

Milford Board of Education Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes April 27, 2009

Board members present:

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

Administrators present:

Harvey Polansky, Superintendent
Michael Cummings, Asst. Superintendent
Philip Russell, Deputy Superintendent

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held its Committee of the Whole meeting on Monday, April 27, 2009 in the Board of Education Meeting Room in the Parsons Complex. Board Chair David Hourigan called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance immediately following.

Mr. Hourigan then congratulated Mr. Cummings on the birth of his son, Keane. He presented him with a gift certificate.

II. MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Mr. Hourigan turned the meeting over to Dr. Polansky for the introduction of the Middle School Programs presentation. Dr. Polansky told the board that middle school education drives the district. With cutting edge rigorous middle school programming, you will have a better high school. In 1994, the middle school structure was added to the Milford Public School system. The program has not been reviewed or changed in 15 years. He explained that middle school programming needs to be consistent so that every child leaving the eighth grade has comparable opportunities across the continuum. He then turned the meeting over to Mr. Cummings to present the new program.

Mr. Cummings told the board the work has been ongoing for the last two years and is ready to be implemented. He explained the reasons for the change are:

- ❖ to strengthen academic learning
- ❖ consistency of programs
- ❖ better bridge to the high school program
- ❖ implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI)

Mr. Cummings also explained the standardized test scores have declined in grades 3 through 8. 56% of the 9th graders have earned a D or lower in the first two semesters and 60% earned a D or lower on the midterm exam. He reiterated the program will give every student a comparable experience and make the transition to high school better. He then explained the process which led to changes in the program. Staff, student and parent surveys were conducted, along with site visits to neighboring school districts. He then unveiled the following program changes with the board:

- ❖ 7 period day (less one period adding 20 more hours of instructional time per period a year)
- ❖ Lunch will be 30 minutes (increasing by 8 minutes)
- ❖ 3 trimesters instead of 4 semesters
- ❖ Increase of physical education time
- ❖ Increase world language
- ❖ Increased Team Meeting Time
- ❖ 5 person teams in all grades at all schools
 - Grade 6 – Math, Social Studies, Science, English (double period)
 - Grades 7 & 8 – Math, Social Studies, Science, English, World Language

He explained the flex periods would be offered but would be more structured to ensure best use of time. Currently every student has a flex period of 42 minutes a day. However, 80% students do not need support and will be able to spend more time on task.

The plan will eliminate 8 language arts positions and replace those positions with world language teachers. The plan is to prepare all middle school students for high school. The 20% of students that need extra enrichment will not get a world language.

There was some discussion about Spanish and how the outcome could be for an 8th grader taking Spanish I in 6th grade. Currently Spanish I is taught in 7th & 8th grade. Now, you could have students ready for Spanish II in 9th grade. Mrs. Staneski asked if that would be an option. Mr. Cummings told her the board could choose to give a pass/fail grade and move to Spanish II in 9th grade. This will force the issue and may make Spanish II look very different.

The plan will also eliminate keyboarding and cooking classes at the middle school level and add technical education. Again, this will bring the middle school program to be consistent across the board. Mrs. Staneski asked why things such as home economics and technical education are being taken out. Mr. Cummings said it was done to accommodate the double period of English.

Mr. SantaBarbara has some concern about staffing, in particular the elimination of positions.

This new structure will assist in preparing students for the demands of high school and post high schools. However, the students who need extra Language Arts will continue to receive extra Language Arts.

Mr. SantaBarbara would like administration to research a remediation for a student who starts with an extra Language Arts class, then brings their scores up to passing within the first couple weeks of a trimester.

The Strings program will become an after school program two days a week. Mrs. Staneski did remind the board there is not a Strings program at the high school at this time. Mrs. Casey told administration the students are being asked to select their respective music programs at this time and they have not been made aware of any changes in the program.

Mr. Cummings then highlighted the changes to the program that would enhance the bridge to high school. This program will be implemented for the 2009-10 school year.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Laura Caporusso, 46 Shadows End Lane – Ms. Caporusso commented about the five person teams and the increased space needs in the middle schools.

Cathy Berni, 96 Centennial Drive – Mrs. Berni said she is hearing a lack of life skills. She hopes there is more emphasis placed on the middle and high school programs so the children will be able to function in society.

Susan Glennon- 99 Carlson Drive – Ms. Glennon has concerns about the staffing shifts and budgetary issues. She would be upset to hear that an advanced class got bumped because of budgetary issues.

Swine Flu Update

Dr. Polansky told the public he has been in contact with the Health Department daily and information about the Swine Flu has been uploaded to the website. He also reported there have not been any confirmed cases in Connecticut.

IV. BOARD COMMENT

None

V. ADJOURN

Greta Stanford made a motion to adjourn. Joanne Rohrig seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Greta Stanford, Corresponding Secretary

Pam Griffin, Recording Secretary