr. Geary noted that we are not nearly in full implementation of restorative practices across the district at this point and that will take another few years. He noted that training is ongoing. Mr. Geary also noted that we are seeing an increase in extreme behaviors over the last 2-3 years. One thing Waddell spearheaded is the use of calming centers, which will be used at other elementary schools this year. Mr. Geary noted we want to build trust with parents and we need to get better at dealing with extreme behaviors.

Ms. Stefanowicz noted in the Humanities common exam there did not seem to be much of an achievement gap and she was pleased.

Mr. Thames took exception to the term “better school” used by another board member. He noted we need to look at the school district as a whole and feels it is dangerous to refer to one school as better than another because of socioeconomic or racial factors. We need to be one Manchester district and value all students and parents equally. Mr. Thames stated we should be careful with our words because they are powerful.

Looking at student performance on a particular student, Mr. Thames wondered how that is communicated with a student. Dr. Radikas noted the teacher communicates with the student and/or parents. She mentioned academic success chats at MHS, to point out what the student does well. APTT (academic parent teacher teams) are involving parents at the elementary level and are being expanded a grade this year. Dr. Radikas noted that older students know where they struggle.

Mr. Thames pointed out that he has two grandsons currently in the district and the level of communication with families versus when his own children attended Manchester schools is much improved.

Ms. Jacobsen tried to explain that she was referring to people in the community judging the schools and that she thinks every school in Manchester is great. She is proud of Verplanck, which is a Title school, and their success.

Ms. Jacobsen wondered about the in-school and out-of-school suspensions at the elementary level. How do we know what is leading elementary suspensions. Mr. Geary noted that the consequence is of little use to us, what is important is the behaviors. Dr. Radikas noted this is the first time in four years this type of data has been shared. Mr. Geary noted it is important not to treat any one group of students differently than another.

Ms. Hagenow asked about the CT SAT day and asked about Level 3. Mr. Geary noted that is the proficient level dictated by the state.

Mr. Pattacini thanked the administration for their work and he is excited and hopeful that we are showing progress in many areas, although we have more work to do. He is encouraged by the work and celebrates the successes. We need to take the information and reflect on it and recognize the need to act.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

None.

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

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, supports numbers 8-13 on the Consent Calendar. He enjoyed the presentations this evening. As a former Manchester student, he wants all children to succeed. He is a non-parent who pays his taxes. Mr. Stringfellow does not want to see schools pitted against each other. Regarding SATs, he noted some colleges do not look at them anymore. He also noted that some children have an unfair advantage on the SATs, with being able to pay for tutoring.

Mr. Stringfellow suggested an article on back to school in *Family Circle* magazine as well as one in *Women's Day* on healthy schools. He noted it is important to have role models come into the schools and diversity is important.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Jacobsen attended the ribbon cutting at Cheney and notes they did a great job. The classrooms are gorgeous and the students will have a great experience with all the

new technology there. Ms. Jacobsen noted that it was with sadness that she was resigning from the Board of Education effective 8/31/17. She has enjoyed serving and has learned many things, but at this point she needs to focus on her own child.

Ms. Hagenow thanked Ms. Hagenow for her service and wished her well. She hopes the replacement is just as passionate.

Mr. Caldwell noted it was a pleasure to work with Ms. Jacobsen and he wishes her success.

Mr. Conyers thanked Ms. Jacobsen for her compassionate and conscientious work on the board.

Mr. Pattacini noted that being a board member takes a lot of time and commitment and he thanked Ms. Jacobsen for her time.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Ms. Jacobsen would like to see more information on suspensions and how to address the issue. She would also like to see the entrance plans for Verplanck looked at so the entrance is just as nice as the Cheney building.

Mr. Conyers wants to hear about the Health Center at Illing and possibly tour it with the Buildings & Sites Committee.

Mr. Caldwell would like to see a discussion on the budget uncertainties and how we are preparing to address them.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Caldwell seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Board Secretary