BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MANCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT SAU #37

January 28, 2026 **6:00 p.m.**

1. Mayor Ruais called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Mayor Ruais called for the Pledge of Allegiance and asked Vice Chair O'Connell to lead us.

3. A moment of silence was observed.

4. The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Committee Members Turner, Parr, Taylor, Stewart, O'Connell, Potter, Hamer, O'Neil-Wong, and Mayor Ruais.

Absent: Committee Members Georges, Want, Bergeron, St. John, and Smith.

5. PUBLIC FORUM

There was no one present wishing to speak during the public forum.

7. New State of New Hampshire Department of Education Minimum Standards, ED 306's – by Nicole Doherty, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning

Ms. Doherty and the Teaching and Learning team, made up of Ed Doyle (Fine Arts Director), Leslie Whitney (Teaching and Learning Director), Geoff Giotas (Instructional Director for High Schools), and Joyce Lewis (Director of Comprehensive Guidance) were present to talk about the new state of New Hampshire Department of Education Minimum Standards, or the ED 306s. It was stated that over the past several months, the teaching and learning team has been spending a considerable amount of time digging into these new state expectations, reviewing the district policies and unpacking the requirements to fully understand what these changes will mean to the district, the students, the staff and the schools. Tonight they plan on giving the Board a clear overview of the work that has been done, key shifts in the expectations and how these requirements shape graduation moving forward. The agenda this evening focuses on three main areas: (1) the overview of the 306s and why they matter; (2) review of the competency based education and how it connects directly to the states expectations; and, (3) Graduation requirements and how they align with both the ED 306s and our local policies. They indicated that within the packet is a vocabulary guide. As part of the recent K through eight curriculum revisions, several key shifts were made that affect instructional language expectations and student pathways. This has already been underway for the past few years, such as framework supports exploratory learning within play based Kindergarten and beyond. Also, elementary instruction must align with the science of reading,

with clear expectations of what is taught at each grade. For example, Amplify is an evidence based program specifically tied to the science of reading. Manchester's K through eight core programs in reading and math are evidence based, and has been established in Manchester as part of the ED 306s. There have been updated language emphasizing the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and this is tiered with support and helps develop personalized learning. Civics instruction is more explicitly defined in social studies. Holocaust instruction is to begin no later than eighth grade as developmentally appropriate. This is embedded within the current eighth grade Amplify unit. K through five math standards are more specific around fluency and reasoning, while grades six through eight allow more flexibility and are already in place within the iReady math program. Extended learning opportunities are designed to better align with High School pathways and expectations. This is an area that will be explored as the district moves forward. The ED 306s define a new set of minimum requirements for graduation. There are some changes for our upcoming grade nine students, all other high school student's graduation requirements will still stay in place. For example, in English, 3.5 credits are the new state requirement with a half a credit, specifically in writing, and the district proposal keeps the bar high, requiring four credits to include a half a credit in writing. There's a change in mathematics by adding statistics data analysis as a half a credit of the required three. The science state assessment has been moved to the second year of high school, as opposed to the previous junior year in social studies. This is where we will see the biggest change. The state has moved us from 2.5 credits to four credits to graduate, adding a full credit in United States and New Hampshire history of government and constitution, which requires a separate half credit of civics, world history is now to one full credit from the half and then also the additional of Holocaust and genocide curriculum as a requirement. Logic and rhetoric is introduced as a required half credit as well. Seat time has been eliminated and competency mastery has taken its place. Students make progress when they have obtained mastery of competencies, not at the end of a set time when we ask how we know that students has made progress and achieved mastery of a competency. We continue to partner with our consultant, NHLI that's the New Hampshire learning initiative, to deepen that shared understanding and provide targeted professional development for our staff. The work in the high school departments, is that they are organizing the work as such that competencies are made of standards, and each standard is made up of learning objectives, and each learning objective can be made up of learning targets. Think of competencies as a large concept like reading or equations or cooking. Obviously, within those concepts or those buckets, there are more concrete things if we were to look into those competency buckets, we would see several smaller buckets. Those smaller buckets would be standards. These standards are more specific. For example, if reading was the competency, then at the high school level, we would have critical reading or evaluating arguments, perhaps analyzing text. But

again, these standards, while more specific, have more specific competency concepts within them. High school professional development days will also be tied to competency based learning as we move forward, along with revisiting curriculum documents to best align to these new concepts, and we will continue working on revising and updating our policies and procedures regarding all aspects of CBE, including graduation requirements. The proposal for incorporating the new state graduation requirements with the components that have been the fabric of the Manchester School District Education were discussed, indicating that they are proposing that the graduation requirements shift from 22.5 to 24.5 credits, and this will be on the consent agenda for the full board on February 9. This proposal outlines a structured sequence for freshman and sophomore year, while allowing room in the junior and senior year schedule to explore career pathways or CTE programs. This proposal includes a required freshman course that gives students the tools they need for high school success and future planning. Digital literacy is embedded in the School to Career Readiness course, while statistics and logic and rhetoric are embedded in successful completion of a sequence of courses. All embedded credits will also be offered as standalone options. All freshmen will take physical science, as this is part of best practices and is essentially the catalyst to success in other sciences. The state science test, or the science SAS, will be moved next year to second year of high school, and is in the midst of being rewritten by the DOE with science teachers statewide, and will more heavily focus on physical science and biology. In working with the math bills, they have embedded the statistics competencies through a continuum of courses that is the most common for all students. That continuum of courses is algebra, Geometry and Algebra Two. We will also create a half credit statistics course for those students who do not successfully complete this continuum or otherwise need or want a different option. A process to evaluate the programs with the use of data is being reviewed and there will be a continual improvement process put into place, where they will define, implement and assess the programs and will submit it biannually to the Board for approval. New Hampshire's minimum standards require our schools to provide instruction in the fine arts, aligned with the New Hampshire arts model and the competencies and national standards. Music and visual art remain an essential part of a complete K through 12 education in Manchester. The purpose of arts education is to foster creativity, self expression, cultural awareness and critical thinking, while also building the transferable skills students need for college career and life readiness, such as collaboration, communication and innovation. As the district continues its important work around competencies, course design and career pathways, work will be ongoing with administrative investment in thinking holistically about student learning. As we expand options and expectations across disciplines, we need to ensure that the arts remain visible, valued and accessible to all students. Maintaining that balance is essential to honoring New Hampshire's vision of a well rounded whole child education. It's important that our local

policies align with both the letter and the intent of the ED 306s. This work includes a close review of our existing policies related to instruction, curriculum, assessment and graduation, to identify where updates may be needed. The focus is on ensuring our policies support competency based learning, promote consistency across schools and align with our shared vision for student centered education.

The conversation included:

1. The current reporting system is the traditional reporting structure of the ABCs, Attendance, Behavior and Curriculum. As we move forward, they will get stakeholder input on how to move forward.
2. The new standards aim to ensure all students have access to meaningful learning experiences and a diploma that represents readiness for college, career and life.
3. They discussed the recent K-8 curriculum revisions, including frameworks for exploratory learning and alignment with the science of reading.
4. Specific programs like Amplify and iReady math are mentioned as evidence-based programs tied to the science of reading.
5. Civics instruction is more explicitly defined, and Holocaust instruction is required by eighth grade.
6. The new standards emphasize multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) and specific K-5 math standards around fluency and reasoning.
7. The new graduation requirements for high school students, includes changes in English, mathematics, science, and social studies.
    a. English requires 3.5 credits, with a half credit specifically in writing, while mathematics includes statistics and data analysis.
    b. The science state assessment is moved to the second year of high school, and social studies requires four credits, including a full credit in US and New Hampshire government and constitution.
    c. The new standards also include specific Holocaust and genocide curriculum and logic and rhetoric as required half credits.
8. Regarding Competency-Based Education (CBE) the team explained the shift from seat time to competency mastery in the new standards. The New Hampshire Learning Initiative (NHLI) is partnering with the district to provide professional development for staff.
9. The structure of competencies, standards, and learning objectives, emphasizing student agency and feedback loops.

10. The importance of common expectations and assessments, and transparency in learning outcomes, is highlighted.
11. The proposal for incorporating new state graduation requirements, includes a shift from 22.5 to 24.5 credits.
12. The proposal includes a structured sequence for freshman and sophomore years, with room for career pathways in junior and senior years.
13. A required freshman course on school to career readiness is proposed, focusing on digital literacy and career planning.
14. The new requirements aim to provide a stronger start for students and align with the state's competency-based education standards.
15. It was indicated that there is an impact on School Counseling and Fine Arts, including the new standards on the school counseling program, including the K-12 school counseling program and the fine arts program remains essential, fostering creativity, self-expression, cultural awareness, and critical thinking.
16. The district continues to work on integrating the arts through all K-12 curriculum and ensuring visibility and accessibility for all students.
17. It is important that there is a shared intentionality and ongoing administrative investment in holistic student learning is emphasized.
18. This work has included a review and revisions to district policies to align with the new standards. Attorney Matt Upton will begin this work, with updates coming before the policy committee.
19. The focus is on ensuring the policies support competency-based learning, promote consistency across schools, and align with the district's vision for student-centered education.
20. Implementation and training for staff will occur over the summer, with resources and support provided for the transition.

Questions and comments from the Board included:

1. How much time will teachers have to rework lesson plans to align with student agency and common assessments. The work will start at the March teacher workshop day and continue with professional development.
2. It was asked what the impact of increased credits on graduation and enrollment are and if there is a potential for an increase in dropout rates. It was stated that the new structure aims to provide a stronger start for students and address potential challenges.

3. The Board asked about the transition to competency-based reporting and the potential learning curve. The focus is on common assessments and feedback loops, with reporting coming later.
4. It was asked what the rationale for starting civics and social studies in freshman year would be and the if this is expected to impact attendance. It was stated that it is important that there is early exposure to civics and the alignment with the state's requirements.
5. It was asked if there would be an impact on GPA, class rank, and college admissions, and the cost of implementing the new standards. It was responded that the transition to competency-based reporting will take several years, and the cost is currently being evaluated.
6. Staff training will be provided and is ongoing.
7. It was asked about the potential for adding world language as a dedicated credit requirement. They stated that this is possible and is being considered.
8. It was asked what the rationale for the 24.5 credit requirement and the potential impact on students transferring in or out of the district. It was stated that the new requirements aim to provide a robust education and align with the district's strategic plan.
9. Concerns were raised about the time and resources required for teachers to provide feedback and the potential challenges for diverse students.

ADJOURNMENT

8. This being a special meeting of the board, no further business can be presented unless by 2/3 majority and a motion is in order to adjourn.

This being a special meeting, no new business was presented.

On motion of ***Committee Member O'Connell,*** *duly seconded by* ***Committee Member Potter,*** *it was moved to adjourn. All were in favor and the motion passed; meeting adjourned at 7:19 p.m.*

True Copy. Attest.
Respectfully Submitted,

Angela McCarey

Clerk of Committee