

**APPROVED
MINUTES
BOARD OF EDUCATION
May 10, 2016**

PLACE:

Darien Board of Education
Meeting Room
7:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Harman, Chair; Mesdames Hagerty-Ross, Zuro, McNamara, Stein and Sullivan; and Messrs. Burke, Dineen, and Martens

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Dr. Dan Brenner, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Susie DaSilva, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Ms. Shirley Klein, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services; Mr. Michael Feeney, Director of Finance and Operations; Ms. Marjorie Cion, Director of Human Resources.

VISITORS:

Approximately 20.

CALL TO ORDER.

Mr. Harman called the regular meeting to order at 7:37 p.m. The next Regular BOE meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 24, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. in the Darien Board of Education Meeting Room.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT.

Mr. Harman greeted everyone and thanked them for coming out. He said that the RTM had approved the budget last night.

PUBLIC COMMENT.

Ms. Kristy Erwin came forward to address the Board regarding Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). (See attached).

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT.

Dr. Brenner said that he was pleased with so many positive things happening. He then called Mr. Marc Marin forward to give a presentation on the updates for the Darien Public Schools website.

Web Page Calendar -

Town of Darien
Darien Board of Education
Regular Meeting
May 10, 2016

Mr. Marin came forward to present the new Darien Public Schools website district comprehensive calendar.

Collaborative Program –

Dr. Brenner then spoke about a recent collaborative program between DHS students and Central Connecticut State University students which took former Toys R Us vehicles and modified them for therapeutic use by children who have Cerebral Palsy. The staff displayed a photo of the young students in their cars on the digital screens.

IDEA –

Dr. Brenner said that there was an IDEA night at the High School this evening and gave the details.

Quiz Bowl Tournament –

Dr. DaSilva introduced Mr. Romeo and Ms. Ivey along with two representatives from the Middlesex Quiz Bowl team.

Mr. Ken Romeo and Ms. Barbara Ivey came forward and displayed the large first place National Quiz Bowl trophy that the team won in Atlanta. Ms. Mia Napoli, a Middlesex 8th grader, came forward to speak about the tournament. (See attached). Ms. Riya Krishnan, a Middlesex 8th grader, came forward to speak about her experience with the Quiz Bowl team. (See attached.)

The Board thanked Mr. Romeo, Ms. Ivey, Ms. Napoli, and Ms. Krishnan for their reports.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

February 9, 2016 Regular Meeting Minutes

Mr. Harman stated that a typing error had been discovered in a motion in the minutes of February 9, 2016.

**** MR. BURKE MOVED TO REVISE THE FEBRUARY 9, 2016 MOTION ON PAGE 14**

REGARDING THE CAPITAL PROJECTS FROM:

**** MR. HARMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2016-2017 CAPITAL PRIORITY 1 PROJECT AS LISTED ABOVE FOR \$3,341,000.**

**** MS. STEIN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

TO:

**** MR. HARMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2016-2017 CAPITAL PRIORITY 1 PROJECT AS LISTED ABOVE FOR \$3,441,000.**

**** MS. STEIN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** MR. DINEEN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

April 26, 2016 Special Meeting and Executive Session

**** MR. DINEEN MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 26, 2016 SPECIAL MEETING AND EXECUTIVE SESSION.**

**** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL MEETING AND EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES OF APRIL 26, 2016 AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

April 26, 2016 Regular Meeting

**** MS. SULLIVAN MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 26, 2016 REGULAR MEETING.**

The following correction was noted:

Page 1, **FOOTER**, please change the date in the footer from "April 6, 2016" to "April 26, 2016"

**** MR. DINEEN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS.

Budget Committee - Ms. Hagerty-Ross said that the Budget Committee met on Friday. She thanked all those involved in the budget and especially the principals, assistant principals, and parents for coming out to the RTM meeting to support the budget.

Reiss Fund Scholarship Awards - Ms. Zuro said that the Reiss Fund Committee met on April 27th and thanked those involved in the awards process and said there would be some very good applications presented later in the meeting.

Shared Services Meeting - Ms. Sullivan presented her report. (See attached)

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS.

A. UPDATE FROM K,G & D ARCHITECTS ON MASTER PLAN.

Mr. Erik Kaeyer, Principal and Vice President, K, G &D Architects, narrated a PowerPoint presentation on the various school buildings. (File #2498)

Board questions and comments and responses: a) **Regarding Ox Ridge, this plan does not have the ELP program consolidation?** (Mr. Kaeyer said that the ELP classrooms were included. There are currently 22 classrooms and this plan would add eight to ten classrooms. This would take the pressure off Royle and Tokeneke and eliminate the need to construct additions on those buildings.) b) **Do all the other schematics that the Board has seen take this dynamic into consideration?** (Mr. Kaeyer said this was correct.) c) **When there are ELP classrooms noted in the other buildings, we are not keeping them as ELP classrooms with the exception of Ox Ridge?** (Mr. Kaeyer said this was correct.) d) **Would an option such as lengthening the bus queuing area involve Planning and Zoning?** (Mr. Kaeyer said that they would have to speak with Planning and Zoning but added that he thought Planning and Zoning would be interested in getting as many of the buses off the main road and the intersection as possible.) e) **One concern with Royle was the fact that there were a number of classrooms that were small. That's not even addressed in here. There was previously a Tokeneke and Royle Building Committee that discussed the size of the classrooms at length.** (Mr. Kaeyer said that when they had done the walk through, the classrooms at Royle were only about 700

square feet whereas the other school classrooms were approximately 800 sq. ft. He reminded everyone that there was a district wide cap and suggested the Board might want slightly smaller class sizes at Royle because of the physical space. It is challenging because of the way that the building was designed. We looked at Ox Ridge because of the potentials for renovation.) f) **I want to echo that comment about the size of the classrooms. As we look holistically, that needs to be addressed.** (Dr. Brenner suggested potentially repurpose the smaller classrooms as office space and shuffle the classrooms around. Mr. Kaeyer said that the classrooms in the original building were smaller. The other two additions have larger classrooms.) g) **Would you give us some background on how you arrived at this point?** (Mr. Kaeyer said that they had met with many different people. It is a fresh look at the situation from a design point of view, but also there were discussions with administrators, and email contacts with building principals about modular classrooms and space needs.) h) **Regarding Ox Ridge, do you know if construction could be done on the playing field?** (Mr. Kaeyer said that they had looked at the Town Codes in terms of setbacks. The project would be within the percentage of land coverage. As long as both buildings are not occupied concurrently, the proposal would work.) i) **Looking at the Hindley and Holmes layouts regarding the best main entrance, what are the best practices for the main entrance for an elementary school?** (Mr. Kaeyer said that it would be important to consider where the drop off areas are. It is also important to have only one point of entry, which would be a vestibule. The second set of doors would be where the security station or main office would be.) j) **Do you have a security rating for the schools?** (Mr. Kaeyer said that the group would look at each individual school and make recommendations.) k) **There is a town property that is right off the map by Middlesex. Were you aware of that?** (Mr. Kaeyer said that he was aware of the property but it is not a school site. The group was not asked to look at it. It is a valuable asset to the Town.) l) **Do you plan on going beyond the level of the security doors and the portables?** (Mr. Kaeyer said that the level of security would require a specialist being brought on board. From a design specialist standpoint, we would look at whether there is a vestibule at the main entrance and the cost of constructing one. Additional security measures beyond that would not be part of the report.) m) **The design for Ox Ridge is excellent and having the ELP in its own space. Is there enough ancillary space for the OT/PT spaces?** (Mr. Kaeyer said that currently there are 8 classrooms and the plans have 10 classrooms. Dr. Brenner explained that there were several options being presented and the Board would ultimately decide which one to choose.) n) **Where would the ELP classrooms be?** (Mr. Kaeyer indicated where those classrooms would be located on the plans and gave the details of the student traffic flow.) o) **This is great work and sets a foundation for more long term planning. I assume because of the Ox Ridge plans, you feel this is the best site. But it would be important to evaluate whether the other buildings could be renovated in the future so that people would know which sites could not be developed in the future.** (Dr. Brenner said that the Royle campus could be expanded. Being able to answer a question as to whether or not expansion could be done would be very important. Mr. Kaeyer gave a brief overview of the benefits of the various different campuses. Dr. Brenner reminded everyone that when the evaluations are being done, the condition of the buildings would also be a factor.) p) **Does this plan anticipate a larger student population?** (Mr. Kaeyer said that they have considered which schools would be able to take more students. There are some potential developments that would add more students to the District, such as the area around Ox Ridge. There was some thought to why Ox Ridge would be utilized.) q) **You built this on the current enrollment projections. We need to have a conversation about future enrollment.** (Mr. Kaeyer reminded everyone that the current chart still needed to be vetted for accuracy.) r) **How long would these projects take? How many would we do at once? Are the other projects things that could be done over the summer? How do you phase them? Which do you do?** (Mr. Kaeyer said that the report would be designed in such a way that the Board could adopt the entire Master plan or work on individual portions. The Board may decide to address the Priority 1 issues first because they are health/safety issues. The other consideration is dealing with the life expectancy of the mechanicals in the buildings. The list will be presented in an Excel spreadsheet. It

might be that the Board decides to work on all the roofing projects at once. Then if the Board decides to do roofs or windows, they can generate a list. Mr. Harman said that it would be important to determine how to stage the projects out because it may not be possible to work on all the projects at one time. Mr. Kaeyer said that they could assist with the planning.)

Mr. Burke left the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

s) **So, this is a 5 to 10 year plan?** (Dr. Brenner said that this was a road map for the next five years. It will give the Board a vision as to where they are headed. The building conditions survey is a road map. The Master Plan is a vision.) t) **Is it worthwhile to have input from the parents on issues like the drop off and pick up issues? Do we want to bring it to that level with all the stakeholders? Is it feasible with the costs?** u) **There had been discussion about slotting parental input in. Now that we have a base to work off of, I agree wholeheartedly.** (Dr. Brenner said that Mr. Kaeyer had come in and had been handed summary information from the first failed attempt to address the problems. That information contained information from the building principals and assistant principals. Dr. Brenner said that Mr. Kaeyer had also received feedback from both Mr. Lynch and him about issues such as the portables and the traffic patterns. The request was for options on how to handle these issues. In terms of next steps, Dr. Brenner said that it would be possible to create groups for the parents to attend and to get the input and would be happy to do that if the Board wished to do this. He cautioned the Board that getting the feedback would slow the process down. Mr. Kaeyer said that his company had done this in the past. Another option would be to have this proposal go through the School Facilities Committee where people could come and give input. Dr. Brenner said that his goal had been to get assessment underway because it had been stalled. However, it is up to the Board as to what direction they wish to choose. Mr. Harman said that the key issue was that the District needs space. Ms. Hagerty-Ross pointed out that the District needs to talk to Planning and Zoning about these plans.) v) **I'm just concerned that the parents and the RTM have an opportunity to give input, ideas and suggestions.** (Ms. Hagerty-Ross said that the Board needs to figure out what the District needs first. She said that the Board wants the parents involved, but they need something to present to the parents first. Dr. Brenner said that it would be important to realize what that is and isn't. It is a plan and only a plan. It is not what the Board is going to do. Once the Board decides what they are going to do, then an RFP will be put out and an architect will present a plan on how to achieve the goal. At that point, it becomes how you are going to do it. That's when you need to hear from the parents. This is at a big level. Dr. Brenner said that he was not telling the Board not to have parental input, but cautioned them that it was a large picture moment. This is a concept, an idea. It's a guide.) w) **I think that this is the time to get as much input as possible so that we have everything in the Master Plan. This is the time I would like to hear from everyone.** x) **I agree.** (Mr. Harman said that the Board needs to have a Facilities meeting and this type of conversation should be in a work group. That is where the experts would be brought in to give input.) y) **This is a plan where it is getting everything together for us, which hasn't happened in the past. But we have to get our priorities in order; ELP, security in the classrooms, traffic and portables. And then we have to take it to the next level and fine tune those priorities. Then it would move to the next stage with Planning and Zoning, etc. Once we fine tune those priorities, we can have public input.** z) **I disagree and since it will be on the website, it should be easy to get the comments from the public. Someone may have a great idea.** (Dr. Brenner said that he was somewhat reluctant to post the comments because the Board has already seen the plan. He explained that he did not want to see people get frustrated because this was only a plan. Perhaps the Facilities Committee will figure out a way to go out and gather that information.)

B. PRESENTATION AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL OF REISS FUND SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS.

Dr. DaSilva gave a brief overview of the Reiss Fund Scholarship awards. (File #2499)

**** MS. ZURO MOVED TO APPROVE THE NOMINEES FOR THE REISS TEACHERS FUND FOR FURTHER STUDY.**

**** MR. DINEEN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

C. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACCEPTANCE OF CONTEMPLATED GIFT FROM THE MIDDLESEX PARENTS ASSOCIATION. (File #2500)

Dr. Brenner said that this was a very generous gift from the Middlesex Parents Association that would digitize the Parent Bulletin Board along with other locations in the school. It's a nice technological upgrade.

**** MS. STEIN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE GIFT FROM THE MIDDLESEX PARENTS ASSOCIATION.**

**** MS. HAGERTY-ROSS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

D. PROPOSED NEW EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR 2016-2017.

Ms. Klein acknowledged the parents who were present and had helped to build the program. She then narrated a PowerPoint presentation. (File #2501)

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **Would you speak about the nature of the professional development necessary and the kind of qualifications that all of the staff would need to have?** (Ms. Klein said that it will be important for the staff to have ongoing PD not only on data collection but on robust ABA program or discrete trials. Being able to dynamically shift the program and having trained the staff to analyze the data and seeing how the students are progressing will also be important. We are fortunate to have a new program director who implemented one of these programs in New York City. She will be present to support the program and in-house PD. Ms. Klein also said that Ms. Laura Straiton, who was part of the program design team will be also available to provide support.) b) **How are we educating this population? What will change?** (Ms. Klein gave a brief overview of the program and how it functions.) c) **Is this Applied Behavior Analysis?** (Ms. Klein said the focus on that program is the behavior, but the focus of this program is to gather the data and analyze it as the student achieves the skill. It is also important to focus on what the goal of the program is.) d) **Does this require a specific type of professional development?** (Ms. Klein said that it requires the coordination of an aide who is working to train the staff and will also support the other service providers.) e) **Is it used with any special needs students other than those with autism?** (Ms. Klein said that the program could be used with other special needs students.) f) **We have a number of programs, ELP, TLC and we went from TLC to DLC. I don't understand how this fits into the overall picture with the different programs. How are we organized? We have some programs at Ox Ridge and Tokeneke. How did we get to where we are today?** (Ms. Klein said that she believed the change from TLC to DLC (Developmental Learning Center) occurred in the last year. The DLC program was still at Ox Ridge. The DLC I program addresses students in Kindergarten and Grades 1 & 2, DLC II covers Grades 3, 4 & 5 students with multiple classifications. She went on to explain that some students don't meet the discrete criteria for intervention. She gave a brief overview. Dr. Brenner said that he would like to say that it was a small program

and that the administration would just say that there are students that need this program. Discussion followed.) g) **I'm just trying to figure out why we didn't have this program.** (One of the members of the audience gave an explanation.) h) **Is that why you are looking at Hindley versus Ox Ridge in terms of facilities?** (Ms. Klein said that when evaluating the different opportunities, Hindley offers the ability to put all the classes in one building. This impacts staff in terms of related service providers.) i) **Are we using some of the systems that we have or are we developing something new?** (Ms. Klein said that this was a systematic way of approaching the program. She gave a quick definition of the acronyms for CBA and ABA. There are students who receive discrete services, but it is currently not being done to the level of fidelity that one would want to run the program at. She went on to describe a wealth of other acronyms and how the various trained staff would intervene and use the various techniques.) j) **The existing District staff will be allocated to the TLC III. Were they just involved with this or were they assigned?** (Ms. Klein said that there was staff that could be assigned to it. There is available staffing for new students coming in because other students are aging out. We have enough staff for the cohort coming in.) k) **Is this part of building out the special education program so that we don't need to place students out of district?** (Ms. Klein said that it was.) l) **Will this program result in students who are placed out of district returning to the District?** (Ms. Klein said that this was the goal.)

E. VERBAL UPDATE ON HIGH SCHOOL AND MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHEDULING.

Dr. DaSilva gave a brief overview of the scheduling status.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **I'm not clear on the World Language going to five days. Will the students not be taking a computer classes?** (Dr. DaSilva said that they would not have computer and while the art classes will be somewhat reduced, study halls may also be impacted)

F. FURTHER DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON 2017-2018 DARIEN SCHOOL CALENDAR. (File #2502)

Dr. Brenner presented the 2017-2018 School Calendar.

Board questions and comments and Administration's responses: a) **There was reference to the fact that in the 18-19 school year, the vacation would be different.** (Dr. Brenner said that the reason they were able to do this was because of the Flex days. The State does not allow the District to take a full week off. Based on where the holidays fall in 18-19, the flex days would not work out. Discussion followed about how the calendar days would align with the vacation.) b) **Speaking with people in town, I continue to hear that they want the full week.** (Mr. Harman said that there were concerns about consistency. The State now mandates a start time for the school year.) c) **Other communities are doing the week and I am of their mind set.** (Dr. Brenner said that Greenwich and Westport are going outside of the legislation. The question is whether or not there would be repercussions. Dr. Brenner said that he did not know the answer. Mr. Harman commented that it would affect the graduation date and also possibly affect the snow days. This is a trade-off.)

**** MR. DINEEN MOVED THE 2017-2018 PROPOSED DARIEN SCHOOL CALENDAR.**

**** MR. MARTENS SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH SEVEN IN FAVOR (HARMAN, HAGERTY-ROSS, ZURO, STEIN, DINEEN, MARTENS AND SULLIVAN) AND ONE OPPOSED (MCNAMARA).**

G. REPORT ON 2015-2016 BUDGET STATUS REPORT. (File #2503)

Mr. Feeney gave an overview of the current financial status, which currently shows a favorable balance.

H. FURTHER DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON RECOMMENDED REVISIONS TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICIES. (File #2504)

Ms. Cion said that the revisions were highlighted in red.

- ** MS. STEIN MOVED TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDED REVISIONS TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICIES.**
- ** MS. ZURO SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ACTION ITEMS.

PERSONNEL ITEMS (File #2505)

Appointments
Resignations/Retirement

- ** MS. ZURO MOVED THE PERSONNEL ITEMS.**
- ** MS. SULLIVAN SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC COMMENT.

Ms. Erwin, Mansfield Ave., said that she thought it was important as a parent to fill the Board in about ABA programs. She said that she did not think her son would do well in a general classroom. There are no more self contained classrooms However, her son would spend between 80-90 percent of his time out of the general classroom. She urged the District to consider how they will offer Professional Development in this area. Ms. Erwin said that discrete trials is only one approach. The most used approach is Pivotal Response Training. She gave a brief overview of the PRT approach.

Ms. Stacy Tie, Clocks Lane, said that the transition from ELP to kindergarten is very stressful for the parents. She said that playground location for ELP would require that they have to walk around the bus loop. Ms. Tie said that there are some parents who would prefer that the ELP be in one school and others that would like it in the individual schools.

Ms. Jill McCammon, Old Kings Highway South, said that when the architectural plans are presented to the parents, it will be important to give them some of the back story. It's hard for them to make good decisions without that context. She said the idea of the DLC III was wonderful. She had ABA in her own life successfully and that it was a wonderful tool. She said that the ABA trained staff were already working a full schedule already.

ADJOURNMENT.

- ** MS. ZURO MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** MR. MARTENS SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Schneider Zuro
Secretary

My name is Kristy Erwin and I am here to share my support for the new special education ABA (or Applied Behavior Analysis) program to begin in Sept of 2016. I know that Laura Straiton will share an overview of the program with you later, but I wanted to open with some thoughts from both an educators and parents perspective.

Aside from being a parent to a 6 year old autistic boy currently in the ELP program, I have also been a classroom teacher and reading specialist in both the public and private sector. I have 2 masters in education- a joint degree from Harvard and Boston College as well as Columbia. While all of these respected schools provided me with a great education, it did not prepare me for the work I have been doing since my son was diagnosed. I am sure there are many other teachers in Darien that would agree that they are not prepared nor do they have the tools to support and educate the autistic children in our district, which may be why so many children have had to leave and find alternative programming in other schools. The number of autistic children, or children with developmental disabilities, coming through Birth to 3 and into our ELP program, is only growing. As a district, it's imperative that we create a program, such as the proposed ABA one, to meet their needs. WHY ABA? Children with autism deserve ABA because there is more scientific evidence demonstrating ABA "works" than there is for any other intervention or treatment. WHY HERE? These children deserve the opportunity to stay in their communities, given that they receive the highly specialized support they need from qualified professionals. If we can create this program effectively, we will be able to retain our special needs population and perhaps bring some of the out-of-district placements back.

Thank you for your time and thank you, again, to Dr. Brenner, Mrs. Klein, and Mrs. Straiton for listening to the parents and for creating the initial design for a program that this town needs.

For those of you who don't know, Quiz bowl is a game in which two teams compete head-to-head to answer questions from all areas of knowledge and the middle school curriculum which cover history, literature, science, fine arts, geography, current events, sports, and popular culture. Players buzz in the answer, like you do in JEOPARDY, but as a team and not as a single person. It starts with a tossup which individuals players try to race to answer, which when done correctly, garners the team the chance to answer 3 bonus questions. Kids who participate in Quiz Bowl can have an interest in one or all of the subjects mentioned.

Over the years our MMS quiz bowl teams have developed brand recognition, ranking, and honor. People at tournaments know that we are a force to be reckoned with.

We have competed in several regional tournaments along with many schools across the Eastern US, where we have won first, second, or first and second place. In Quiz bowl Nationals 2015, in Dallas, we were #4 in the country and we had 3 7th graders receive individual scorer awards, out of the 600 kids attending. With this confidence we grew as a team that this year has 60-70 kids.

This year alone in every middle school tournament the A team competed in, we were placed first like last year, but also had our B, C and D teams in the top five rankings.

1. In the Bergen Academics Junior Competition our A team was #1 with our B team as #2.

5 out of the top 10 individual scorers were from Middlesex.

2. In Manheim Township, PA, Middle School Academic Challenge the A team was #1, with the B and D team in the top 5.

3. And in our very own Charter Oak Scholastic Tournament at the school we had the A, B, and D teams place in the top five. With the B team winning the tournament over the A team.. In Charter Oak 3 out of top 5 individual scorers were from Middlesex.

4. We have performed in high school tournaments, as well, and have performed brilliantly against High Schoolers.

At the Yale Academic Tournament the A team was ranked #5 in a field of 18 schools.

In the MIT fall tournament the A team was ranked #8 in a field of 24 schools . Beating very elite schools such as Phillips Exeter, Phillips Academy and Boston Latin. We were the only middle schoolers in all the tournaments.

These awards, rankings, and accomplishments are just the tip of them he iceberg.

Our proudest accomplishment came just two days ago in Atlanta when our A team won the Quiz Bowl Middle School National Championship and are now #1 in the country and are National champions out of a field of 160 teams nationwide. A phenomenal achievement. Our D team ranked 13th. In addition, we had an individual place in the top 20 and a 7 th grader received a rising star award. They competed against 832 players nationwide.

Our victory was remarkable, awe- inspiring and monumental in our history as a team and the history of Darien. I may be wrong, but I don't think many other teams have done well at this level in an activity.

You may ask...What does Quiz Bowl do for us?

And our answer will be ...we have fun learning about different things. It appeals to someone with a love for any one of the following topics like Sports, History, Art, Science, Geography, Pop

Trivia or all of the above. Quiz Bowl slowly molds us into well informed, savvy students who can confidently participate in a dialogue, on varied topics. **Some very shy students, have found Quiz Bowl to be a safe haven and these students have flourished in the program and have slowly come out of their shells.**

However, quiz bowl is more than just academics. It has helped build friendships with like minded classmates and made life long bonds. Some of my closest friends are from quizbowl. It helped me build connections with my teammates and coaches.

As captain of MMS Quiz Bowl, it has offered me ways to develop my leadership qualities and helped me enhance them so that I can be an efficient and productive leader.

Besides myself, this leadership opportunity is given to many kids to lead a team and helps build multiple leadership opportunities, across the board. In addition, quizbowl has helped me learn to have integrity and to be able to build upon my passions. With my passion, I have learned how to create a good work ethic and put in a 110% of my effort, into my work.

Quiz Bowl is a place for these students who share the same thirst for knowledge, to express their creativity, to showcase their thoughts, and intellectual prowess, and to speak up and not be afraid to voice your opinion or solution to a problem.

Finally, one major quality quiz bowl has taught us, is that we learn to work as a team. We all lose together and win together. We learn how to work well with other people and take advantage of each person's talent to make us invincible. We truly are "all for one and one for all".

Nevertheless we couldn't have gone this far without the support of our two wonderful coaches Mr. Romeo and Mrs. Ivey. They have supported this program for many years and their dedication has helped make it flourish into a nationally known team, today.

Mr. Romeo always stays after school, every day and practices with us. He is a coach that appreciates our dedication to this program and has taken advantage of our passion for knowledge, to transform us into an invincible team. In addition, he knows exactly when to raise our spirits by telling a joke and makes practicing more interesting, by telling us one of his stories or anecdotes. He knows exactly how to encourage us on, to becoming better players. It is always a treat and delight to have him as a coach.

Another coach I truly admire and look up to is Mrs. Ivey. In Malcolm Gladwell's book the Outliers he says "You have to put 10,000 hours into your field to become an expert". Well I couldn't have gone through those hours without her. Whenever I was in a bad mood or stressed out, she always knew how to cheer me up. Her smile is like a pearly white moon that looks over a stormy sea. My stormy sea of stress and emotions going through middle school. Somehow, that pearly white moon helped the stormy sea start to be more limpid and the only murmur is the ebb and flow of gentle waves. In addition, her knowledge is vast and she shares that with all of us. She shares every little fact or tid bit she knows, and lo and behold, it comes up in a tournament question. She researches various topics endlessly for us and guides us, on what to read. She always knows which book to read or which newspaper article to read, to further our knowledge in a topic of our interest. Her dedication to this program is what I admire and look up to. She spends extra hours practicing with kids. Everyday at 7:20 in the morning and everyday after school, along with Mr. Romeo. Like a watchful sentinel, shepherding us. Her dedication to practicing twice a day at Quiz Bowl is what inspires all of us to work our hardest. Her coaching and guidance has made Middlesex Middle School the best school in CT for the Geography Bee.

Mrs. Ivey also encourages girls, who show an interest in Quiz Bowl and supports them immensely.

We might sacrifice a lot of time and effort into quizbowl. But the true people who sacrifice the most, are our amazing coaches Mr. Romeo and Mrs. Ivey.

In conclusion all I am saying is that quizbowl has helped me take the hardest decision in my life. I took the "road not taken" but with that, I have grown to be more confident and well informed . In addition, quizbowl has helped many other kids take the same path and learn to be themselves and express who they are. But we couldn't have gone this far, without support from our wonderful coaches Mrs. Ivey and Mr. Romeo. Individually they are both fantastic but we need both of them to survive as a team, not just one. Without the support of both our coaches we would not have gone this far.

Good evening,

My name is Riya Krishnan and I am representing the Middlesex Middle school quiz bowl team.

I've wanted to share some of my experiences with quizbowl, and how important it was to me.

When I came to the middle school, I was **new** to the town and school. I was not involved in any school related extracurricular activities, and I didn't know very many people. But **that changed** for me after I joined quiz bowl.

It definitely piqued my interest, as I had been **interested in geography** in elementary school, and quizbowl opened my mind up to many **new topics** that I would eventually enjoy, such as science, history and literature. As soon as I joined I was immediately inspired by my **8th grade seniors**. I watched with how much hard work and determination they practiced, how much discipline with which they competed, and how much passion they had for learning and quizbowl. After my first tournaments, where naturally, I did not do so well, I learned the importance of dedication, hard work, making goals, and I knew I would have to put **110% effort** to meet those goals. Mr. Romeo and Mrs. Ivey, who **ran practices** every morning and afternoon were more than happy to help and prepare those like me, and to this day I look forward to the daily practices where I am greeted by Mr. Romeo's enthusiasm and Mrs. Ivey's embrace and interesting facts she has to share.

And of course, the real thing that kept me going was that it was **simply a lot of fun**. Quizbowl was a place where I could meet like-minded people who like me, enjoyed

learning about different topics. I have met some people who over time have become my **best friends**. Quizbowl is one of my favorite part of school, where I could embrace my knowledge, and not be afraid or ashamed of guessing the answer or speaking out. I had gone from a shy 6th grader to a more **confident**, "worldly wise", well informed 8th grader. Our Quizbowl team is like a **family** to me, and we all share a strong bond with each other, and our loving coaches.

I think the key to our success that's easy to miss, is our **support and practice structure**, which is what I think is the secret to our success, and for this, the **ONLY** people that deserve credit are our coaches, **Mr. Romeo and Mrs. Ivey**.

I don't think anything i say would be sufficient enough to thank our coaches. They are a beacon of **light** that guides us, a firm **hand** to support us, and a crowd to cheer us on. It is humbling to think of the **countless hours** of their own personal time they have spent to help us prepare for, and attend tournaments. They motivate us to work our hardest, and give us the **ingredients** we need for success, and how to put it together. Without their strong support and guidance we would have never achieved the level of success that we have, and I think we **ought to recognize** their contribution to us students, our school, and our Darien community.

Overall Quizbowl has been probably the best part of my middle school experience. We have achieved so much, and the **milestones** we've had are those we will always treasure. Quizbowl has been an **enriching** experience, and we credit this all to our

phenomenal coaches. After our tremendous success this weekend nothing I say does justice to our coaches, Mr. Romeo or Mrs. Ivey, who have taught us, believed in us and helped us unconditionally. We can only hope we have **touched their lives as profoundly they touched ours.**

Shared Services Meeting of 4.25.16

Members present:

Chairman: Frank Huck, Lee Palmer, Mike Harman, Marge Sion, Jamey Stevenson, Kate Busch, Mike Feeney, Callie Sullivan
reluctant secretary

Meeting Began at 8:05 AM

Discussion was primarily about combining pools of BOE and BOS Health Insurance for a larger pool which would have an more efficient time absorbing hits, and cost the tax payers less.

Areas to be aware of: The BOE doesn't want to have cost shifting, ie. Be responsible for more of the cost, even though there may be an overall cost savings, we must be held harmless for any increases in spending.

Wellness plans were discussed, as well as the different insurers and which offer different dental benefits. Employee Assistance Programs were reviewed, as well as the different Unions and their contract timing.

It was decided that a neutral advisor- ie not the BOE or the BOS's broker should be engaged to perform a third party analysis.

Mike Feeney and Marge Sion are currently preparing the RFQ for this work, in hope of hiring the third party by Mid June. The analysis would then be completed over the summer, and the committee would hope to have something to report. *this fall*.