

Date Approved/Released: *Am 1/17/18*

Date Approved/Hold: \_\_\_\_\_

School Committee Chair: *Am*

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

1. Call to order: 6:00 pm/ Pledge of Allegiance

Present: Danielle LaPointe, Dawn Fronte, Larry Murphy, Felicia Nurmsen, Greg Vine  
Steve Haddad-Superintendent  
Richard Ikonen-Business Manager

2. Audio/Video Disclosure: Doneen Durling

3. Citizen Questions and/or Comments: None

4. Student Representative Report: None

6:02 pm D. LaPointe moved for a 5-minute recess to resolve technical difficulties. Second by G. Vine. Approved 5-0-0.

6:07 pm Reconvened in Open Session.

5. Student/Staff Recognition – Blue Devil Cool - Angela Suarez was recognized because of her un-relenting dedication and hard work for our schools and community. She applied for and was awarded the Bridges Together grant that provided the training and resources for the program that fosters friendships and understanding between students and older adults in the community. She also helped build up the PBIS program that works to build positive behavior in the school community at Toy Town Elementary (TTE). S. Haddad recounted how her creativity has done wonders for the program and presented her with the Blue Devil Cool T-shirt.

Ms. Suarez reviewed how she started the Bridges Together program, from inception to grant application to activities and the values the program encourages, including learning what it means to be a healthy adult; the program changed the students' impression of 'elderly'. She stressed that the PBIS program helps put the fun back into learning and fosters a safe and inclusive environment. The committee viewed pictures of the students engaged in activities with the senior citizens, highlighting the relationships that are built between them.

6. Teaching and Learning Highlights: MCAS – Elementary

Mary Alice Aker and Jessica Vezina presented the results of the MCAS Next Generation test students in grades 3-8 took in Spring, 2017. J. Vezina reviewed the new scoring terms/vocabulary, noting the district is held harmless and maintains the Level 3 designation this

year due to this change. The 2018 and 2017 results will be used for comparison and the district level will be determined from those scores. M. Aker presented the scores at TTE for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades; all School scores were below the State scores. She noted that no district was above 49%; the test itself was made to be much harder than any previous test. The largest gap was in Math; she explained the 'lesson studies' put in place under DSAC guidance to address the issue. Students are assigned 'high leverage tasks' that require higher level thinking. Teachers will also develop language to address the gap in students' vocabulary by incorporating test-used vocabulary. Gaps in reading will be addressed in a newly implemented reading series; they hope to see an increase in scores in the next year.

G. Vine voiced concerned about the States new categories names, noting he wants to make sure that 'partially meeting expectations' is taken seriously; like the previous 'needs improvement'. The presenters explained that they do, and this new system allows students to get credit for moving their scores.

F. Nurmsen stated she is concerned the district is regressing, as seemingly portrayed in the lower scores as students' progress through the grades

J. Vezina noted there were similar results in other districts between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade; technology was an issue and is a focus this year. Students had to learn the 'tech tools'

Murdock Middle School (MMS) - J. Vezina presented the Math, ELA & Science scores. She noted the New Generation science standards integrates the 3 sciences for 3 years. She explained how the 'personalized learning model' and the 'measures of academic progress' assessment will target students who need 'intervention services'. Teaching will focus on cognitive skills and critical thinking, and perseverance, a skill that has to be taught.

S. Haddad noted students improve as they become more accustomed to new test formats and style.

J. Vezina stated that she is extremely proud of the Middle School teachers who started making changes even before the test scores were released. They have seen behavior and method changes already.

F. Nurmsen stressed that these scores are a benchmark and TTE must prepare students for MMS. She asked 'how does Summit Learning prepare students?'. J. Vezina explained how data is more accessible and used to augment teaching the standards.

Murdock High School (MHS) – Ralph Olson invited Heidi Bevacqua, an Administrative Intern with Ralph Borseth, presented grade 10 ELA, Math and Science (taken in 9<sup>th</sup> grade-Biology) MCAS Legacy test scores. The transition to MCAS New Generation was outlined.

R. Olson noted that 2017 student growth at 31.5 is considered low growth.

Through the chairman, F. Nurmsen asked that document pages be numbered for easier reference and better organized in future presentations, as part of best practices.

R. Olson noted a shift of a few students can greatly affect the percentages and scores in a small school. He noted variables that affect each years' scores and gave a litany of areas to consider when looking at data and measures to implement in future years. H. Bevacqua reviewed steps taken to prepare students throughout the academic year and to review the skills just prior to taking the tests. R. Olson related a strategy about how students who had an appreciable improvement offered? peer pressure from can have a positive effect. He outlined measures the district can take to improve scores that include - \*Change the master schedule and staffing to

decrease the size of college prep and inclusion classes. \*Need to solidify quality staff and administration-reduce turnover, \*recruit early, \*Consistent administration. He noted the district can appreciably move the bar up because it is a small school. He explained how teachers get the test copies and data.

H. Bevacqua summarized the ELA teaching strategies will be shared with other departments, more uniform as a school department wide, having common planning times to study test data,

L. Murphy stressed that the district needs a dedicated, consistent and committed approach, which will include the new Principal.

G. Vine voiced frustration that something, somewhere has not been not working spent last 18 years trying to come up with a strategy like darts at a board. He wants a consistent strategy to improve the MCAS scores.

R. Olson stressed the importance of instilling a value on education and instill a value on work ethic; he sees it emerging but still struggling. He added that the momentum needs to be sustained.

S. Haddad agreed the school needs to look at the master schedule, to give students the individualized attention they need.

F. Nurmsen agreed with the TTE and MMS method, that MHS needs to look internally because the present method is not working. Teachers coming together

L. Murphy agreed that the MHS needs a plan to stick with for 3-5 years.

F. Nurmsen stated 'it's about ownership' there is an issue within the high school

R. Olson noted there are pockets of very good things; adding to effectuate change you need to recruit the best possible principal for 5 years.

H. Bevacqua noted she has seen amazing changes in 7 years, but changing personal and personal put in places other than what they are qualified and signed up for has been detrimental to the district.

## 7. Consent Agenda

### a. Minutes – Regular Meeting Minutes

#### i. October 19, 2-17 Regular Meeting

#### ii. November 16, 2017 Regular Meeting

G. Vine moved to approve. Second by F. Nurmsen. Approved 4-0-0. D. Fronte was absent for the vote.

## 8. Superintendent/Business Office Report 7:34

a. School Advisory Committee Update – R. Ikonen noted the committee met earlier tonight and discussed finances, resources and communications. The next meeting will be focused on the 5-year plan and how it relates to the finances.

b. Principal Search Update- S. Haddad will finalize the committee tomorrow and it will meet next week.

c. Budget Process Timeline-The administration team met last week to go over the process and are working on individual school budgets. He is putting together the salaries, including different scenarios for the two unions entering into contract negotiations. He can present that information after the holidays.

S. Haddad and G. Vine attended the revenue sharing committee meeting yesterday. The group is looking at its value to the community, municipal and school district. They need to do more

research but will look for ways to cut expenses and work collaboratively with the municipal government. G. Vine noted that communication between the Town, the School Department, the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee has to be a top priority. He let them know that the School Committee did not like the actions taken at the last Special Town Meeting when something was sprung on them at the last moment. He noted that action has created skepticism on his part. He will go on with good will and hopes to maintain it going forward.

Joanne Goguen, Town Hall Assistant accountant, was hired to do the pay roll as a stipend position for six (6) hours a week.

S. Haddad reported that FLAAC will get the loan as the financial agent to finance "Footsteps to Brilliance"; funding was previously approved by the School Committee. He will need another School Committee vote for the exact same terms as before.

He attended an opioid awareness forum this morning at Fitchburg State University with all of the area local police chiefs. The Fitchburg Police Chief stated that communities need to start the conversation at the elementary level. The district is signed onto Maura Healy's project called "Project Here", a middle school education program.

He applied for a grant through the Chris Heren Foundation, a grant program to have speakers come in to address students; he will be contacted if awarded the grant.

9. Sub Committee Report: use dawn's notes

a. Update on first group of policies – D. Fronte reported that she and D. LaPointe met today with S. Haddad and discussed several policies.

ACAB - Update contact information.

GEA & GEA-E - Job descriptions for school programs which are covered under this policy, approved 11/20/14, so no further action is needed. The policy needs to be uploaded

BHC-Discuss MASC version.

KF - Community use of school facilities. Need to update forms and confirm all forms out to buildings.

IJOA-E-3 – Field Trip Forms. Check minutes for last vote approval.

10. Old Business: None

New Business:

a. School Committee Day Meeting Schedule – The committee discussed meeting on Wednesday evenings through the May, 2018 Town Elections to accommodate D. LaPointe's school schedule. Members also discussed changing to holding just 1 meeting per month. G. Vine voiced concern about full and long agendas and restricted public access to the committee. Several members noted that a single monthly meeting is better for teachers and administration, agreeing that meetings would need to be scheduled for 3 hours. There will be additional meetings throughout the budget season and the committee will revisit the matter before the end of the school year. After discussion, F. Nurmsen moved to change the School Committee meeting day to Wednesday instead of Thursdays. Second by D. LaPointe. Approved 5-0-0. F. Nurmsen moved to change to meet once a month on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month to begin

in January (2018) dependent upon the availability of the Hall. Second by D. Fronte. Approved 4-1-0.

11. Future Agenda Items:

- a. Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School Representative (12/20/17)
- b. Footsteps to Brilliance funding through FLLAC – Vote (12/20/17)
- c. Policy BHC School Committee & Staff Communications Discussion & Vote

12. Committee Member Comments: None

Executive Session: 8:01 pm. F. Nurmsen moved to go into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining, and to reconvene in Open Session for the sole purpose of adjournment. Second by G. Vine. Roll Call Vote: G. Vine-Aye; D. LaPointe-Aye; D. Fronte-Aye; F. Nurmsen-Aye; L. Murphy-Aye. Approved 5-0-0.

13. Adjournment:

Respectfully submitted: \_\_\_\_\_  
Barrie E. Martins, School Committee Recording Secretary