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Milford Board of Education

Meeting Minutes
September 23, 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

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held a meeting on Monday, September 23, 2013 in the Board Room in the Parsons Complex. Mrs. Casey called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. DISTRICT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT REPORT

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

Dr. Feser explained the purpose of the meeting was to understand the district student achievement results and what work will be pursued going forward. She then turned the meeting over to Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings began by reviewing the Board goal which is to increase achievement of all students insuring that every student has access to a rigorous and quality education and has the supports needed to be successful. The first objective is to have 100% of students in grade 2 and grade 5 reading at grade level using as a baseline 2011 performance on Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and other measures.

Mr. Cummings spoke to the DRA results explaining that they are administered three times a year. He addressed the impact that the summer months have on some children, that is, they lose ground and their fall scores reflect the loss. Summer reading programs can help students keep on course with their reading. Mr. Cummings referred to a presentation last spring wherein he shared data from the Summer Academy in literacy. Mr. Cummings asked Mrs. Keramis to speak further about the lost ground over the summer, which she did. Dr. Feser asked her to share what she did for some of her readers over the summer. Mrs. Keramis explained that she chose 60 students who were struggling readers, and selected two books for each based upon what she knew of their interests. She mailed each student their two books and wrote each a note asking them to read the books, and to send the notecard back to her, which was included with the books, telling her how they liked the book. She said she heard from some students but not all, but her hope was to

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get the students to read. She also shared that her school participated in the Governor's Challenge Summer Reading Program.

Mr. Cummings then reviewed the CMT scores for Milford compared to the State in all subject areas. The scores for the most part showed a decline across grades and the tested areas.

Mrs. Casey recalled the State's Press Release as being positive. Dr. Feser explained the positive piece of the press release was relative to the Alliance districts. The general sense was the scores across the state had gone down.

Mr. Cummings then shared the scores for CAPT.

Mr. Saley asked administration how we get the test scores where they need to be.

Mr. Cummings explained that as a district we need to raise the level of urgency around student performance and raise the level of expectation. The district needs to do a better job of being coherent about the test by imbedding the skills in the curriculum and not having the test be "separate from" the curriculum.

Mrs. Casey stated that the Board that was in place when the goals were voted on was very specific with the reading goal. The goal was to get to 100% of students reading on grade level. The tests are a gauge of how we are doing. However, CMT and CAPT is one measure. Another measure is enrollment in AP courses; another is students going onto college. The ultimate goal is the kids learning and achieving, not the test scores.

Mr. Cummings then reviewed the CMT and CAPT scores compared to four select districts in our DRG (District Reference Group): New Milford, Southington, Wallingford and Shelton. Mr. Cummings pointed out that Southington and Shelton consistently score higher than Milford on almost every indicator.

Achievement gaps were shared, specifically the gap between special education students' performance and non-special education students performance, and between free and reduced lunch students' performance and non-free and reduced lunch students' performance.

A discussion of Vertical scale scores followed. It was explained that these scores reflected growth over time, that is, they show the degree of growth from, for example, students in 3rd grade in 2008 and in 8th grade in 2013. The Vertical scores paint a positive picture of student performance in Milford.

Mr. Cummings offered his thoughts on the 2013 performance with the Board. There was much disappointment with the scores. He offered some factors that contributed to the decline: there was a de-emphasis on the CMT/CAPT test knowing that Common Core Standards were going to be put in place. There was also a loss of 2 ½ weeks of instruction due to the hurricane and the blizzard. He also indicated that there have been misaligned priorities reflected in the test not fully being imbedded in curriculum, curriculum being defined by a program rather than the other way around, curriculum not aligned with the tests, and more. However, in spite of these factors, our students are capable of doing better.

Mrs. Lisa Swanson, (Math Department Supervisor) gave some examples of what may have contributed to the drop in math CMT scores, e.g., she said that estimation was a strand in the 3rd grade math CMT, but will

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be moved to 7th grade in the new SBAC test, so she told her teachers not to teach estimation. Their scores on this strand fell as expected.

Mr. Cummings explained that the district, for a decade or more, had been program driven, and he displayed a list of “packaged programs” in numeracy and literacy. Almost all of these have been eliminated. The focus now is the instructional core, professional learning around the core, embedded practice, alignment of curriculum and coherence in delivery.

Mr. Cummings then called upon Mrs. Keramis to talk about her work tied to lifting student achievement.

Mrs. Keramis shared Pumpkin Delight’s CMT scores with the Board. She reviewed them by year to year and then a cohort comparison. She further explained the school is committed to strengthening the core curriculum. Professional learning plays a big part. She explained how the teachers are doing “push in” instead of taking the child out of the classroom for specialized teaching. She spoke about the success of the co-taught classrooms wherein the special education teacher is in the classroom with the regular education teacher together instructing students. She concluded her report stating staff continues to look into ways to help engage the students in reading.

Mr. Saley wanted to know how the district handles students who are not doing well.

Mrs. Keramis explained it is about alignment of resources.

Mr. Cummings then called upon Ms. Jennifer Sinal, Supervisor, English/Language Arts.

Ms. Sinal explained that the district is embracing the Reader’s/Writer’s Workshop model. The model provides highly effective and rigorous literacy instruction to prepare all students. Instruction is delivered through a workshop model. Daily routines are established and practiced enabling students to function independently with a high level of accountability. A natural effect of the workshop model is a gradual release of responsibility from teacher-directed modeling to student-directed work, which leaves teachers more time to devote to individual and small group instruction. She reiterated CMT does not align to the Common Core State Standards while the SBAC field test makes a direct connection with reading and writing.

Mr. Cummings concluded the report by stating the Board goals need to be revised given that the CMT and CAPT are ending after this school year, and Milford has chosen to administer the SBAC field test. When we transition to the Smarter Balanced Assessments, we will then be able to establish a fair and equitable baseline. He also explained that we need to pursue more internal assessments, and mentioned that SBAC has formative assessments that are given 5 times a year, which the State has said they will pay for. We also are working on creating district common assessments.

Mrs. Kubek thanked Mrs. Keramis and noted her focus on instruction and learning in the classroom.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

IV. BOARD COMMENT

None.

V. ADJOURNMENT

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary

Ms. Susan Glennon
Corresponding Secretary