

Milford Board of Education

Meeting Minutes

Committee of the Whole Meeting

September 29, 2009

Board members present:

David Amendola
Tracy Casey
David Hourigan, Board Chair
Jim Quish
Joanne Rohrig, Minority Leader
Jim Santa Barbara
Pamela Staneski
Greta Stanford, Majority Leader

Administrators present:

Harvey Polansky, Superintendent
Michael Cummings, Assistant Superintendent
Philip Russell, Deputy Superintendent
Wendy Kopazna, Dir. of Human Resources
Susan Kelleher, Dir. of Pupil Personnel Services

Absent:

Cindy Kopazna
David Steinlauf

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held its regular business meeting on Tuesday, September 29th, in the Board of Education Meeting Room in the Parsons Complex. Board Chair David Hourigan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance immediately following.

II. District Student Achievement Data Report

Chairman Hourigan turned the meeting over to Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings began by stating that he prepared his presentation based on requests made by the board. His presentation will show different scenarios. He began by saying that every organization is perfectly designed to get the results it gets. If you do what you always did, you'll get what you always got. To that, the district remained static with the scores. He then shared the SAT longitudinal data in Math, Reading and Writing. The district has had a decline since 2003. In looking at the data against the National and Connecticut groups, the district is ahead of the national scores, but not Connecticut. (PowerPoint on file.)

Mr. Cummings showed a correlation between CAPT and GPA/SAT performance which show a high GPA would relate to a high CAPT or SAT. What connects the tissues? A 1.0 is dead on. The district did not show any signs of being close to the 1.0. He further said that we need more data. He also said that teachers grade work differently. When the district moves to standard based report cards, students will be graded the same and you should see closer alignment.

He then showed a slide by level which clearly showed students going from advanced goal to basic and below basic. Milford wants the students at goal, not proficient. It is comparable to the national data, but not the Connecticut data. Dr. Polansky thinks it is connected to students not reading. Students are using the electronic medium. Dr. Polansky is hoping that print media becomes available to kids.

Mrs. Staneski said that they have to want to read.

Dr. Polansky said the district had substantial growth this year and he believes that reading in the content area assisted that. It needs to be done at the high school now. Last year's focus was the middle schools.

Mr. Cummings showed more correlations between the CMT and CAPT and grade performance. Math again, showed a closer a correlation.

Mr. Cummings said the grades exceed the CMT scores. Dr. Polansky said that strengthening the district-wide tasks and benchmarks assessments is key.

Dr. Polansky further said the many states purchase publishers curriculum. They do not develop their own. Therefore, the publisher is going to put their money into those states where they can sell the books. Connecticut on the other hand develops their own curriculum.

A board discussion ensued.

Mr. Cummings continued to report the correlations and the cohorts still identified a declining trend.

He then showed a slide that broke out the special education and free and reduced sub groups because the district is being sited on for not making AYP. Dr. Polansky told the board that other districts such as Old Saybrook and East Lyme are in our DRG, do not have free and reduced lunch. For that reason, you can not compare those districts to Milford. Mr. Cummings continued to explain the “same group growth” slide. The cohort group grew to 8.9 almost five points, while the number is supposed to be 15 over the four years of taking the test. However, a lot of the growth happened in grade seven in reading. Math and writing declined. This group will now need to be followed through grade eight and beyond.

In completion of the presentation, Mr. Cummings said what the district has been doing has shown that it is not working. He then shared the District Scorecard, which was designed last year, with the board. The District Scorecard shows areas of concern and the progress.

Dr. Polansky said that by collecting data this year the district will have chronological data that can be tracked.

There were 37 ninth graders who did not move forward. That number was after summer school.

Mrs. Staneski asked if a plan of action was put together. She said she has seen the Theory of Action and has listened repeatedly to resource allocation, embedded improvements etc. We only have very little time. What does this say to you as our administration? You are failing each child that you can not reach. What do we in Milford say that child needs to learn?

Dr. Polansky said we need to rewrite unit courses of study. That is going to be a secondary plan. At the elementary level, we need to continue to flush out the 80% core. RTI will assist with this and make sure that both the high flyers and those students who need remediation meet those needs at the building level. We need to look at: are teachers doing what we expect them to do, and are the tasks reflective of a good curriculum?

Mr. Cummings said everything we do has to improve the interaction between the teacher and the student. We are working on the curricular and the materials pieces. We need to define what is the best material to meet the needs of the learner. We need to improve the teacher’s ability to adjust based on the feedback they are getting on student learning. It can not come at the end of a test. The final piece is the work with the student. There are issues to work on with motivation, the student’s needs and capabilities. How to challenge the gifted students. How do we give the special education student what they need to be successful?

Mrs. Staneski asked how that develops into concrete information to report back to the board so they can report to the public.

Mr. Cummings said we will be looking at the K-12 curriculum in math and language arts in late winter. The unit plans, the data team work at the elementary schools.

Ms. Garagliano said that her building will work with all of the teachers about the unit plans. A healthy number of the 37 retainees came from Law. In conjunction with Mrs. Kelleher, she hand picked their teachers and they are doing eighth and ninth grade work. It should help them when they take CAPT. The AIP has a section on student outcomes in relation to CAPT. They can now take a look at the current 11th grade students CAPT scores, broken out by strands, ninth grade English, math social studies grades and the 10th grade as well. Each department has been charged to come up with a plan as well.

Dr. Polansky said that he put the administrators through two day exercise recently where the content standards were identical and it showed that one teacher was very sophomoric, while another one was really relevant. We want to start controlling many more of the student’s tasks; we can control the integrity of those programs.

Mr. Santa Barbara asked if the principals will be able to embed CAPT like skills into the content areas.

Ms. Garagliano told him yes.

Mr. Santa Barbara said he believes it would be much better to integrate it into the content area.

Mrs. Casey asked administration if the CAPT and what the State expects the students to know are aligned with what Milford is teaching.

Chairman Hourigan said that teachers don't teach to the CAPT. They teach to the skills that the CAPT assesses. Embedded questions are designed to teach the kids the format of the questions, not the material of the content in it. By embedding daily skills, the kids are going to become familiar with the format.

He then shared a situation with a student taking an exam. She did not know how to add a math problem. She said she learned how to do everything with a calculator. There is a serious problem.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. C. Berni – 96 Centennial Drive – She asked for clarification of the curriculum changes.

Mr. Cummings told her that our curriculum was finished in 2006. Since then, the GLEs have been put in place by the State. The district needs to review those standards and make sure our curriculum aligns to it.

Mr. M. Taylor – 340 Wolf Harbor Road – He has three children who have done really well on CAPT and they have told him that no one really cares about the test. He said some students may even bomb it on purpose. He said that possibly the district should look at incentives to get the student to want to pass it. He said possibly a monetary incentive would work.

Ms. L. Biagioni – 73 Sentinel Hill Road – She said that she feels that after tonight's presentation we are getting somewhere. She thanked Mrs. Staneski for her comments. She appreciates Mrs. Staneski asking for the action plan. Secondly, what is the goal for the kids when the walk across the field?

IV. BOARD COMMENT

Mrs. Staneski thanked administration for putting the information into real numbers. She said she too feels like it is the same conversation as "Nation of Risk." Somewhere you have to get in there and tell the students that they can not use a calculator. She hopes to see concrete information as the district moves forward.

V. ADJOURN

Greta Stanford made a motion to adjourn. Joanne Rohrig seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Greta Stanford
Corresponding Secretary

Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary