

Date Approved/Released:

Murphy 10/5/17

Date Approved/Hold _____

School Committee Chair: _____

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2017
TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM

1. Call to order: 6:00 PM - Pledge of Allegiance
Present: Larry Murphy, Danielle LaPointe, Felicia Nurmsen, Greg Vine
Steve Haddad-Superintendent
Richard Ikonen-Business Manager
 2. Audio/Video Disclosure
 3. Citizen Questions and/or Comments: None.
 4. Student Representative Report: None. Mr. Olson will work on appointing a Student Representative in time for the September 21, 2017 meeting.
 5. Student/Staff Recognitions - Blue Devil Cool Award - Jennifer Belanger, the September, 2017 recipient, is a 3rd grade teacher at Toy Town Elementary. She was recognized for her ability to provide an excellent and inclusive classroom for all students. S. Haddad relayed a story of her work with a specific student, which resulted in a highly successful year, advancing that student from below 2nd grade to above 3rd grade level. Her commitment to excellence was noted. She was presented with a plaque and the BDC tee-shirt; S. Haddad noted Ms. Belanger practices the attributes that are listed on the back of each shirt; he commended her talents, skills and dedication. Ms. Belanger praised the support team she works with to make every student successful. D. LaPointe also noted her work in the district; Ms Belanger was a Pre-school teacher in the district for 11 years, moving to the 3rd grade several years ago.
 6. School Openings and Communications - The Principals reviewed the successful openings and how they will work to improve communications with students, staff and parents. TTE Principal Mary Aker presented the reports for the Pre-school and Memorial school; those principals were unable to attend the meeting.
- Memorial School- Michelle Atters' report noted a very busy but smooth start to the school year. The Universal Free Breakfast in the Classroom Program was rolled out in all of the classrooms and was a great success. Teachers and interventionists jumped right into the Fall Assessments for reading and math placement. The staff will continue to use a variety of ways to communicate news and events to families and community members, including a monthly newsletter and a weekly letter to families (from some teachers). Information is also shared through the one-call email and phone system and the Friends of Winchendon face book page. A new avenue of communication is the Memorial L'il Devils face book page.

Preschool - Suzanne Michele noted in her report that the orientation yesterday went very well and had great participation. Their Open House is October 19th. Ms. Michele uses The Winchendon Pre-K Program face book page and Twitter as means of communication. Ms. Aker explained how and why they are separate from Memorial School information.

Toy Town Elementary - Mary Aker, Principal, reported the breakfast program is going really well, with about 95% participation. She gave an overview of Spirit Week to be held next week. She explained the Picnic Tee-Shirt and Book Report activity planned for tomorrow. The TTE Open House and BBQ is September 12th; food will be served starting at 4:30 PM and the Open House runs from 5:30-7:00 PM. Ms. Aker uses the TTE face book page and a parent blog, Toy Town Telegraph, which goes out every Monday at BlogSpot. F. Nurmsen suggested the face book pages be shared by the committee members just to 'friends'.

Murdock Middle School - Mustangs - Jessica Vezina reported the school had a great start, noting the 6th graders transitioned very easily this year. She explained the community-building and relationship building with the 6th graders, helping the students become familiar with their new building. All students have been going through the PBIS lessons to learn the schools' expectations and how to continue it beyond the school day. Their Open House is Wednesday, September 13th at 6:00 PM. She explained the new format of the 6th graders and the 7-8th graders. There are two new specials this year-STEAM Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math taught by Alex Johnson; Mr. Fontaine will teach the Technology Education. She will expand the use of the Friday issued The Week Ahead-one is geared towards teachers and the new one for parents. The middle school Face Book page, Twitter and one-call system will continue to be used; all correspondence and information will also be on the website. The first summit Parent Night was held on August 30th; it went over very well and there will be more in the months to come. F. Nurmsen noted she appreciates the 'The Looking Forward' sent to parents and all the information it includes.

Murdock High School - Principal Ralph Olsen and Assistant-Principal Ralph Borseth-- R. Borseth noted his academic and computer history. He reviewed the communications changes, noting the Blog will have tutorials, power-point presentations and scholarly articles. He has found the Twitter account to be most effective communication for students and parents. There will also be weekly emails to teachers, parents and students. The school will fully utilize Google Classroom and will encourage parents to use the resource. School Brains may also be used to post information; Mr. Borseth noted he is okay with redundant information going out.

School Opening - He noted there was a 20% staff/teacher turnover, yet very few changes regarding how they do things; emphasis has been placed on adherence to the rules. There are now 2 lunch periods that are better for students and teachers, allowing them to engage and use the entire hour for time on learning. R. Olsen noted he has been proactive; specifically about speaking with athletic teams, reminding them that this is an extension of the classroom and the expectations, such as respect, good effort and sportsmanship. The faculty and administration are committed to be very visible and to know the students personally; he reviewed the strategies they will use. They outlined their expectations to the students at the greeting assemblies, and stressed the need for order in the school. Hamilton Day, orchestrated by MHS Librarian Jenna Morin, was a great success. The school is getting ready for NEASC; this includes the Endicott Survey. He noted positive eye contact and social skills being demonstrated by the students and is confident things will move in the right direction.

S. Haddad noted that Murdock was recognized by MIAA for sportsmanship last year. The new Football coach is Billy Wright; all athletic coaches will be present one night to be introduced to the school committee.

7. Teaching and Learning Highlights-

a. Personalized Learning Model - Jessica Vezina and Alex Johnson, the MMS STEAM specialist. A. Johnson reviewed the history and success of the platform that gave instant and dramatic positive results in 6th grade teams. J. Vezina noted the process was started a year ago, because MMS data had shown minimal improvement over the past 3 years; the school remained around the 10th percentile on PARCC and MCAS. She reviewed steps taken to improve the culture of the school, noting this is part of the School Improvement Plan and Turnaround Plan that will be presented at the first October meeting.

She explained The Summit Learning Platform, a tool that is helping the administration and staff implement Personalized Learning; both have received training for the program. Some schedule revision was needed for the project based, individualized learning method. She reviewed the outcomes they hope to achieve, that include teaching students how to build the skills and habits of success necessary for their future. She explained how achievement will be measured 3 times a year through Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). The Personalized Learning model will be implemented with the grade 7 & 8 students, using 2 Teams. The students will work on Chrome books as part of the learning platform. She is planning to hold a series of parent education workshops for parents that will focus on specific portions of Summit. She noted that additional information is available at the Murdock Middle School Summit website: <http://summit-mms.weebly.com/> and the Summit Learning website: <https://summitlearning.org>.

G. Vine asked if the students being taught how to fail; how to deal with setbacks and failure. He voiced concern about how teachers and peers respond to a students' failure, acknowledging parents' frustration when failure happens. He noted the need to teach parents the need to let their kids fail. J. Vezina explained the new program issues 'incompletes' instead of failing grades. She added that perseverance needs to be taught with this model-learning those habits of success. L. Murphy remarked that they should be taught how to deal with failure, to make their own goal and how to reach it.

F. Nurmsen noted the program is similar to an IEP, that it is steeped in the principals of special education. L. Murphy noted the mentoring piece is a strong component to keep students focused, and to connect to their social-emotional needs.

J. Vezina noted that access points have been added to classrooms and the system has sufficient bandwidth to fulfill the need.

D. LaPointe noted that staying afterschool for extra help cannot be seen as a stigma or punishment.

S. Haddad stated the goal of the program is for students to be self-directed and set goals while teachers monitor their progress. He noted this is a big step for the school.

F. Nurmsen noted L. Murphy taught her how to achieve and set goals as her 9th grade teacher, skills she still uses.

L. Murphy commended the teachers and administration for the courage to self reflect and to admit that new, different teaching strategies needed to be initiated. He added the support and buy-in from the staff is a testament to J. Vezinas' leadership, and that he is proud of the middle school. J. Vezina commended her staff for working to be accepted into the program, adding it is an honor for their school to be admitted to the program.. She will provide updates throughout the school year.

8. Consent Agenda

- a. Minutes - August 17, 2017 - D. LaPointe moved to approve with the noted corrections.
Second by G. Vine. Approved 4-0-0.

Field Trips - Catherine Desmarais, Special Education Life Skills Class to Market Basket, Rindge, NH on Tuesdays throughout the school year. D. LaPointe moved to approve. Second by G. Vine. Approved 4-0-0.

9. Superintendent Report/Business Office Report- S. Haddad noted the openings went very well, with the theme Welcome to Blue Devil Nation. Murdock High School students are Blue Devils; the Middle School students are Mini Devils, Toy Town Elementary and Memorial Elementary are L'il Devils. Friday is Blue Devil Day-staff and students are encouraged to wear blue and white. Teachers wearing the school colors on the first day will be a tradition. The Open House at Memorial last night went very well; TTE Open House is September 12th, The Middle and High School Open House is on September 13th and the Pre-K Open house is on September 19th.

He read an email from DESE that it recommends the district investigate how to better allocate resources among the schools. He asked for volunteers to be on an advisory committee to come up with recommendations on how best to utilize the resources of the district (people, time, facilities and money). The committee of 10 will be equally made up of employees in the district and residents of the community in order to keep up objectivity. Letters of interest should be sent to the Superintendents' office by September 29, 2017. It has been forwarded to district staff; Town Manager Keith Hickey was asked to forward it to town boards. The contents of the email will be sent to parents via the one-call system. This is also part of the Superintendents' goals.

He reported that a plan for the Business Office is being developed; an Accounts Payable/Office Assistant position will be posted through September 15th. The office is working on possible job sharing with the Town Accountant or using someone 'in house' to handle the Payroll. He plans to have something finalized by next school committee meeting, September 21, 2017.

a. Budget Update - Richard Ikonen explained the several negative balances in the monthly financials (collaborative tuition and private school tuition) are due to the encumbrances in the Munis format and by the way the district is invoiced by the schools in the collaboratives. The numbers will exceed what is budgeted in those line items; the shortfall will be made up by grants. Two of the negative balances were due to data entry errors and have been corrected. He has been working with the Town Accountant to close FY '17; the district finished the year with a balance of \$74,000, which goes into Free Cash. The spending freeze put into place in January, 2017 worked to the districts' benefit. The End-of-Year Report is due October 2nd; he does not foresee the need for an extension.

Student Activity Accounts- Tony Roselli, of the auditing firm Roselli & Clark, sent a follow-up report from the June, 2016 audit report. R. Ikonen reviewed the past bookkeeping practices and explained the recommended changes. Mr. Roselli and the Town Treasurer recommended that the single savings account be closed down and it should be replaced by four individual savings accounts, one for each school. The four accounts have been established to facilitate reconciliation. He gave examples of errors and situations that have been rectified. He has created a handbook for the administrators and the accounts will be monitored and reconciled on a monthly basis.

7:20 PM D. LaPointe left the meeting.

He will include a report on the accounts on a quarterly basis. The Middle School maximum allowed amount can be changed by a vote of the school committee if necessary to pay invoices as required. He reviewed the items noted in the letter. Roselli & Clark will hold a training session the week of September 18th on the proper administration and use of student activities; school committee members are encouraged to attend. R. Ikonen noted the new Principals do not have signatory rights yet; that paperwork will be completed soon.

F. Nurmsen commended the written practices and processes put in place and thanked R. Ikonen. He also noted all payroll issues have been resolved. F. Nurmsen stated emphatically 'You Rock!!'

S. Haddad noted the School Committee will host the next joint committee meeting; due to scheduling considerations, it is tentatively scheduled for September 28th. The School Committee will hold its' regularly scheduled meeting on September 21st. S. Haddad will arrange the date that works for most members.

10. Sub Committee Report:

a. Schedule Policy Sub-Committee Meetings - G. Vine reported that D. LaPointe and D. Fronte are planning to have it within the month prior to a School Committee meeting. G. Vine moved to table to the next meeting. Second by F. Nurmsen. Approved 3-0-0.

11. Old Business: None

12. New Business:

a. Review of School Committee Retreat - L. Murphy thanked S. Haddad for taking the lead during the activity. He noted the committee set **Norms** regarding how to do business within the meeting.

- Punctuality - Start and end on time
- Listen respectfully to all ideas
- Be prepared
- Discuss - don't lecture
- If differing idea, not to be taken personally
- Express disagreement with ideas, not individuals
- Keep it professional, not personal
- Be concise and clear spoken
- Stay on Task - Follow the agenda
- Reach decisions by consensus-support the majority decision

The committee also created a '**Pyramid of Success**' to help crystallize what their work and focus should over the next 3-5 years.

The Base: Goals Completed - Town and District Collaboration, the Blue Devil Cool Nation, Goals to hire the Superintendent and Business Manager.

Quick Wins: Set up Face Book pages for each school-the High School page is not completed. The district page is still under construction but will soon be live. Working on Internal Communications-the lunch menu link is on the daily email. Playground Support-The project received the grant; it is not known if the Basketball Court will be included. F. Nurmsen noted how well cared for the playground at TTE is now. The project did receive money for the swing set. Improve Morale - Real progress has been made but it is always a work in progress. Monty Tech Representative-Austin Cyganiewicz will provide frequent updates and reports

Next 1-3 years - School Committee Goals were updated at the retreat. Superintendent Goals were submitted to the committee for review.

Murdock High School Principal - the search will be completed for the 2018-2019 school year.

WPS Budget - to make it transparent and accurate.

District in 5 years - Level 3 is a step in the right direction; the district hopes to be at Level 2 in 2-3 years. The district is working towards Level 1 for the sake of the kids.

L. Murphy summarized, saying that in 5 years the WPS will have positive collaboration; a safe environment recognized as such by staff, students and parents; that is conducive to teaching and learning; a positive school climate; successful Curriculum Instruction and Assessment with support; a district where kids choose to remain in district in large numbers-stop the brain drain and students who will be well prepared for college, work and life.

L. Murphy noted he is pleased at with what is happening in our schools already, adding there is a good team and leadership.

F. Nurmsen observed that the district has a solid foundation in our elementary schools, and now that is happening and coming to fruition in the Middle School. She stressed that the district needs to see it follow through to the High School. She stated achieving the goals will make WPS successful whether or not it achieves a Level 1 school rating.

L. Murphy noted he wants to see kids succeeding but also wants to be Level 1 in the eyes of the state.

G. Vine stressed the need to get that positive message out to the community. He related a story that highlighted the need to get the support of the residents, adding the schools have to be supported for the future of the town.

S. Haddad noted 5 former students who are now successful and have their children in the Winchendon school system. He added 'how good it was to see that-it is the top of the pyramid'.

13. Future Agenda Items:

- a. Water Report - Jim Murphy
- b. Schedule Policy Sub-Committee Meetings
- c. MMS School Improvement Plan & Turnaround Plan-J. Vezina (1st meeting in

October)

14. Committee Member comments: G. Vine noted he went to Girls first Soccer game of the season and was disappointed there was no one in the booth to announce plays or put up the score. S. Haddad agreed; other people have voiced the same concern. The Boys Soccer team played today. He will work with the Principals and the Athletic Director about establishing a system to process debit/credit cards. Visitor spectators and family have arrived at the field without cash to pay the gate fee.

15. Executive Session: None

16. Adjournment: 7:52 PM. G. Vine moved to adjourn. Second by F. Nurmsen.
Approved 3 -0-0.

Respectfully submitted: _____

Barrie E. Martins, School Committee Recording Secretary