

MILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION
Committee of the Whole Meeting
September 24, 2007

Chair Kopazna called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M. asking everyone present to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Members Present

Mr. D. Amendola
Mr. M. Cavallaro
Mr. D. Hourigan
Mrs. C. Kopazna
Mr. S. Marlow
Mrs. D. Mead
Mrs. C. Nihart
Mrs. J. Rohrig
Mrs. P. Staneski
Dr. M. Stapleton

Chair Kopazna read the public comment statement noting this is a Committee of the Whole meeting and asked that public comment be specific to agenda items. She then turned the meeting over to Dr. Polansky.

Dr. Polansky told the board that administration will provide an in-depth analysis on the CMT test results, High School Advanced Placement results and a presentation on athletics.

Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT)

Relative to the CMT report, the scores were made available earlier in the year. The CMT is used as a base line for the No Child Left Behind Act and all the processes associated with it. He noted that nearly every single student takes the exam. It is hard to compare the scores to three or four years ago because it was a different exam then. He then told the board the special education students, by enlarge are taking the exam. That also has a different impact on the numbers of students at mastery and numbers of students at goal. All children take the test at their chronological age level. Years ago special education students were able to take the test at their cognitive ability. He also pointed out that No Child Left Behind provides sub-groups such as Special Education and English Language Learners (ELL). The law dictates only those students who are categorized as ELL take the exam in English. These issues are being dealt with on a federal level.

Mrs. Herbst reported children are tested on 25 content strands in Math. Content strands give the educators a clear picture of the specific skills and where the strengths and weaknesses lie. In reading, the students are tested with multiple choice questions by degrees of reading power (DRP). This is designed to

measure the student's ability to understand non-fiction on a graduated scale of reading difficulty. The students take a DRP prep test at least twice a year. Reading comprehension is tested on four strands:

1. Forming a general understanding;
2. Developing interpretation;
3. Making reader/text connections and
4. Examining content and structure.

Writing is tested in direct assessment of writing and editing and revising. She noted there are five levels of reporting of scores and this is the second year of the fourth generation of the CMT.

She gave the board historical and current district data, as well as a comparison of where the district has been over time from grades three through eight.

A discussion ensued about strands 11, 15 and 25 of Math. All of which are in "estimation". Those strands appear to be the weakest for the district.

Mr. Hourigan asked if the text books are teaching estimation.

Mrs. Staneski asked if calculators are hindering learning with regard to estimation.

Dr. Polansky said it is most likely a literacy issue because if the student understands the math problem, the calculator should not impede them.

Dr. Polansky said that CMT is developmentally appropriate. We teach to the standards and the framework the state and the national math associations have outlined as what is important. He noted there are 50 exams that measure AYP.

Dr. Polansky noted that Milford's scores were slightly higher than the state average.

Mrs. Malone then shared some grade three integrated math problems with the board noting how literacy plays a significant role in answering the math question. She said we continue to implement programs to connect the Reading and Comprehension to Math. She then gave Math Navigator as an example. Dr. Polansky said we also use FASTMath.

Dr. Polansky said key to consistency is common assessments, which should be completed over the next two years.

Mrs. Malone then talked about the strands related to reading comprehension. A new strand was added to the generation of the test called the connection strand. She then shared a two sample problems with the board.

Mrs. Malone said we want children to do well on the CMT, but we really want our children to be literate, able to synthesize information, evaluate and choose evidence to support their opinion.

Advanced Placement Test

Mrs. Herbst gave an overview of the AP test and its results. The AP is used by colleges to grant students college credits in advanced standing. The scoring is based on levels one through five. Five, being the highest. Scoring a level of three used to be the criteria for college entry. Now a level four, and quickly reaching five is the criteria.

A discussion ensued about whether the pre-requisite courses benefit the test score. Some districts don't have pre-requisites and the test scores did not fall.

Athletic Participation

Dr. Polansky emphasized the high school principals run the athletic program.

Mrs. Garagliano then gave an in-depth presentation on the athletic program. The program is aligned with the CIAC accreditation model, which the district has been asked to pilot.

Dr. Polansky explained the CIAC wants to create a measuring stick for equity of programs across the state. The State Department of Education makes sure the certification is utilized, but it doesn't take into account program evaluation, resources, how it ties to student life and how it ties into curriculum. The state wants the high schools to be able to measure the effectiveness of their programs.

Athletic Budget

Mr. Russell then gave an overview of the athletic budget for 2007-08. He compared the budget from last year to the current year.

Mrs. Staneski said when the budget for 2007-08 was being prepared, the board had a discussion about how the general funds was to be disbursed. In conclusion, the general fund account should be used for "fixed costs". The gate receipts would supplement any excess costs.

The board shared their concerns about the athletic budget and the use of the general funds account with Dr. Polansky.

Mrs. Staneski requested that data be collected for the current year and be prepared for a more detailed discussion in preparation of the 2008-09 budget.

Dr. Polansky said the revenue stream is gate receipts and contributions from the board through the general funds. He said he understands the board wants the board funds to pay for site costs.

Mr. Russell said it costs approximately \$240,000 to run a program at both schools.

Dr. Polansky said Mr. Russell will provide the projected costs of “true” costs of athletics at a later time.

Education Specs

Mr. Silver reviewed the Phase III of the project work to be done at both Law and Foran. The board is required to approve the specifications before they are presented to the Permanent School Facilities Committee on September 27, 2007.

Chair Kopazna asked the majority leader to read the motions.

Mrs. Staneski and Mr. Amendola made and seconded a motion approve the final plans, specifications and cost estimations for phase III additions, alterations and energy conservation at Jonathan Law High School. Motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Staneski and Mr. Amendola made and seconded a motion approve the final plans, specifications and cost estimations for phase III additions, alterations and energy conservation at Joseph A. Foran. Motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Staneski and Mr. Amendola made and seconded a motion to approve the working agreement between Milford Board of Education and Milford Federation of Paraeducators dated September 1, 2007 to August 31, 2010. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Mike Taylor - 340 Wolf Harbor Road – He asked if everybody in every district has the same policy as Milford in regard to special ed being tested? Please be selective when choosing the reading material.

Dr. Polansky said relative to special education, the results are not truly accurate because of the Special Ed and ELL students. The differences are because many schools out-place their special education children.

Kathy Berni - 99 Centennial Drive - She would like the administration to look at the amount of paper being used. She encouraged two-sided copying for reports.

Board Comment

Cathy Nihart asked the following statement be put into the minutes.

Most school districts in CT, perhaps all, operate under the individual committee system, as Milford Board of Ed did until about 5 years ago. Our standing

committees had names like: Finance, Policy, Personnel, Negotiations, and Building, just like other Boards of Ed in the state. Some Boards have Curriculum and Planning committees.

By disbanding the committees, more unilateral power was given to the Chair, both party leaders and to Administration. Consequently, authority and responsibility were removed from regular board members.

Much like our electoral system of representative government, each committee had its own chair, was able to provide more coverage to the subject matter, and then reported the committee's recommendation to the whole Board, allowing the full Board to VOTE.

But under the current system, our Board has been stripped of its ability to investigate, recommend, and in many cases to vote, especially in the areas of Policy and Personnel where we have little to no input.

In fact, our current Board was never allowed to vote on which committee system we would prefer: individual or the whole. Previous Board leadership adopted the COW system when they bought our governance policy from Colorado at the suggestion of the former superintendent. During this board session, regular Board members have tried to change or even eliminate this policy manual to no avail.

Instead, most decision-making has been concentrated between Board leadership and Administration. Regular Board members discover implementation after the fact when it is often too late to make practical changes to a policy, program or staffing. Meanwhile, we have been treated to monthly meetings which are 90% show-and-tell called "Committee of the Whole."

Reinstituting the standing committee system within elected government is the best beginning toward serving Milford voters in general and the taxpayers, parents and students in particular.

Mrs. Staneski, along with other board members who were part of the committee structure agreed it did not deem to be beneficial for Milford. The current structure allows the "whole" board to be a part of the decision making. She also noted that all board members receive the information at the same time and they vote as a board of ten members.

Mrs. Staneski then said she took offense at the comment Mrs. Nihart made referring to the "show and tell" meetings. The administration has put forth a lot of effort in presenting very valuable information to assist the board in understanding specific subject matters.

Mr. Marlow said the current structure eliminates redundancy. The committees would meet and discuss the issues and then present it to the whole board and discuss it again. He noted the board is just as informed by having the current structure.

Mrs. Mead stated she was appreciative of the Committee of the Whole structure. Board members and the public hear the presentation together.

Chair Kopazna asked for a motion to adjourn.

Being no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made by Mrs. Staneski and seconded Mr. Amendola. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Staneski
Majority Leader

Recorded by:

Pam Griffin