

1 **Amherst School Board Meeting**
2 **Thursday, April 1, 2010**

3
4 **Attendance**

Attendance

5
6 **Amherst School Board:**

7 Nancy Head, Peg Bennett, Peter Maresco, Rob Graybill, Lucienne Foulks

8
9 **Administrative Team:**

10 Mary Athey Jennings, Porter Dodge, Gerry St. Amand, Nicole Heimarck

11
12 **Minutes Recorder:** Beth Penney

13
14
15 **Organizational Meeting**

**Organizational
Meeting**

16 **Call to Order**

17 Dr. Jennings called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.

18
19 **Election of School Board Officers**

20
21 **Chairman**

22 Ms. Bennett nominated Ms. Head and was 2nd by Mr. Maresco.

23 Ms. Head was nominated as Chair and the vote was unanimous.

24
25 **Vice-Chairman**

26 Mr. Graybill nominated Ms. Bennett and was 2nd by Ms. Foulks.

27 Ms. Bennett was nominated as vice chairman and the vote was unanimous.

28
29 **Secretary**

30 Mr. Maresco nominated Mr. Graybill and Ms. Bennett 2nd the nomination.

31 Mr. Graybill was nominated as secretary and the vote was unanimous.

32
33 **Committee Assignments**

34
35 Master Plan – Ms. Head, Mr. Maresco

36 Amherst PTA - Mr. Graybill

37 Mont Vernon School Board Liaison – Ms. Bennett, Ms. Foulks

38 Manifest – Ms. Foulks, Mr. Maresco – Ms. Bennett as Alternate

39 Policy – Ms. Bennett, Ms. Head

40 Ways and Means Committee – Ms. Head, Ms. Bennett

41 Facilities Expendable Trust Fund– Ms. Head, Mr. Maresco

42 Late start/ Alternative start Time– Committee is no longer meeting

43 RSEC – ASB not responsible this year for this committee

44 AEA Negotiations – Ms. Head, Ms. Bennett

45 Town of Amherst – Mr. Maresco

46 CIP – Mr. Maresco

47 Recreation - Ms. Foulks

48

49 **Appointment of School District Officials**

50

51 Dr. Jennings –stated these appointments are for the treasurer and clerk, but we have
52 no nominees tonight. Nancy Baker was the past clerk; Jan Bunker was the past
53 Treasurer. We will make the appointments next time.

54

55 **Ms. Foulks motioned to adjourn this part of the meeting and Mr. Graybill**
56 **seconded. The vote was unanimous.**

57

58

59

Regular Meeting

Regular Meeting

60

61 **Call to Order**

62

63 Ms. Head called the meeting to order at 6:12pm.

64

65 **Announcements**

Announcements

66

67 **Principals' Report**

68

69 Mr. St. Amand added to his report that a students' mother passed away over the
70 weekend and the school was addressing this circumstance individually and with the
71 class that the student was in. The child may not return to Amherst.

72

73 **Public Time**

Public Time

74

75 No public present.

76

77 **Consent Agenda**

Consent Agenda

78

79 **Minutes**

80 Ms. Head asked to pull the minutes from 3/4/10.

81

82

83 **Mr. Graybill moved to accept the consent agenda consisting of February 2010**
84 **Treasurers Report, February 2010 Manifest and Budget Transfer 2010-13.**
85 **Mr. Maresco seconded the motion.**

86

87

88 **Ms. Bennett moved to accept the 3/4/10 minutes and Mr. Maresco seconded**
89 **the motion.**

90

91 Ms. Head asked for the following changes to be made:

92

93 Page 12 line 305 change “Yes, we can do that without the SAU ok”
94
95 Page 15 line 412 change “Curriculum coordinator Teachers do not have time
96 implement curriculum instruction”
97
98 Page 17 line 522 get rid of the word written
99
100 **The vote to accept the minutes as changed was unanimous.**
101
102 **Presentations** **Presentations**
103
104 NECAP Results
105 Ms. Heimarck stated that the results of the NECAP tests we analyzed by data teams,
106 which were a mix of people in each building.
107
108 Ms. Heimarck introduced the following people who were also present at the meeting
109 Jen Eccleston, Meg Trainor, Fay Deysher, Nancy McGuire
110
111 Ms. Heimarck did a quick review of NECAP. The results were brought as a brief
112 presentation before the SAU board to showcase results. The NECAP is a state
113 assessment that measures the annual progress of student’s performance. There are
114 four levels of performance; Level 4 is proficient w/ distinction; Level 3 is proficient
115 (all students must perform at this level by 2013 as determined by the No Child Left
116 Behind Act), Level 2 is partially proficient, and Level 1 is substantially below
117 proficient. We have 5 years of data in the elementary school. Grade 5 scores goes
118 back to Wilkins because that’s where the standards were taught. These scores are
119 just from 2009.
120
121 Ms. Heimarck gave an overview of how the test scores were analyzed.
122
123 This analysis is of a 5 year comparison for Reading and Math. We have seen an
124 increase since last year. We are also tracking movement to the 4th level and we have
125 seen growth.
126
127 AMS reviews data for 6,7, and 8th grades to look at a school-wide picture and they
128 track data for Reading and Math.
129
130 The data is analyzed by looking at the whole school, by grade level, with in sub-
131 groups in each grade level and individual students movement over time.
132
133 NECAP is a Reading and Math test given to grades 3-8 and 11.
134
135 The NECAP Writing test is give at grade 5,8, and 11. We will not be getting tests
136 scores for this test because it is a new writing test and this year was the pilot. In
137 future years the students’ writing samples will be returned with the assessment so

138 results are more meaningful. We can use authentic pieces of student writing to look
139 for strengths, weaknesses, consistencies and inconsistencies in our curriculum.
140 The district does a comparative study with the data also. The administration made a
141 cohort group of districts to compare our SAU to by looking at demographics,
142 socioeconomic groups, geographic area, and size.

143
144 In Reading, we are at the top and we saw significant gains in reading in 2009.

145
146 Mont Vernon's scores are separated and compared and the 11th grade scores are
147 removed from the over all percentages also.

148
149 We also have had gains in Math compared to other SAUs. Math can vary and change
150 over time. The scores are often not a consistent increase over time like reading.

151
152 Mr. St. Amand presented the Clark Wilkins analysis. He stated the focus was on the
153 students. There were 20 people involved in the analysis of the test scores.

154
155 When comparing Clark Wilkins to the state grade 3 Math showed 88% / 76%
156 respectively; grade 4 showed 88%/75%; grade 5 showed 77%/75%. Although we
157 are better than state we would prefer to be much higher than state. We are
158 concerned about the discrepancy between grades 3 and 4 to grade 5.

159
160 This discrepancy was discussed and the following is a summary of the discussion.
161 They cannot pin point the reasoning for this discrepancy, but it boils down to
162 instruction and the transition from Clark Wilkins to AMS. The State Department of
163 Education has been asked to help look at how to better pinpoint the decline in the
164 5th grade scores. Other assessments and item analysis are also going to be used to
165 help determine the most significant cause. They will also be looking at if there are
166 specific standards, which are being missed.

167
168 Mr. St. Amand pointed out that the level 4, proficient with distinction, scores are
169 equal in all three grade levels.

170
171 Ms. Heimark stated that they were also going to look at the cut points for some
172 students who make it by one point. They will also look at what percentage of kids
173 do we have right at the cut point and how can we move those kids more into the
174 proficient zone.

175
176 Mr. St. Amand stated that the intervention team discussed those students at the cut
177 point, but they no longer support 5th graders at Clark Wilkins.

178
179 The board discussed the sample size of each grade and how the sample size could
180 affect the percentage in each level. There was discussion about how we needed to
181 increase the number of students in the Level 4, proficient with distinction.

182

183 Mr. St. Amand reviewed the reading data comparing Clark Wilkins to the state; 3rd
184 graded showed 94%/80% respectfully; 4th grade 84%/75%; 5th grade 90%/79%.
185 We are happy with the reading scores.

186
187 Ms. Heimarck stated that they started a literacy focus 3 years ago. A national report
188 stated that 95% should reach grade level standards in reading. 5 years ago we were
189 off this mark, but now that we have reached it we need to focus on sustainability.

190
191 Mr. Graybill asked does the NECAP standard change over time.

192
193 Ms. Heimarck replied that the cut points for students remain similar over time. The
194 changes for the students are the standards because they move up a grade level.

195
196 Mr. St. Amand continued the presentation by focusing on IEP students. The 504
197 students scores are included with the general population of students. The math
198 scores were 3rd grade 75% (8 students) met proficient = out 12 students.
199 Grade 4, 44% (17 students) met proficient compared to the state which was 40%;
200 5th grade, 32% (22 students) met proficient and this was lower than the state and is
201 a concern.

202
203 Mr. Maresco –asked if the percent of students with IEP increases over time.

204
205 Mr. St. Amand replied yes, because a learning disability may not be identified until
206 students are further along. Other disabilities are recognized earlier on. Clark Wilkins
207 has reduced the number of IEP's and scores have improved over time. We will
208 continue to see grades 3 and 4 with more IEP students than k-2. A majority of the
209 learning disabilities are reading deficits and not math deficits.

210
211 Ms. Heimarck stated that literacy disabilities are identified earlier because research
212 has not been done for as long in Math.

213
214 Mr. St. Amand stated that by the 4th grade many more math disabilities are
215 noticeable.

216
217 Jen Eccleston – We noticed a few years ago that Geometry was not in the curriculum,
218 but instead the focus was on number sense. We put Geometry back in the
219 curriculum to align with state standards. This 5th grade class only got geometry for
220 the 1st time as 4th graders, which could impact the scores.

221
222 Mr. St. Amand reviewed the reading scores of the IEP students compared to the
223 state. 3rd graders showed a bigger difference than 4th grade when compared to the
224 state and 5th grade scores were slightly above the state.

225
226 Ms. Heimarck stated that last year we looked at sub-groups of students by
227 identifying levels 1 and 2 scores. We looked at special education numbers and grade
228 5 is where the concern is. Overall we saw fewer special education students

229 performing below proficient compared to last year. This tracking was done looking
230 at the same cohort of students as they traveled vertically.
231
232 Mr. St. Amand presented the scores for gender comparison.
233
234 In Math, for males vs. females, Grade 3 showed 86%/ 91% respectively; grade 4
235 showed 91%/87%; and grade 5 showed 77%/76%.
236
237 NAP(a national assessment) showed a 15% discrepancy for males vs females in
238 math.
239
240 In Reading, for grades 3,4, and 5 males and females scores were neck and neck. We
241 are not concerned in reading.
242
243 The board discussed different developmental rates of the males compared to
244 females. They also discussed why the males' scores from grade 4 to 5 dropped
245 significantly. They hope to pin point the reason and make positive change. They also
246 discussed how the types of passages used in the reading assessment might affect the
247 differences in the scores of males and females. Males tend to prefer non-fiction.
248
249 Mr. St. Amand stated that the research goes back and forth on the gender of the
250 teacher at that effect on the students' performance. We have become more data
251 informed, by this testing, but it takes time to look at the data in a valuable way. We
252 need to support teachers better to continue to increase scores. We have improved
253 upon grouping practices. The grade level teachers are more connected to
254 expectations and standards. We have formed database-learning teams to continue
255 research and response to intervention. We have started the DI facilitators and
256 continued professional development. We see all of these things as positive steps.
257
258 Mr. St. Amand described the data when looking at a group of students over time.
259 The progression from 3rd to 4th grade showed that the math scores increase from
260 83%-85% performed in the proficient level from 08/09-09/10 and in reading the
261 scores showed a decrease from 89%-84% in the proficient level from 08/09-09/10.
262
263 Ms. Heimarck stated that the 4th grade is often where we see more reading
264 disabilities become apparent and this could be the reason for the drop in scores.
265
266 Mr. St. Amand continued looking at the 5th graders scores in comparison from
267 progression of grades 3-5 using 3 years of data. The scores showed improvement
268 from 07-09 and from 08/09 to 09/10 scores showed an increase in reading from
269 80%-90% and a decrease from 82%-77% in math.
270
271 Meg Trainor shared a sample of writing, which is a compilation of students from a
272 fourth grade class because it captures what we do.
273

274 Mr. Dodge presented the AMS data as follows. In Math, grade 6 scores were 7 points
275 above the state average. Grade 7 scores were 14 points above the state average.
276 Grade 8 scores are well above the state average. Our students who performed at
277 level 4, proficient with distinction, dropped a little in grade 8. We are pleased with
278 the scores, but we have a ways to go.

279
280 Mr. Dodge continued discussing the Reading scores. All of the scores are high and
281 we are above the state average. We are pleased with the rebound in our scores from
282 last year. We are also very pleased with the number of students performing at level
283 4, proficient with distinction.

284
285 Mr. Dodge continued discussing the scores of students with IEP's. In Math, grade 6
286 out of 18 students/ 7 scored proficient. In grade 7, out of 39 total students, 15
287 students scored proficient and 24 scored not proficient which was above the state's
288 average scores. In grade 8, out of 32 total students, 19 students scored proficient
289 and 13 scored not proficient which is a considerably large jump above the state's
290 averages.

291
292 Ms. Sparks stated that the current 7th grade has significant disabilities in reading.

293
294 Ms. Foulks stated that the current 7th grade is the first group that did not have
295 readiness.

296
297 Mr. Dodge continued with the reading scores for the IEP students. The scores were
298 higher than the state in 6th, 7th, 8th. We have focused more on reading and it has
299 been paying off. We have also found that the current 7th grade has shown a
300 considerable increase in test scores since 5th grade.

301
302 At AMS, the gender comparisons of the test scores are close in math except a slight
303 discrepancy in 7th grade. In reading, scores are equal in 6th grade. In 7th and 8th
304 grades the scores show girls are ahead, and reading seems to be struggle for boys at
305 these grade levels.

306
307 Ms. Heimarck stated that the middle school, curriculum becomes more literature
308 based and novel based. We need to consider this and help teachers choose books
309 through out the year that are non-fiction, fiction, and literature that males are
310 drawn to.

311
312 Mr. Dodge stated that to continue to improve test scores, AMS continues to hold
313 academic support and after school study sessions and we are further implementing
314 RTI. RTI models are hard to use at the middle school level and we need to come up
315 with our own program. The experts say it's difficult to have an RTI model because it
316 does not fit for all students. Now that the RTI is successful at the elementary school
317 then the middle school will start to be more successful with RTI.

318

319 The board discussed that the RTI implementation at the middle school has a team
320 that meets often and continues to find ways to look at how to implement the right
321 RTI model. The middle school RTI model needs to be consistent with the
322 elementary school. The schools need more data and work on scheduling to help get
323 services to students.

324

325 The board discussed using NECAP test scores to place students. The current system
326 uses 5 factors weighted equally. There has been discussion at the coordinators
327 meeting about re-weighting different factors. The board's concern is that the NECAP
328 test scores are from the fall and growth could happen during the year. The
329 coordinators will continue to look at this placement process.

330

331 Reading Pilot-update

332

333 Ms. Heimarck introduced Nancy McGuire, who is the literacy coordinator for the
334 district K-12. She has been the leader and facilitator for the Scott Foresman reading
335 pilot in Mont Vernon last year and Amherst is piloting the program this year.

336

337 Ms. McGuire stated that currently we have 6, kindergarten teachers using Reading
338 Street and 2 teachers in first and second grade. Next year will be full
339 implementation of the program in grades k-2 and we will add 2 classrooms in
340 grades 3-6. Last year, we went to Bedford to look at the Reading Street program and
341 came up with our own pacing guide, core expectations, and asked teachers to poke
342 around with the other resources. For the pacing guide, we took off the last unit,
343 which is review. This allows us to stretch out the other units and allows for time for
344 other things teachers like to do like novel units.

345

346 The negative aspects of this program include the adoption curve. This program is a
347 ton of work for teachers to take on. This is a spiraling curriculum and some skills
348 seem advanced to both teachers and students. The learning is rigorous and
349 expectations are high. Teachers were not sure kids were ready for this, but the kids
350 are surprising them. We are very interested to see how the kids do next year.

351

352 Ms. Heimarck stated that they received similar feedback about the rigor of the
353 program last year with Mont Vernon and this year they see a big difference with the
354 kids who now have had more exposure to this program.

355

356 Ms. McGuire continued to discuss some of the negative aspects of the program.
357 Teaching grammar explicitly can be hard for some teachers who have never done it
358 before. Also there is never enough time.

359

360 The positive aspects of the program are that kids love the materials. With the
361 previous program we did not see as significant gains as we have this year. The
362 teachers can easily combine this program with their own values and best practices.
363 Teachers have put a lot of thought and care into the program. The program has
364 testing that is similar to the NECAP and NEWAA. The program gives all kids

365 exposure to the same skills at the same time and all kids are exposed to the same
366 grade level material no matter their reading level.

367
368 The board discussed many years of reading programs including Houghton-Mifflin
369 and Guided Reading. The SAU brought in Scott Foresman because it has more
370 differentiated instruction and is heavy with non-fiction readings. They will continue
371 to use the Guided Reading program to support the Scott Foresman.
372 The new program also allows for all schools in the districts to have a similar
373 program, so students coming to AMS from Mont Vernon have a similar background.

374
375 Recommendation to Make-up Snow Day Time

376
377 Dr. Jennings stated that she is concerned with the number of snow/ flood days. She
378 proposed starting April 19th adding 30 min. to the day for 40 days to make up 3 days
379 of contracted time. Amherst ends June 24th. This would be advantageous to
380 students and families. This proposal was also, discussed with Amherst Education
381 Association and they are supportive. The Amherst School District would end on
382 June 21st if we do this.

383
384 The board discussed how this time would be allocated and offered suggestions to
385 Dr. Jennings and the principals, including adding 15 minutes to the start and finish
386 of the day or having a rotating schedule so all blocks get more time throughout the
387 rest of the year. The board also discussed in the future changing how to adjust for
388 more than the allocated snow days by switching to minutes rather than number of
389 days and using teacher-contracted time differently. These ideas cannot be put in
390 place for next year, but could be considered in the future. There was also concern
391 for letting parents know as soon as possible so they can make adjustments for their
392 families' schedules after school.

393
394 **Mr. Maresco made a motion to add 30 minutes to each day, and 3 additional**
395 **days having the Amherst School District school year end on June 21st, Ms.**
396 **Bennett seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.**

397
398 Action Items

Action Items

399
400 Wellness Policy JLCF- 1st reading

401
402 Dr. Jennings stated this is actually the 2nd reading, but the Amherst Board dropped
403 the proposal years back. Mont Vernon and SHS adopted the wellness policy that
404 changed the standards from nutritional standards to USDA guidelines. Another
405 change was the portion sizes from a maximum of 1¼ ounces changed to 1 ½ ounces
406 because of how items are being sold to us. Beverage size was also in creases to 16 fl.
407 oz . This policy only controls food that the school district sells, anything the district
408 doesn't sell is not controlled with in this policy. This changes celebrations, because
409 there is no celebration clause and it does allow for a sweet treat at a holiday party as

410 long as school does not provide the food. A parent can also bring in a cake for a
411 birthday.

412
413 The board discussed not using food as a reward and how import that is. The board
414 decided not to vote tonight and to review the policy again at the next meeting.

415
416 FY11 MS-22

417
418 This is a report that must be turned in to the state after the district meeting. Every
419 board member must sign that this report is what we determined the budget would
420 be for next year. Dr. Jennings verified that it is accurate. Each board member's
421 signature is their vote.

422
423 **Review of Meeting**

**Review of
Meeting**

424
425 Ms. Head reviewed the meeting. The board would like to bring back the 5th/
426 6th grade dip in NECAP scores after further analysis and would like to have Ms.
427 McGuire return at a future time with teachers to continue to review the new reading
428 program.

429
430 **Mr. Graybill made a motion to end the public session of the meeting and move**
431 **into non-public session, Ms. Bennett seconded at 8:35pm.**

432
433
434 **Non-Public Session**

Non-Public Session

435
436 Mr. Graybill took the following notes.

437
438 8:40 Rob motioned to bring the board into non-public session. Motion seconded by
439 Peter. Unanimous roll call vote was taken to enter non-public session. Dr. Jennings
440 presented nominations for contracts for the ASD for the 2010-2011 school year. Dr.
441 Jennings also presented salary and contract recommendations for administrators
442 for the ASD for the 2010-2011 school year. Discussion ensued.

443
444 9:15 Peg moved to bring the board out of non-public session. Motion seconded by
445 Lucienne. Unanimous roll call vote was taken to re-enter public session.

446
447 9:16 Peg moved to accept the recommendations as presented by Dr. Jennings for
448 contracts for 2010-2011 school year. Motion seconded by Lucienne. Motion
449 received unanimous vote.

450
451 9:17 Peter moved to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Rob. Motion
452 received unanimous vote. Meeting adjourned.

453