

# **Milford Board of Education Minutes for the Committee of the Whole Meeting: February 23, 2009**

## **Board members present:**

David Amendola  
Tracy Casey  
David Hourigan, Chair  
Cindy Kopazna  
James Quish  
Joanne Rohrig  
James Santa Barbara  
Pam Staneski  
Greta Stanford  
David Steinlauf

## **Administrators present:**

Harvey Polansky, Superintendent  
Michael Cummings, Asst. Superintendent  
Philip Russell, Deputy Superintendent  
Sue Kelleher, Dr. of Pupil Personnel Services

## **I. CALL TO ORDER**

The Milford Board of Education held its committee of the whole meeting on Monday, February 23, 2009 in the Board of Education Meeting Room in the Parsons Complex. Board chair David Hourigan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance immediately following.

## **II. SPECIAL EDUCATION PRESENTATION**

Mr. Hourigan turned the meeting over to Dr. Polansky for the presentation.

Dr. Polansky told the board that special education has become one of the most misunderstood processes in education over the years. It became part of the federal law in 1972 and has now become part of a variety of legislations. The nuances are unique and important. The services have changed very much with inclusion and it has been proven to be better for the kids. He then turned the meeting over the Mrs. Kelleher.

Mrs. Kelleher introduced the following:

Andrea Giannattasio, Elementary Teacher Leader/LRE Facilitator  
Charlene Beers, Assistive Technology  
Christine Kennedy, Supervisor (elementary)  
Sharon Kluchnick, Supervisor (middle school)  
Kim Planas, Supervisor (high school)  
Jennifer LeBlanc, Supportive Kindergarten teacher  
Susan Dowid, Supportive Kindergarten teacher  
Catherine Walsh, Grade 2 teacher  
Marie Levesque, parent  
Marie Capiris, parent  
Cathy Berni, parent

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Mrs. Kelleher began her presentation by stating there are 981 students in the special education program within the Milford Public Schools. Services are provided from Pre-K through age 21. Dr. Polansky told the board there are 14 characteristics of disabilities with special education. Mrs. Kelleher also mentioned that many of the students have more than one identified disability. As she proceeded with the presentation, she told the board data has shown that students in inclusive classes test higher on literacy measures.

Mrs. Staneski asked what support is in place with respect to the seasoned teacher. Dr. Polansky explained that years ago the special education students were taught in a separate classroom. Today, they are included in the regular classes. Training does need to be in place for the “seasoned” teacher. Co-teaching has been put in place.

Both Ms. LeBlanc and Ms. Dowid spoke about their experiences in the supported kindergarten classroom. They discussed the benefit of having children with disabilities in the typical kindergarten program with support and role models.

Ms. Walsh then talked about her co-teaching experiences. She is a co-teacher facilitator. Ms. Walsh read a letter from a parent expressing gratitude of her child’s experience in a co-taught classroom.

Mrs. Kelleher then explained how accommodations and/or modifications play a role in testing. An accommodation could mean giving a student extended time on a test. A modification is an actual modification to a test.

Chairman Hourigan asked how the modified test score is reflected on a report card. He was told it does not show up as a modification to a test.

Following the presentation, the following people spoke:

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Ms. Walsh then talked about her co-teaching experiences. She is a co-teacher facilitator. Ms. Walsh read a letter from a parent expressing gratitude of her child’s experience in a co-taught classroom.

Ms. Beers explained how the assistive technology is used. She shared a keyboard terminal that played a voice response to her typed words.

Mrs. Capiris spoke as a parent of a high school senior with autism. She said some children are smarter than their peers. However, they suffer socially. Inclusion has helped her daughter.

Mrs. Lévesque spoke as a parent of a 14 year old with Down syndrome. She commended the special education program and inclusion. Her daughter is very popular at school. She

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feels the students have already accepted this. It is the parents that need to educate themselves.

Mrs. Berni spoke as a parent of a pre-schooler with Down syndrome. She said inclusion is everything. She has her daughter enrolled in every program available to her and she has done phenomenal and she believes it is because of her peers. She also told the board that the state, through SERC offers a program that teaches teachers and parents about inclusion.

Mrs. Stanford thanked all of the staff and parents for their input. She said parents are the chief advocate.

### **III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chairman Hourigan asked for Public Comment.

C. Haley – Ms. Haley said this has truly enlightened her and she is very proud of Milford.

### **IV. BOARD COMMENT:**

Chair Hourigan asked the board members for any comments they may have relating to Board business.

Mr. Quish asked what would make the perfect system. Dr. Polansky told him using the “backwards design” and RTI will help make that happen. Curriculum also has to be written to standards.

Mrs. Staneski applauded staff, parents and Dr. Polansky for a wonderful presentation.

### **X. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Hourigan asked for a motion to adjourn.

Mrs. Stanford made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Rohrig seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

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Greta Stanford  
Corresponding Secretary

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Pam Griffin  
Recording Secretary