

Milford Board of Education Committee of the Whole Meeting March 22, 2010

Board members present:

David Amendola
Tracy Casey
Suzanne DiBiase
Josip Jukic (arrived 7:20)
Diane Kruger-Carroll
Jack O'Connell
Greg Oliver
Jay Tranquilli
Mark Stapleton
Robert White

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held a Committee of the Whole meeting on Monday, March 22, 2010, in the Media Center at Calf Pen Meadow Elementary School. Chairman Stapleton called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance immediately following.

II. INSTRUCTIONAL DIVISION REPORT

Mr. Cummings explained the focus of the meeting would be on the student and what goes on in the classroom. He then told the board that he chose to hold the meeting at Calf Pen Meadow so they could see the rooms and how the action occurs. SRBI (Scientifically Research Based Instruction) will be framed in the discussion. He introduced the members of central office who were present. They were:

Sharon Kluchnick, PPS/MS	Steve Madancy, Principal/Orange Avenue
Jamie Whitaker, Reading Consultant	Carrie Keramis, Principal/Calf Pen
Mary Zikaras, Information Tech.	Andrea Giannattasio, Teacher Leader PPS
Gail Krois	Christine Kennedy, PPS/Elementary
Kim Planas, PPS/HS	
Carol Swift, Teacher Leader PPS	
Carol Scaramella, Supervisor Reading & Curriculum	

Mrs. Scaramella explained how the core reading program works. There are currently two hour literacy blocks. Within that time, there are a lot of things that go on. Guided reading, shared reading and independent reading are intertwined into the daily lesson. Guided reading is considered small group discussions. They last from 15 to 20 minutes in the lower grades and a little longer in the upper grades. Teachers sit with at least three groups a day. Shared reading is when the teacher sits with a book and reads to the class usually above the reading level – broadened vocabulary. Upper grades use one piece of text as the focus. Independent reading allows the student to choose their own reading selection. They read books on their level and read books that interest them.

She further explained there are five very important parts of reading.

Phonological awareness – to be able to hear sounds/no print

Phonics – decoding sounding out words

Vocabulary instruction

Comprehension – gaining the meaning

Fluency – How automatic you are with your reading

The core program is Good Habits, Great Readers. At the present time, kindergarten through third grade is currently using the program. It will be incorporated into the fourth and fifth grade next year. It is based on the seven habits of good readers. The instruction will be the same at every school. However, teachers are artists and will embellish it to make it their own.

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Mrs. Keramis then introduced the teachers:

Shannon Pocevic and Michele Barile – 4th grade data team at Calf Pen

Tom Stack and Melissa Constatini – Enrichment program

Eileen McMullen – Resource Room

Diane Martin – Pre-school teacher

Kate Nolan – Primary Development Class

Mrs. Keramis then reviewed how elementary math works. It is an evolving process. The district is beginning to incorporate the SRBI/RTI model into the program. Houghton Mifflin Math is the core program. After having the program for one year, the district put together a scope and sequence which aligns state standards and the CMT to the concept of the program. She shared a few different examples that included shared groups, guided practice and independent practice. This is very similar to the reading program. Once the class masters a component, the class will move onto the next lesson. Differentiated instruction may be used for the struggling learners and the students who are excelerated. Independent practice is aligned with differentiated instruction, also. The district is currently exploring what fundamentals are missing. The groups are flexible. As you progress, you move. So no student is stuck in a group if they have mastered the skill. Mrs. Pocevic and Mrs. Barile shared the various cycles and how the students have improved over the course of the year.

Mrs. Kruger-Carroll asked if the CMTs were used as a bench mark and was told no.

Mr. Cummings said that there is commonality in the curriculum across the district. However, there is a need for the teachers to differentiate instruction depending on who they are teaching. Every class is going to produce different results. Therefore, the day to day lessons change.

Mrs. Kennedy explained how Response to Intervention (RTI) surfaced. RTI are guidelines from the Government. SRBI is what the state established. IDEA went into effect in 1999. Over the years, children were being over identified as having a learning disability. The state then put in more guidelines. Initially, it was just reading and math. When IDEA was reauthorized in 2004, it allowed the district to use SRBI to determine eligibility for students with learning disabilities. Districts continued to use the discrepancy model, which meant the IQ had to be at a certain level. New guidelines put into effect in 2009, no longer allowed the district to use that model. New forms were created to ensure it is happening very systematically. Once the district is able to document that the interventions are happening, making the groups smaller and the student is not able to show progress and he/she are still significantly below their peers, then we can determine that he/she has a learning disability.

Mr. Madancy said it is a monumental task. But, how do you identify the students? SRBI looks at numeracy, literacy and behavior. Orange Avenue was able to pilot the RTI program for the past two years. Each school built RTI teams using the information learned the previous year. The program is a three to five year process. However, RTI will need to be fully implemented by July 2010. He then explained how various short dip-stick quick assessments occur and are evaluated three times a year. Eighty percent of the students are in the core. Fifteen percent will fall within the Tier II category and five percent will fall within the intensive or Tier III category.

Mr. O'Connell asked who is supervising in relationship to the system goals to the goals to the curriculum team?

Mr. Cummings said the building principals make formal observations. CMT is the overall check results come in around July 4th. Principals have learning environments with the teachers where the feedback is constant.

Mr. O'Connell said it is the job of the board to make sure the goals are being met.

Mr. O'Connell asked about the five percent that are over?

Mr. Madancy told him that those students are identified as well.

Mr. O'Connell said there is a lot of focus on the 20% that are in Tier II. Is the other 80% being treated fairly?

Mr. Madancy said there are opportunities available for them.

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Mr. Cummings said he worries about that. However, the state will not give this district money for a charter school. He does have concerns that we will lose the students after 8th to private schools. Preserve AP classes. A lot that we

Central High School in Bridgeport has a charter like school in the high school. They put many students into Ivy League schools. They ranked higher than Fairfield Prep or Laurelton. It is fascinating.

Chairman Stapleton asked if RTI is a state mandate and was told yes.

Mrs. Swift gave a few examples of assessments used with struggling readers in the various tier levels.

Chairman Stapleton asked for a recess at 8:25 p.m.

The meeting was called back into order at 8:38 p.m.

Mr. White made a motion to suspend agenda item II Instructional Division Report and move onto agenda item III Action Item. Mr. Amendola seconded the motion. The motion passed.

III. ACTION ITEMS:

Mr. White made a motion to approve the settlement agreement with Superintendent Harvey Polansky as presented and authorize Chairman Stapleton to sign on behalf of the Milford Board of Education. Mr. Amendola seconded. By a roll call vote 7-3 (Casey/DiBiase/Kruger-Carroll), the motion passed.

Chairman Stapleton announced that the agreement will not become a public document until after a seven day period. If the contract is to become null and void, the board would then move to the termination hearing process on Thursday, March 25, 2010.

The board members broke into groups and visited the following classrooms for demonstrations:

- Preschool
- Self Contained Classroom
- Leveled Literacy/Reading
- Resource
- Enrichment
- Inclusion/Assistive Technology

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Cathy Berni – 96 Centennial Drive – Mrs. Berni said that her daughter was doing sixth grade math in fourth grade when she lived in Stamford. She told the board they need to be creative with the enrichment program. However, it should not be in comparison to those special needs. Early intervention is so critical. The more you have the special needs kids in the district so the parents are suing the district and pulling their kids out and having the district pay the tuition. You need to look at both programs and be very creative.

V. BOARD COMMENT

Mr. White thanked the staff at Calf Pen Meadow for hosting the evening and the excellent presentation.

Chairman Stapleton thanked the staff on behalf of the whole board.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. White made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Amendola seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

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Robert White
Corresponding Secretary

Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary