

**New Milford Board of Education  
 Special Meeting Minutes  
 November 19, 2024 - 5:45 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 Mr. Eric Hansell <i>arrived at 5:48pm</i> Mr. Tom O'Brien Mrs. Sarah Herring Mr. Brian McCauley Mr. Dean Barile Mr. Randall Scofield Mayor Pete Bass <i>ex-officio</i>
Absent:	Mr. Brian McCauley
Also Present:	Dr. Janet Parlato, Superintendent Mrs. Laura Olson, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Services

1.	<b>Call to Order</b> The special meeting of the New Milford Board of Education was called to order at 5:45 p.m. by Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach, Chairperson.	<b>Call to Order</b>
2.	<b>Public Comment</b> None	<b>Public Comment</b>
3.	<b>DISCUSSION</b>  <b>A. Presentation: Student Achievement Information</b>  Dr. Parlato began the presentation by reviewing the Board of Education goals and then gave an overview of the accountability indicators. Dr. Parlato stated every district in the state has an Overall Accountability Index (OAI), that is calculated by the Connecticut State Department of Education. The state's target for every school district is 85. The OAI is made up of 22 unique indicators. Dr. Parlato reviewed the district's previous OAI and reviewed New Milford's 22 unique indicators.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● English Language Arts (ELA) Performance for all grades 3-11 students on the Smarter Balanced test and SAT:       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ For 2023-2024 New Milford was 61.6, and State Target was 75.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● ELA Performance for all high-needs grades</li> </ul>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>  <b>Presentation: Student Achievement Information</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>3-11 students on Smarter Balanced test and the SAT:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ For 2023-2024 New Milford was 54.8, and State Target was 75.</li></ul></li><li>● Mathematics Performance for all grades 3-11 students on the Smarter Balanced test and the SAT:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ For 2023-2024 New Milford was 56.3, and State Target was 75.</li></ul></li><li>● Mathematics Performance for all high-needs grades 3-11 students on the Smarter Balanced test and SAT:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ For 2023-2024 New Milford was 49.6, and State Target was 75.</li></ul></li><li>● Science Performance for all grades 5, 8, and 11 students on the Next Generation Science Assessment (NGSA):<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ For 2023-2024 New Milford was 57.8, and State Target was 75.</li></ul></li><li>● Science Performance for all high-needs grades 5, 8, and 11 students on the NGSA:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ For 2023-2024 New Milford was 50.3, and State Target was 75.</li></ul></li><li>● Academic growth from one year to the next in ELA for all grades 4-8 students on the Smarter Balanced test:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ For 2023-2024 New Milford was 59.5, and State Target was 100.</li></ul></li><li>● Academic growth from one year to the next in ELA for all high-needs grades 4-8 students on the Smarter Balanced test:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ For 2023-2024 New Milford was 55.1, and State Target was 100.</li></ul></li><li>● Academic growth from one year to the next in Mathematics for all grades 4-8 students on the Smarter Balanced test:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ For 2023-2024 New Milford was 58.3, and State Target was 100.</li></ul></li><li>● Academic growth from one year to the next in Mathematics for all high-needs grades 4-8 students on the Smarter Balanced test:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ For 2023-2024 New Milford was 55.4, and State Target was 100.</li></ul></li><li>● Progress toward English Proficiency - Literacy: Percentage of multilingual learners making progress towards reading proficiency as measured by the LAS Links test:</li></ul>	
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- For 2023-2024 New Milford was 68, and State Target was 100.
- Progress toward English Proficiency - Oral: Percentage of multilingual learners making progress towards reading proficiency as measured by the LAS Links test:
  - For 2023-2024 New Milford was 59.7, and State Target was 100.
- Chronic Absenteeism - All:
  - For 2023-2024 New Milford was 17.2, and State Target is less than 5%.
- Chronic Absenteeism - High Needs Students:
  - For 2023-2024 New Milford was 22.7, and State Target is less than 5%.
- College and Career Readiness: Percentage Taking Courses
  - For 2023-2024 New Milford was 97.3, and State Target was 75.
- College and Career Readiness: Percentage Passing Exams
  - For 2023-2024 New Milford was 35.3, and State Target was 75.
- On-Track to High School Graduation:
  - For 2023-2024 New Milford was 86, and State Target was 94.
- Four Year Graduation Rate for All Students:
  - For 2023-2024 New Milford was 88.4, and State Target was 94.
- Six Year Graduation Rate for High Needs Students:
  - For 2023-2024 New Milford was 85.4, and State Target was 94.
- Postsecondary Entrance:
  - For 2023-2024 New Milford was 75.2, and State Target was 75.
- Physical Fitness:
  - For 2023-2024 New Milford was 26.2, and State Target was 75.
- Arts Access:
  - For 2023-2024 New Milford was 52.7, and State Target was 60.

Dr. Parlato stated academic growth from one year to the next is one of the most important indexes because it measures how the students have grown from one year over the previous year. ELA and Mathematics saw

	<p>a nice jump for all grades 4-8 and high needs grades 4-8. This shows we are trending in the right direction and we need to identify how we can accelerate that growth.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato stated there were also jumps for the Multi Language Learner (MLL) students for Literacy and Oral Proficiency from 2022-23 to 2023-24.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato explained that chronic absenteeism means a student misses 10% of the total number of days or greater. There are 180 days in the school year, so more than 18 absences is considered chronically absent. There is also a 2% drop in chronic absenteeism from 2022-23 to 2023-24.</p> <p>For College and Career Readiness, we are seeing students are enrolled in classes that qualify: AP, tech courses, etc. There is a high percentage of student participation, which is great, but the other side is, only 35.3% of students are passing the exams.</p> <p>Speaking to the Graduation Rate indexes, Dr. Parlato mentioned it is a known fact that students will struggle to get to 25 credits if they do not earn at least 6 credits in their first year of high school. These 22 indicators are all the ways you can measure a school district.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato continued by reviewing New Milford vs. other towns in New Milford's DRG (District Reference Group). Comparing by DRG is a way to show New Milford's performance in comparison to like-districts and state average.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Overall Accountability Index (compilation of the below 22 indexes) for New Milford is 70.2% and state average is 70.8%.</li><li>● ELA Overall Performance Index (OPI) for New Milford is 61.6% and state average is 63.9%.</li><li>● Math OPI for New Milford is 56.3% and state average is 60.2%.</li><li>● Science Performance Index for New Milford is 57.8% and state average is 61.8%.</li><li>● SAT ELA for New Milford is 65.4% and state average is 54.8%.</li><li>● SAT Math for New Milford is 23.8% and state average is 29.5%.</li></ul>	
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- Growth Target Met ELA Grades 4-8 for New Milford is 59.5% and state average is 58.7%.
- Growth Target Met Math Grades 4-8 for New Milford is 58.3% and state average is 61.4%.
- Progress English Proficiency Literacy for New Milford is 68% and state average is 58.9%.
- Progress English Proficiency Oral for New Milford is 59.7% and state average is 55.2%.
- Chronic Absenteeism for New Milford is 17.2% and state average is 17.7%.
- College and Career - Percent Taking Courses for New Milford is 97.3% and state average is 91.5%.
- College and Career - Percent Passing Exams for New Milford is 35.3% and state average is 44.3%.
- On Track to Graduate High School for New Milford is 86% and state average is 84.5%.
- Graduation Rate for New Milford is 88.4% and state average is 88.4%.
- Two- and Four-Year College Entrance for New Milford is 75.2% and state average is 68.4%.
- Meeting Physical Fitness Standard for New Milford is 26.2% and state average is 47.2%.
- Arts Access for New Milford is 52.7% and state average is 55%.
- The Per Pupil Expenditure for New Milford is 19,376 with the state average being 21,143.
- Free/Reduced Lunch for New Milford 33.1% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch and the state average is 43.96%.

Dr. Parlato stated of the 169 towns in the state of Connecticut, based on wealth rank, New Milford is ranked 94.

Dr. Parlato continued by reviewing the action steps taken, and what future action steps there will be. One of the first action steps is to focus on early literacy development. If a student does not meet literacy standards by 3rd grade, it is known they will struggle for the rest of their academic career. There have been revised units of study for K-3 and the district has invested in phonics: Heggerty and UFLi, which has provided professional learning to teachers. Per the state, we have to fulfill the requirements of Science of

<p>Reading Legislation and we are required to have a core literacy program. The district is planning to purchase Bookworms. We will keep what we have and supplement with Bookworms. There has also been a focus on leadership with Master Classes and Literacy Laboratory Classrooms. Also in development is an Admin Literacy Leadership to look at K-5 administration. The district now has a K-6 Literacy Curriculum Specialist.</p> <p>The action steps for Mathematics have included investing in iReady for grades K-8, having a Mathematics Curriculum Specialist, as well as Math Laboratory Classrooms for K-5. There has been an analysis and revision for grades 6-8. Future steps include exploring a core Mathematics series for grades 6-8 and having a “Mathematics Think Tank.”</p> <p>There is a focus on developing the science of student and adult learning. The focus cannot just be academic, but also must include social and physical abilities.</p> <p>Additional steps are to help support students with test taking by giving more exposure to a test before they actually take the test. The district has begun doing Interim Assessment Blocks (IAB’s). IAB’s are administered to students so they can sample what a test will be like and build familiarity. The district aligns the IAB’s with where the students are within the curriculum, so the material is top of mind. This is currently happening in grades 3,4 and 5, and will be moving on to 6,7 and 8. After Covid, student stamina was reduced, so when it comes time for the actual test, the staff can allow the students to do it in chunks. This helps avoid fatigue and loss of attention.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney asked if the district would consider offering SAT prep again after school. Oftentimes it is not the content the students need help with, but strategies to get through the test. It would help the students be more prepared. Dr. Parlato stated she would look into starting that again.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato continued by stating, another action step is maintaining a specific and actionable focus on improvement and evidence of impact. These items</p>	
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<p>include board goals, consistent review meetings, non-tenured teacher review meetings and instruction for administrators in observation feedback. There is a growing focus around the ideals we live by and a building of common language toward an instructional culture, which will lead to “Evidence of Impact” in discussions and presentations. This will help show what is and what isn’t working. Since May, there have been seven instructional rounds completed to build common language toward an instructional culture.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato stated intervention is key. With the use of Educlimber, they are keeping track of students' yearly progress. For determining student progress during the school year, they use iReady. This allows staff to see who is falling below grade level, so it can be addressed. Alongside that, an intervention leadership has been established and more tutors have been brought on board. There is a solid process for what to do as students do or do not respond to the help, and a method to figure out why. Lastly, there is a plan to create a consistent assessment analysis and problem solving teams for teachers to help each other and give feedback.</p> <p>Another important piece is Special Education. This includes having intensive structured literacy instruction with groups based on specific needs. There is also co-teaching instruction and iReady insights for individual students. At the middle school, there are multicentered reading groups, and new math programs are being explored.</p> <p>There is a definite need to increase the assistance for EL (English Learner) students. Currently, the district has 328 EL students, which is 9.4% of the student population. There are 1,160 students who qualify for free/reduced lunch, which is 33.2%. The number of students with IEPs has been stable over the years, but the student population is going down. This is resulting in fewer kids enrolled in the district, but more kids with needs.</p> <p>Another action step is leadership. Stability creates traction. It's not the only reason for a district's success, but there is a lot to be said for it. There will be a shift</p>	
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<p>in the evaluation plan, so teachers can determine their own professional learning goals based on written feedback. Teachers are also becoming involved in the selection of materials.</p> <p>It is important to stay on track. Cabinet members are creating belief statements for our ideals: Focus, Heart, Collaboration, and Creativity. The principals are using the language of the Connecticut teaching rubric to create language for classroom observation feedback. The assistant principals and special education supervisors are defining the characteristics related to building and maintaining relationships.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato stated the district is doing the right work. There is alignment of grade level standards, a culture of instruction, multiple ways to intervene in the face of challenges, an understanding of utilizing Science of Learning and a creation of a safe and welcoming school climate. There are things in the immediate future that are needed. It includes additional professional learning and support for multilingual learners. They are integrated into the regular classroom but students and teachers struggle when there is a student who does not understand the language, and there are still 20 other students to teach. The district has to do better in math. We need to pay more attention, and get better at teaching it. Other needs include a special education opportunity review, an employee retention plan, and open discussion of high needs students.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato concluded the presentation by displaying an expectation of performance for each of the 22 indexes and how the district can move the needle.</p> <p>Mayor Bass thanked Dr. Parlato for her presentation, then asked Dr. Parlato to provide timelines for action steps already in place and to provide how long they have been in action. Dr. Parlato stated she would do that, some are new this year, but would provide that information. Mayor Bass asked if some began in 2021-22. Dr. Parlato stated a few had. Mayor Bass stated, the beta line in your data, from what you're implementing, is 2022-23. Dr. Parlato stated she started in February of 2023, but she can still provide</p>	
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<p>times for things that may have started before her arrival. Mayor Bass explained he is asking, because if you take the pre-covid years out of the accountability index, and you use the after covid years, our metrics are all down, just about, based on the numbers given. Dr. Parlato stated there are jumps in some of the indexes for 2023-24. Mayor Bass stated, the question he is posing is, when looking at implementation of action steps, when, in your experience, do you think there will be an increase in what's been proposed. If you look at the numbers in the main categories, such as ELA, we are down from 2022-23 to 2023-24. Dr. Parlato stated she understood, and answered that it can take time to turn around something like this. It's like turning a cruise ship. The other is, there has been fragmentation in the school district on all different levels. There is a consequence to teacher and staff morale and the direction of the district. The gathering of traction with any of the initiatives we have takes a long time. Mayor Bass stated, so the board needs to realize this is something that is a work in progress. Dr. Parlato stated she has put forth a goal of modest gains but hopes for higher. Patience is required in a place that has had so much turnover.</p> <p>Mayor Bass asked Dr. Parlato what she is seeing in students in a socioeconomic context, and what does that create as far as what the district needs. Dr. Parlato stated, if you look at the 12 year span of students in the district from kindergarten to grade 12, you are seeing many more students of color coming in, more free/reduced lunch coming in, and students who have more intense needs. If you compare the students in kindergarten to the students in 12th grade, it's almost two different school districts and there are monumental impacts to that.</p> <p>Mrs. Faulenbach stated these numbers are shocking and there are a variety of reasons for it. The only way to move forward is to address and acknowledge it and to identify it as a team and community. It is hard to look at and it's personally frustrating. Mrs. Faulenbach stated she appreciated the information coming forward in these details as first presented at the Committee on Learning last November. She had asked for the workshops and much more detail and Dr. Parlato has</p>	
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	<p>provided it.</p> <p>With the expectation plans presented by Dr. Parlato, she asked about the upcoming budgetary component. How will this be and will this be presented at budget and identified to expectations of performance. Dr. Parlato stated yes, and that was why the action items are purposely broken out as a district, and not by grade. Mrs. Faulenbach stated, as a community, this has to be looked at from a budget perspective. As a parent, our scores are the lowest. We need to fund our budget and chart our path accordingly. Mr. Barile asked if the district is able to drill down student performance and align it with specific teachers. Dr. Parlato stated yes, and that is why there are goal setting conferences. Written feedback is provided and it can lead to a performance plan.</p> <p>Ms. Olson stated she has been in her position for 12 years. During that time she has seen 6 leaders come and go. Ms. Olson stated she could not emphasize enough the importance of consistent leadership. Where they were working in silos, they are now working collaboratively. She is personally setting shift and change.</p> <p>Dr. Parlato added that something like this takes time but the level of performance is not acceptable.</p> <p>Mrs. Sarich asked about English Learner students and if they are being put in their own classrooms. Dr. Parlato replied that at the high school level, there is sheltered English. With the younger students, they learn quickly if exposed to it. In high school, we have sheltered English but not sheltered Math.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney asked if they are offering practice tests for the students taking the SBA's. Dr. Parlato stated they are offering Interim Assessment Blocks for grades 3, 4 and 5. Mrs. McInerney asked if the chronic absenteeism numbers include IEP students. Dr. Parlato stated, yes. Mrs. McInerney asked if the Arts Access numbers are only students taking classes. Dr. Parlato stated yes, it has to be in class.</p>	
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Adjourn</b></p>	<p><b>Adjourn</b>  <i>Motion made and passed</i></p>

**New Milford Board of Education  
Special Meeting Minutes  
November 19, 2024 - 5:45 pm  
Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

	<i>Mr. Hansell moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:56 p.m., seconded by Mr. Barile. Motion passed unanimously.</i>	<i>unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:56 p.m.</i>
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Respectfully submitted:



Tammy McInerney  
Secretary  
New Milford Board of Education