

Milford Board of Education

Committee of the Whole Meeting
February 22, 2016

Board members present:

Claire Casey
Michael DeGrego
Suzanne DiBiase
Jennifer Federico
Susan Glennon, Chair
Walter Hagedorn
Susan Krushinsky
Earl Whiskeyman

Administration present:

Dr. Elizabeth Feser
Jeffrey Burt
Jim Richetelli

Board members absent:

Dr. Jess Gregory
Tom Jagodzinski

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Glennon called the special meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. She announced Dr. Jess Gregory was on a medical absence and Mr. Jagodzinski was on vacation.

II. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING UPDATE

Mr. Burt introduced Mrs. Carlson, who narrated a PowerPoint (on file) which gave an overview of the benefits of professional development for staff at each level. The weekly Wednesday meetings allow for one to one and half hour building based learning, while the six early release days are a three hour block of time. Mrs. Carlson explained the professional learning assists with implementation of new standards and preparation of new assessments, analysis of student performance data and instructional planning. Staff members were on hand to share examples of how their building facilitates the professional learning to enhance the schools' overall performance and the teachers' collaboration across the district. The professional learning is designed to be effective by using the following foundation:

- Focus on student learning
- Organized professional development based on staff needs
- Collaboration in content areas to improve instructional practices
- Utilize time for data analysis and data driven decision making
- Share effective teaching strategies

Mrs. Federico asked if six early release days dedicated to professional learning were enough. Mr. Burt said the typical Wednesday meeting days allow for some opportunities but the six early release days allow teachers to come together across the district. The general consensus of staff was the six days are working well.

Mrs. Krushinsky asked if outside presenters are ever brought in for professional development. Staff gave some examples where this is the case.

Since most members of the public were in attendance to hear the Before and After Care Program Update, Dr. Feser asked to reorder the agenda.

Mrs. Glennon asked if any members of the Board objected to that change. No one objected.

III. BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CHILD CARE PROGRAM UPDATE

Through a PowerPoint presentation (on file), Mr. Richetelli provided the Board with the history of MPS before and after school child care. At one time, the YMCA child care program managed all elementary schools. Approximately 10 to 15 years ago, the district applied and was awarded a state grant that would cover before and after school child care for low income children and a program was begun at Simon Lake School. When Simon Lake was closed in 2010 this MPS program shifted to both John F. Kennedy and Pumpkin Delight Schools, while the YMCA operated the program in the other 6 elementary schools. During the redistricting process it came to light the MPS program fees were considerably less than the fees of the YMCA. The Board directed administration to develop a plan for the 2016-17 school year that would provide a comparable program that is equitably priced for all families in the district.

Mr. Richetelli reported to the Board the YMCA will assume administration of the before and after school care program in all eight elementary schools beginning in the 2016-17 school year. The YMCA will reduce its pricing to match the MPS pricing at all elementary schools. The MPS before and after school care staff will be retained at current compensation levels. The structure of the program at JFK and Pumpkin Delight will remain the same. Mr. Richetelli went over the other components of the agreement. He will work with the YMCA on the development of a five-year contract and will bring it to the Board for approval in May.

After discussion, there were some questions that needed follow up:

“What is the capacity of the program, and what happens if need exceeds the capacity?”

“What is the student to caregiver ratio?”

IV. MILFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRESCHOOL UPDATE

Mr. Burt delivered a PowerPoint presentation (on file) which provided an overview of the preschool programs in the Milford Public Schools. Currently, the district offers two programs. One is offered through the Special Education department and is a combination of special education students and students without disabilities. Another is the Ready to Learn program. A third program is being proposed for the 2016-17 school year at Pumpkin Delight. All preschool programs have curriculum based on the Connecticut State Preschool Standards. Mr. Burt offered examples of how students learn through purposeful play.

Special Education pre-school is mandated by law and dictates that the school district needs to provide education to its special education students in a least restrictive environment. Students are to spend as much time as possible with non-disabled peers, so typical students are included in its program to fulfill the requirement.

Approved

Ready to Learn program is a combination of three and four year olds. It is grant funded as well as tuition based. It is a full year full day program with before and after care available. In addition, the program has a summer session.

Mr. Burt reviewed the October 2015 enrollment showing MPS preschool with 160 students and Ready to Learn with 64. The proposed Pre-K program at Pumpkin Delight will be a half day program with a morning and afternoon session and will serve approximately 35 children.

Mr. Burt reviewed the fee structures, indicating that Special Education students do not pay a fee. All other students pay a fee based on days attending and a sliding scale. Fees for the new program at Pumpkin Delight have not yet been determined and more specifics will be made available to the Board as they are developed.

Mr. Burt also shared some information on the validity of PreK programs. He researched studies ranging from the 1960s to late 2000s. There has been much debate over the interpretation of the studies, which has become highly politicized. Long term affects have not been proven or disproven. Studies have shown there have been positive gains in school readiness and the achievement gap from the low socioeconomic population has seen a decrease.

Mrs. Federico and Ms. Glennon suggested the preschool information should be more readily available to the public.

Mr. DeGrego asked about measuring how well the preschool program works. Mr. Burt explained there are assessments in place that will provide that information.

Mr. Whiskeyman asked if there is a plan to attract the population around Pumpkin Delight. Mr. Burt indicated there would have to be advertising and outreach. If the program does not fill to capacity spots could be made available to families in other parts of town on a lottery basis.

Ms. Glennon read the Public Comment statement.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Melissa Smith - 69 Hickory Avenue – Mrs. Smith has a daughter in the before and after care program at Pumpkin Delight. She appreciates that the issue of care on delayed opening days will be looked into.

Susan Marklinsky – Mrs. Marklinsky is a paraprofessional with Milford Public Schools, and also works in the before and after care at JFK. She requested that there be open communication with the YMCA and the MPS Before and After Child Care Program. She feels the two programs are different. She added it seems that many view it as us versus them.

Dr. Feser told her that the difference in fee structure may have a lot to do with the situation.

VI. ADJOURN

Ms. Glennon asked for a motion to adjourn.

Approved

Ms. DiBiase made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Federico seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Mrs. Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary

Ms. Suzanne DiBiase.
Corresponding Secretary