

**Amherst School Board**  
**April 17, 2014**

**ATTENDANCE**

Amherst School Board

Peg Bennett, Lucienne Foulks, Amy Facey, James Manning, and Paul Prescott

Administrative Team

Peter Warburton, Gerry St. Amand, Porter Dodge, Betty Shankel, Nicole Heimarck, Meg Beauchamp, Christine Landwehrle, Meg Trainer, Patty Wons

Minute Taker

Beth Penney

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Foulks called the meeting to order at 6:37pm.

The board took 15 minutes to look at the AMS student's Global Science Initiative projects.

The board discussed the student's projects with the 7<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, Linda Ferrington and Corey White. The board discussed the level of complexity, depth, and how intelligently the students spoke about their projects.

Ms. Farrington and Mr. White discussed how they give the students a global topic and students can choose individual topics. Some students have a passion and can choose topics quickly and others work with teachers and parents. They start with six big topic groups and use online discussion forum through Edmodo, which looks like Facebook. Every day, students are given a question to give them knowledge about the larger topics, which helps them to choose topics. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders come up to see the projects and so some students know the project they want to do before they start.

Mr. Manning discussed the strategic learning committee meeting and STEM. He wants to see STEM in the schools more. He discussed how much his son worked on the project, but it was for a short period of time. Students love the experience and struggle. How do we get that to happen all the time? He saw play, discovery, engagement, self-direction learning, collaboration, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning throughout the entire project.

Ms. Farrington discussed STEM and putting a STEM activity at the end of each unit. She discussed the NSTA STEM seminar she attended and how to connect content, including science and math.

Mr. Manning asked what would it take to get STEM going more quickly. Many schools in MA have a STEM curriculum.

Ms. Heimarck stated that there are a few states leading in STEM and they have a lot of

41 money to support STEM. The school does not need materials, but Professional  
42 Development time for the teachers. The skills of science and the topics of science are  
43 separated. Students need to understand what it means to be a scientist. In most schools, 6  
44 yrs. ago the conditions in the classroom did not support the scientific inquiry. SAU 39  
45 revised the science curriculum 6 years ago. Not all schools that claim they are doing  
46 STEM are actually doing it. There is a gap between the language of “doing” STEM. The  
47 most successful STEM schools are private or charter schools.

48 Ms. Farrington discussed Project Lead the Way, which has an already designed  
49 curriculum for elementary and middle schools in engineering. AMS could have a STEM  
50 academy in the school, afterschool program for extracurricular, or could supplement the  
51 curriculum. The Concord Technical College is the representative for the Project Lead the  
52 Way in New Hampshire. This could be something to be used as place to start.

53 Ms. Heimarck stated that they would need to look at the Project Lead the Way  
54 curriculum. If the schools want to go in the STEM direction, which would be a change in  
55 teaching and then there would need to be professional development work for the teachers.

56 Mr. Manning discussed having both a bilingual K-12 and STEM programs in the schools.

57 Ms. Landwehrle stated that these programs are hard to consider right now because the  
58 elementary school teachers are working on Common Core and working on the  
59 implementation for Math in Focus.

60 Ms. Heimarck discussed how teachers K-6 teachers are being asked to change how the  
61 teach in many ways. She discussed how the schools need to have extended learning  
62 opportunities. She discussed that the Common Core standards cannot be implemented in  
63 a half-day program like in Kindergarten. The schools need to consider the ideal structures  
64 that could be in place to support all of these ideas and what is reality.

65 Mr. Manning stated that if goal is to be the top school system in the region then we must  
66 have a STEM and language program.

67 Ms. Heimarck discussed the international model. Many schools have a 4-day student  
68 week, but the days are longer. There are fewer student breaks. The 5<sup>th</sup> day of the week is  
69 for professional development and collaboration time for teachers. This is good especially  
70 for inquiry-based learning. The district needs to be looking at great models and asking  
71 why they work effectively.

72 Ms. Foulks stated that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is going to wait for no one and to not have STEM  
73 in the schools will very soon be unacceptable. If we want people to come to our town,  
74 then we need to have it. We need to take baby steps. It is not acceptable to do nothing, the  
75 district needs to consider what creative ways will allow the schools to have STEM and  
76 language.

77 Mr. Prescott stated that the board should think about what are the next steps even if they  
78 are small.

79 Mr. Manning stated that these science projects were great, but they do not have to be one  
80 moment in time. This needs to be a priority to advancing our school system.

81 The board thanked Mr. White, Ms. Farrington, and the students for their hard work.

82 Ms. Farrington stated that the kids were honored for being able to show the board their  
83 science projects.

84 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

85 Principals' reports

86 Mr. Prescott stated that he is really happy that the expectation is that teachers pick one of  
87 the 15 pieces forms of technology and that by the end of the school year they will  
88 implement it. This is a great way to start integrating technology to support their  
89 curriculum. He applauds the method of allowing teachers to choose.

90 Mr. Dodge discussed the method and how all teachers have to do one new integration of  
91 technology no matter how many they are already doing.

92 Ms. Bennett and Mr. St. Amand discussed the expansion of preschool to two classes in  
93 the am and two in the afternoon. They already have two full time people in the budget.  
94 They are moving one class to the Kindergarten room and Kindergarten is moving to the  
95 technology room.

96 Mr. St. Amand stated that there are 101 students registered for Kindergarten. 20 of the  
97 letters were returned because addresses are no longer valid. There are 10-12 letters that  
98 have not gotten a response. This is very comparable to numbers last year at this time.  
99 There is more of a need for the am class, but it is close to being maxed out.

100 Ms. Bennett stated congratulations to Amanda Eaton and she hope she wins.

101 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

102 No public comment.

103 **CONSENT AGENDA**

104 Ms. Foulks pulled the minutes.

105 Ms. Foulks corrected line 82: awards ARE going away June 2015; Line 170 Millie  
106 Thibeault; line 190 missing word take/bring

107 **Ms. Bennett made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda containing the amended**  
108 **Minutes, March 27, 2014, Treasurer's report, March 2014, Donation to Clark**  
109 **Student Activities- \$37.50 donated by Jason Nurmi for Kindergarten enrichment,**  
110 **Donation to AMS Student Activities- \$171.00 from Hannaford Helps School**  
111 **Program, Budget transfers, and Resignation letter. Ms. Facey seconded the**

112 **motion and the vote was unanimous.**

113 Commitment Committees

114 Mr. Prescott discussed the good work principals and teams are doing. The elementary  
115 school is looking at online report cards. This needs to be separated discussion from  
116 assessments. There is a search started for online registration for students. It will save  
117 hours that it is for staff each year, easier for parents, eliminates human error, and allows  
118 for information sharing between systems. They are looking to use this for the coming  
119 year. There has been some consideration of using Google apps for software. Google  
120 apps allows for real time collaborative editing at the same time. The bandwidth at  
121 Clark/Wilkins is increasing from 30mgs to 40mgs to support the coming online testing.  
122 All Clark/Wilkins classes have Smart boards and most classes at AMS will have the  
123 interactive projectors by the end of June. He discussed that 90% of those who have this  
124 technology in their classroom use it as part of the curriculum and are working to help  
125 support those who do not yet. Implementation of the technology is happening and the  
126 teachers are getting the technology they need in a more complete way.

127 Mr. Warburton stated that Mr. Charkin has discussed professional development and the  
128 importance of looking at all of the things that are going on. Many high school and  
129 colleges are using Google docs now. He discussed getting more people to go to  
130 technology conferences. He also discussed when teachers are interviewed to ask  
131 questions about integrating technology into their curriculum. This would help to better  
132 understand the level of technology integration as teachers come into the school system.

133 Ms. Bennett stated that the budget part of the manual is finished and the committee is  
134 working on grants, trusts, local revenue, and expenditures.

135 Ms. Facey stated that inspirational effective teaching has been discussing and tuning the  
136 survey to gather data from the pilot participants. The survey will be compiled at the end  
137 of May. The committee will review the feedback and recommend to the school boards in  
138 June whether to adopt Thoughtful Classroom or not. If accepted then the schools will  
139 begin using it in the fall of next year. The Leadership tool is being explored.

140 Ms. Facey stated that the committee is looking at the student and parent surveys and  
141 discussing standardized testing. She discussed the professional development day and  
142 training on close reading. This summer there will be a K-12 literacy institute to look at  
143 standards and connecting them to the curriculum.

144 Ms. Foulks stated that the Excellence Commitment would have a presentation from Mr.  
145 Dodge and Mr. St. Amand next month.

146 Mr. Dodge stated that they are working on the survey about sports and co-curricular  
147 activities. The survey will be given out to parents soon.

148 Mr. Manning discussed the Strategic-planning forum, which, happened last Saturday.  
149 There were many speakers from a variety of communities. The group broke out into 5  
150 subcommittees and most have met or will meet in the next week. The board members

151 need to make sure when they go into subcommittee meeting everyone understands what  
152 has already happened in the last several months.

153 The board and Mr. Warburton discussed having people read the mid-year report. The  
154 time-line is aggressive and feels stressful. They discussed conversations weekly with  
155 facilitators. Everyone on the sub-committees should read the email that was sent out to all  
156 of the facilitators, which discusses the guidelines. The sub-committees need to be 100%  
157 transparent. Maryanne is working to restructure the website and make buckets to  
158 organize sub-committee information. The sub-committees need to be able to see overlap  
159 and connect the work of their sub committee to others. They discussed working off slides  
160 and then having a working document. The discussed the facilitators from each group have  
161 a sit down conversation to discuss where the sub-committees are in their work.

162 Mr. Warburton stated that he will ensure the guidelines for the facilitators gets on the  
163 website and emailed to everyone.

164 Mr. Warburton thanked Mr. St. Amand and Mr. Dodge for their hard work to continue to  
165 recognize the wonderful people that the schools have lost.

## 166 **PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS**

### 167 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Financial Report

168 Ms. Shankel stated that this report is till March 31<sup>st</sup>. The revenue total is \$326,000 from  
169 from LGC, ESY, CAT Aide and Metacade. The expenditures have an excess of  
170 \$250,000 in salaries and benefits and an overage of \$13,000. The net is \$237,000 over.  
171 There will be a great amount of return to the taxpayers this year.

172 Ms. Shankel stated that the SAU has been given the rates for health insurance for next  
173 year. The rates were budgeted at 4.4% and came in at -3.1%. This will have a very large  
174 effect on the budget and she is already estimating before the start of the year a savings of  
175 \$247,000.

176 Mr. Prescott discussed how to advertise to community what happens outside of the  
177 budget season and how there is an impact on the taxes. The board needs to put something  
178 together that is concise and short for the Amherst Citizen. Then the board could refer to it  
179 next budget season.

180 Mr. Manning discussed how the board could use this money to jump start programs  
181 especially since there was a 0% increases this year for the budget.

182 The board discussed how to use the money and decided to have a deeper discussion next  
183 month about where the money would be best to spend.

### 184 Assessment Presentation

185 Ms. Heimark explained the presentation is about the 2013 NECAP scores and the future  
186 for assessments. She reminded the board what NECAP is.

187 Ms. Heimarck and Mr. Manning reminded the board that the math scores would go down  
188 because the assessment does not match what is being taught since the schools are  
189 transitioning to the Common Core standards already in Math.

190 Ms. Heimarck stated that there was a definite decrease in scores and in the state of NH in  
191 general there was a decrease in the NECAP results in Math. The state has many theories  
192 for why this could be. The state has stopped looking at NECAP and has been moving  
193 towards Common Core. Student performance data over time in grade 3 and grade 7 were  
194 looked at more deeply because there was a greater shift in performance.

195 Ms. Landwehrle used the Math coaches who are in all of the classrooms to do a deep  
196 analysis of the released NECAP items. She discussed the items taught in content for  
197 grade 3 were only 43% of the items that were taught and in grade 7 only 26% was content  
198 that was taught. She discussed why items were not taught including the transition to Math  
199 in Focus, pacing of the content, and misalignment with the transition to Common Core.

200 Ms. Heimarck discussed the strands of performance and which strands are important  
201 based on the transition to Common Core. The focus for Common Core is on Numbers  
202 and Operations and Functions and Algebra. The trends from the NECAP support this  
203 transition. She discussed 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and why the highest strands of performance are a little  
204 different. Grade 3 uses another math program during morning meeting that works with  
205 data, statistics, and probability. She stated that the lowest performance strands do align to  
206 those that are not emphasized in the Common Core including geometry, measurement,  
207 data, statistics, and probability.

208 Ms. Landwehrle discussed student growth percentile, which looks at how students did  
209 across the state compared to each other. All grade levels are still showing growth even  
210 though the test is not aligned to the curriculum that is being taught.

211 Ms. Heimarck discussed elementary mathematics education and how it is delivered. The  
212 Common Core has a very integrated method for teaching math curriculum. She discussed  
213 how students will be assessed in the new SBAC assessment and gave examples of how  
214 the assessment will test the students.

215 Ms. Heimarck discussed the area district comparison and why there was a shift since the  
216 district is very far along in the Common Core integration. She discussed how far along  
217 the other districts are in the transition to the Common Core and how it is hard to know  
218 how much integration they are doing. She gave an example using Dover who is a year  
219 ahead and is using the same program, Math in Focus.

220 The board discussed Everyday Math and its use in Bedford and Concord, NH and how  
221 they have to implement other programs. They discussed a culture around assessment and  
222 test preparation. Other districts do test preparation and this district does not have a focus  
223 on the summative tests and focus more on the journey and learning. Some districts take  
224 the first 6-8wks to do test preparation. There is some good in knowing how to take a test,  
225 but this district has made the choice to not to do that. They discussed Bedford and how  
226 they have a very different assessment culture.

227 Ms. Heimarck stated that as the move to use the Smarter Balance, new SAT and ACT  
228 assessments the strategic planning process be including some test preparation.

229 Ms. Landwehrle stated that this is especially important since the new tests are computer  
230 based.

231 Ms. Heimarck discussed how the pilot districts for the SBAC would have an advantage.  
232 The next generation of standardized assessment is much more authentic. The district may  
233 now have to be a little more concerned about having an assessment culture.

234 Ms. Heimarck began discussing the NECAP reading scores. In reading the district is not  
235 very far into the work of aligning to the Common Core so there is not a decrease in the  
236 test scores. She discussed grade 3, where 25% of students are receiving tier 2 or tier 3  
237 intervention for reading and this impacts their performance levels in math and reading.

238 Mr. St. Amand stated that this years 2<sup>nd</sup> grade has a higher percentage of tier 2 and 3  
239 support, but they have not been assessed yet.

240 Ms. Heimarck stated that the elementary teachers are using a new program, which is  
241 aligned with the Common Core and as of the end of March a significant amount of the  
242 students are meeting benchmarks.

243 Ms. Landwehrle stated that across the state there is a 2pt. drop in reading scores.

244 Ms. Heimarck discussed the reasons why the NECAP reading scores statewide maybe  
245 lower including that this is the last year of the NECAP. She discussed the comparative  
246 district data. The district has a lot of work to do in literacy and they have made good  
247 progress already. She discussed the strands where students had high performance and  
248 low performance. She discussed the implications in transitioning to the Common Core  
249 and the change in philosophy for vocabulary and which vocabulary words should be  
250 taught. The teachers are implementing the change in vocabulary already in the classroom.  
251 She discussed the types of texts students will be asked to look at in the SBAC assessment  
252 and what they will be asked to do with the texts.

253 Ms. Landwehrle discussed the growth data in reading. Grade 7 showed the highest  
254 growth in reading and a decreased growth in Math. This shows the misalignment of the  
255 Math curriculum and the test. All grades showed growth.

256 Ms. Heimarck stated that AMS, SHS, and Clark/Wilkins are giving the Common Core  
257 aligned Math NWEA. She discussed how NWEA had to change the format of the  
258 assessment because of findings from SAU 39 teachers when the students took the exam  
259 last year. In the fall, the schools will administer the Common Core aligned NWEA  
260 literacy assessment. This will help teachers address gaps to prepare students for the  
261 spring 2015 SBAC assessment. The schools have also been doing another assessment for  
262 math using math exemplars at all grade levels except in Kindergarten. These assessments  
263 are more authentic with a focus on problem solving.

264 Ms. Landwehrle discussed the exemplar problem given in third grade recently. The

265 exemplars are aligned with Common Core; they help with depth of knowledge, give  
266 students an experience with what they will get on the Smarter Balance assessments and  
267 are an assessment that is not from Math in Focus.

268 Ms. Heimarck stated that these exemplars are helping to get students ready to take the  
269 common performance assessments that students will get at the high school, so eventually  
270 there will be similar assessments k-12.

271 Ms. Heimarck stated that the SBAC assessment would be given to grades 3-8 and  
272 grade 11. It is a computer based and adaptive assessment that includes performance tasks,  
273 math, reading, and writing. She discussed the design process for the Common Core  
274 including standards development and adoption, content specifications, assessment  
275 development

276 Mr. Manning stated the board should get a communication out to the community about  
277 the new generation of assessment and how they have been developed.

278 Ms. Heimarck discussed the content specifications in reading and math.

279 Ms. Heimarck stated that David Pooke would come back for a ½ day work session and  
280 they are working to schedule him for next year to work with writing standards.

281 Ms. Bennett asked that the board be invited to work with David Pooke.

## 282 **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### 283 ASD Modulares

284 Mr. Warburton stated that the three AMS modulares are leaving and also two of the back  
285 modulares from Wilkins. The company will come and take them out for no charge. This  
286 will happen after last day of school.

287 Ms. Shankel discussed other people who had interest in the modular, but in the end no  
288 one was truly interested. This will be a savings of \$14,000 to not have to re-roof the  
289 portables at Wilkins. There will be some cost to smooth over where the portables were,  
290 but not a significant cost. The company is coming in April to make sure they are  
291 acceptable and then they will be taken in June.

## 292 **ACTION ITEMS**

### 293 2014.15 School Year Calendar

294 **Ms. Bennett made a motion to accept the 2014/15 calendar. Mr. Prescott seconded**  
295 **the motion and the vote was unanimous.**

296 **Mr. Manning made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:28pm. Mr. Prescott**  
297 **seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.**