

Approved

Milford Board of Education

Meeting Minutes
September 9, 2013

Board members present:

Tracy Casey
Michael DeGrego
Suzanne DiBiase
Laura Fetter
George Gensure
Susan Glennon
Dora Kubek
Beverley Pierson
Christopher Saley
Earl Whiskeyman

Administration present:

Dr. Elizabeth Feser
Michael Cummings
James Richetelli
Susan Kelleher
Wendy Kopazna

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held a meeting on Monday, September 9, 2013 in the Board Room in the Parsons Complex. Mrs. Casey called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. STUDENT AND STAFF RECOGNITION

Dr. Feser recognized Bradley Orban for being named an All-American High School tennis player. Bradley is a senior at Foran High School. During his years at Foran, he has won the State Championship (Class M) in Boys Tennis, as well as the State Open. Dr. Feser and the Board congratulated Bradley.

III. STUDENT REPORTS

Erin Dunn and Andrew Jones reported on the latest activity and upcoming events occurring at Joseph A. Foran High School. Soumya Kundu, Brittany Scott and Ciara Hayden presented the report for Jonathan Law High School. Both reports are on file.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Tom Jagodzinski – 27 Berkley Terrace – Mr. Jagodzinski told the Board he was surprised to see the graduation statistics rate reported as 93%. He read the State reported them to be 86%. The Board should use the same benchmarks. Shelton’s rates increased to 91.4% vs. 86% without spending more money on education. He feels the high schools are underperforming. The Board needs to address the problem in a significant way.

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Mark Ahrens – 258 Oak Ridge Lane – Mr. Ahrens conveyed his support of Milford Public Schools switching to SBAC field testing in the current school year. There is a misalignment of what is being taught by Common Core and the state's Connecticut Mastery Test.

Gary Tobin – 29 Thompson Street – Mr. Tobin offered his views of the Jonathan Law Band Parent Group including that the Administration disbanded the Band Parent Group.

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Mrs. Casey reported that the presentation on the Long Range Planning initiative will be delayed until the October Board Meeting to allow time to notify the community. The venue will most likely change to accommodate a larger audience. The consultant will be presenting the Committee's work thus far. A public forum will be held in the following months.

Mrs. Casey then reported teacher negotiations will move to arbitration. The Board and the union negotiations were unsuccessful.

She then notified the Board members of a request that was made by the Milford Prevention Council. The Council would like to have the appointment of a Board liaison. The coalition is a group of community representatives who are committed to reducing underage alcohol abuse and other substance abuse. The Council meets the second Wednesday of every month at 3:00 p.m. at the United Way. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 11th at 3:00 p.m. at the Bridge House restaurant.

Mrs. Casey asked for a motion to add the Milford Prevention Council to the Board's liaison list.

Ms. Glennon made a motion to add the Milford Prevention Council to the liaison list for the Milford Board of Education. Ms. DiBiase seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Casey then asked anyone interested to let her know as soon as possible.

VI. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mrs. Casey turned the meeting over to Dr. Feser.

Back to School Report

Dr. Feser reported the opening of schools went well. Teachers returned to school on August 26th. Opening Convocation was held at Law on the 27th. Mayor Blake, Deputy Police Chief Tracy Mooney, Joan Campbell (Head Nurse Administrator), Mary Ellen Minichiello (Teacher of the Year) and Mrs. Casey all offered remarks to the staff. Milford students returned to school on August 28th. Approximately 6,400 students returned, with the exception of East Shore Middle School, which welcomed students on September 3rd.

She spoke to East Shore's delayed opening due to the deferral in obtaining the Certificate of Occupancy from the City. She shared that the building was not ready as furniture and class materials needed to be moved back into every classroom. Teachers were able to come in over 3 days to set up their rooms. Dr.

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Feser gave accolades to Principal Williams and her staff for the smooth transition. Dr. Feser also recognized and thanked Pat Bradbury and his staff for their hard work. The school has a new drop off and pick up pattern to ensure safety and the flow of traffic. She reminded the Board that lunches will be served in the classrooms until the cafeteria and kitchen are completed. Mrs. Faustich and Principal Williams reported this process has worked well. Dr. Feser offered her gratitude to all involved with the opening of East Shore.

Dr. Feser then reported student transportation went well. Over 5,000 students are transported daily. Bus routes will continue to be monitored over the coming weeks. She commended Durham for their efforts and patience in transporting the students; especially those who attend East Shore. Construction has made it difficult. She also noted Durham will donate a bus to transport children from Pumpkin to Kennedy who participate in the before and aftercare program.

She then updated the Board on the some items in the Special Education area. The Special Education Vocational Program is in its fifth year. The program offers students more work experience to help prepare them when they leave Milford Public Schools. She also reported three full time behavior analysts are onboard for the school year.

In the curriculum area, Math Investigations will be implemented in grade four this year. A new Spanish II curriculum will be implemented in grade 9. There are new computer labs at Foran, Law, Harborside, Kennedy, Orange Avenue, Calf Pen, Orchard Hills and Meadowside. She concluded her report by notifying the Board that the Teacher and Administrator Evaluation Plans will be fully implemented for the 2013-14 year.

9/11 Curriculum Update

Mrs. Casey thanked Ms. Rowley for attending the Board meeting to give an update of the 9/11 curriculum. She then turned the meeting over Dr. Feser.

Dr. Feser reminded the Board and public of the creation of the curriculum by MPS teachers. She then turned the meeting over to Dr. Barbiero.

Dr. Barbiero explained that usually the department will look at other district's curriculum when developing new curriculum. However, the 9/11 curriculum developed in Milford does not exist anywhere in the United States. Dr. Barbiero worked with a team of teachers who collaboratively developed the 9/11 curriculum for grades 6-12 in Milford. Those teachers are: Rachel Rowley, Mary Mannion, Tom Acri, Megan Lynch, Kelsey Burns, Sarah DiGiacommo, Tom Dooley, Rob Hanson, Alex Iaconna, Cordelia Isophia, Melissa Rossi, and Austin Ceasare.

Ms. Rowley reported there have been several changes to the curriculum since its initial implementation. The curriculum begins in sixth grade giving an oral history. Guiding questions are used to help parents to discuss the event with their children. The seventh grade unit helps students gain an understanding of terrorism, while the eighth grade unit leads up September 11, 2001. The high school units focus on the victims and the various responses. The 12th grade unit focuses on charitable organizations and community service. Ms. Rowley said the teachers have received very positive responses from parents, and students have had many questions.

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Ms. Rowley then reminded the Board there will be a Citywide 9/11 ceremony at Jonathan Law on September 11th. Jonathan Law received a scholarship from the Welles Crowley Foundation that helped fund the event. Mayor Blake has declared Jonathan Law's ceremony as the ceremony for the City. The ceremony will begin at 8:00 a.m. on the football field. There will be events throughout the day.

Mrs. Casey thanked Ms. Rowley and the team for their dedication to educating Milford's youth on the events of September 11, 2001.

Graduation Statistics Report

Dr. Feser turned the meeting over to Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings reported out on three areas:

- 4 year college acceptance rate
- Percent accepted at top tier colleges
- Graduation rate

In speaking to the first two indicators, which showed no growth or a decline, Mr. Cummings spoke to the economy being a factor.

Mrs. Casey asked administration what has been done since 2011 when the goal was set to meet the goal. Mr. Cummings explained the remedy is to raise awareness of the benefits of applying to four year colleges. The advisory program is a vehicle. However, more needs to be done. The parent community needs to be better educated relative to scholarships and federal aid.

Mr. Fran Thompson, (Principal, Jonathan Law) told the Board the district needs to educate the children earlier than when they become a junior in high school. He believed this is not solely a guidance issue. He also believes it is not solely an advisory issue. It is a team effort to make the students aware to take the challenge. He agreed advisory is a tool. He further told the Board the students need to be notified in middle school.

Further discussion ensued.

Administration was asked to provide the Board with a list of schools with the number of students who applied vs. accepted.

Following the discussion, Mrs. Casey asked for clarification on the rate of kids who graduated from high school.

Mr. Cummings explained the 86% rate mentioned during Public Comment was the "on time rate". The on time rate includes only students who graduate in four years. Those students who take more than four years are not included in the state's new calculation of high school graduation rate. The graduation rate of 97% reflects the percent of 12th graders in June.

Dr. Feser noted the high school principals will now be measured by the graduation rate of their school with the implementation of the Administrator Evaluation Plan.

Mr. Whiskeyman suggested that the goal may be unrealistic.

AP Report

Dr. Feser turned the meeting over to Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings gave a presentation that explained how Advanced Placement is administered and graded across the state.

Mr. Cummings reviewed the 16 courses offered in Milford at this time. He then reported that participation rose by 77% over the 2011 school year.

Ms. Mannion, Mr. Cesare and Dr. Barbiero all shared their beliefs about the benefits of taking the exams even if only earning a score of 1. The students learn time management, organizational skills, concepts and more.

Several AP students spoke to the benefits of taking AP courses. Below is a sample of those comments:

“The hope is to earn a high rating on the exam but the course itself is worth taking.” “AP curriculum teaches concepts and understanding of the material, organizational skills and so much about the topic.” One student said that she learned, “the political structures and more about the world in a very organized manner.” She reiterated exams are not reflective of what students learn.”

Mr. Cesare added, “Students have learned time management and prioritization skills. It encourages kids to be exposed to things they never had at a high level of rigor.”

2013-14 Standardized Testing: SBAC Field Test

Dr. Feser reported Connecticut joined 46 other states to adopt Common Core State Standards. The standards will focus on literacy and mathematics with an impact on every subject area. The State Department of Education is giving to local districts the option of taking the Smarter Balanced Consortium (SBAC) field test or the CMT/CAPT for 2013-14. The CMT and CAPT are being phased out. This is the last year. They are not aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Therefore, in the best interest of Milford’s students, Milford will participate in the SBAC field tests. Dr. Feser explained the scores may not be received until fall of 2014. Those scores may be used for the baseline. Teachers and administrators will be held accountable to the SBAC scores in 2015. Milford is being proactive in administering the SBAC tests.

Dr. Feser reminded the Board the science portion of the CMT and CAPT will continue to be administered.

Human Resources Report

Mrs. Kopazna gave the Human Resources Report for the month of August. Thirty one new teachers have been hired. There is still a reading teacher opening at Foran. The position will replace Mrs. Whitaker who will now be the Dean of Students at Foran.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Glennon made a motion to approve Consent Agenda items 1-2.

1. Disbursement Report

Approved

2. Consideration of Minutes

a. July 8, 2013 Business Meeting

b. August 19, 2013 Committee of the Whole Meeting

Ms. DiBiase seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

None.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

X. BOARD COMMENT

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Glennon made a motion to adjourn. Ms. DiBiase seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary

Ms. Susan Glennon
Corresponding Secretary