

**New Milford Board of Education
 Committee on Learning Meeting Minutes
 November 7, 2023
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

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 2023 NOV -9 P 12:00
 NEW MILFORD, CT

Present:	Mrs. Tammy McInerney, Chairperson Mrs. Wendy Faulenbach Mr. Brian McCauley Mrs. Leslie Sarich
Also Present:	Dr. Janet Parlato, Superintendent of Schools Ms. Holly Hollander, Assistant Superintendent Mrs. Karen Bosco, Data Coach Mrs. Gavi Ziu-Pires, 6-12 Math Coordinator Mrs. Lisa Morlock 6-12 ELA Coordinator Mrs. Ashley Dovale, MLL Coordinator
Absent:	Mrs. Sarah Herring

1.	Call to Order The meeting of the New Milford Board of Education Committee on Learning was called to order at 7:30 pm by Mrs. McInerney.	Call to Order The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm.
2.	Public Comment None	Public Comment None
3.	Items of Information A. District Data Ms. Hollander stated she was appreciative of the colleagues present and stated the presentation will be focused on recent data, with an emphasis on instruction and accountability. She went on to say the data aligns with the vision of the district using a variety of data points, structures, and processes. The focus for today is the K-12 growth targets. The theory of action involves collecting and analyzing data to support students' target growth rates, with student success as the end result. The mindset is to think about where students are right now, where they need to go, and how the district will get them there. Ms. Hollander explained current performance on diagnostics and the state's assessments. She explained what is meant by high need groups: MLL (Multi Language Learners), Free and Reduced Percent, and SWD (Students With Disabilities). Free and Reduced Students Lunch-eligible are going up, currently at 36% for the district. The students with disabilities has remained consistent at about 16%.	Items of Information A. District Data

Mrs. Bosco stated the assessment for students in grades 3-8 was based on four proficiency levels. It was broken down by the district as a whole, then MLL, and SWD. The presented data includes years prior to the pandemic and the last two years. With both proficiency and growth targets, it is clear students are not moving in the direction needed to be proficient after high school. For ELA the district fell in proficiency and growth. For math the district fell dramatically in both proficiency and growth. This is seen in the district overall, and when broken out to MLL and SWD.

Dr. Parlato stated the numbers are troubling and the district needs to look at the data as a flashlight to see what's going on and why it is happening, not place blame. Ms. Hollander stated she is trying to build capacity to look at data in an informed way. Coming out of COVID, the district was just happy students were showing up, and it's no longer ok that they're just coming to school. The idea is to now find tasks that students are engaged in so they can again grow.

Mrs. Bosco went on to show data broken down by school, and she went on to drill down into the cohort data. The current ninth grade students for ELA and math saw a dip with the return from the pandemic, and not a lot of variation since.

Mr. McCauley asked if there are similar results with other schools in our DRG (District Reference Group). Ms. Hollander stated if the district had had a strong system in place, there might have been a dip but it would have stayed more steady. The district has done a thoughtful job in making changes, which have been hard, but necessary, and hopes it results in an upward shift. With the new diagnostic tools, the district has better predictors. Mrs. McInerney pointed out that the math fell drastically. Ms. Hollander stated that's been a discussion for some time and why the district launched programs like iReady.

Mrs. Bosco stated, answering Mr. McCauley's question, when looking at the DRG averages, and comparing them against ours, New Milford is below DRG in ELA proficiency and growth as well as math proficiency and growth. Mrs. Sarich asked why that is and stated it is shocking.

Dr. Parlato answered by stating not all of the schools in our DRG have 36% of students in poverty in their district and that there are challenges from having multiple superintendents in a short time. These are reasons, not excuses. Mrs. Sarich stated the district took a big dip last year. Ms. Hollander stated that was due to behavior. Students are trying to learn how to learn again. The district needs to do better for the children. She stated she is not trying to be an alarmist but being transparent about the necessity to do better. Mrs. Faulenbach agreed we all want to do better, but to do better we have to truly identify what those deficiencies are. When thinking long term, she is not sure the strategies have changed. Ms. Hollander added there have been changes in teachers and turnover has happened. The district has done a good job of K-5, diving deep and coming up with a plan. The middle school needs a complete audit, looking at curriculum, explicit instruction, and skills.

Mrs. Faulenbach stated students came back in 2021, and the following year the district went down further, across the board. Everyone is back after a national tragedy with the setback of COVID, and the following year it's 10-14% loss, across everything.

Mrs. Ziu-Pires stated remote learning did not work for mathematics, and when the students returned, there were gaps. The focus is to help the students that have gaps, along with the other challenges: changes in population and students in poverty. The district did not have the proper tools and knowledge. It's necessary to teach the skills needed, or there will not be growth. To see real change, New Milford needs to know where students are before the unit even starts. It's hard to be in the classroom nowadays as a teacher, and they are doing the best they can. With K-5, the focus is working on making sure the foundation is there and getting the students ready to learn. This mindshift needs to happen at the middle school.

Ms. Hollander added that it is time to audit the middle school curriculum. Mrs. Morlock said that there were holes for incoming kids, and they couldn't get the gains because of loss of language exposure during the pandemic.

Mrs. Bosco stated the diagnostic tool will help with that. iReady will highlight what the specific skills are needed for the students and will use data to make informed decisions.

Mr. McCauley stated he teaches 9th grade algebra and noticed those students are lacking foundational skills, as they were the kids in 6th and 7th grade during COVID.

Mrs. Bosco stated, looking at the SAT data, grade 11 SAT ELA and Math, compared to the state, is trending downward but still above state average. The PSAT data shows there is a decrease for ELA, but still above college and career readiness benchmark. The PSAT math was a decrease and below college level benchmark.

Mrs. Bosco went on to state that the iReady shows there is an increase in grade level expectations and attainable targets. For math, it was lower, but still showing growth. Mrs. McInerney noted the fall numbers will always be low because of the summer slide. Mrs. Bosco agreed and stated fall assessments will look low because you wouldn't expect students to be at grade level, since the school year has just started.

Mrs. Bosco went on to show the slide for NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards) assessment of science and engineering for students in grades 5, 8 and 11, showing a decrease overall.

Ms. Hollander wrapped up by stating, going forward, the district needs to have relevant and updated curriculum. This allows teachers to give feedback and create opportunities to work together. Teachers need best practices to engage students, and have accountability. Ms. Hollander reviewed what has been happening. Specifically with K-5, the district was able to identify holes in phonics, vocabulary, and fluency. The view for math is a K-12 perspective. The district is continuing to help teachers to understand the iReady tool, being able to make informed decisions.

Mrs. McInerney asked if the district was still using IXL. Mrs. Ziu-Pires stated no, it was felt the program did not provide constructive feedback, they are now using iReady with a personalized learning pathway.

Ms. Hollander added the schools are now doing learning walks. For grades 6-12, the district is looking at secondary programming for literacy and numeracy, while identifying strengths and needs. Ms. Hollander stated the district needs to do a proper audit at the middle school in order to provide feedback to students, offer support for students not at grade level, and make sure professional learning is aligned. Ms. Hollander thanked everyone, including Mrs. Bosco, and noted that the presentation is aligned with the vision of the district.

Mr. McCauley stated he was startled by the Free and Reduced Lunch numbers. It's gone up quite a bit in the last 10 years. Ms. Hollander agreed, and stated it has fluctuated over the years, but has gone up quite a bit overall.

Ms. McInerney asked how New Milford compared to other schools in the DRG in regards to students participating in Free and Reduced Lunch. The community needs to be involved in this discussion because not being able to eat means you don't have the energy to learn. Things like standardized tests are a snapshot, and Mrs. McInerney stated she prefers project based learning. Ms. Hollander stated the data is based on multiple data points. Dr. Parlato added that there are other things that can be measured so the district can see how it can do things better.

B. Explanation of Strategic Ambitions

Dr. Parlato stated the Strategic Ambitions are what the district strives for each day. The aim is to have everyone in the district at or above grade level. The fundamental operating principle has to be that kids have to be at grade level, but she wants to have the ambition to be above grade level.

The Strategic Ambitions are centered around the whole child, focusing on the ideas we live by. This connects directly to the testing report, ensuring school is designed around instruction, based on the science of student and adult learning. Once that is accomplished, initiatives can then be implemented through partnerships with families in the community. Over time, we will see the growth of students because of putting structures like this in place.

B. Explanation of Strategic Ambitions

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4.	Public Comment None	Public Comment None
5.	Adjourn <i>Mr. McCauley moved to adjourn, seconded by Mrs. Sarich with all voting in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:31pm.</i>	Adjourn The meeting adjourned at 8:31pm.

Respectfully submitted:



Tammy McInerney, Chairperson
Committee on Learning