

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting
Thursday, November 10, 2008

Lincoln Center
7:30pm

PRESENT: Crockett, Edwards, Hackett, Marcano, Moran, Pattacini, Rizzo, Small-Miller, Stafford

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Ouellette, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction Richardson.

A. OPENING

A.1. Call to Order

Ms. Hackett called the meeting to order at 7.30 p.m.

A. 2. Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Hackett led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

A.3. MINUTES

Ms. Hackett called for a motion to approve the Board of Education Minutes of October 27, 2008.

Mr. Moran asked for a friendly amendment, i.e., P.16 under "I. Communications", the text in the final sentence should read "9:30am-11:00am."

Mr. Pattacini asked for an amendment to P.5 para.6. The statistics quoted were erroneous and should be deleted. The statistics had already been quoted accurately in the first paragraph of that page.

MOTION: Marcano/Rizzo s.v. the Manchester Board of Education approved the Minutes, with the inclusion of the two friendly amendments. 9/0/0.

B. BOARD MEMBER RECOGNITION

Dr. Ouellette recognized Linette Small-Miller and Carl Stafford, two Board members.

Ms. Small-Miller had begun her tenure on the Board three years previously and during that time worked tirelessly to improve the quality of education for the children of the District. She had an admirable frankness and ability to truly define the needs of the community.

Ms. Small-Miller had played a critical role on the Curriculum and Instruction Committee, Community Relations Committee and Policy Committee, where she had contributed her time and ideas. The School District had benefited from her commitment and devotion.

Ms. Small-Miller was presented with a plaque inscribed "*Presented to Ms. Small-Miller, Board of Education Member, for your dedicated service to the Manchester Public Schools, 2005-2008.*"

Ms. Hackett clarified this was the last Board meeting in the terms of office for both Ms. Small-Miller and Mr. Carl Stafford. They were being honored in the traditional manner.

Mr. Crockett, Mr. Marcano, Mr. Moran, Mr. Rizzo and Mr. Edwards in turn paid tribute to Ms. Small-Miller mentioning the passion and zeal she illustrated at meetings. They shared the hope that she would be around to take an interest in future Board meetings. They all recognized her hard work and valuable input on the various Board Committees when they had faced some very tough issues; they had enjoyed her sense of humor. It had been a pleasure serving with her and they had learned from her the importance of being a Board member and how time-consuming it could be. She had approached the task with her own individual intelligence, perspective and her style had always been to speak her mind in an honest fashion. She had given wise advice to them individually. They wished her the best of luck in all her future endeavors.

Ms. Hackett echoed all the previous comments, emphasizing particularly the passion with which Ms. Small-Miller had served and the candor she had from time to time brought to many issues and airing her healthy doubts. Her input would be missed on the Board.

Carl Stafford

Dr. Ouellette paid tribute to Mr. Carl Stafford for valuable contributions over his many years of his service to the District because of his strong desire to help students reach their academic potential. He had been a strong supporter of the district, always looking for ways in which to improve programs and services, always been an advocate for their teachers ensuring they had the appropriate resources, represented the community with distinction and honor being mindful at all times that children always come first.

Mr. Stafford had served on several committees, Curriculum and Instruction, Building and Sites, Transportation and Residency. During his service on the Board he had seen the district grow in terms of academic programs and student enrollment. Mr. Stafford would forever leave an indelible mark on the Board, be remembered as a true collaborator, a strategic thinker, and one who would always inspire children to do their best.

Mr. Stafford was being recognized for his three years of service to the Manchester Public Schools. He was presented with a plaque inscribed *“Presented to Carl Stafford, Board of Education member for his dedicated service to the Manchester Public Schools 2005-2008.”*

Mr. Edwards extended his gratitude to Mr. Stafford recalling the many friendly arguments they had enjoyed over the years. He told him he was “A worthy ally and a worthy opponent at the same time.” Mr. Stafford had made him think by challenging his own basic assumptions. Mr. Stafford measured high in his yardstick of what a Board member should be.

Mr. Moran, Ms. Small-Miller, Mr. Pattacini, Mr. Crockett and Mr. Rizzo followed with their individual tributes to Mr. Stafford, quoting instances of the ways in which he had given them help. It had been obvious that his heart was in working with children of the community ensuring the school system was a better one than when he had started with the Board. Mr. Moran thanked him not only as a Board member, but as a parent. Ms. Small-Miller recalled that even though they had disagreed at times she had still learned a lot from him. Mr. Pattacini reminisced on the time he had first met Mr. Stafford at Waddell School when he was involved in the PTA. His recollection was of a passionate community member in support of public education then and that same value existed today through the building of the foundation for Manchester

Public Schools. He expressed the wish that Mr. Stafford would move back into the community and continue to fight the good fight. Everything he had done for the children of Manchester was appreciated.

Mr. Crockett said it had been a nice few years and he wished Mr. Stafford well. He also appreciated everything he had done for the Board. They had not always agreed but that was okay. He had made them think and worry about what he was going to say next. The Board was better off because of Mr. Stafford's service and he wished him well.

Mr. Rizzo reiterated a comment by Mr. Moran "His last year was probably his best." He had stepped up to the plate and continued to learn. He had given his all - even in the last year. He had been feisty with his opinions but he had made them laugh.

Mr. Marcano liked and admired Mr. Stafford as he had observed him at caucuses when he had come up with statements that made a lot of sense and drew the group together. They would miss his contributions.

Ms. Hackett recalled her first meeting with Mr. Stafford and while working on a Referendum had enjoyed his sense of humor and commentary on politics. He had been a constant volunteer. Carl had demonstrated care and diligence on curriculum, modernization of our school buildings and development of certain policies. He had contributed a lot of his personal time and she would miss him.

C. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT - Part I

C.1. Reading Program Update

Ms. Mary Luce, Language Arts Supervisor for the District, and Ms. Kathi Young, Senior Coordinator for the Vernon Reads Program gave an update on the program.

Ms. Luce emphasized they did not just want to create school time readers; they wanted lifetime readers. It had been a great privilege for her to have worked with Manchester Reads as they geared up for the current school year.

Last year volunteers had worked at Bowers Elementary School and the program had been expanded this year to both Keeney and Martin Schools. There were twelve children at Keeney and ten volunteers; nine children and eight volunteers at Martin, twelve children and eleven volunteers at Bowers.

Ms. Young expressed gratitude at the opportunity to talk about the program, making a brief mention of her personal background followed by an enthusiastic overview of the process they had used to select volunteers in order to serve the children in the schools appropriately. It was her fourth year in the program.

Ms. Young recapped she had been recruited to be the coordinator for the program in Vernon which at that time had two schools and twenty-two volunteers. They presently had four schools with over sixty volunteers. The previous year they had added Manchester to the program with Bowers. Of the twelve volunteers eleven had returned.

Articles had appeared in local newspapers and volunteers had responded. There was an interview process and all the necessary background checks were carried out. Training programs were provided for the volunteers. Children were being selected on an "As needed" basis and ones who needed just a little bit of extra help in reading. Ms. Young said a lot of mentoring went on. One could have a Mentoring Program without reading but could not have a reading program without mentoring and this was an added benefit to

the children. The age of mentors could be anywhere from fifty-five to eighty. Board members were invited to visit any of the schools at any time.

Ms. Mary Luce added her encouragement to come visit the program which created a wonderful rapport between the mentor and the children. She looked forward to continuing with this.

Mr. Pattacini sought to get a sense of the experience a typical child would go through. e.g., how frequently did they meet with volunteers? The answer was one hour once a week, one-on-one. Mr. Pattacini wondered if the volunteers all came from Manchester and was told they were primarily from Manchester.

C.2. Manchester High School Highlight Presentation

Dr. Ouellette welcomed Mr. O'Donnell, Principal of Manchester High School, Ms. Beth Hayes, Department Head for Business and Finance Education and two of her students.

Mr. O'Donnell recapped that a few weeks previous the Board had expressed an interest in information about online course work and coursework through the Internet. They currently had a program in play at the high school where the students were in the process of creating an E-Commerce business. Mr. O'Donnell thought this would be informative to the Board and the community.

Ms. Beth Hayes introduced students Lorraine Mumby and Eric Guerette who would be giving Power Point Presentations spotlighting their Marketing II E-Commerce Project. The program was a very exciting, challenging, innovative course they had been selected, as a high school, to participate in two and a half years ago. This was a Pilot program and sponsors include Education Connection in Connecticut and Correct Choices. Partners in the program are the State Department of Education, MCC, and University of New Haven.

Ms. Hayes had been intrigued when she found out about the program for several reasons. It is about students working together to create an online business solution. Marketing was all about meeting lots of customers and students were being given the task of identifying customer's needs and finding an online business solution to their problems. Students worked collaboratively in the classroom to come up with a company name, identity, logo, slogan, business plan, promotional materials and a website. It was amazing. They even learned to create portfolios and Business Dress Code. They were actually graded online and this went into their student mailboxes.

Ms. Hayes invited Board members to visit the class at any time. She can be reached via email.

Students are fully funded to go on field trips throughout the year. Ten other schools participate in the course so they are able to communicate with them, talk about assignments and exchange ideas. Every May students were bussed to the Convention Center in Hartford and basically competed when they presented their website; business plan, marketing materials and commercials they had created so there were substantial financial rewards and scholarship opportunities available.

Lorraine Mumby demonstrated how to log onto the course and talked through the entire process of setting up an assignment and the creation of a resume`.

Eric Guerette talked about the expo experience and his field trip experiences. He said the best part of the course was that not only did one have the opportunity to associate with people at their school but this

extended to people in other countries, e.g., China, to make comparisons. It was very interesting to note the differences.

Eric said that of all the work they did, he was most enthusiastic about the opportunity to participate in the Governor's Innovation Expo. One slide was of students presenting their assignments. He elaborated on the events portrayed in his slides - Governor Rell appeared in one.

Eric talked briefly about the costs involving software involved.

Eric said that overall it was a very challenging course; it really made the students think and he summarized by saying this was a very good course to teach the students and allowed others to see what they do.

Ms. Hackett thanked Lorraine and Eric for their presentations. It was truly project orientated and they had made it look like fun.

Mr. O'Donnell added his personal thanks to the students. This was one of the 'cool' things students were doing at the High School and they were very proud of them. If Board members had an opportunity on November 21, at 5:00am, Channel 3 would be featuring Manchester High School as a "Cool School."

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Michael Pohl, 157 Brookvale Street, addressed the Chair and the Board and asked that the Board of Education Policy Committee develop a new policy regarding the use of school buildings and grounds for political events during primaries and elections. He recalled that the previous year they were told that campaigning on school grounds was not allowed. This year Republican Town Director Sheri Pelletier had two or three campaign events on school grounds, as a candidate for State Representative. He understood that the grounds were rented to her campaign.

Mr. Pohl requested policy that addressed the use of buildings and grounds for campaign events so that both Democratic and Republican Town Committees ensured that their candidates understood the rules. If campaigns events are allowed he would also request a fee schedule so that all candidates are charged the same. He requested that, in fairness the policy be developed before the next campaign season so everyone was made aware of the Board of Education's position.

Mr. Pohl thanked the Superintendent and Ms. Brooks for their diligence on Election Day, and the previous day when they had been faced with teacher in services in parking which could have been a total nightmare because of the numbers. They had stepped up and done an incredible job in ensuring problems were kept to a minimum.

Mr. Pohl thanked Board members Linette Small-Miller and Carl Stafford for their services to the children of Manchester. Commitment and dedication to the Board was important.

Mr. Pohl extended his thanks to Ms. Hackett also for her great leadership as she had chaired the Board with a level-headed and steady hand for the last several years.

He thanked Mr. Rizzo for all the work he had done over the past term. He wished him well, as he started his new term, in a very important leadership role.

Stephanie Kynbel, 138 Bobby Lane, spoke as the parent of a 9th Grader and her first year dealing with proficiency. She knew they had dropped the percentage from 30%-50% and was concerned about the pressure that proficiencies were putting on students in order to pass them. She was in a quandary as to why they were having proficiency on top of all the other tests they were conducting. She was observing the stress level shown by her own child, having to take one test four times in order to pass. Ms. Kynbel wondered if we could get a report somehow about how many students passed the proficiency the first time, second time or third time. How were our minority students doing on those? If we were basing our proficiencies per grade why were we still having mid-term and final exams? This question had already been brought up when they went to ninety minute class periods; that was the selling point that we were no longer going to have mid-term and final exams yet we were still having them.

Ms. Kynbel saw the frustration and was concerned with the question of how much stress we were putting on the students.

Geoff Luxemburg, 248A New State Road, explained he was appearing in a couple of capacities, i.e., as a former Board member, to congratulate Carl Stafford on a tremendous dedication and ten year of service to the Board. He could appreciate all the hours that he and Ms. Small-Miller had put in over the years. As a former colleague he was very appreciative of all their efforts knowing that a lot of the community watched the meetings and had the opportunity of seeing both of them in action. It meant a lot to the community and he personally, as a new Board member, had benefited from their guidance not too long ago.

Mr. Luxemburg talked about the Senior Citizen Tutoring Program discussed earlier. He thanked the Board for their unanimous vote to approve the program. He pointed out one oversight, however, on the part of Ms. Luce and Ms. Young, who had not informed them that not only had the program expanded but offered great opportunities for senior citizens and students. They had actually done research in Vernon and, starting with Manchester proved it had actually improved reading scores for the participating students with a positive educational outcome. He thought this was important information for the Board. He thanked the Chair and the Board for making this possible.

Mr. Luxemburg pointed out the Savings Bank of Manchester had contributed financially to make the program successful, at no cost to the taxpayer, and was something that benefited everyone.

In conclusion, Mr. Luxemburg commented that as a citizen he had been watching Board meetings and was impressed with the Board's two newest members - Chris Patacchini and Jay Moran who he thought were doing a tremendous job. While we paused to congratulate Carl and Linette we should also take a moment to congratulate them for stepping up to the plate as new members.

Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hills Town Road, - follow up to Columbus Day Famous European Explorers brought to mind Henry Hudson, Samuel de Champlain, Adrian Block - Hartford, Ct. - Hadrian's Landing - Dutch Explorer off the Coast of Connecticut; Lief Ericson and Brendan the Monk (Ireland) sailed to America.

Native American Indian Heritage month - Reading "American Indians in WWI" by Thomas Britton. It was not a White Man's war.

WWI 90th Anniversary - November 11, 2008 - Two Remembrance Ceremonies held - Manchester Memorial Hospital 10:45am and 2:30pm.

Book for younger children “*Eyewitness Books*” dealing with WWI and WWII by Simon Adams.
Exhibition of WWI posters at Bruce Museum, in Greenwich, Ct. “Patriotic Appeals.”
Mark Twain’s documentary on CPTV - by Ken Burns - narrated by Kevin Conway - very good production.
4 hour, 2 part documentary. Shown on November 2nd and Nov. 9 from 2:00-4:00pm. Sundays.
Article passed to Mr. Bishop on drugs relative to dropouts et al for his information.
Mr. Stringfellow commented that it was also important to remember women veterans from all over the world.

Ms. Somer, Spring Street, commented that she thought Ms. Kearney’s presentation at the previous Board meeting was wonderful.

She extended congratulations to Ms. Small-Miller, Mr. Stafford and Ms. Hackett for their work.

Gerald Bujaucius, 88 Ambassador Drive commented on the Racial Imbalance Plan. He shared that he was on the Board of Directors of the Foundation for Manchester Public Schools - a non profit organization that raised funds and distributed them to teachers in Manchester for interesting projects and programs that enhanced the educational process.

Mr. Bujaucius had also served as the Town resident to the District Technology Plan, the group that decided how to distribute one-half percent to your budget on technology related purchases. He volunteered one afternoon per week at a Manchester PAL Homework Club; his brother is a teacher at Manchester High School.

He mentioned there had been a lot of newspaper articles over the last two weeks and he thought there were four major elements to the plan, i.e., we wanted to train teachers in culturally relevant instruction so students could see their lives reflected in the curriculum, intra-district multicultural programs, more courageous conversations and a focus on raising test scores of minority students. He agreed with the concept of the plan and the ultimate goals but thought there was a big difference between what he would call a platitude, a specific goal and a specific objective. A lot of those elements were not very specific and he would like the Board to consider revising the plan in order to achieve success. He worked as an Information Technology Manager and they employed a process called SMART - a device for project objectives; the S is specific and significant, the M is measurable and meaningful; A is obtainable and achievable, R is realistic and relevant and T is time based and trackable. He used as an example the fourth element which was on raising test scores for minority students - he did not think this was really achieving any of the specific items set out in SMART.

Mr. B. suggested the Board look at SMART principles and apply them to the plan; look at their objectives; make sure they applied to SMART principles. If objectives were not really measurable then they would never really know if they had achieved success.

E. CONSENT CALENDAR

There were three items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

E1. Personnel Action

Details had already been provided to Board members in their agenda packets.

E.2. Increase in Appropriation for Education Special Projects - \$26,754

For a total of \$1,606,102- IDEA 611 Grant

E.3. Budget Transfers

Budget Transfers were in accordance with Board policy. Details had already been provided in the agenda packets.

Mr. Marcano moved that the Board accept the Consent Calendar and the motion was seconded by Mr. Pattacini.

MOTION: Marcano/Pattacini s.v. the Board of Education unanimously approved the Consent Calendar, as presented by Dr. Ouellette. 9/0/0.

F. SUPERINTENDENTS'S REPORT - Part IIF.1. School Security Update

At the request of the Board Mr. Bishop, Security Director, provided a district school security update.

Mr. Bishop thanked the Board as he recalled he had been providing updates now for thirteen years. He believed there was always good news regarding what had been accomplished. He paid tribute to the veterans who had assisted the country in maintaining our freedom.

As of June 30, 2008 a total of 356 residency investigations were initiative;

Of those, 356 inquiries, 42 denials of educational accommodations took place.

Two residency hearings took place during 2007-2008;

Based upon those investigations 46 students were denied educational accommodations.

In the current year they had opened 148 investigations resulting in 19 denials of educational accommodations.

During school year 2007-2008 16 expulsions took place, six of whom were from Manchester High School and 6 from Illing Middle School.

Two expulsions had taken place from Bentley.

One expulsion each from Buckley and Two Rivers Schools.

Of 16 expulsions - five were for weapon violations, 3 for assault and 3 for defiance of school rules. 2 violations for narcotics and one for a bomb threat.

There were harassment and threatening violations.

This school year 13 expulsions had taken place; nine from Manchester High School, 2 from Bentley; 1 from MRA and one from the New Horizons Expulsion Program - for challenging disciplinary rules on two occasions.

Mr. Bishop said this was an indication of how the Board and Administration were taking care of occurrences in the community. These could have an adverse affect on the safety of our students because the majority of the expulsions dealt with community activity that could have easily have been brought back into our schools. The Administration and the Board would not put up with that!

Unusual incidents reports continued to be reported and the Board were briefed on those as issues developed in an endeavor to try to keep the Board abreast as quickly as possible.

In the previous year there were 147 unusual reports and so far this year there had been 55.

Many of the issues of notifications by the police department to the Board were a concern. Last year there were 203 student referrals from the Manchester Police Department. Presently there had been 84. Those students who became involved in the Juvenile Justice System were either referred to the Juvenile Court or dealt with through the adult court system; many of them being considered youthful offenders. It was not a black mark they would carry with them throughout their life. However, there were consequences and they had to be dealt with, either within the community or the school, in compliance with our disciplinary policy.

The development of Informational Intelligence and the sharing of that information between agencies continued to be one of the most vital tools in prevention. The information was shared immediately with the SROs, who were supervised by Sergeant Foran, the Power Officers, who were supervised by Sergeant Wilson, the Patrol Officers and Mr. Bishop. The information was then assessed by the police department regardless of its source or assumed importance. History continued to reveal that our concerned students were our best source of investigation. They brought forward concerns of safety and security which led to a preventive, rather than a reactive mode.

Mr. Bishop continued to participate in the Town Manager's Youth Services Issues Committee and met on a bi-weekly basis with the Manchester Police Department SROs and Power Officers.

Applications for grants were being submitted in an effort to complete camera work at Manchester High School, Illing Middle and selected elementary schools.

As Mr. Bishop had indicated, in April 2006, the efforts made by the Administration and the Board to deal with crime prevention, through environmental design, in dealing with school projects was a very important issue and if this continued we would be able to address the changing issues we faced on a daily basis within the community and in our headlines.

Mr. Rizzo talked about residency investigations recapping that during the 2007-2008 school year there were 350 investigations, with 49 denials of educational services. The number of investigations that did not result in a denial of service was 90% and he discussed the issue wondering about the amount of time spent by Mr. Bishop's office on those and what information emerged that we had not been aware of previously.

Mr. Bishop responded that each investigation was handled in a manner that either verified a report they had received as to families moving in with other families, the financial aspects of the occurrence in the community. Many families were finding it difficult to survive alone so they came to live with family members, after having to relinquish their own apartments.

Many of the 90% investigations under discussion were simply verifications. He and his staff spent a lot of time eyeballing the situations and on one extreme issue followed a family by car to New Britain at 84 miles per hour. The majority of investigations, however, turned over in a matter of two to three days.

Ms. Hackett clarified that Mr. Bishop was an ex-policemen and it was not a run of the mill practice of Central Office to carry out high speed chases on the highway.

Mr. Rizzo continued discussing with Mr. Bishop the 300 investigations which had not resulted in denial of service. Mr. Bishop said they could spend up to three weeks on some cases but reiterated the majority of cases were cleared much sooner. They had to verify if they were still resident in the community. He quoted that families in the past from outside the community had attempted to utilize our educational system.

Mr. Edwards expressed curiosity about Mr. Bishop's comment that his best intelligence still came from inside the schools from students. He thought it was laudable in this age to see students putting the safety of the school above potential friendships etc. He asked if we still had a TIPS line and was assured we did. Mr. Edwards asked for the number to be scrolled on the television screen. The telephone number is 250-3019 and can be treated with anonymity. They continued to get calls on a monthly basis - two to six a month on concerns raised regarding children, citizens or teachers, which leads to prevention of issues. Student/Parent pamphlets going out to each of the schools included this information. Mr. Edwards suggested they be placed in a prominent place in schools.

Mr. Pattacini went over the numbers with Mr. Bishop in an effort to try to get a sense of how the trends were shaping up. He recapped there were 16 expulsions the previous year and this year they were at 13 and asked Mr. Bishop to describe was it typical to see this happen early in the year. Why was it relatively high so early?

Mr. Bishop gauged the number was higher because there had been a significant community issue back in July which resulted in a number of juvenile referrals/arrests. The affect had carried over from the previous school year.

Mr. Bishop explained that what they termed an unusual incident was if it involved injury to a student, staff, visitor, law enforcement, fire department response, potential for media attention, suspension with potential for expulsion or any incident that an Administrator might feel occurred of which Central Officer needed to be aware.

Ms. Hackett commented that some fine points had been made in the Report.

F.2. All Day Kindergarten Update

Dr. Richardson gave a Power Point presentation which summarized her research on full-day versus half-day Kindergarten. (Copies of her presentation were tabled).

Research had repeatedly shown that full-day kindergarten could afford children the academic learning time needed to be prepared for mastery of primary grade reading and math skills and was consistently more effective than half-day programs, especially for disadvantaged children. Benefits included increased school readiness, higher academic achievement, and improved attendance. It also supported literacy and language development, social and emotional growth, reduced retentions and remediation rates which translated into cost savings.

Dr. Richardson elaborated on tables which set out the comparison, percentagewise, of CMT scores between full-day at Nathan Hale, Robertson, Washington and half-day Kindergarten at Verplanck and Waddell. Comparison of CMT Scores for Robertson half-day kindergarten for school years 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003 and full-day kindergarten for 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 in the subjects of reading, writing and mathematics were highlighted. The data referred to students at/above proficiency and at/above goal. The same comparisons were shown for Washington School.

The last research Dr. Richardson talked about was Nathan Hale where they had ended up with a list of half-day students at a low level and a significantly higher level for full-day students - 29 students achieved at/above proficiency.

Dr. Richard proposed the investment of Full-Day Kindergarten throughout the entire District would be very wise.

Mr. Edwards professed to be unclear as to the process leading to the statistics quoted in the charts. He and Dr. Richardson discussed the format in which the data was presented at some length and Dr. Richardson explained how she had arrived at the percentages set out in her report.

Mr. Edwards recalled requesting the data and it was the first time he had seen it. He was very excited and thanked Dr. Richardson for the update. However, he questioned the validity of the numbers given because they did not know the population. They continued to debate this issue but Mr. Edwards remained unsatisfied concluding he “did not get it!”

Mr. Pattacini agreed with Mr. Edwards that it was important for the Board to see the total number of students in each of the populations and then the percentages. That would provide a complete view of the data. When doing statistics and analyses, in a process like this, very small populations could skew numbers. He supported Mr. Edwards in his request to be shown the total number and the result of that data.

Mr. Marcano asked how many of the students who had attended the Kindergarten also attended the Head Start Program. Dr. Richardson told him this was a good question and she would take a look at that.

Ms. Hackett said she would be interested at some point - when they were getting cohort data for these students - in seeing their progress. Research had shown that earlier intervention measures at all levels generally worked and ensured the student had mastered the right literacy and numeracy skills by grade four. That was what it was all about!

G. OLD BUSINESS

G.1. Revision to Racial Imbalance Plan

Dr. Richardson pointed out the specific measurable attainable realistic and timely specifics were really better than the curriculum. The new paradigm shift they had presented to C & I and the Board had embodied something called the central questions and also unit goals. Teachers were trained to look for specifics, including measurable action goals. Much of the activities involved in the curriculum were around measurable goals. Therefore, when we looked at benchmark assessments and all the criteria, we were really talking about skills plus content and that was really what SMART goals was all about.

Dr. Ouellette pointed out that they needed Board approval for this item. She reminded the Board that at their October 27, 2008 meeting Ms. Diane Kearney had presented a revised Racial Imbalance Plan. Further revisions had been made and the Board had already been given this information in their agenda packets. She also reminded that although it was not mandatory to update their plan, this was an opportunity to make strides in the area of racial balance.

Dr. Ouellette recapped on the previous Board of Education Meeting saying it was important to let our teaching staff know that they had the utmost confidence in their commitment to the students. Evidence of this could be seen in the recent gains in achievement as Manchester began to close the gap, as well as making other academic progress. This work could only be attributed to our phenomenal teaching staff and we needed to highlight that. They had worked tirelessly, every single day, to meet our academic goals and this was something that should be celebrated by our stakeholders because our teachers had their children's

education at heart. She felt it would have been remiss of her not to mention this at this time. We knew we still had a long way to go but as we moved forward we considered ourselves in a wonderful position to reach out to accomplish all our academic goals. It was important to know that each student's needs are considered and we would continue to persevere to make certain that all our students reach their full potential.

Mr. Edwards moved that the Board adopt the Manchester Public Schools' proposed adjusted Racial Balance Plan, as at October 2008 and this was seconded by Mr. Moran.

MOTION: Edwards/Moran s.v. the Manchester Board of Education unanimously approved the Revised Racial Imbalance Plan, as presented by Ms. Kearney. 9/0/0.

H. NEW BUSINESS

No new business

Ms. Hackett reminded Board members they needed to pause after the next agenda item to allow Ms. Small-Miller and Mr. Stafford the opportunity to give their acceptance remarks to the Board for the recognition and accolades extended to them earlier.

I. COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Hackett read aloud a communication she had received and Board members were invited to follow her lead.

Ms. Hackett read aloud a letter she had received from Mr. Thomas Alexander, President of the Manchester Education Teachers' Union.

"November 10,

Dear Ms. Hackett:

Statements made at the Board of Education Meeting on October 27th, 2008, which linked the colored students to learning have angered the Manchester Teaching community. The Manchester Teaching Association believes that each student, regardless of color, has his or her own unique learning style. To suggest that "Black or Brown" students who were taught by "Mostly white women will not, or have not been successful in an academic environment is irresponsible and divisive. Most importantly, the statement that "Black or Brown" boys learn differently is very racially stereotyping and an insult to all students of color. Manchester cannot tolerate this belief system or this view of the teaching/learning process. The Manchester Education Association strongly objects to these racially biased statements. The public did not accept racially biased statements made by Don Imus, a nationally syndicated radio personality. Manchester should not tolerate such racist beliefs and behavior either.

Very truly yours,

Thomas Alexander

President

"Manchester Education Association"

Ms. Hackett commented that several members of the Board had received communications or had informal discussions with members of the public and teaching staff regarding comments made at the previous

meeting. She said they were all concerned about the comments and she had responded to the letter from Mr. Alexander thanking the MEA for the sincere and honest letter.

She was deeply proud of Manchester for daring to tackle difficult issues, including how to teach and learn in an increasingly diverse community. One of the challenges in these circumstances is that although we tried to listen to each other we did not always hear with our hearts. Everyone had in their hearts a desire that Manchester students leave school optimally equipped to live and prosper in a world that was increasingly diverse and challenging. Getting there was a continual challenge for Manchester and tempers may flare as we inched forward every day. Everyone should keep their hearts and minds open. Manchester Public Schools had demonstrated a firm commitment to investigate, explore and understand what approaches to teaching and learning would work best to eradicate the student achievement gap. We should not be afraid to take on those issues and discuss them. Unless we understood why there was a gap – we would never understand how to close it.

One thing, however, the Board must absolutely insist all times in trying to understand how the gap existed was to rely on nothing other than hard facts and data from our teachers on the performance and progress of the students they worked with, developed, and came to know as individuals, each and every day. As a school system we could not rely on loose impressions and random generalizations to determine why the achievement gap exists. This was a path from which Manchester Public Schools cannot veer – even when the dialogue was difficult and intentions were misunderstood.

Mr. Pattacini reported receiving a number of emails and carrying on some conversations with members of the community that echoed what the MEA described and what Dr Ouellette stated recently. From both teachers and citizens alike he would say the concern was that we did not lose sight of closing the gap for all children in our community. A number of folks echoed support for teachers and educators and belief in their ability to help all our children.

Mr. Moran received communications from the public and reiterated the comments made by Mr. Pattacini about support from teachers.

Mr. Crockett received communications from people who expressed their unhappiness at some of the comments made at the last meeting and he was passing this on to the Board as a matter of information.

Mr. Rizzo received communications and he had thought about what he would say, and how to say. He did not think anyone sitting on the Board could have expressed it better than the Chair had done, i.e., listening with your heart. The intention behind some of the things that were said could only be understood with the heart and not the brain and he thanked Ms. Hackett for that.

Ms. Small-Miller

Ms. Small-Miller commented that time flew when you were having fun. She reminisced on the events leading up to her becoming a Board member. She expressed special thanks to the Democratic Committee, especially the Nominating Committee, for making it possible for her to serve. She said she was not saying goodbye that evening – she was merely taking a break and said “I’ll see you later! One did not have to be on the front line to make a difference. The most important thing was to continue to make a difference and she mentioned a number of Board achievements over the last few years. She urged that parents become more involved in their children’s education. She promised she would be watching to make sure that under-achievers were being offered the programs to help them achieve and that promises were fulfilled. She

hoped the Board would continue to uphold the Superintendent and the Central Office staff. It had been her pleasure to serve.

Mr. Stafford said that in the three years he had spent on the Board he had met some of the finest individuals in the town. They had worked very hard and accomplished a lot. He listed things they accomplished from 2005-November, 2008 and he said "What I wanted to do I did!" They had fixed Waddell, Bowers, worked on MHS and built a very good wing on it. Iling, Martin, driveways in Keeney and Buckley; voted to renovate Highland Park School, Head Start was being rebuilt. NEASC accreditation. He had got to serve on the Head Start Council, the Great Path Academy liaison. During all of this he had finished his Masters Degree, so in three years he had accomplished a great deal and had done it with very fine people.

Mr. Stafford appreciated the opportunity he had had to work with all the Board members, given by the people of Manchester.

Ms. Hackett commented that at the November 24th meeting the Republican Caucus would hold the majority on the Board and so she and her fellow Democrats would be representing the minority party. While a Chairperson worked on many issues in between televised meetings, this was the last regular meeting of the Board of Education on which she would serve as the Chairperson. On that note she thanked Board members for all their support, teamwork and focus over the past three years. They had made progress in making their schools competitive, provided more academically rigorous and enriching programs and curriculum, expanded All Day Kindergarten opportunities, narrowed the achievement gap and witnessed impressive gains in CMT and CAPT scores. The Board would continue modernizing school buildings.

Ms. Hackett expressed her thanks for their participation and dedication to make all the aforesaid happen. She looked forward to this momentum continuing for the remaining two years of her term and the continuation of working in a bipartisan spirit to further address the improvements needed to take place in Manchester Schools.

G. COMMITTEE REPORTS

J.1. Personnel and Finance Committee

Mr. Marcano reported on the Personnel and Finance Committee which met on October 22, 2008.

Ms. Brooks informed the Committee that the Manchester READS program submitted their proposed budget for 2008-2009 School Year. The RSVP volunteer program's budget showed an increase in cost from \$1,996 for the 2007-2008 School Year to \$5,479 for the 2008-2009 School Year. During the 2007-2008 School Year the program started at Bowers Elementary with 12 volunteer tutors. The 2008-2009 program budget indicated there would be 40 volunteer tutors in three Manchester Elementary Schools.

The Committee requested an update at a full Board meeting and an evaluation of the program from Bowers Elementary School determining the program's instructional value.

Mr. O'Donnell updated the Committee on interest expressed for Boys' and Girls' Lacrosse. After a length discussion the Committee suggested Mr. O'Donnell include the cost in the FY2009-2010 budget.

Dr. Ouellette shared that there were parents interested in a full-day kindergarten program at Keeney Elementary School. Since there were no funds to support this in the FY2009-2010 budget, the parents were offered the choice of attending an extended day program at Keeney, a full-day program at one of the intra-

district magnet schools Nathan Hale and Washington, or attend an inter-district Magnet School under the Connecticut Public Schools' Parent Choice program.

The Committee agreed the funds were unavailable to support a full-day kindergarten program and supported the three choices offered. The Committee recommended the remaining three schools, Keeney, Highland and Martin, be added to the 2009-2010 Board of Education Budget.

Ms. Brooks apprised the Committee that the position of Expulsion Hearing Officer had not been evaluated or appointed since 1996. The Committee agreed that Ms. Brooks should investigate the process of evaluating and appointing Expulsion Hearing Officers.

The next meeting will be held on November 19, 2008 at 5:30pm. in the Central Office.

J.2. Curriculum and Instruction Committee

Mr. Rizzo reported that the Curriculum and Instruction Committee had a lengthy meeting on November 3, 2008.

The English, Math and Science Departments all shared and presented their new Curriculums. There were many changes in the K-12 Curriculum for English. Use of text to teach skills rather than just teaching text. The text is the vehicle that drives the skill. Incorporated in this unit is a focus on skill which forces teachers to use instructional design for understanding material. Teaching strategies for life learning.

The K-8 Language Arts Curriculum - aligned with the 4th generation CMT, provided teachers feedback in new documentation; vocabulary had been expanded.

There was a discussion about the Huck Finn Update. Professional Development had finished with Beyond Diversity training, effective social changes and discussion of themes.

Two classes would be teaching Huck Finn with the new book and supplemental material was added to the course. Course participants were going to visit the Mark Twain House. Class trips would begin Thursday, November 6, 2008. Students still had a choice of opting out. A letter to this effect was sent home to parents and notifying the start date.

New books of interest with leveled texts were introduced to enhance reading opportunities at Bennet and students are voting on national high interest books. The Math curriculum review was for K-8 and the 9-12 would be presented to the Curriculum and Instruction Committee in December. The same goes for the new Science Curriculum. Staff members talked about the changes and connections to standard in the CAPT and the questions on content were at a high level.

The new emblem was discussed and it was agreed to send this issue back to the full Board for discussion.

A brief discussion took place on differentiated instruction with regard to a policy on instructional techniques.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, December 1, 2008.

K. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Stephanie Kynbel, 138 Bobby Lane, enjoyed the security update given by Mr. Bishop at the last Manchester PTA meeting. He had spoken on security at Manchester High School and she had found this very

informative. It was nice to know the TIPS line was still working and doing its job. She thought it was very valuable that we had our SRO's in our schools and she implored that the Board of Directors at least unfreeze the Police Department funds so we could keep our areas safe for all our children and residents.

Ms. Kynbel considered All-Day Kindergarten very important. It had been a thorn in everyone's side only because of budgets. They all knew there was background information that all-day kindergarten benefited our children. It benefitted taxpayers and our community in the long run. It just came down to the financial dollar and we all knew that financial dollar was getting tighter and tighter. It was one of those programs we would have to keep pushing for so it would not just get lost in the meantime.

Ms. Kynbel wished Ms. Small-Miller and Carl Stafford good speed. She knew all about their dedication to the Board. Ms. Hackett had been a wonderful Chair and Ms. Kynbel knew the vast amount of time Ms. Hackett had put into her role and this would be well rewarded. She reflected that the following day Ms. Hackett would be thankful for some spare moments.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hills Town Road, wished the best of luck to Mr. Stafford on all his future endeavors. He extended the same wishes to Ms. Small-Miller. He knew she was a busy lady but he admired her for her West Indian work ethic. He added that many West Indians come from Islands in addition to Jamaica and Barbados.

Colin Bennet, had been a noted committee person at West Indian Museum, Central Connecticut State University, until his demise.

Mr. Stringfellow supported all the items on the Consent Calendar, especially the one dealing with the IDEA grant.

Recommended reading "*Getting Special Needs Kids ready for the Real World.*" - David Funk.

Mr. Stringfellow supported the Marketing IIE - Commerce project. A recent CBIA newsletter covered the importance of a post high school education offering support/mentoring.

Mr. Stringfellow was pleased with Mr. Bishop's presentation, especially about residency requirements. If they had to make arrest - so be it - if it meant safety for the school. Students should be able to attend school in a safe environment.

Mr. Stringfellow commented on Ms. Kearney's presentation at the previous meeting of the Board. She had given a good presentation. He knew that sometimes the truth may hurt but we had to deal with that. He recommended a book by Alana Lentin which came out this year on anti-Semitism and people's attitudes "*New York Times*" Article by Dr. Betty Sternberg who was stepping down as Superintendent talked about similar problems to those in Manchester.

L. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Ms. Hackett commented it looked as if we might have a double standard for Board members who were seeking elected office, and others who were also seeking office but were not on the Board of Education, regarding the use of, and access to, school facilities. The Board had been requested to at least take a look at designing a policy so that everyone understood what the rules and parameters were.

M. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Edwards/Moran s.v. The Manchester Board of Education unanimously approved a motion to adjourn at 9:45p.m. 9/0/0.

Respectfully submitted,

Enrique Marcano, Sr., Board Secretary
Manchester Board of Education