

**New Milford Board of Education
Special Meeting Minutes
February 20, 2024 - 5:30 pm
Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

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NEW MILFORD, CT

Present:	Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach, Chairperson Mrs. Tammy McInerney Mrs. Leslie Sarich Mrs. Sarah Herring Mr. Brian McCauley Mr. Dean Barile
Absent:	Mr. Eric Hansell Mr. Tom O'Brien
Also Present:	Dr. Janet Parlato, Superintendent Mrs. Laura Olson, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services Ms. Holly Hollander, Assistant Superintendent

1.	Call to Order The special meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach, Chairperson.	Call to Order
2.	Public Comment None	Public Comment
3.	DISCUSSION A. Presentation: Review of Student Performance Topics Dr. Parlato gave her presentation on student achievement, looking at specific data points, potential causes for achievement challenges, planned action steps, impact of those initiatives and accountability for student growth and achievement. Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate: Mrs. McInerney asked about the special needs students who go on to the transition program. Dr. Parlato confirmed those students are included in the numbers. Two or Four Year College Entrance: Mr. McCauley asked if this is compared to other districts. Dr. Parlato stated not in her presentation but will provide that information.	DISCUSSION A. Presentation: Review of Student Performance Topics

Percentage of Chronically Absent Students in the District:

Dr. Parlato stated students who are absent more than 18 times are considered chronically absent. Mrs. McInerney noted the numbers have tripled for 22/23. Mrs. Faulenbach asked how truancy fits into it. Dr. Parlato stated truancy is based on how many times a student is absent in a month. Unfortunately DCF does not step in as often and districts have had to increase family engagement officers and truancy officers. Mr. McCauley asked what happens for students who miss more than 10% of the year. Dr. Parlato stated 9-12 grade students will lose credit if absences cannot be explained. K-8 is possible retention.

Mrs. Faulenbach asked if this data allows them to flag these instances and cross reference how it affects grades. Dr. Parlato stated Powerschool will send out letters starting at four absences. Ms. Hollander added each building has an attendance committee and there is a district attendance committee. The number of students absent in 2022/2023 is 717 students. That is HPS and Northville combined, plus some. Mr. Barile asked if the district tracks mental health. Dr. Parlato stated the school counselors and psychologists follow that.

Teacher Attendance:

Dr. Parlato stated the district average of teachers absent is 14.2 days for 2021/2022. Mrs. McInerney asked if there is a way to account for the rise in absences. Dr. Parlato stated anecdotally, kids coming back from Covid are harder: behaviorally and emotionally. Mrs. McInerney added that it is taking a toll on the teacher.

High Needs Students Over Time

Dr. Parlato stated in 23/24 the district had 8.8% English Learner (EL) students. In 14/15 it was 2.7%. Dr. Parlato added that the Free/Reduced Lunch percentage is also up, giving numerous implications in terms of staffing needs.

Smarter Balanced English/Language Arts Achievement

Dr. Parlato stated this demonstrates the percentage of students who have met ELA proficiency and who have

<p>made their ELA growth target.</p> <p>Smarter Balanced Mathematics Achievement Mrs. McInerney stated the numbers are sad. Dr. Parlato agreed and stated this is why we're having this presentation. Mr. McCauley stated from his professional experience, students who were in 6th grade during Covid are missing fundamental skills that they need to make up. Mrs. Faulenbach stated next year, prior to budget, there will be a curriculum drill down, and the district can defend or explain things that it might need. It's about understanding where we are and what we need to do in all areas. If we don't ask these questions, it's a missed opportunity. The district is down 20% in math compared to 2018/20219. Mrs. McInerney added that the community needs to understand that resources are needed.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated there is a parent obligation component and is also reflected in these numbers. Mrs. Herring added that sometimes there is a lot of emphasis placed on sports and not so much academics anymore.</p> <p>SAT English/Language Arts and Math Achievement Dr. Parlato stated in 2018 the SAT changed, creating a new baseline.</p> <p>Next Generation Science Standards Achievement Dr. Parlato stated this is adopted in many states. Mrs. Sarich asked why there was a dip. Dr. Parlato stated they are different groups of kids.</p> <p>Grades 6-12 Co-Curricular Offerings Dr. Parlato stated the co-curricular offerings are high, with more than 30 clubs at Schaghticoke and 50 at the high school. Mrs. McInerney noted there are 107 students participating in theater.</p> <p>Current Ninth Graders with 3+ Failing Grades in Q2 Dr. Parlato noted this is data for this current Q2 year. There are 40 students in 9th grade with three or more F's. Mrs. Herring asked how we prepare students for the grading system at the high school. At SMS, they</p>	
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may not get an F, and then in high school they do.

Mrs. McNerney stated she is worried about the homework load, she has noticed there is less homework for SMS students and it can be culture shock going into high school.

Mrs. Herring brought up the grading system and how it can be discouraging to students who do not speak English. Perhaps a softer way to grade EL students, such as an effort grade. Mrs. Hollander stated they are working on how to address the different levels of EL students.

iReady Growth in English/Language Arts & Math for 2022/23

Mrs. Faulenbach asked if there is a comparison for other districts. Dr. Parlato stated not for iReady. Ms. Hollander stated this year's numbers show promise and they are addressing gaps to move students forward.

**Potential Cause of Achievement Challenges:
*Impact of Covid***

Dr. Parlato stated the impact included the following: learning loss and incomplete learning, disconnection from school, less clarity about the purpose of relevance of school content, and ongoing increase in anxiety.

**Potential Cause of Achievement Challenges:
*Increased Student Needs Across the District***

Dr. Parlato stated there is almost triple the number of EL students, double the students who qualify free/reduced lunch and an increased number of students with severe disabilities.

**Potential Cause of Achievement Challenges:
*Impact of Poverty upon Student Performance***

Dr. Parlato stated there can be lowered vocabulary exposure, less access to nutrition and health care, more stress at home, and lower quality of childcare and early learning opportunities. This creates a gap going into Kindergarten.

**Potential Cause of Achievement Challenges:
*Disconnect between grade level expectations and the instructed curriculum***

Dr. Parlato stated it's about making sure teachers have an understanding of the grade level standards for their subject areas or classes and ensuring that the actual curriculum is what is being instructed.

Current Action Steps to Increase Student Performance

Dr. Parlato stated the district is focusing on goals and strategic ambitions. The expectation is that everyone is at or above grade level. The purpose is to unify the district, set goals in writing and increase faculty participation. It's important to stay connected to district goals in a common format, including having stability in leadership and decision making.

When it is related to classroom instruction, it includes a development of effective instruction and instructional rounds. Mr. Barile asked if teachers will try to look better on days they are being observed. Dr. Parlato stated the teachers 'do their thing,' without showing off in her experience.

Mrs. Olson stated for special ed teachers, one focus is to provide specialized training. With turnover and new hires, there needs to be consistent training, including common language and common goals. For students with disabilities, it's about inclusion. Pulling a student out of class puts them on a different trajectory and the district is looking at more in-classroom instruction. One option is to introduce co-teaching with EdAdvance. Not only does it help the student, but the teacher to student ratio goes from 1:20 to 1:10. Mr. Barile asked if students with disabilities (SWD) ever exit the program. Mrs. Olson stated they do. Dr. Parlato added the students are reviewed and tested regularly to determine that. Mrs. Faulenbach stated that in 2019 students with an IEP who enrolled in a 2 or 4 year college after graduation went from 51.2% in 2019 to 23.3% in 2022. Mrs. Faulenbach asked if there was anything to explain it. Mrs. Olson stated it is different cohorts, that is a large gap and vocational programming is a needed consideration. Dr. Parlato stated a larger conversation has to be about programming in general. It's mapping out what we have and what we want to see. Mrs. Olson added they are including Parents As Partners workshops and post

reflection surveys.

Mrs. McInerney asked about Parent University. Ms. Hollander stated they don't have the community engagement and are looking to work with the Youth Agency to re-engage families since Covid.

Ms. Hollander stated they are building a strong system to support student success by looking at district data, learning communities, learning walks, climate committees, and teacher leadership.

Mrs. Olson stated, to increase student performance they will continue to improve behaviors and regulation for SWD in a least restrictive environment, while keeping students and staff safe. This includes new staff training, Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) staff training, and master teacher trainings. There are trainings in place for paraeducators, and they are continuing with the school-based health centers.

Dr. Parlato stated in the analysis of current programming, it is about meeting the needs of all the learners. Planning and Development of Future Programming is to expand school-to-career options. They are doing interviews and focus groups with students. The purpose is to honor student voices and gathering data on what works.

Planned Action Steps to Increase Academic Performance

Mrs. Olson stated it will take three years to see the efficiency of what the district is doing. It's looking at what programs should look like for kids that need something different. Dr. Parlato stated they looked at Newtown and Pomperaug programs that are similar in what New Milford is looking to do.

Ms. Hollander stated the data platform, such as iReady, is something all teachers are starting to use. It's an essential piece to ensure there is curriculum alignment throughout the grade levels.

Dr. Parlato stated she is aware we have work to do. She would like to see scores improve and student achievement increase across all grade levels. Mrs.

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	Herring noted when Kindergarten became full day it changed the expectations for each grade level because academics were pushed more in Kindergarten. It could be adding to anxiety and worry. Dr. Parlato stated purposeful play has been introduced because of that.	
4.	Adjourn <i>Mrs. McInerney moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 p.m., seconded by Mr. McCauley.</i>	Adjourn <i>Motion made and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 p.m.</i>

Respectfully submitted:



Tammy McInerney
Secretary
New Milford Board of Education