

**MONROE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Monroe, Connecticut**

**Meeting Minutes**  
**October 17, 2016**

**Present:** Chairman Donna Lane  
Secretary Shannon Reilly-Monaco  
Board Member Christine Cascella  
Board Member David Ferris  
Board Member James Martinez  
Board Member Carlos Reinoso, Jr.  
Board Member Jerry Stevens  
Board Member Alan Vaglivero

**Also present:** Superintendent James Agostine  
Assistant Superintendent John Battista  
Finance Director Gabriella DiBlasi  
Masuk Student Board Representative Kevin Brown  
Masuk Student Board Representative Michelle Cobuzzi  
Masuk Student Board Representative William Santee

**Absent:** Vice-Chairman George King III

**Call to Order**

*Chairman Lane* called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Report of the Chairman**

A. Boards Acceptance of Donations for the Masuk Turf Field

- Monroe American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO)-Monroe AYSO, long-time supporter of the District, contributed \$25,000 to the Masuk Field Project
- All Sports Booster Club-*Principal Kobza* said that the All Sports Booster Club donated \$25,000 when the project first began, and tonight they will be donating the proceeds for the brick fundraising in the amount of \$44,000. It was noted that *Tom DiBlasi* donated his fees for the engineering of the field lights back to project.
- Monroe American Youth Football (AYF) - On behalf of the Monroe Lions Football Organization, AYF donated \$7,500 to the Masuk Field Project.

*Chairman Lane* thanked all the organizations for their generous donations and added that there are a few items remaining, including the sound system installation, but the Board is happy with how the project came out. *Superintendent Agostine* added that the new scoreboard should arrive the first week of November.

## **Consent Agenda**

### **Motion to approve the Consent Agenda**

**Motion: (S. Reilly-Monaco)**

**Second: (C. Reinoso)**

Discussion: None

**Motion passed 8 (Lane, Reilly-Monaco, Cascella, Ferris, Martinez, Reinoso, Stevens, and Vaglivello)-0**

16-063

## **Reports of the Committees and Liaisons**

### Masuk Student Board Representatives

*Masuk Student Board Representative Santee* said that all juniors will take the PSAT test which is an opportunity to earn Merit scholarships to college. There will be a Parent/Teacher Council (PTC) meeting also on Wednesday, and Junior College Planning Night will be held on November 1 and 3. *Masuk Student Board Representative Cobuzzi* said that Jostens will be at Masuk on Tuesday and Wednesday to take cap and gown orders, and the National Honor Society Induction Ceremony will be on Tuesday, October 25. She added that the first quarter will conclude on November 4. *Masuk Student Board Representative Brown* said that Masuk will have their first home football game on the turf on Friday night, and Senior Night for boys' soccer is being held tonight. He added that Spirit Week begins on Monday, October 31, and the Mr. Panther Pageant will be held on November 3. *Board Member Reinoso* added that Senior Night for girls' soccer will be on Thursday night.

## **Public Participation**

There was none at tonight's meeting.

## **Review of the Fund Activity Statement**

*Ms. DiBlasi* said that the insurance account is doing better this month as the teachers are back and making contributions. She added that claims came down a little bit from July though it is still running ahead of last year. The reason for that is that the cost of care and prescriptions has increased dramatically in the past few years. *Ms. DiBlasi* continued that they are monitoring spending and the auditors begun their annual visit on Monday.

## **Presentation**

### Board of Education PD-Graduation and Student Assessment Analysis

*Ms. Casinelli* began the presentation of the 2015-2016 Student Assessment Results. She said that the report includes an Overview of Standardized Testing Information, Profile on the Class of 2016, and District Improvement Strategies.

The Test Score Data includes results from:

- Smarter Balanced Assessment-ELA and Math (SBA)
- Connecticut Mastery Test-Science (CMT)
- Connecticut Academic Performance Test-Science (CAPT)

- College Admission Tests (PSAT, SAT and ACT)
- Advanced Placement Tests (AP)
- ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages (AAPPL)

*Ms. Casinelli* continued there are Formative and Summative Assessments; a Summative Assessment is “a snapshot in time, on a given day how a student will perform” while a Formative Assessment is what happens in the classroom on a daily basis. Tonight’s focus was on Summative Assessments.

DRG (District Reference Group) for Grades 3-8 for ELA and Math. *Ms. Casinelli* said that the test changed from the previous year; there is a Computer Adaptive Test which is more multiple choice and short answer; how a student responds will determine the rest question they get as well as a Performance Task, which involved a lot of writing for ELA. This year, due to budget cuts and testing time, the Connecticut State Department of Education, eliminated the Performance Task from ELA this past year. Because of that elimination, the ELA scores cannot be compared exactly from last year to this year.

In ELA for grades 3-8, Monroe is 8<sup>th</sup> in the DRG, above the DRG average of 76.0 and in the top 13.7% of the State’s 189 districts. In Math for grades 3-8, Monroe is 12<sup>th</sup> in the DRG, slightly below the DRG average of 67.71 and in the top 17.6 in the State’s 182 districts. *Ms. Casinelli* said that there may be a different number of districts or schools, because some of the schools or districts do not have enough of a percentage of taking the tests to make them statistically significant.

The presentation continued with information on Grades 3-8 on ELA and Math. She noted that *Debbie Walls* is the District’s ELA Coordinator for ELA K-5, and *Mike Crowley* is the 6-12 Secondary Instructional Leader for ELA. *Cindy Brooker* is the District’s K-5 Coordinator, and *Kevin Welch* is the 6-12 Secondary Instructional Leader in Math.

#### ELA K-5 Results

Grade 3 dropped slightly this year with 73% at level 3 or higher; *Ms. Casinelli* noted that this is the first year of standardized testing for this grade level. Grade 4 had 82.5% of students at level 3 or above which placed them 4<sup>th</sup> in the DRG and in the top 10% of the State. Grade 5 has had consistent performance over the last 2 years; 87% of students were at level 3 or above; they were 1<sup>st</sup> in the DRG and in the top 4% in the State. Grade 5 teachers have followed Reader’s Workshop both years and this year, Grades 3-5 will all follow the Reader’s Workshop model. *Ms. Casinelli* continued that the District will continue to use the Interim Assessments from SBA for students to practice the format and technology of the test.

#### ELA 6-8

The scores for Grade 6 historically drop, and the District continues to monitor and they look at the cohort of students to determine the cause of the decline. Grade 6 is below the DRG average, Grade 7 is 6<sup>th</sup> in the DRG and in the top 10% in the State, and Grade 8 is 4<sup>th</sup> in the DRG and in the top 9% in the State. *Ms. Casinelli* added that like the elementary schools, the middle school also uses Writer’s Workshop, and they are working on the interim assessments as well.

## Math K-5 Results

*Ms. Casinelli* said that historically the scores have been consistent. Both Grades 3 and 4 are 4<sup>th</sup> in the DRG; Grade 3 is in the top 11% in the State and Grade 4 is in the top 10% in the State. The biggest improvement was in Grade 5. Last year, the District was below the DRG and 12<sup>th</sup> in the State while this year, we are now 4<sup>th</sup> in the DRG and in the top 11% of the State.

Because the math assessment remained basically the same from year to year, the math scores can be compared from year to year. Math in Focus is the resource in the elementary levels, there is a STAR universal assessment which the District uses to monitor students throughout the year as well as the interim assessments from SBA. *Ms. Casinelli* continued that this year's fifth grade has had more years of Common Core instruction than the previous fifth grade class as well as a year of using Math in Focus.

## Math 6-8

*Ms. Casinelli* said there was an increase at every grade level and each cohort; Grade 6 dropped from the previous year scores though the current sixth grade had Math in Focus for one year and the expectation is that next year's results will show that foundation. STAR assessment is used in Grade 6. She continued that the greatest increase, 10%, was from Grade 6 to Grade 7 though the middle school is below the DRG average. *Kevin Welch* worked with the teachers last year with a focus on concepts and procedures and that score did increase in all three grade levels: 10% in Grade 6, 4% in Grade 7 and 10% in Grade 8. The emphasis will be on problem solving, modeling and data analysis.

*Ms. Casinelli* also provided the Board with a Cohort Comparison which was a new version of what they shared in the past. The chart showed the ELA and Math scores of current 4<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grade students from their previous grades. She noted that the ELA scores for next year can be compared to this year's scores. There was an increase in math scores in almost all levels and the lower ELA scores in some levels.

*Ms. Casinelli* next reviewed the results of the Science CMT scores for Grades 5, 8 and CAPT Test scores for Grade 10. *Roseanne Haughton* is the District's Science Coordinator for Grades K-5 and *Jim Stoelzel* is the Secondary Instructional Leader for Grades 6-12. She said that the students did "amazingly well." Grade 5 was second in the DRG with 90.8% of students meeting goal, fourth in the State and in the top 2% of the State. Grade 8 was 5<sup>th</sup> in the DRG with 83.9% of students meeting goal, 23<sup>rd</sup> in the State and in the top 14% in the State. Grade 10 was 6<sup>th</sup> in the DRG with 77% of students meeting goal, 13<sup>th</sup> in the State and in the top 10% in the State. The next generation Science Standards will focus less on content and more on scientific skills, "thinking like a scientist."

*Ms. Casinelli* said that *Lisa Peterson*, World Languages Secondary Instructional Leader, has given the American Council of Teachers Foreign Languages (ACFTL) assessment to World Language students in Grade 7-12 for the past two years. She explained that the speaking test assesses a student's level of proficiency from Novice to Intermediate.

## PSAT/SAT Scores

*Principal Kobza* said there were two sets of SAT scores to review as the State of Connecticut adopted the SAT as the State accountability test for juniors. The class of 2016 took the last version of the old SAT; the average score was 1612 and the State did not

release individual school scores so there was no DRG comparison for that class though the State mean was 1497. The current seniors were the first class to take the redesigned SAT. *Principal Kobza* said that there are sub scores in Evidence Based Reading and Writing as well as Math which means that questions from different subject areas are embedded in the sections.

*Principal Kobza* continued that the Class of 2017 did well on the Redesigned Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) Results; both the Mean Scores in EBRW and Mathematics were significantly higher than the State Average though slightly below the DRG Average. He added that every student takes a PSAT prior to the SAT; juniors will be taking the PSAT on Wednesday and the SAT in the spring. *Principal Kobza* added that each section of the SAT is worth 800 points for a total of 1600. There is now a benchmark for the freshman class; their average score is 969. He continued that they have a lot more data available now on how students are progressing and can use it to help identify students who needs remediation or additional assistance.

*Principal Kobza* said that the ACT and SAT are very closely aligned now; 152 students took the ACT last year which was the highest number of students at Masuk who have taken the test. The increase was partially due to the redesign of the SAT; the scores are close to the State average. Any of the PSAT tests offer students the opportunity to sign up for Kahn Academy, a free on-line resource which creates individualized study plans for a particular student.

*Principal Kobza* next discussed The Advanced Placement Results. There are 31 sections of Advanced Placement classes last year; 343 students took AP Tests with 605 tests being taken. Of the 605 tests taken, 495 had scores of a 3, a passing grade, or higher. He also provided information on the Class Profile for the Class of 2016. There were 286 graduates with 91% of students attending with a 2 or 4 year college. 56 students were accepted to the Most Competitive Schools and 234 were accepted to Highly Competitive Schools.

*Assistant Superintendent Battista* said that the Student Assessment Results, beginning in 2010, are on the District website. He continued that the District's success is not only about this data, it is about the students and their accomplishments. The State of Connecticut has developed a Persistence Rate to determine how many students who attend college directly after high school return to college for a second year; the most current year there is data on is 2014; 96.2 % of Masuk graduates attended a second year of college which is higher than the State Persistence Rate of 88%. The Curriculum Leadership Team, the Principals, Administrators and Teachers all review the data. The curriculum changes the District have implemented are working; "we know we need to focus on the standards rather than on the test." *Assistant Superintendent Battista* said that the data is used to create goals; the goals are reviewed halfway through the year as well as at the end of the year.

He reviewed some of the Improvement Strategies the Leadership Team has formulated including:

#### ELA

Each grade level K-12 uses short formative assessment tools to identify students needing additional support. Reader's and Writer's Workshops have been incorporated at all levels and have yielded positive results. Flex Time at the Elementary Schools have also made a

difference and there is consistency with how the three schools offer support to the students. Jockey Hollow's Intervention Model uses Reading and Writing Specialists to help struggling students and at Masuk, the use of SAT-like reading assignments and assessments are incorporated into English, Social Studies, and Science classes.

#### Math

Math in Focus is used in all the Elementary schools and the District is seeing growth with that program. All three levels use Formative Assessments which helps to identify students needing additional support.

#### Science

Students at the Elementary level are working on sequence and pacing and each classroom uses a Science Notebook. At all levels, the District uses their benchmark to identify strengths and weaknesses. Assistant Superintendent Battista continued that there is a greater emphasis on science skills and less emphasis on content. This will be the first year that the CAPT Science will be on-line and students are beginning to practice that technology. All Science teachers are using the Next Generation Science Standards. He added that though there is a lot to celebrate, there are still areas where improvements can be made.

*Board Member Vaglivo* asked what they think happened with the Grade 3 Reading Results; *Ms. Casinelli* said that a possibility is the shorter answer responses and those types of questions are being embedded in the classroom work and interim assessments continue to be given. *Board Member Reinoso* thanked the Administration for the efforts in putting this presentation together. *Board Member Vaglivo* asked about the drop in the middle school scores; *Assistant Superintendent Battista* said they have made some instructional changes this year in terms of how students are grouped and how support is being used. *Superintendent Agostine* said that though the data is a snapshot in time, when one sees the growth when students culminate in high school, those successes speak volumes.

#### Old Business

Policies-Second Review

#### **Motion to approve Policy #5141.4 and Policy #6153 as presented**

**Motion: (J. Martinez)**

**Second: (J. Stevens)**

Discussion: Assistant Superintendent Battista said that Policy #5141.4, Students, Reporting Child Abuse, was amended to address changes in State law including the posting of Department of Children and Families Hotline phone number and information to ensure that all employees are stakeholders in the process. Policy #6153, Instruction, Field Trips, was clarified to include three elements: The Superintendent has the right to cancel a field trip, parents/guardians must have trip cancellation insurance and a field trip is not to be advertised to students until the Board of Education has approved the trip.

Assistant Superintendent Battista added that the moratorium on field trips will be reviewed in January.

**Motion passed 7 (Lane, Cascella, Ferris, Martinez, Reinoso, Stevens, and Vaglivo)-0**

16-064

## New Business

### Stepney Roof Project-Approval of Garland Company

*Superintendent Agostine* said there is scanned evidence that there is saturation in the Stepney roof, and they would like to have the necessary repairs begin in the summer of 2017. The District had used Garland on previous projects and the District was very pleased with their work and the finished product. Superintendent Agostine asked the Board for their approval to have Garland serve as the General Contractor using the US Communities Bid Process. He will attend the Board of Finance meeting on November 16 and the Town Council on November 28. Some issues to address are the roof's pitch, internal roof drains, structural deficiencies and fascia/soffit work.

### Motion to Approve Garland Company for the Stepney Roof Project

**Motion: (J. Martinez)**

**Second: (J. Stevens)**

Discussion: None

**Motion passed 7 (Lane, Cascella, Ferris, Martinez, Reinoso, Stevens, and Vaglivello)-0**

16-065

### Dental Insurance

*Assistant Superintendent Battista* said that they met with Ovation and it was determined that the District could save approximately \$30,000 by changing their dental plan to Cigna. He stated there will be no change to the employee cost but that they wanted to confer with the unions. Though there was no vote necessary, he asked for the Board's approval to proceed.

### Policies-First Review

Policy # 4112.5

Policy # 4212.5

These policies are regarding Personnel-Certified/Non-Certified, Security Check and Fingerprinting. Both policies are up for second review and vote at the next meeting.

## Adjournment

### Motion to Adjourn at 8:55 p.m.

**Motion: (J. Stevens)**

**Second: (A. Vaglivello)**

Discussion: None

**Motion passed 7 (Lane, Cascella, Ferris, Martinez, Reinoso, Stevens, and Vaglivello)-0**

Respectfully submitted,



Shannon Reilly-Monaco  
Board of Education Secretary