


**New Milford Board of Education  
 Committee on Learning Meeting Minutes  
 December 5, 2023  
 Sarah Noble Intermediate School Library Media Center**

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 2023 DEC -7 P 3:02  
 NEW MILFORD, CT  


Present:	Mrs. Tammy McInerney, Chairperson Mrs. Sarah Herring Mr. Brian McCauley
Also Present:	Dr. Janet Parlato, Superintendent of Schools Ms. Holly Hollander, Assistant Superintendent Mrs. Ashley Dovale, MLL Coordinator
Absent:	Mrs. Leslie Sarich

<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Call to Order</b>          The meeting of the New Milford Board of Education Committee on Learning was called to order at 7:31 pm by Mrs. McInerney.</p>	<p><b>Call to Order</b>          The meeting was called to order at 7:31 p.m.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Public Comment</b>          None</p>	<p><b>Public Comment</b>          None</p>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Items of Information</b></p> <p><b>A. Science of Reading Update</b>  <b>B. Kindergarten Entry Age Update</b>  <b>C. World Languages Update at SMS</b>  <b>D. District Multilingual Learners Programming - Presentation</b></p> <p>Mrs. McInerney welcomed Ms. Dovale. Ms. Hollander began her presentation, stating the focus is on the vision of the district. There has been a thoughtful approach to Science of Reading. The district had to find a path that made sense. The waiver put forward did not get accepted. Mrs. McInerney asked if Ms. Hollander knew what other schools were also rejected. Ms. Hollander stated yes.</p> <p>Ms. Hollander continued by stating all K-5 students are getting individualized instruction. Teachers are working to deepen their understanding, which is just one of many topics that teachers prepare for in a day. There is also a new math program. Ms. Hollander stated she just completed K-2 classroom visits and is looking at that data for trends. She is also addressing areas of comprehension and fluency for K-3 curriculum revision.</p> <p>Ms. Hollander explained that one of the reasons the</p>	<p><b>Items of Information</b></p> <p><b>A. Science of Reading Update</b>  <b>B. Kindergarten Entry Age Update</b>  <b>C. World Languages Update at SMS</b>  <b>D. District Multilingual Learners Programming - Presentation</b></p>

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waiver was weak is they could only use what they had at that time. Since then, there have been amazing strides. Once the waiver was submitted, there was a meeting with the State Department and an outside company to review it. If the waiver could be written today, it would be very different. Units of study from CT were not complete, but since then, New Milford's units of study, not the state, have been revised by the coordinator. Some needed changes to just vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Some had to be completely rewritten. This created the New Milford Units of Study.

Mrs. McInerney asked if there is an opportunity to reapply for the waiver with the new information. Ms. Hollander stated she was not sure. A letter was sent to teachers today sharing the outcome of the waiver. The district is fine for this year and next year to use what we have. It is the 25/26 school year when things will have to be in place.

Mrs. McInerney asked when the letter came stating the waiver was denied, were next steps included. Ms. Hollander replied by stating the state is requiring a core curriculum that has been approved, and it is still evolving.

Mrs. McInerney noted that making a knee-jerk reaction and buying a new program may not be a good idea. Ms. Hollander stated that no matter what, she wants to have teacher representation moving forward. Some districts made a decision and pushed it on the teachers. Ms. Hollander stated she does not want to dump and run. There is a need for ongoing professional learning and conversations, and that will be at the forefront of the decision process. Just as was done with UFLI.

Mrs. McInerney asked when this needs to be in place. Ms. Hollander stated a year from September. Mrs. McInerney asked when a decision needs to be made. Ms. Hollander stated they have already done a review of what was originally out there, that was approved. Ms. Hollander stated she didn't like the options so she is trying to repurpose what the district is using and expects to have a better sense in the late winter. The state offered some funding through an application to help offset costs. Ms. Hollander plans to submit that to get some support funding, just in case. It's known the

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waiver has not been accepted, but Ms. Hollander stated the work that Mrs. Megan Sylvester has done has been amazing and she continues to do good work. Phonics and phonemic awareness will continue and core literacy will be supported. They will continue to keep using multiple data points. Teachers are helping each other, building a culture of trust. It is not just for students, but for staff too. Ms. Hollander displayed an example that she will distribute to the Board. Ms. Hollander stated it shows trends in data collection, that students know routines. These routines are empowering kids to write more.

Ms. Hollander went on to speak about the Kindergarten Entry Age, noting the tight turnaround but stating Connecticut was one of the last states to still have a December 31st cut off. Mrs. McInerney stated people will be upset to pay for daycare if they feel their child is ready. Ms. Hollander stated a committee was put together and has developed a responsive approach. Ms. Hollander stated Dr. Parlato will send out communication on December 11th. Parents can submit a waiver, and there will be an assessment process, which the district still has to develop since it should look at both academics and SEL/maturity. Parents will have to submit their waivers by certain deadlines. There will be a second deadline for families that have just moved to town. Ms. Hollander stated she is also working with daycares and Brian Pembroke is helping facilitate that. The plan is to hold a community conversation called "Let's Talk about Kindergarten." It will be on January 9th, snow date January 11th, from 6-7 p.m. at NMHS. Child care will be provided.

Mrs. Herring asked if there is a way to know how many children are affected. Ms. Hollander stated yes, about 34 kids in one of the elementary schools and 32 in another. The district will follow the law as it is, but can look at it with some responsiveness and be respectful to the families.

Ms. Hollander went on to speak to the SMS World Language Update. She stated herself, Mrs. Scoralick and Dr. Parlato have all met. To date, they have been able to provide students with alternative experiences, including communication, how to write a letter, etc. Mrs. McInerney stated her son was affected by the lack of Spanish being offered and was afraid the

<p>Humanities course was just a checkmark, but it is not. Mrs. McInerney stated he is doing better in ELA and other courses because it's improving his communication. Ms. Hollander stated they are focusing on vocabulary, as well as discipline literacy. It has to be a team effort, and it's not just helping ELA because students are being taught to read, write, and put those thoughts together with evidence. Mrs. McInerney stated that Social Studies and Science are very aligned with ELA because of the need to be able to write.</p> <p>Ms. Hollander stated the district is at a point where they have to decide what to do regarding world languages in the middle school, if they cannot secure additional members. The thought is to keep world language in 8th grade, and 7th grade would have a focus on communications arts. As the students continue to high school, the district would create an assessment tool so teachers can see what skills their students are coming in with. Ms. Hollander stated there are 277 students projected for the 24/25 school year. Students will study world language, or receive extra support for reading. Roughly 9% of students will do the extra reading. The plan is to have two world language teachers with an average class size of 25.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney asked if SMS must hold on to at least one French and one Spanish teacher. Ms. Hollander stated yes and she is going to put out the call for another Spanish teacher immediately. Dr. Parlato confirmed that it will be in February. Ms. Hollander stated the teachers in Humanities will need to know if they have a job for next year. Ms. Hollander then stated, agreeing with Mrs. McInerney, the Humanities course is helping the students overall with writing, communication, etc. The plan is to post for a Spanish teacher and then decide course selection. In March, a final decision will be made.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney asked if the plan is to shift World Language and put it under Communication Arts. Ms. Hollander stated it will remain World Languages.</p> <p>Mrs. McInerney asked for Mrs. Herring's input. Mrs. Herring stated it is making lemonade out of lemons. It's great what they've done to fill the gap. Thankfully, unless a student is planning to major in a world language, most colleges only require two, maybe three</p>	
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years, giving students time to meet the requirements in high school.

Ms. Hollander continued the presentation, and began to speak regarding the district's multilingual learners, stating she wanted to look at growth and why students may not be growing. Ms. Dovale stated it is about the growing needs of the multilingual learners.

Ms. Hollander stated the multilingual learner has grown over time, 163% in the last 10 years and 95% increase in the last five years. Her team looks at the data several times during the year: at the beginning, in February, and at the end of the year. Ms. Dovale stated they are seeing an increase in enrollment at the beginning of the year and again later in the year when families move to the states during their spring break, only then realizing school is in session and they have to enroll. Ms. Dovale stated multilingual learners are also a transient population. Ms. Hollander stated they looked at how many students start in kindergarten and stay, and noted many of them do not stay. This means the program has to be more clearly defined. There is a need to understand the scope of sequence because the high school has students who are not ready for English, and needs should be addressed early on. It is the same at SMS. The goal is to know what students know throughout the school year, instead of waiting for the February assessment.

Mrs. Herring added that multilingual learners are also students who will leave for a month and then come back. This interrupts their learning. Ms. Dovale stated they have a lot of students with limited formal education. There are gaps from their home countries. Ms. Dovale gave an example, stating there is a student that was detained at the border and missed 5th grade until high school.

Ms. Hollander stated the district is doing an audit, looking at numbers as to where the students are, and employing faculty to help in those areas. Currently SMS has a lot of students like this and it's a matter of knowing what the caseload will be for an MLL teacher. It is hard to define since it depends on the level of each student and how they need to be supported.

Ms. Hollander stated they have two methods of

support. There is the push-in support, where an MLL teacher comes in and co-teaches. Then there is the pull-out service, where students meet in small groups outside of the classroom.

Ms. Hollander stated after an audit, she identified a need for stronger systems, stronger scope, and sequence of curriculum. Ms. Dovale added that there is a need to vertically align things.

Ms. Hollander stated they will use data from LAS Link to get an idea of student support and teacher capacity. Ms. Hollander stated Ms. Dovale has been going to schools, meeting with the department as a whole, looking at oral and literacy scores, and getting a bigger picture. Now there is an idea of when students start and identifying them as MLL. This helps to respond to the needs of families, and Ms. Dovale can help answer questions. Overall, it's helping to smooth out the process. There is a need to know if a student is an MLL student or an MLL student who needs help academically as well, and the district is looking to do a professional collaboration with UCLA.

Mrs. Herring asked if there is assistance with grading. Ms. Hollander stated there is a new colleague that just came on to help with that. Mrs. Herring noted it is difficult in certain subjects such as Science and Social Studies. Ms. Hollander stated Ms. Dovale has been helping to facilitate that. Mrs. Herring stated if there are 180 days of school and you're teaching on a daily basis a language they don't know, as a teacher, to try and translate is a lot of extra work. Ms. Dovale stated she is trying to make her staff more visible to general education teachers to help make things easier. For grading and lesson planning, she is getting feedback and it is a case by case basis. Ms. Dovale stated they do not want to add to teachers plates.

Ms. Hollander stated they have been collaborating at the high school to ensure students walk away with skills. Mrs. McInerney noted a student cannot get a diploma unless it can be proven that they earned it. Ms. Dovale stated it's not just our district. Unfortunately, students get overwhelmed and try to do night classes instead.

Ms. Hollander finished by suggesting a presentation on

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	Career Readiness.  Mrs. McInerney thanked Ms. Hollander and Ms. Dovale for all their work and added it's all happening so fast and they are doing a great job.	
4.	<b>Public Comment</b> None	<b>Public Comment</b> None
5.	<b>Adjourn</b> <i>Mr. McCauley moved to adjourn, seconded by Mrs. Herring with all voting in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:25pm.</i>	<b>Adjourn</b> The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Tammy McInerney, Chairperson  
Committee on Learning