

Approved

Milford Board of Education

Meeting Minutes
May 19, 2014

Board members present:

Michael DeGrego
John DeRosa
Suzanne DiBiase arrived 7:45 p.m.
Laura Fucci
George Gensure
Dr. Heidi Gold-Dworkin arrived 7:10 p.m.
Susan Glennon, Chair
Anthony Piselli
Earl Whiskeyman

Administration present:

Dr. Elizabeth Feser
Michael Cummings
Susan Kelleher
Jim Richetelli

Board members absent:

Tracy Casey (sick)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Glennon called the Special meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. in the Board of Education room at the Parsons complex. She then led those present in the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. UPDATE ON RESPONSE TO THE DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COUNCIL'S OPPORTUNITY

Dr. Feser stated in October 2013 the board was presented with a response plan that was created based on the findings of the Special Education audit. The administration will present on the work that has been done over the past year. She then turned the meeting over to Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings told the Board administration was charged to perform an audit of the Special Education program in 2012. The purpose of the audit was to assess the Milford Public School Special Education Program. District Management Council (DMC) looked at areas where Milford was effective, and where improvement was needed. Following the audit, the DMC offered commendations and recommendations (opportunities). Four opportunities would be the focus of the work ahead for administration. Those opportunities are:

Opportunity 1: Develop and implement a clear and consistent vision for providing reading instruction at the elementary level.

Opportunity 2: Develop and implement a clear and consistent vision for raising academic achievement at the secondary level, with a focus on increasing time on task with content strong teachers.

Opportunity 3: Establish clear roles and responsibilities of leaders in regular and special education, and increase coordination and planning between them.

Opportunity 4: More efficiently manage the deployment of therapeutic services, psychologists and social workers.

Regarding Opportunity 1, Mr. Cummings discussed how the SRBI was not implemented well. Mr. Cummings and Ms. Sinal reviewed the work that has been done to date and the work to be done in the 2014-15 academic year, including continuing to align curriculum and interventions to the Common Core State

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Standards, fully implementing the Readers/Writers Model along with ongoing professional development and implementing a district/school-based monitoring system.

Mr. Cummings then reviewed the work that had been done in Opportunity 2. This work focused on the alignment of district, school administrator and teacher goals to increase student achievement and initiating professional development to ensure the consistency of the literacy practices in all content areas and alignment to the Instructional Framework. A 6-12 literacy and math SRBI model has been completed. Student assistance team processes have been revised. Duplicative practices were eliminated.

Mr. Cummings then spoke of the work that will occur in the 2014-15 academic year. The responsibility for core instruction in reading and math for all students will be shifted to regular education. He noted that as students move through middle and high school the content areas become more specialized, prompting the need of a regular education teacher rather than a special education teacher. Alignment of curriculum and interventions to CCSS will be continued, SRBI development will continue and a district/school based monitoring system will be developed.

Mr. Cummings then provided the Board with a background of the work that had been done relative to Opportunity 3. He emphasized the roles and responsibilities of special education were not clear. The committee used the administrator's evaluation rubric and the role expectations of the Assistant Superintendent and the Director of Pupil Personnel Services to build clear concise role expectations tied to specific indicators. The role expectations are to be communicated to the staff in the summer. Preschool and enrichment will be moved to a regular education program beginning in the 2014-15 school year, as they are identified as core instructional programs. He further said Mrs. Swift will oversee the preschool program, and Mrs. Krois will oversee the enrichment program. Communication to staff will take a priority to implement the changes effectively.

Following the discussion, Mrs. Fucci requested the roles and responsibilities document to be shared with the Board, and parents.

Some other actions that will be essential to the success of the changes are:

- revising the Board goals, district continuous improvement plan and the school improvement plans
- expansion of the extended-day programs
- increasing the number of teachers with reading expertise, without adding to the budget
- piloting standards based report cards in grades 1-5 as a means of increasing parental communication
- ensure roles and responsibilities support the primary goal of increasing student achievement
- establish a group in spring of 2015 to review the impact of the changes developed in Opportunities 1-3.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Tom Jagodzinski – 27 Berkley Terrace – Mr. Jagodzinski claimed the DMC report states that Milford is spending 9M more than needed in special education. There will not be significant savings unless there is a staff reduction. The Board will never fix the fundamental problems until you accept that program is overfunded. He added a state report identified Milford as number 23 out of 24 similar school districts for the high school graduation rate.

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Joanne Poffenberger - Mrs. Poffenberger is a teacher and has four kids in the system. She is concerned about the time it would take the content teacher to add an intervention to a high school students schedule. Teachers need more planning time to research student's needs. She also questioned the effectiveness of the middle school enrichment program.

Cathy Berni – 96 Centennial Drive – Mrs. Berni asked how the intervention would be done. Her hope is that the interventions will be done on a one to one basis. She does not understand why the district has a no retention policy. She questioned the support in high school. She then suggested that the administration reach out to the parents to be part of the process.

Donna Iaffaldano – 45 Yankee Hollow Road – She has a child who struggles in reading. He is classified as having a mild to moderate disability. He will not do well with a class without a special education teacher in the class. The regular education teacher will not be able to handle it. She further said her son is pulled out for reading, by a special education teacher and it works well. She also questioned the ability of the regular education teacher diagnosing learning disabilities. She urged the Board to begin the interventions early.

Laura Fetter – Mrs. Fetter commended the administration, Sue Kelleher and her staff. She then shared her personal experience as having her daughter, who was in special education beginning at age 3. She then left the Board with three guidelines she felt essential in success; absolute integrity, take personal accountability and do parallel teamwork. She hopes the Board is committed to supporting the teachers in this endeavor.

Robin Malin - 331 Plains Road – She questioned the ability of regular teachers teaching special education students. There have been so many changes taking the focus away from the kids. She questioned the validity of standards based report cards. She too does not believe the kids should be pushed forward if they are not ready. She urged the Board to look to the other school districts to determine what is being done wrong.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Fucci a motion to adjourn. Mr. DeRosa seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Mrs. Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary

Ms. Laura Fucci
Corresponding Secretary