



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

OPEN SESSION MINUTES OCTOBER 3, 2017

Meeting:	School Committee
Date:	October 3, 2017
Location:	MERMHS Library
Attendees:	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent of Schools; Avi Urbas, Director of Finance; Ann Cameron, Chairman; Julie Riordan, Co-Chairman; Shannon Erdmann, Sarah Wolf, Caroline Weld, Ken Warnock, and Rachel Fitzgibbon
Absent:	None
Recorded by:	Adele Ardolino, Secretary

A. Call to Order

Ms. Cameron called the School Committee Business Meeting Open Session to order at 6:40 p.m.

B. Business Meeting Open Session

1) Student Report: None.

2) Consent Agenda

- Acceptance of Warrants: FY17 Voucher 1072. FY18 Voucher 1016.
- Out-of-State Travel.
- Minutes 9/5/2017 and 9/19/2017 (as amended per Ms. Fitzgibbon).

Ms. Cameron asked Ms. Puglisi for more detailed information regarding the Manchester-Essex Spanish students' trip to Peru during the April school vacation.

Ms. Puglisi explained that there was a parent meeting last night (10/2) and this trip is definite. Ms. Beaudoin stated that the Committee has to approve their intent to go on this trip.

Ms. Wolf made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, and Ms. Erdmann seconded the motion. Vote: Unanimous by Ms. Cameron, Ms. Riordan, Ms. Erdmann, Ms. Wolf, Ms. Weld, Mr. Warnock, and Ms. Fitzgibbon.

3) Sub-Committee Reports

- **Elementary Facilities (Caroline Weld/Ann Cameron):** Ms. Weld stated that there is a community meeting on 10/4 at the Memorial Elementary School to discuss the feasibility study, its process and timeline. There will be a meeting at 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Cameron explained that there was a meeting last week to discuss feasibility study, site issues, and the concepts of the community meeting. The Community meeting is about who the people are and what is the process.

- **Finance Committee: (Ann Cameron/Shannon Erdmann):** Ms. Cameron stated that there will be a meeting on October 18th with the Essex Board of Selectmen, but haven't heard anything from the Manchester Board of Selectmen
- **Policy & Communications Committee: (Rachel Fitzgibbon/Ken Warnock):** Ms. Fitzgibbon explained that the topic was giving a facelift to the landing page of the School Committee regarding content and making it more easily accessible. Mr. Warnock suggested subscribing to sections of the school district website, so that the parents and the community can be appraised of events, etc. Ms. Beaudoin asked the Committee to register to the website as a test to be certain that it will reliably go out to people. Ms. Beaudoin cautioned about the expectations they will be setting by offering the option of subscribing and also the decision has to be made as to what notifications are going to be pushed out. We do not have a dedicated webmaster to take care of this on a daily basis, nor do we have anybody dedicated to communications and standardization. Ms. Beaudoin will contact Mr. Kwiatek to see what options are available for the School Committee website and how to narrow the subscription options. Ms. Wolf stated that she is an advocate for the newspaper, but not an advocate for subscriptions to get that messaging out.
- **Negotiation Team (Sarah Wolf/Julie Riordan):** No report.

4) Superintendent's Report

Ms. Beaudoin stated that Cyber Safety Night will be on October 19. How Am I Different meeting will be held on October 26. We are well underway with the RULER training. The annual Reaching All Learners PD Day will be on October 6—the keynote speaker is Robert Brooks to speak about raising resilient children, and there will also be workshops.

5) Continued Business

High School SIP Progress Report—Patricia Puglisi

Ms. Puglisi outlined the latest developments as follows:

Whole Child

- Continued work with Guidance Department development.
- Implementation of U Block, which is a time slot to provide time for teachers to assist students who need extra help, time for homework, or whatever fits the individual students best. This year, a teacher can require a student to go to their U Block, if the student is not doing well in that area.
- Implementation of the Bridge Program, which is a 12-13 week program for students who are out of school, for whatever reason, for 5 plus days where teachers and a social worker will assist students with the transition back to their classes, and the students' progress is monitored by 2-week progress reports. A quiet room will be provided for counseling sessions, phone calls, etc., and then an academic room.

Student Achievement

- Bell schedule implemented (length of the class periods—59 minute block during the day, 45 minute directed study in the middle of the day [Power Block/E Block]).
- Lunches—the high school students now have a separate lunch time from the middle school students.
- Professional development focused on implementation of student centered learning.
- Professional development focused on depth over breadth.
- Continue curricular review in all departments.
- Implementation of new grade 12 English electives.
- Outstanding AP, MCAS, and PISA outcomes.
- Department of Education Commendation School.

Climate

- Bell schedule reduced stress for both students and teachers.
- U Block changed the school day for both students and teachers.
- Separation lunches from Middle School and divided by class.

Community Partnerships

- School Council focus on community partnership, Police & Fire Departments, Chamber of Commerce, Libraries, Career Day.
- International Week speakers.
- Conference & Networking: MassCue, NACAC, NCSS, Primary Source, AP Institutes, New England Bio Labs, AP Reading.
- ASR Internships (11 internships—course high).
- Gardner Project—Bikes for Humanity.

Resources

- Re-allocation of funds to expand music program.
- Re-allocation of sections to develop expanded Green Scholars program beginning with a sustainable class.
- Re-allocation of staffing to allow for development of STEM pathway.
- Use of Spaulding Funds to transform Library into a Learning Commons.

FY 18 Outlook

- Student Centered Learning.
- Social Emotional Learning—RULER.
- Curricular Review and Mapping.
- NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) Self Reflection Study.
- Athletics Review.
- Implementation of Bridge Program.

Areas of Concern

- Social Emotional Health of Students.
- Inclusivity, Tolerance and Empathy. Student participation in association with Online for Good, WGBH Anti-Bullying, Anti-Deformation League to partner with their World of Difference program, and the Faith in History and Ourselves program.

Question & Answer Session

Ms. Weld expressed concern regarding the possibility of some students being overwhelmed with too many AP courses and the Honors program and inquired about finding a balance. Ms. Puglisi replied that the Guidance counselors monitor the number of AP courses that students take and advise the students. However, the teachers and guidance counselors need to have more conversations regarding

evaluating students' other activities and finding the right balance regarding recommendations for taking the Honors courses.

Ms. Erdmann asked for more information about the Bridge program. Ms. Puglisi explained that it is modeled after the BRYT program (Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition) partnering with schools and families to get teens back on track after prolonged absences), from Brookline High School. This is our first year in this program and we are working on the entrance and exit criteria.

Ms. Erdmann asked if the Athletics Review will be publicized and how will the suggestions be implemented. Ms. Puglisi explained that a presentation will be given to the School Committee, following that we will make it public and then have to strategize how we can make the improvements. Ms. Erdmann gave an editorial directed at the camera: “When we have an Athletics review, we have more than 30 parents in attendance, but when we do a Curriculum review.....crickets. NO one shows up. That’s a shame....”

Mr. Warnock asked if there is social media guidance for the students. Ms. Puglisi explained that the teachers are addressing issues of inappropriateness as they come up in real time.

Mr. Warnock asked about the timing of the recommendations for the Honors Program, and Ms. Puglisi replied that they will be allowing more time for the teachers and guidance counselors to make their recommendations.

Ms. Wolf stated that she is in favor of the focus on social/emotion health and regarding school spirit, asked if there will be a homecoming dance. Ms. Puglisi replied that Spirit Week will be held October 15-21 and run by the Student Council—some thoughts are to have a pancake breakfast, a project to decorate the halls of the school, a pep rally on October 20, and a dance at the school for grades 9-12 on October 21. Pink ribbons will be sold at the football games for breast cancer awareness. The issue of better attendance at the school's sports events was raised and Ms. Puglisi explained that this is being addressed by the Athletic Directors with better scheduling, etc.

Ms. Fitzgibbon asked for more details on Online for Good and World of Difference. Ms. Puglisi explained that Online for Good (anti-bullying, better online presence is an event sponsored by Framingham State College and WGBH, and MERHS send four students and a teacher to this event. World of Difference is sponsored by the Anti-Deformation League, and there will be a conference in April to bring schools together to talk about issues such as tolerance, acceptance, and inclusivity in the schools. They will also send one of their members to MERHS to train our students on these issues—train the trainer model on kids working with kids.

Ms. Fitzgibbon asked if the plan is to bring MEMO (Manchester-Essex online magazine) back, and Ms. Puglisi replied that the teacher who works on MEMO is currently busy with the yearbook and other projects, but will work on MEMO as time permits.

Ms. Cameron asked if U Block is having a positive impact. Ms. Puglisi replied that they will be a survey at some point, but if it didn't have a positive academic impact, the teachers would certainly let her know. Ms. Weld faced the camera and stated that it shouldn't just have a positive academic impact. Ms. Puglisi replied that it is about finding the balance among all the students' personalities and their individual needs results in how they use the U block period—some for homework, quiet reading time, listening to their iPods, etc. Ms. Cameron stated that it helps students succeed academically when they are not anxious and they are able to work at their own pace (social/emotional).

The School Committee thanked Ms. Puglisi for doing a great job, and Ms. Puglisi thanked the Committee for their support.

Middle School SIP Progress Report—Joanne Maino

Last Year's Goal Overview—FY16

- Facilitate New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS) Whole School Assessment.
- Leverage Assessment for Ongoing Professional Development.
- NELMS Scheduling Workshops (Winter 2017).
- Increased Focus on expanding faculty and staff capacity in areas of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Social Emotional Learning (SEL), and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
- Explore opportunities to "innovate" with faculty and staff.

Whole Child

Accomplishments

- NELMS Assessment—completed January 2017.
- New 2017-18 schedule developed and ratified through META Contract, May 2017.

Schedule Improvements

- Incorporated ME Block into each day: 32 ME Block groups ranging in size from to 16 students.
- Divided lunches into 3 grade-level times (7th and 8th grade no longer sharing).
- Added end-of-day homeroom for Grade 6.

Grade-Specific Improvements

- Increased focus on community building in Grade 6.
- Creation of Middle School Academy (MSA) in Grade 6.

- Piloting student-led conferences in Grade 7.
- Return to one-team structure with increased in-class support in Grade 8.

Extracurricular Improvements

- March Madness Spirit Week.
- Fall and Spring Plays (in partnership with YMCA): Student participation increases: 37% (2016-17); 46% (2017-18).

Note: 76 students currently participating in the play—20% of all students).

After School Clubs

- Mountain Biking Club (added in 2016-17). Doubled in size this year.
- Additional clubs coming soon: Art and Nature and Card-making clubs.

Student Achievement

- Began grade-level work with Teachers 21 to uncover opportunities for increasing student-centered learning through multidisciplinary focused work.
- Laid the groundwork for including Engineering for Grade 6 students starting in 2017-18.
- Used IXL to facilitate student summer math practice in order to:
 - Streamline the workload and increase student engagement.
 - Utilize a tool for improved data collection and analysis.
 - Highlight opportunities for vertical curriculum alignment.
- Participated in faculty summer reading based on NELMS recommendations: Teach Like a Pirate, Dave Burgess.

Never Work Harder Than Your Students, Robyn Jackson.

Climate

Accomplishments

- March Madness Spirit Week.
 - Grade-level community identity and team building.
 - Daily, student-centered areas of focus.
 - Whole school community building.
- Sunshine Committee.
 - A grassroots, faculty initiated group focused on boosting morale.
- School Dances (one each trimester).
 - Organized by Student Council.
 - Includes all grades.
- Morning announcements done by students.
- Beginner RULER work with faculty and staff (setting the tone and laying the groundwork).

Community Partnerships

Accomplishments

- Career Day (coordinated through School Council).
16 professionals (Artist, Fitness, Lawyer, Movie Critic, Therapist, Veterinarian, etc.)
- Student-led community outreach and fundraising initiatives:
Iron Giraffe—Water for South Sudan.
Partners in Development—Haiti.
Open Door—Gloucester, MA.
- Coffee with the Principal.
One monthly—morning and afternoon sessions.
- Continue to work with YMCA and Manchester Parks & Recreation.

Resources

Accomplishments

- A Chromebook for every student.
All general education classrooms equipped with Chromebook carts.
Shared with exploratory classes as required.
- IXL (Subscription-based learning site for K-12 education).
Math classes.
Science class (Grade 8).

FY 18 Outlook

Overarching Goals

- Continue to incorporate NELMS recommendations in order to increase and improve:
Student-centered and student-led learning.
Interdisciplinary work across all grade levels.
Instruction and assessment: Expanding differentiation, embedding themes, and broadening formative and summative assessment options.
- Align with new Curriculum Standards (English, Math, and Science) and strengthen vertical connections.
- Investigate new science resources that align instruction and assessment across all grades.
- Consider expanding IXL into Grades 6-8 English.
- Expand upon the work done with Teachers 21.
- Extend RULER work to students and families.

Question and Answer Session

Ms. Fitzgibbon asked for more information on Teachers 21. Ms. Maino explained that it is a consulting group that provides professional development and coaching for the administration and teachers. Ms. Fitzgibbon remarked that she is happy to see that Career Day is going well and that the Middle School has its own Spirit Week, and asked about the Math Club. Ms. Maino replied that it's not as robust as she would like it to be, but the students enjoy it. Ms. Maino added that she

would like to see more girls participate in the Math Club and Robotics. Career Day will be every two to three years, so we do not exhaust the resource pool.

Ms. Wolf asked Ms. Maino to expand on the student-led conferences in Grade 7. Ms. Maino explained that the students will do a lot of the work in English and Social Studies classes, collecting the work they have done through their Google drive folders, and doing guided reflections on some of the pieces of their work to examine where their strengths are. Parents will be invited in and the child will lead the discussion, show a sample of their work and articulate their own understanding of their abilities as a learner, and where their strengths and areas of growth are. The teachers will also have their input.

Ms. Wolf stated that she likes the fact that all students have a Chrome Book now, but asked about the Wi-Fi situation. Ms. Maino replied that it has been going okay and there haven't been any complaints. Mr. Urbas stated that investments have been made to improve the Wi-Fi. Ms. Maino stated that the MCAS will be done online this year.

Ms. Riordan asked to hear more about Universal Design for Learning ("UDL"). Ms. Maino explained it is putting supports in place so that all learners can access them and providing good accommodations for all kids and "good teaching." Universal Backwards Design ("UBD") is beginning with the end in mind, starting with your assessment and how you are going to determine if they know what you are teaching them, and then backing into it.

Ms. Riordan asked for more detail about IXL. Ms. Maino explained that it is a prescription-based computer program that the students sign into to collect data, take tests and other work they do that will be funneled back to the teachers through categorized reports. We started using it for summer work, but now the math teachers are using it. IXL can be used to determine students' needs, such as the need for math tutoring and to determine if there is a weak strand vertically through their curriculum

Mr. Warnock stated that Ms. Maino has gained the confidence of the communities (students, parents, and teachers) in the district, and thanked Ms. Maino for the continued challenges and instituting the new teaching technologies, such as Chrome Books and IXL.

Ms. Erdmann echoed everyone else for taking a critical look at the Middle School and acting immediately on issues as needed. Ms. Erdmann asked if there is a directed purpose within each ME Block, or is it more like the Power Block where the kids can take a breather or get some homework done? Ms. Maino explained that it depends upon the grade. Sixth grade is very directed—a time of the day that is for quiet reading from a book to decompress and relax. They will start to do more community things within that time such as homework. Seventh grade has a schedule based upon the student-led conferences. One day is a reading day,

the next day a study group when they can do homework. The other days the students go into their Google drives to review their work and tag pieces of their work for their portfolios. Eight grade has a whole menu of opportunities to start them thinking: What do I have? What do I need? What should I be studying? Do I have a project? It's a very released structure, and the kids are allowed to look at that structure and make decisions for themselves on a daily basis. They are not allowed to use iPods or cell phones. This is a way to prepare them for the U Block, which is a lot more independent.

Ms. Erdmann asked about the use of Chrome Books for the MCAS. Ms. Maino explained that the Chrome Books will be handed out in class—the students cannot bring their own.

Ms. Erdmann asked for more information regarding math tutoring. Ms. Maino explained that we have Title I funds available for students who need extra help. We are using the IXL data to determine which students who need the most help (5-7 students/grade). Once we know who needs the help and what we need, we will back into that and determine who is available for tutoring, use teachers in-house or look outside. I would like to begin the tutoring in mid-November, but it will be based on teachers' availability.

Ms. Weld inquired about Coffee with the Principal and asked if it is the same group of parents that come each time? Ms. Maino replied that sometimes the same parents come, but often there is a new group. It is a nice way for me to make connections and build relationships with parents.

Ms. Weld asked if the Seventh Grade pilot student-led discussion program will be seventh grade specific, or will it be branched out to other grades? Ms. Maino replied that this is a new endeavor, and if it goes well, it might branch out to other grades.

Ms. Cameron stated that she is interested in encouraging girls to get more involved in science, math, and technology. Ms. Cameron commended Ms. Maino for bringing all learners to the Middle School presentation to the School Committee last school season.

The School Committee thanked Ms. Maino for doing an excellent job and for making great progress.

Annual Bond Rating Report

Mr. Urbas reported that they have publicly issued tax-exempt municipal bonds to cover a portion of the cost of this building that were not covered by MSBA. We have submitted our financial data and audits to Moody's Investors Service. Moody's has upheld our rating, and we are rated AA2 (third highest rating possible—a very strong rating).

Ms. Erdmann asked what sets the bond rate when we go to bond for the building? Mr. Urbas replied that it is based on MERSD rating, based heavily on our finances, our issuance statements (bond book), which includes a lot of information on the Towns of Manchester and Essex. Our Offering Statement will have an MERSD section, and sections on the Town of Manchester, and the Town of Essex. We get 85% of our funding for each town, so that has a significant impact on our credit rating.

Ms. Cameron asked Mr. Urbas to go over the *Finances* paragraph. Mr. Urbas explained that if you look at cash as a percent of operating revenues and our fund balance (the amount we have in our reserve) as a percent of revenue, Moody's is saying that we are substantially below the US median (25-26%). Mr. Urbas stated that he is confused about the US median data set that Moody's used and has reached out to our financial advisors about this. Basically, our credit position is very good. Mr. Urbas stated that this will be discussed at the Collaborative meeting.

Solar Panels for MERHS (continued discussion)

Ms. Beaudoin stated that it has been decided to invite all the neighbors/abutters to a meeting on October 10 (6-7 p.m. in the library) prior to our Building Committee meeting, to share the images and talk about any concerns that they might have.

Superintendent's Evaluation Follow-Up/FY18 Compensation

Ms. Cameron stated that we have to talk about finalizing the Superintendent's evaluation and address the Superintendent's compensation. Ms. Cameron stated that Ms. Beaudoin's review was excellent. Ms. Cameron reached out to the Towns of Essex and Manchester to find out their administrators' compensation amounts. Essex had a 2.5% increase on the 2016 salary and a merit-based percentage to bring it to 3%. Manchester had a 2.5% increase and a \$4,600 righting the ship bonus, and 2.5% for the next two years. Based on Ms. Beaudoin's evaluation and our financial status, Ms. Cameron recommended a 3% salary increase for Ms. Beaudoin, which is in line with what other town administrators are getting. Mr. Urbas stated that he is comfortable with this decision.

Ms. Erdmann made a motion to approve the 3.0% salary increase for Ms. Beaudoin. Mr. Warnock seconded the motion. Vote: Unanimous by Ms. Cameron, Ms. Riordan, Ms. Erdmann, Ms. Wolf, Ms. Weld, Mr. Warnock, and Ms. Fitzgibbon.

Ms. Cameron and the School Committee thanked Ms. Beaudoin for doing a great job as Superintendent. Every school improvement plan we see reflects strong leadership, and Ms. Beaudoin replied that we have a good, strong team.

Ms. Beaudoin also thanked the School Committee for its support for the work that we are doing, not just the resources.

6) New Business: None.

7) Public Comment: None.

8) School Committee Comment: Ms. Wolf stated that she is disappointed that nobody from CPAC has come to our meetings. Mr. Warnock pointed out that Ms. Beaudoin is always looking at the negotiation issues from the interests of all the parties involved. Ms. Fitzgibbon had an edit to the September 19 minutes and gave it to the secretary.

9) Adjournment

Mr. Warnock made a motion to adjourn, and Ms. Erdmann seconded the motion. Vote: Unanimous by Ms. Cameron, Ms. Riordan, Ms. Erdmann, Ms. Wolf, Ms. Weld, Mr. Warnock, and Ms. Fitzgibbon.. The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Adele Ardolino
Secretary to the MERSD School Committee