GROTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 21, 2024 @ 6:00 P.M.
CENTRAL OFFICE, ROOM 11

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jay Weitlauf – Chairperson, Beverly Washington – Vice Chairperson (remote) Andrea Ackerman (remote), Dean Antipas, Adrian Johnson, Matthew Shulman, Ian Thomas, Jennifer White, Michael Whitney

ALSO PRESENT: Susan Austin, Anne Marie Mancini, Denise Doolittle, Laurie LePine, Clint Kennedy, Lauren Casini (remote), Steve Wheeler, Jamie Giordano, Paul DiPadua

I. CALL TO ORDER – Mr. Jay Weitlauf, Chairperson called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

II. REVIEW OF OCTOBER 15, 2024, MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: Whitney, Antipas: To approve the minutes of October 15, 2024 meeting with the correction to Mr. Thomas' referral to discuss P1312 & P1312.4 regarding public/anonymous complaint policy and procedure – change to process and procedure.
PASSED – UNANIMOUSLY

III. REVIEW TRMS AND MRMS DATA, ACTION PLANS, AND INTERVENTION SUPPORT

Mrs. Doolittle addressed how special education impacts the schools. (Attachment #1)

Mr. Wheeler gave an overview of the MRMS data and action plan and Mrs. Giordano gave an overview of the TRMS data and action plan. (Attachment #2)

IV. REVIEW DRAFT SCHOOL CALENDAR (Attachment #3)

The Board reviewed the draft 2025-2026 school calendar.

V. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Washington, Johnson:
To adjourn at 8:58 p.m.
PASSED - UNANIMOUSLY

Groton Public Schools

SPECIAL EDUCATION OVERVIEW



Groton Public Schools designs and conducts individualized evaluations for children who are experiencing learning delays and if eligible, collaborates with families in the development of an individualized educational plan to meet the child's needs. The Planning and Placement Team, with parent input, determines the level of support required for students to progress in the general education setting. If appropriate, programs are available to provide students with more intensive specialized instruction and supports.

Denise Doolittle
Director, Pupil Personnel

Karen Hyatt
Amy Ruotolo
Katie Vanasse
Special Education Supervisors

Department and Program Highlights:

- 6 Integrated Preschool Classrooms
- 11 Intensive Learning Classrooms
- 7 Social Emotional/Behavioral Academy Classrooms
- Transition Program for students ages 18-22
- Alternative Educational Program
- Medical Director to advise school staff
- Nursing and School Health Aides in every school
- Social Emotional Learning Curriculum
- Mental Health Consultant
- Assistive Technology

821 Students = 20%

of Groton Public Schools' total student enrollment are receiving special education support(s)

Certified Staff: 119.6

- Special Education Teachers 63.0
- Speech and Language Pathologists 14.0
- School Psychologists 11.0
- School Social Workers 11.0 (5.5 BOE, 5.5 Grants)
- School Counselors 12.6
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst 1.0
- Dyslexia Specialists 7.0

Contracted Staff: 10.8

- Occupational Therapists 3.0
- Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants 2.6
- Physical Therapists 1.4
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst 1.8
- Nurse's Aide 1.0
- Dyslexia Specialists 1.0

Non-Certified Staff: 272

- 198 Paraprofessionals
- 11 Registered Behavior Therapists



Early Childhood Program

DID YOU KNOW?

- Increases occurred in the percentage of students with disabilities for the 12th year in a row, with 17.1% of students receiving special education services, according the Connecticut State Department of Education.
- In the 23-24 school year Groton Public Schools screened 215 three and four year-old children for Preschool or Pre-K eligibility.
- Connecticut continues to experience an increase in homelessnes, impacting the number of students experiencing housing insecurity and in need of student support services and transportation.

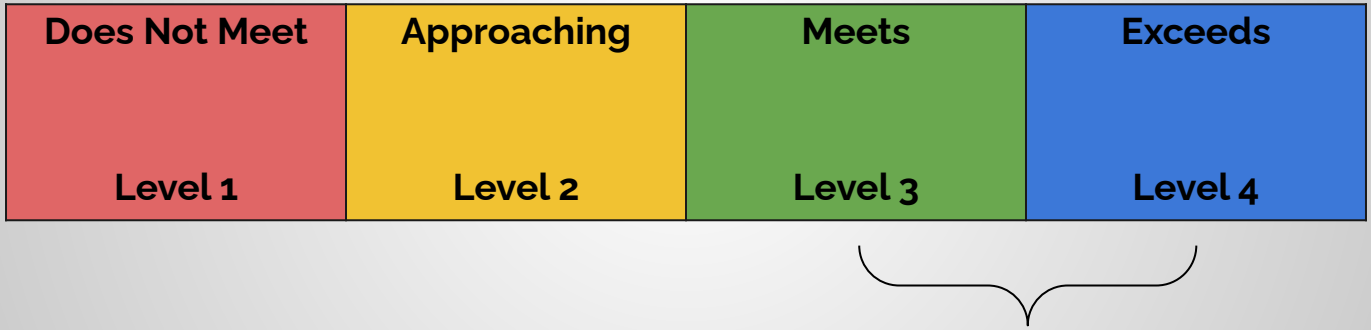
MRMS/TRMS
Data Reporting: Goals & Action Plan
October 21, 2024

Mystic River Magnet School: Who Are We?

School Enrollment	542
Special Programming	● Preschool- 3 Classrooms (AM/PM classes) ● Pre-Kindergarten- 1 Classroom (AM/PM classes) ● Transitional Kindergarten- 1 Classroom ● Autism Program- 5 classrooms (Including 1 Preschool Autism Classroom)
Student Makeup	● 52% Free/Reduced Eligible (282 students) ● 32% Special Education (173 students) ● 8% Limited English Proficiency (43 students)
Chronic Absenteeism Trend	● 2022- 26.9% ● 2023- 22.6% ● 2024- 17.2%
Theme/Theme Related Opportunities	● School Based Enrichment blocks on Friday ● Friday Electives for Play Block ● All school Day play-based learning stations- 3 times per year ● Pfizer, NESS, Niantic Children's Museum visits during year

Smarter Balanced Assessment

Achievement Levels
(According to Grade Level Standards)



MRMS: Smarter Balanced Performance

ELA	Does Not Meet Standards	Approaching Standards	Meets Standards	Exceeds Standards
Student Count (175)	61	36	38	40
Student Percentage	35%	21%	22%	23%

Math	Does Not Meet Standards	Approaching Standards	Meets Standards	Exceeds Standards
Student Count (175)	61	42	35	37
Student Percentage	35%	24%	20%	21%

ELA Smarter Balanced By Grade Level

Grade 3	Does Not Meet	Approaching	Meets	Exceeds
Count (67)	22	17	10	18
Percent	33%	25%	15%	27%
Grade 4				
Count (52)	25	7	8	12
Percent	48%	13%	15%	23%
Grade 5				
Count (56)	14	12	20	10
Percent	25%	21%	36%	18%

Math Smarter Balanced By Grade Level

Grade 3	Does Not Meet	Approaching	Meets	Exceeds
Count (67)	22	18	13	14
Percent	33%	27%	19%	21%
Grade 4				
Count (52)	18	13	13	8
Percent	35%	25%	25%	15%
Grade 5				
Count (56)	21	11	9	15
Percent	38%	20%	16%	27%

Next Generation Science Standards
MRMS Elementary Students

Grade 5 NGSS	Does Not Meet Standards	Approaching Standards	Meets Standards	Exceeds Standards
Student Count (56)	14	14	23	5
Student Percentage	25%	25%	41%	09%

Mystic River
School Culture and Climate Survey

- Results indicated positive focus on relationships- both with students and staff.
- Results also indicated a high percentage of students feeling like they belong.
- As we continue to focus on monthly “superpowers,” we will work to integrate a kindness theme throughout the year. Survey data showed a need to focus on students using kind words toward each other.
- We will also expand communication with families through increased newsletters, posts on ParentSquare, and long-term planning for themed-based activities, spirit days, and school events.
- Lastly, MRMS will take a deeper dive into staff morale and climate through the work of our school culture/climate committee.

Mystic River Action Plan

Areas of Focus:

- **Math –** Students will increase their overall yearly growth and proficiency in Mathematics. (Targeted math concept area by grade based upon prior Smarter Balanced assessments. (place value and fractions-gr. 3,/ fractions- gr. 4,/Multi-digit operations and problem solving-gr. 5)
- .**ELA-** Students will increase their overall annual growth and proficiency in ELA. Focus on independent reading, written response to reading, and WIN skills-small group.
- **Science -** We will focus heavily on utilizing IABs as a teaching tool with students. In addition MRMS will utilize district assessments to drive instruction and practice for students. Lastly, MRMS will implement the use of interactive science kits through Mystery Science.

Action Steps:

- Implement learning walks in Science with our district Director of STEM and Magnet programs.
- Utilize numeracy screener for all K-5 students three times yearly, addressing content target areas. Monitor DreamBox goals (Growth and Standards) through monthly math data meetings.
- Math Specialists- Continue coaching and total push-in intervention supports in small groups. Conduct weekly planning and instructional meetings with grade levels.
- ELA coaching- Grades 3-5, Literacy Specialist will provide support in the implementation of Wit & Wisdom.. We will look to target small group instructional practices during WIN blocks to support stronger written responses,
- ELA- coaching- Grades K-2- Literacy Specialist continue in their support of phonics instruction and support implementation of Wit & Wisdom. Win blocks, small group instructional practices will be a focus.
- ELStudent focus- ensuring consistent interventions in both EL services and remedial reading along with Tier 1 instruction. Progress monitoring and growth target focus. (Math and Reading)
- Target students through reading intervention that are “approaching” grade level proficiency.

Thames River Magnet School: Who Are We?

School Enrollment	537
Special Programming	• Preschool - 3 Classes (AM/PM) • PreK - 1 Class (AM/PM) • Transitional Kindergarten - 1 Class • Academy Program - 2 Classes (K-1; 2-3)
Student Makeup	• 50% Free/Reduced Eligible • 27% Special Education • 3% Limited English Proficiency
Chronic Absenteeism Trend	• 2022- 24.6% • 2023- 19.4% • 2024- 14.3%
Theme/ Theme Related Opportunities	• Marine - Project O Educators at TRMS Tues & Thurs teaching hands-on lessons connecting to Project Based Learning and NGSS Standards • Field Trips with Project O and culminating Action Projects • Environmental- Recycling, Gardening, Plant Sale, Composting, Trails

TRMS: Smarter Balanced Performance

ELA	Does Not Meet Standards	Approaching Standards	Meets Standards	Exceeds Standards
Student Count (190)	53	39	49	49
Student Percentage	28%	21%	26%	26%

Math	Does Not Meet Standards	Approaching Standards	Meets Standards	Exceeds Standards
Student Count (190)	50	44	51	45
Student Percentage	26%	23%	27%	24%

ELA Smarter Balanced By Grade Level

Grade 3	Does Not Meet	Approaching	Meets	Exceeds
Count (63)	15	14	18	16
Percent	24%	22%	29%	25%
Grade 4				
Count (73)	24	17	19	13
Percent	33%	23%	26%	18%
Grade 5				
Count (54)	14	8	12	20
Percent	26%	15%	22%	37%

Math Smarter Balanced By Grade Level

Grade 3 Math	Does Not Meet	Approaching	Meets	Exceeds
Count (63)	11	15	21	16
Percent	17%	24%	33%	25%
Grade 4 Math				
Count (73)	22	16	25	10
Percent	30%	22%	34%	14%
Grade 5 Math				
Count (54)	17	13	5	19
Percent	31%	24%	09%	35%

Next Generation Science Standards
Thames River Elementary Students

Grade 5 NGSS	Does Not Meet Standards	Approaching Standards	Meets Standards	Exceeds Standards
Student Count (54)	11	12	18	13
Student Percentage	20%	22%	33%	24%

Thames River School Culture and Climate Survey

CLIMATE GOAL: Increase positive initiatives and explicit teaching so that students recognize and understand the impact of kind words and actions on others and themselves.

Data from 2023 "Hear Kind Words" A lot was a need

CONTINUED CLIMATE GOAL from 22-23:
Continue to advance the work related to students recognizing and understanding what a trusted adult is and know they can go to them when they need help.

Data from 2023 Trusted Adult Focus Goal K-5. Increased



ACTION STEPS

- **All staff can give *Shout-Outs* to students to celebrate and promote citizenship and positive behaviors - We announce all on Friday Morning Announcements**
- **Whole Class *Turtley-Awesome Shout-Outs***
- **Second Step Lessons and Health Lessons taught weekly**
- **Using DESSA Data and resources to focus on specific grade levels, classes, and individual students**
- **Whole School Meetings to celebrate positive behaviors with *Splash of the Month* and having student leaders as role models lead the meeting**
- **Continue to promote and infuse our Mission of BELONG *(Believe in Ourselves, Engage and Explore, Learn from Each Other, Never Give Up and Grow Together)* daily**

Thames River Action Plan

AREAS of FOCUS:

- **LITERACY - Students will discuss and write about fiction and nonfiction texts in order to strengthen their communication skills. Additionally, students will increase their oral reading fluency (rate and accuracy) with a grade level text in order to improve comprehension.**
- **MATH - Students will clearly and precisely construct viable arguments to support their own reasoning and to critique the reasoning of others through words, models, and/or numbers.**
- **SCIENCE - Students will explain and communicate ideas and reasoning through varied representations such as: model, illustration, graphing, measurement, written and verbal forms *(GPS High Quality Science Instruction).***

ACTION STEPS:

- **Provide increased opportunities for student discourse through: Socratic Seminars, Think Pair Share, Turn and Talk as well as provide discussion stems/starters to help guide conversation.**
- **Assign writing tasks based upon text and build content knowledge making curricular connections**
- **Provide opportunities for students to practice fluency through choral reading, echo reading, repeated reading**
- **Increase opportunities for students to actively engage in math reasoning by having students explain how a specific strategy works (verbally, in written form, and/or model representations)**
- **Start with a *Communication and Reasoning Warm-up* before mini-lessons or number string**
- **Apply number string concepts during lessons and during small group work**
- **Scheduled SBAC IABs (Science, Math, ELA) will be used as a teaching tool and to reinforce testing protocols**
- **Create opportunities for students to discuss their thinking around a science topic to provide students with different perspectives and ideas**
- **Teachers will use Mystery Science lessons to have students develop models, plan and carry out investigations and/or experiments. Additionally, Project O educators will take a deeper dive to enrich a topic..**

DRAFT - 2025-2026 School Calendar

Early dismissal

No school

Start Date: 8/28/2025

Tentative End Date: 6/12/2026

JULY 2025				0/0
M	T	W	Th	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

3, 4 July 4th Recess

AUGUST 2025				2/2
M	T	W	Th	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

25 Convocation/School Meetings
26, 27 Professional Development
28 First Day of School (1-12)
29 First Day of School (K)

SEPTEMBER 2025				21/23
M	T	W	Th	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

1 Labor Day
2 First Day of School (Preschool, PreK)
9 TLI-Early Dismissal

OCTOBER 2025				22/45
M	T	W	Th	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

7 TLI-Early Dismissal
13 Columbus/Indigenous Peoples' Day
29, 30, 31 Parent/Teacher Conference

NOVEMBER 2025				15/60
M	T	W	Th	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

4 Professional Development
11 Veteran's Day
26, 27, 28 Thanksgiving Recess

DECEMBER 2025				17/77
M	T	W	Th	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

9 TLI-Early Dismissal
23 Early Dismissal Holiday Recess
24-31 Winter Holiday Recess

JANUARY 2026				19/96
M	T	W	Th	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

1,2 Winter Holiday Recess
13 TLI-Early Dismissal
19 Martin Luther King Day

FEBRUARY 2026				18/114
M	T	W	Th	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27

10 TLI-Early Dismissal
16, 17 Presidents Day Recess

MARCH 2026				21/135
M	T	W	Th	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

6 Professional Development
10 TLI-Early Dismissal
25, 26, 27 Parent/Teacher Conference

APRIL 2026				16/151
M	T	W	Th	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	

3 Good Friday
13-17 Spring Recess
28 TLI-Early Dismissal

MAY 2026				20/171
M	T	W	Th	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

12 TLI-Early Dismissal
25 Memorial Day

JUNE 2026				10/181
M	T	W	Th	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

12 Snow Make-Up day
19 Juneteenth Day
FHS Graduation - TBD*