

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting December 8, 2014

Lincoln Center

PRESENT: Crockett, Cruz, Leon, Pattacini, Pazda, Scappaticci, Stafford, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Assistant to the Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Matfess, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Radikas

ABSENT: Hagenow

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Superintendent Geary called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Geary. Mr. Geary explained that this is the organizational meeting of the Board and he would start the meeting off prior to the election of the new Chair and Secretary.

A.3. Election of Board Chair and Board Secretary

Mr. Geary asked for nominations for Board Chair.

Mr. Thames nominated Chris Pattacini for Chairman of the Board of Education, a member of the Board since 2008, four of those years serving as Chair. Mr. Thames noted Mr. Pattacini has led the Board during the hiring of both an interim and new Superintendent, with a focus on student outcomes. During his tenor board meetings have been streamlined and he has worked closely with the transition of the new Superintendent, along with the Interim Superintendent. Mr. Pattacini worked hard on the bond passage and has worked so that all Board members have a voice and makes sure meetings are productive. Mr. Thames feels Mrs. Pattacini is diligent and fair and his goal is to do right by our students.

Mr. Crockett seconded the nomination for Chair, noting Mr. Pattacini has served during four high school principals and three superintendents and has done a good job, even though they may not always agree. Mr. Crockett feels that Mr. Pattacini is

always willing to listen, discuss and strive for consensus and that he is a good leader, fair representative, and a good man.

Mr. Pattacini thanked the men for their kind words, noting that the work done over the years is the work of the full board, not one individual.

Mr. Geary called the vote.

8/0 – Voted in favor of Chris Pattacini as the Chairman.

Next, Mr. Pattacini asked for nominations for Secretary.

Ms. Cruz nominated Jason Scappaticci, a dedicated board member, for Secretary of the Board of Education. She noted his hard work, positive sense of humor, and ability to work well with a diverse board. Ms. Cruz feels Mr. Scappaticci has conducted his responsibilities with pride over the past year.

Mr. Stafford seconded the nomination of Jason Scappaticci for Secretary. He looks forward to the next year and knows Mr. Scappaticci will continue to do an awesome job.

The Chairperson called the vote.

8/0 – Voted in favor of Jason Scappaticci as the Secretary.

A.4. Reaffirming Board of Education Bylaws and Policies

Mr. Pattacini explained that once a year the bylaws and policies need to be reaffirmed.

Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation for the Board of Education to reaffirm its bylaws and policies.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

A.5. Approval of Board of Education Minutes – November 24, 2014

Secretary Scappaticci moved for the Board of Education to adopt the Board of Education minutes of the November 24, 2014 meeting. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

7/0/1 - Voted in favor.

B. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented five items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

B.1. Personnel Information

Details had already been provided to the Board members with their agenda.

B.2. Establish an appropriation for FY 14/15 in the amount of \$96,930 for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Secondary Basic Grant provided by the State of Connecticut

B.3. Resolution for First Niagara Municipal Deposit

B.4. Establish an appropriation for FY 14/16 in the amount of \$1,675,135 under the Title I Improving Basic Program grant to be funded by the CT State Department of Education

B.5. Establish an appropriation for FY 14/16 in the amount of \$182,373 under Title II – Part A Grant to be funded by the CT State Department of Education

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation for the Board of Education to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in Section B of tonight's agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Pattacini asked for clarification of Item 3. Mr. Geary explained the paperwork reflected a change in the signers on the Student Activities account at Manchester High School to reflect the new administration.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

C. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Autumn Struk, 26 Little Street, updated the Board on the Waddell Project Playground. Fun Run was held, and despite the rain, lots of families came and about 80 kids participated. Just under \$5,500 was raised and the total fundraising efforts at this point amount to about \$10,200. They hope to reach their goal by the end of the year. Ms. Struk handed out information to the Board, including information on an upcoming fundraiser at Bertucci's December 1st, updated proposals for the playground, and a list of their websites on Facebook and Go Fund Me. Ms. Struk wondered how the group would go about requesting additional finances from the Board. Mr. Pattacini

replied that the next step would be to go before the Building & Sites Committee and they would determine how to proceed.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, noted that yesterday was the 73rd anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. He recommended the books, *The History of the Philippines* and *Cold War*. Mr. Stringfellow also recommended the movies *The Intimidation Game*, *Unbroken*, and the also *Selma* about Dr. King. He pointed out an article about juvenile justice in East Hartford and the free Braille calendar available, along with an article on tobacco and minors.

D. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

D.1. Power Hour at Manchester High School

Mr. Geary welcomed the principal of MHS, Jill Krieger, to provide an update on how Power Hour is going at MHS. Mr. Geary explained the concept, which calls for an hour break mid-day where students can eat lunch and receive intervention supports during the school day, as well as participate in extra-curricular activities and socialize. Ms. Krieger introduced Assistant Principal Torres who organizes Power Hour. Ms. Krieger and Ms. Torres showed a presentation, which is available on the website. The goal is to increase student achievement by providing time to complete homework, get help with projects, ask for extra help if needed, participate in clubs, and provide a time to unwind.

Ms. Torres reviewed the results of the student survey, which showed 95% of students felt Power Hour provided a valuable break and 85% felt it positively impacted their grades. Students suggested separating the lunch waves for grades 9 and 10 in the future, and having teachers available for the entire hour.

Teachers surveyed felt less positive about the impact on student grades, with 47% feeling it had a positive impact, but 93% of teachers did feel this program helped staff to build relationships with students. Certified staff suggested requiring students with D's or F's to utilize Power Hour for extra help. They also suggested somehow tracking use, maybe requiring the kids to swipe in and out of classes. Another complaint was not having Guidance Counselors free for the entire hour. Some teachers are making themselves available the entire hour, thereby giving up their own lunch break. The full survey results are available on the website.

Two teachers and three students also spoke about Power Hour:

Ms. Dougherty – the lead teacher in the Family Consumer Science teacher in the EPSA Academy, feels students benefit from Power Hour. She is starting a best buddies program for ELL students that will take place during Power Hour. Ms. Dougherty feels this is an opportunity for students to make good decisions. She

would like to see more outdoor seating in the courtyard for students and possibly offering some structured events like workshops or author visits. She notes students can use the time for internships and community service projects as well.

Mr. Joshi, the Social Studies teacher leading the Truth Academy, loves Power Hour and noted about 25 students come to see him on a daily basis. He feels they are getting work done, socializing, and learning to manage their time, which is a valuable skill that students don't often have the opportunity to learn.

Student Robert notes some students go to the library or a classroom and if students are ambitious they will get their work done, though some don't want to. He thinks some students need a push to use Power Hour as it was meant to be used.

Student Nerune often uses Power Hour for extra-curricular activities as it is a chance to work with peers that participate in sports or band and often are not available for after-school clubs. She feels Power Hour is the best thing the school has done to help get kids involved.

Student Valeria feels Power Hour helps her breathe lighter as she doesn't have to stay after school as late. She is able to work on projects as a team and get homework completed.

Mr. Scappaticci wondered how many people completed the surveys. Ms. Krieger revealed that about 700 students and 170 staff submitted surveys. Mr. Scappaticci didn't see extra help as the only goal of this schedule. He stated this is a cultural change and it may take a while to determine if it is successful and he will be patient. He has been at MHS during Power Hour and he was really excited to see students in the halls working on projects, including reading the *Great Gatsby*!

Ms. Pazda also has been at MHS during Power Hour and she was blown away by 1600 students free to make choices and felt the building was filled with excitement. She noted the lunch waves were busy but there was no loitering in the halls. Classrooms were filled with great things and she was impressed that students were taking advantage of what MHS has to offer, whether it be getting extra help or attending clubs. She likes the idea of requiring students with Ds and Fs to utilize the time for extra help.

Mr. Pattacini has not yet been at MHS during this hour, however his daughter attends the school and has positive things to say about it.

D.2. Parent Guides to District Curriculum

Dr. Radikas reviewed the brochures that were recently given to parents at conferences in grades K-5. Each brochure outlines initiatives and changes, what

their child is learning in school, and what parents can do at home to help. The brochures are available on the website. Dr. Radikas noted Spanish versions will be available at the end of January.

Ms. Pazda thanked Dr. Radikas and feels it will be an incredible impact for parents to have this information, especially tips for what to do at home.

Mr. Thames thinks Dr. Radikas and her staff did a wonderful job on this brochure and noted parents need tools and this helps. He asked if they were sent home with the kids and what other ways could we market this. Dr. Radikas noted they were given out at conferences and extra copies will be made available in offices, libraries and Family Resource Centers. Mr. Thames notes it is sometimes hard to reach parents and we need to look at strategies to impact them. Dr. Radikas reviewed that Dr. Oliver is in talks with PTAs on the topic and she doesn't want to just send them home without a conversation with parents.

Mr. Pattacini feels the brochures help explain the language and provide a sense of what is going on in the classroom. He would like to see these in the Family Resource Centers.

E. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

F. NEW BUSINESS

F.1. Policy Revisions

Mr. Geary explained the revision to Policy 5143.2 School Lunch Accounts. Previously if students didn't have money in their lunch account they were permitted to charge three meals. After that, an alternative meal – usually a cheese sandwich, fruit, and milk – was provided. This change will eliminate the alternative meal and children will be able to partake in the regular menu. Increased efforts will be made to contact parents to have the account brought current.

Mr. Leon agreed with the change, but wondered how we prevent abuse of the policy. Mr. Geary noted that even with the alternative lunch, parents were still being charged. Report cards can be withheld if a balance is owed, but the possibility of offering the option for others to donate to a fund when paying their own child's lunch is being explored. Social workers will also outreach to families. Mr. Geary feels this policy is in the best interest of students.

Mr. Pattacini reviewed that this policy revision will be up for adoption at the next Board of Education meeting.

F.2. Policy Additions

Mr. Geary reviewed the proposed policy: Student Representatives to the Board of Education. Two students, one junior and one senior, would be selected to serve in a non-voting capacity on the Board of Education for one year terms. At least one of the two shall be present at each Board meeting. The full proposed policy is available on the website.

Mr. Thames felt this was a great idea but wondered about the selection process and marketing of the topic. He asked about what criteria would be required. Mr. Thames hopes this opportunity will be open to as many students as possible. Mr. Geary reviewed this will be open to all juniors and seniors through an application process. There will be criteria beyond grades and requires a commitment to attend Board meetings. Mr. Coyne felt it would be good to have a junior join him to provide a different perspective.

Ms. Cruz wondered about the timeframe. Mr. Geary replied that if this comes back to the Board in January applications could be due by March and chosen students could possibly finish off this year prior to serving next year.

Mr. Crockett asked who would decide from among the applicants. Mr. Geary felt the high school principal and her designee would review the applicants and make the decision.

Ms. Pazda noted this will be two students from among 1600. The term is just one school year, though it will be possible for the junior representative to successfully bid for a second year, though that will not be automatic.

Ms. Cruz wondered if we could vote on the topic tonight to move this along. Mr. Pattacini stated we could not, as it is required to have the policy reviewed at one meeting and adopted at the next. He thanked Mr. Coyne for bringing this idea to the Board.

F.3. Policy Deletions

Mr. Geary reviewed three policies to be deleted:

- a. 4131 Professional Growth
- b. 4133 Continuing Education Units
- c. 4147 Credit on Teacher Salary Schedule for Teacher Aide Experience

Mr. Geary noted that items (a) and (c) are contractual issues and these policies are simply outdated. Item (b) refers to CEU's, which no longer exist in Connecticut. Mr. Geary noted that a new policy on Professional Learning will be coming up soon.

Mr. Stafford asked about (a) and (c) not being in the contracts and Mr. Geary clarified, those topics are actually covered in the contracts already.

Mr. Pattacini noted these will come back for vote at the next Board meeting.

G. COMMITTEE REPORTS

G.1. Policy Committee

Ms. Pazda reviewed that the last meeting of the Policy Committee was held November 24th. In attendance were Maria Cruz, Deb Hagenow, Mary-Jane Pazda and Matt Geary. The Committee tabled their discussion of a Vice Chair to a later meeting. Mr. Geary reported that a draft of Policy 3510 will be forthcoming at the next Policy Committee. The Committee endorsed the revision to Policy 5143.2, the addition of Board Policy Student Representatives to the Board of Education, and the deletion of Policies 4131, 4133, and 4147. The Committee members also endorsed moving the Communications section of the agenda to after the second Public Comment at Board meetings on a trial basis. The next meeting will be held on January 26th at 5:30 p.m.

H. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

Autumn Struk, 26 Little Street, enjoyed reading the tri-folds provided at each parent-teacher conference she attended for her children. It brought to light what each of her children were doing in class and she feels it is a valuable tool and thanked Dr. Radikas' office for providing them.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, enjoyed the presentation on Power Hour. He wishes they had that when he was a student and feels it is important that students build relationships and don't feel like a number. It improves school climate. Mr. Stringfellow again recommended the brochure *Time Out of School*. He recommended an article in *Better Manchester* about feeling connected in school and also an article on unemployment. Mr. Stringfellow stated that students ages 16-24 often feel disconnected and would benefit from a mentor. He noted childhood abuse often effects learning. Mr. Stringfellow feels communication is important and boys and girls learn in different ways. He recommended an article in *Family Circle* about how to talk to your son and also recommended the book *Teacher Quality 2.0*. Last Mr. Stringfellow feels our school system is doing quite well, though as a former student of color he asks that "you listen to our voices too".

I. COMMUNICATIONS

Student Representative Joseph Coyne updated the Board on the happenings at MHS recently.

- Turkey Bowl 11/20 – The junior and senior girls play flag football while the boys cheer – all for charity. They students raised 460 canned goods and \$470 for MACC Food Pantry and the seniors won 16-6.
- No Shave November – Students and staff grew or fabricated facial hair to raise awareness for prostate cancer.
- Leadership Conference 11/21-22 – Group discussions and a dance.
- Blood Drive – 12/3-4 – There were 35 donors and 43 units were collected, which can save 129 lives! Mr. Coyne noted he donated and passed out!
- Laramie Project 11/13-15 – Sock n' Buskin put on this show about the serious topic of gay prejudice.
- Gingerbread Houses 12/4-5 – The Culinary Arts program had a fun time making these festive decorations.

Mr. Leon thanked the Policy Committee for putting the Communication section after the second Public Comment section.

Mr. Pattacini reminded everyone that the Board of Education has rescheduled the second December meeting and it will be a retreat instead. The next public meeting will be held January 12th.

J. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

K. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Scappaticci moved and Ms. Pazda seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment :22p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Board Secretary