

# Milford Board of Education

## Meeting Minutes

March 30, 2015

### **Board members present:**

Claire Casey  
John DeRosa  
Suzanne DiBiase  
Jennifer Federico  
Susan Glennon, Chair  
Dr. Heidi Gold-Dworkin (7:06)  
Anthony Piselli  
C. Robert Satti, Jr.  
Earl Whiskeyman

### **Administration present:**

Dr. Elizabeth Feser  
Mike Cummings  
Wendy Kopazna  
Jim Richetelli  
Susan Kelleher

### **Board members absent:**

Michael DeGrego

## **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Glennon called the business meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Board of Education Room. She then asked that everyone join in the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. She noted for the record that Mr. DeGrego was ill and would not be able to attend the meeting.

Ms. Glennon turned the meeting over to Dr. Feser for the instruction highlight.

## **II. INSTRUCTIONAL DIVISION HIGHLIGHT: THE BENEFITS OF THE WORKSHOP APPROACH IN ELEMENTARY ELA INSTRUCTION, WITH A FOCUS ON KINDERGARTEN WRITERS WORKSHOP**

Dr. Feser introduced Mr. Smyth, who is the principal of John F. Kennedy Elementary School.

Mr. Smyth gave a brief overview of how Common Core State Standards have changed the kindergarten writing expectation. In the past, kindergarten writing consisted of letter formation and writing sentences. With the implementation of Common Core Standards, kindergartners now learn to write with a purpose: opinion, informative and narrative, although drawing pictures and dictating words are still acceptable at this age. The Writer's Workshop program is the method used involving short, focused lessons with the teacher's guidance. Mr. Smyth then introduced kindergarten teachers Ms. Laslett and Ms. Stern.

Ms. Laslett and Ms. Stern demonstrated a typical lesson used in Writers' Workshop using the Smart Board. It began with an experience that the students encountered, then illustrated into a picture. Using key word descriptors, they then wrote sentences that

told their story. The students then worked in partner groups to revise their work. The finished product was a published story.

Following the exercise, the students shared their stories with the Board members.

Ms. Glennon thanked the students for sharing their stories with the Board.

Mr. Cummings emphasized the new models are building a better literacy understanding. It is also transferring ownership of teacher leader instruction to student ownership.

Mr. Cummings turned the meeting over to Ms. Sinal.

Ms. Sinal provided a snapshot of how our instruction has changed using the readers and writers workshop approach through balanced literacy. Balanced literacy is based on students' needs with a core base of six components; two of which are writing and reading workshop. The workshop approach has four distinct components: mini lesson, independent work, conferring and sharing. The instruction is based on 10 to 12 minute mini lessons, which focus on small group and target a learning goal. The teachers model a teaching point, or a sequence of skills or strategies that build towards the learning expectations of a unit of study. This enables students to think about their thinking throughout the process. The student then transfers their thinking to writing, which allows for a more rich experience. The teacher will then assess the work and recommend the next steps. This is done in a more tailored small group instruction. The final piece is the students sharing their work with their learning community.

Ms. Sinal confirmed the more choices and independent practice, the higher level of sharing will occur. It holds students accountable for what they were doing during the independent time.

The program has been used in Milford for two years (reading) and 3 years (writing) and discussion has begun with the expansion to middle and high school.

### **III. MID-YEAR DISTRICT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT REPORT FOLLOW-UP**

Mr. Cummings provided the Board with an update to the Mid-Year Assessment Report presentation that was given to the Board at the March business meeting. His overview included the three assessments the districts uses; Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), District Common Assessments (DCA) and Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). DRA and NWEA are similar, as they are both measured outside of the district. NWEA is a standardized test and has been around for 20+ years. The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is a standardized reading test used to determine a student's instructional level in reading. Both the NWEA and the DRA are summative assessments where the student is measured against peers. DRA measures student growth in grades kindergarten through grade five and NWEA measures growth

in grades kindergarten through grade eight, while the DCA measures performance in grades 6 through 12.

Mr. Cummings responded to the questions submitted following the previous update. He confirmed the growth made in DRA scores in grades one through five, which are on target to meet the Board goal. This mid-year report is meant to be a brief check-in. A full report will be given to the Board in September.

Mr. Cummings shifted to the District Common Assessments (DCA). DCAs are intended to measure how well a student has learned a specific body of knowledge and skills. Their purpose is to provide students and teachers information about how well students are learning in a particular content area or course. This information is used to improve student learning, and to improve teaching practices and curriculum materials. They are developed in-house and are measured against rubrics that align to the instructional framework. Teachers collaborate over the summer to review the assessments and determine if it accurately measures the curriculum skill set.

He then shared a select course group of DCA growth; both middle and high school in English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and World Language over fall to winter. There was very good growth, however, he reiterated it is a mid-year report. He also noted that the DCSs are new and still being adjusted.

#### **IV. REVISION TO DISTRICT GRADUATION PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS**

Dr. Feser presented the Board with the changes made to Policy 6146 – Graduation Requirements. The current policy is tied to the Connecticut Academic Performance Test, which the State will no longer be using beginning with the class of 2016. The State is now using Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA); therefore, the changes were needed to be incorporated.

As the Board reviewed the policy, a few changes were recommended to make the policy language more clear. Dr. Feser will make the appropriate changes to the document and submit for approval at the April business meeting.

#### **V. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

#### **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Satti made a motion to adjourn. Mr. DeRosa seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Glennon adjourned the meeting at 9:45 p.m.

Recording Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_

Pam Griffin

Corresponding Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_  
C. Robert Satti, Jr.