MANCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT SAU #37
COMMITTEE ON STUDENT CONDUCT

December 8, 2021 **6:30 p.m.**

1. Chair Leapley called the meeting to order at 6:43 p.m.

2. The Clerk calls the roll.

Present: Committee Members Leapley, Turner and Gonzalez.

Absent: Committee Members Kelley Arnold, Lachance and Bergeron.

3. **Public Forum**

4. Chairwoman Leapley advises that the purpose of the public forum is to give the residents of Manchester the opportunity to address the committee on items of concerns affecting the community; each person will be given only one opportunity to speak; comments shall be limited to three minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak and any comments must be directed to the Chair.

Any resident wishing to speak will come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized and give their comments.

There was no one present wishing to speak.

6. Approval of the Minutes of the following meetings: March 2, 2020, April 27, 2020, June 2, 2020, June 15, 2020, June 22, 2020, June 18, 2021, August 16, 2021, and October 16, 2021.

On motion of ***Committee Member Turner,*** *duly seconded by* ***Committee Member Gonzalez,*** *it was moved to approve the minutes of the March 2, 2020, April 27, 2020, June 2, 2020, June 15, 2020, June 22, 2020, June 18, 2021, August 16, 2021, and October 16, 2021, meetings. All were in favor and the motion passed.*

7. **Presentations**

8. Manchester Police Department and Manchester School District Agreement Status

Chair Leapley stated this item is on the agenda so that this committee can get up to speed on what our current agreement with the Manchester Police Department is to provide SROs for our schools. As you

read the agenda, you saw the last three agreements that we had with the Manchester Police Department. For the benefit of the public, she highlighted on page five that we added to the agreement, because we had been working with the MPD to create an MOU, memorandum of understanding, that would be more detailed. We were working on that and then there was COVID going on, and we ran out of time. What we did is add this agreement, add this paragraph to the agreement that we have. She brought the attention of everyone to the fact that the plan was to develop that MOU. On page five, it says this agreement will be thoroughly reviewed during the 2021 school year, representatives from the Board of School Committee, the administration and the police department will work together to review the relationship between the police department and the school district. Representatives from each of these groups will assist with providing quarterly data reports to the Board's policy and conduct committees. In addition to consulting the major stakeholders throughout the community that interact with the SROs, the school district and the police department on a regular basis with the data and input from stakeholders, hope to develop a further MOU that provides specificity regarding the role of the SROs and that guides the relationship between the police department and the school district going forward.

Questions and comments included:

1. In the backup material, there is a history to developing the MOU, and in paragraph 13 it talks about the MOU being reviewed and it was asked if this was done. It was stated that the discussion started and then Covid happened.
2. Item 8 was rolled into item 9 at this point. It was stated that item 9 lays out what needs to be done with the building of the MOU.

Katie Cox Pelletier stated that this was talked about a little bit last year. They started to build out what they thought the MOU would be, trying to take what we have now, which is very basic, and add wording. The basic contract stays how many MOUs we would have and what we would be paying them. This MOU is still in place for the upcoming school year but we need to make another document that flushes out what the goals are around having the SRO in the schools. What does this look like? What are their duties? What is the relationship with administrators? What is the role of the administrators in relation to the SROs? The law has changed significantly in terms of student discipline and that went into effect on July 1st. We are developing this and reflect what is in the new

law in terms of how we handle student conduct. We had to rewrite the Student Code of Conduct based on the law and update Board policies, which has been done, and that had to take precedence due to the new law going into place July 1st. A draft of the potential document has been done and shared with the police department. There are two drafts, one on each side, that has a pretty good amount of work put into it and both sides need to come together and develop a final draft, taking information out of the drafts from each side. There are some things that need to be worked on, including that they talked about this being data driven and they need to look at what that data will look like so that we are getting accurate data. There is not much data from 2020/2021 due to the students being in remote learning.

Dr. Gillis stated one of the bigger aspects that was discussed was the deliberations or discussions around the development of the MOU. We want to be transparent in the communication around what we are seeing in the schools, what the rules look like and what data looks like. Like was indicated, they began the discussion and then Covid happened, and the data was not available. The goal was to look at the data quarterly; however, when school started, we had some questions regarding what student conduct looked like in the schools and they started pulling data for the months of September and October and comparing these to 2019, 2020 and 2021 and this is the colored document received tonight. She invited the Administration teams to join us this evening because it is helpful for them to be present during these conversations as they are the ones in the schools and dealing with behaviors. Principal Szuksta and Principal St. Onge were present, as well as the whole Admin team from Memorial. We have had the shift in the conduct law and we have shared out this information to the principals and building level leaders, as well as the Manchester Police Department. They have been incredibly open with the steps in the progress and are looking at data at a high level within the schools and how it has shifted within the law changes. If you look at Memorials data, you will see it in red on the document on the second row down. In 2019, the action total was 1677 and in October of 2021 it shifts to 355. Dr. Gillis stated that action, in general terms, means any action in response to a behavior that is exhibited. In Memorial's grid, 2019 incidents, the physical behavior that a student exhibits, you're at 1690, roll all the way over to the right in October 2021 it is 456. In looking at data at this high level view, there are two things: one, we're engaging in conversations and two the numbers dramatically shifted. We can then go in and crosscut data in our Aspen tool to look at what is trending, what are the patterns that they are seeing within their building, and then we can wrap in what that data looks like at the school. This data also hinges to information or data that is out there from the Manchester Police Department. She wanted to make one point very clear, if we have what is reported

as a call for service for a school, they've been working with the PD to pull apart those data points, because not all of those calls are associated with our school. I'm going to give one example, Parkside may have a number of calls for service related to the Parkside Middle School; however, not all of those calls for service are absolutely connected to Parkside Middle School at times. Parkside is an anchoring location. If a call comes in, Parkside is an anchoring location, and that is how those calls for service start to build up under our schools. We are working with the PD to pull apart, what is school related and what is that school community location related so that we have a better grasp on that data. They are pulling data in a different way than we have in the past, really looking at what are the patterns we're seeing? What are the areas that we need to address? And what are the areas we need to celebrate? In the case of Memorial, we've seen some dramatic drops in certain variables within their data. She stated that she is going to have Principal St. Onge to talk about a little bit what's going well, what are those shifts? What are we seeing working and what are those areas that we still need to dig into?

Principal St. Onge stated their goal was to bring back students this school year and the primary focus was to build relationships and then develop systems that are effective. They have a new leadership team entirely in the building. Many traditional disciplinary systems often don't look at necessarily the results. The true nature of discipline and conduct is to change student behavior and so that's what they're trying to do. As they move these students back in after being in the midst of a pandemic, they're looking at updating systems and adjusting systems, they've created an intervention team, which has increased collaboration with the school counseling department and our administration and they're trying to increase those opportunities for students to access additional services. They're continuing to work with community partners and the days of suspending students for behavior that's not warranted are much in the past. When you see a suspension, in this day and age, it's reflective of a very serious significant infraction, which typically results in something related to school safety. It's really expected that suspensions would be down. It's also a reflection of relationship building. If you were 15, again, you certainly wouldn't want every initial interaction to be talking about consequences. We need to build relationships with students and administration has done a fantastic job of getting to know as many students as quickly as possible. He stated that he is part of a PLC group with high school principals across the state of New Hampshire. There is a tremendous challenge in many students returning from the pandemic and so prior to changing behavior, you have to get to know somebody. In addition to the intervention team, they have made the initial pleas to build a threat assessment team, and also, including many, many aspects to a full scale revamp of how they operate in the building, to

include additional monitors, support systems, formerly known as internal suspension, those types of systems have to be built and so they are in the process of doing that, as well as looking overall at our overall security in the building. It's expected that our discipline numbers, for lack of a better term would be down and it's not because anything other than the factors that he mentioned, and really trying to build relationships with kids, so and I just have to commend the staff, the administrative team for being positive and welcoming students back to school year, as well as our teaching staff. They are working collectively with all the schools to build a menu of resources and support for the students. They look at what is available for the students for supports and social emotional opportunities and then funnel the school to the services and supports that are available. He stated that they will be coming before the Board in January to give an update.

Principal Szuksta stated he would echo a lot of what Principal St. Onge has stated. They are excited about having students back and there are challenges. One of the strengths at Parkside is the staff members. They have looked at student behavior this year and it is evident that kids went 18 months without real quality, personal interactions with the staff. They are kicking things off differently with the Leader in Me program, which a lot of the west elementary schools have had. When he was in an 8th grade classroom today, one of the eight grade social studies teachers was doing some brainstorming about how we can kick things off with the kids and improve the school, how we can take ownership and invest our time. We are hoping to be able to continue to support eliminating or reducing exclusionary discipline and cutting down on external suspensions. There is a lot of work left to do regarding some interventions and they have proposals for Saturdays, and academic and social emotional supports, and they want to get the teachers involved as well. They did a faculty and student event in November, which was a faculty versus student basketball game and it was very positive. They did some raffles for hallway behavior and they are trying to restructure things in a positive way. We are focusing educational gaps and we need to refocus on building some of the structures that are so integral in the school. He stated they are luck to have school counselors and social workers who are making amazing connections with the families and providing support for the kids. There is an Amoskeag Health My Turn drop center that just opened in the building for west side students and they have had some eighth grade students get connected there. They are lucky to have the supports, along with a great staff that cares about building relationships with the kids.

Questions and comments of the Committee included:

1. This committee is working to wrap their minds around how to better understand student behavior and what is going on in our schools and it is nice to have the principals come in and provided that information to the committee.
2. As we move forward it would be helpful to have a principal come and share what they are doing in their schools.
3. What are the behaviors that are being seen and that are concerning? There is a small group of students who have been really struggling and are not responding to adult interaction, and this is more than we would normally see. The adults are being met with hostility from this small group of kids and it is a different hostility then we are used to seeing. The basis of this is normally in unstructured times, cafeteria, hallways and in the larger groups where students are crying, or are degrading others, and this includes before and after school times. The schools are also dealing with things off school grounds that come onto school ground outside the school hours. This is not specific to Manchester and it is being seen across the state and the nation. Kagan structures have helped in the classrooms and teachers are experts in their craft. Many of the issues are in the unstructured places in the schools.
4. With the State Law having changed on discipline, what are the resources that have been deployed for supports? The staff is looking at creative ways of dealing with behaviors. This includes offering services and having community partners that are a great resource. The law points towards restorative practices and the building are not designed to do this and we need training for our staff.
5. What else can the Board do to support the students and make it so they feel safe in the schools? The schools are really focused on the needs of every student to be able to come to school and feel safe and this boils down to the amount of teachers that they have that have contracted time and their supervisory duties. There has been limited supervisions of students over the last 18 months when they have been home during the pandemic and by having an adult or two in each room is really important to monitor, support and structure the room, whether it is study hall or lunch. Also, more social workers are needed.

6. We need more staff, we don't have enough paras, subs or social workers. They have looked outside of the schools to the community partners and they are really stepping up to help provide the support. The Police Department is helping to give support. The majority of the behaviors are not happening in the classrooms and we need to keep the kids engaged and learning.
7. We have talked about the social emotional learning and MTSS and there are programs that exist. Where are we at in the buildings on having the programs in place, such as Leader In Me and other programs? Mary Steady and Stacy Champey are working to define what our Multi-Tiered Systems of Support will look like. They have existed in the schools but a little less formally and we want to roll it out more formally. Staff is being trained and they are looking at student rollout. They are at tier one. They are trying to create clear, positive expectations for kids with a positive reward system, along with Leader in Me they are directing instruction and services. Tier 2 and 3 would be adding additional services, such as counselors and social workers or using outside agencies for these if needed. Tier 1 includes SEL lessons being integrated within the curriculum.
8. It was stated that the SELs are integrated with the curriculum but they have their own curriculum and are doing a rotation, where one week it is social studies teachers, the next week is science teachers and then the Unified arts (UA) Teachers. The students have exposures to different teachers and all the teachers received their training last year.
9. It was asked how the staff is feeling. It was answered that they are really positive.
10. The two schools present this evening were picked for a particular reason, as they have had some attention due to the challenges of the pandemic and getting the students back into the schools. These schools have taken on the heavy lifting of getting the new conduct law challenges laid out in their schools and getting the message out to everyone.
11. The Committee indicated that they apricate the feedback and the transparency and honesty that the principals are bringing forward. It was encouraged that in the future we have other principals and assistant principals attend the student conduct meeting and that this be a place where an open and honest dialogue can take place.
12. There are misperceptions in many ways and it is important that the Board hears from the principals, teachers and students to see what is going on.

13. The numbers for the new school year are drastically different then previous years and that is because of the new law.

14. There are a number of factors that are in the overall system. These include the new law, but also include the transition to competency based education and are reflective of the attendance policies and how we handle students coming back from the pandemic, as far as tardiness and day to day operations. The system is changing and the process to look at behavior is changing. There have been significant incidents that take a great deal of time to address, and for lack of a better term the smaller stuff is not being dealt with at the moment. We need to focus on learning and address the severe behaviors.
15. Block scheduling is also helping because it is decreasing the amount of time that students are in the unsupervised spaces, and there are less transitions.
16. Students that will be sent to the Committee for suspensions or expulsions will only be for school safety issues. It is hard to compare apples and oranges and with the new law change, that is what is being done.
17. Data for schools is able to be pulled from Aspen.
18. Committee Member Barbee stated that as a student he wanted to offer his perspective regarding the disconnect between the perception of what is happening in the schools and what is actually happing. The issue is that this perception is that bad behavior is being amplified due to the use of phones and social media.
19. It was stated that phones take up a lot of time because you have to track down who has captured these experiences through videos and pictures and make sure that they do not spread. Also, phones and social media are connected to student's safety as far as bullying.
20. Our number one priority needs to be the safety and wellbeing of the students.
21. It was asked if all the schools having two assistant principals is helping. It was answered that one of the Assistant Principals is the health point of contact and that takes up a bit of their time. It was stated having more help, such as a third assistant principal, would help with the caseload. This could be done not just through having an additional assistant principal, but also having more paras, subs, community partners, social workers, SROs and other staff to help with the repercussions from the pandemic.
22. It was asked what can be done in the short term while the system is being overhauled. It was stated that the schools are working on short term fixes and are doing the best that they can with

what they have. The planning that is going on is pretty remarkable. The people in the district are really great and are going above and beyond.

23. The Manchester School District has been hanging on resources wise by their fingernails for a long time. The system is no longer resilient and we need to have the supports. The pandemic has put a strain on everyone and we are providing support for teachers and students in different ways.
24. If there is a fight in a school, several administrators are responding, as well as the SRO, and we are working on the long term systems to be put in place for support. We need to have the mindset that we are redesigning, rebuilding and updating best practices.

9. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) development status update and next steps

Chair Leapley stated background information was put together, with a summary, so that everyone can see where this discussion on SROs has come from. She stated that in March of 2020, it was brought to the attention of the district administration, that while the district has a written agreement with the MPD, a more detailed MOU is not in place. The National Parent Teacher Association, the National Association of School Resource Officers, and the Department of Justice are unanimous in stating that if districts choose to use school resource officers in their schools, an MOU is essential. While the board, district administration and the MPD agree on the importance of this work and have increased communication to work together towards an MOU. This work has not yet resulted in an MOU that meets the national standard. Because this work has been going on for over a year. It's been a year and a half. And this agreement is essential to the work of this committee. We are resurfacing the background information and supporting documents here, so that this committee and the board of school are reminded of this important project and actively work to support its timely and thoughtful execution. So according to the PTA, NASTRO and the Department of Justice, this is a best practice having an MOU in place as a best practice. And I think it's a really good exercise for this committee to engage in, I think it's a great excuse for us to build a relationship, a better relationship with MPD. We need to do a better job sharing data. We need to do a better job of listening to our principals and hearing what's going on in our schools. We can invite our SROs to share what they do and what they see. Two of the things that we need to see in an MOU is a layout of the training that our SROs bring to our schools. That's not included in the agreement we have right now. Another thing that we need to see is

something that Principal St. Onge touched on, which is when there is an incident the SRO comes in to help in school discipline is supposed to be the purview of the administrator. So there has to be teamwork there. The SRO is doing part of the work, the administrators doing part of the work, and the administrators are key. We absolutely need to have enough teaching staff and administrators that we can do that work in the way that we're supposed to. It's not like the SRO can come in and do that work by him or herself. If we can lay this out in an MOU that forces us to talk about what happens, what's happening, how should happen then we can all have that laid out transparently, and that document should be a public document. She wanted to make sure that we had this context. The agreement that we have right now with the police is that we have nine SROs, one at each high school, one at each Middle School, two at Central and in the past, there's been some details added to that. There's been a detail at Memorial, there's been a detail that West, and those have been handled and as was pointed out that's not a long term relationship. We need to get clear on who our SROs are and what they do. We have a new SRO at Central, for example and there has been some turnover in the last few years. As a committee, we need to get better about getting clear on the data we need and building that relationship. So that's part of the work that this committee needs to do. If people didn't understand the context about what is our current agreement with the police department? And how would this change it? Are we talking about adding a permanent SRO to that agreement? What is the best way to move forward? Because we're kind of in this space, where we're between agreements and we're figuring out we're developing that relationship. Do we want to do something until May, which would bring the district to a point where we're having a conversation with the police department, and then we could make a more permanent decision going forward? I just wanted everyone to know where we were before we move on to that conversation.

Dr. Gillis stated we brought this request to increase the SRO compliment at Memorial. It originally came to finance in early November of 2021. The ask at that time was to bring an additional SRO into play over at Memorial. We've talked a lot about the data tonight at this committee. The other piece that she wanted to make sure we have in this discussion is that right now we do have two SROs over at Central, their enrollment sits around 1300. Memorial's enrollment did go up, they are sitting at about 1454. I think the descriptions or the narrative that the principal shared with you today gives you an understanding of the stretch that's in play for all of the administrators at our school at this point. Right now, we do have some details in place; however, the details are not always the same person. We do look to use SRO supports in a very proactive way, not reactive, and having different people at different

days, doesn't let us help build some of those relationships. The ask is to bring in the second SRO to Memorial to finish the balance of the school year knowing that we are continuing the conversation about the MOU, knowing we are engaging in this really deep discussion about student data and what are the resources and supports in play at all of our schools. There's work to be done. We need to figure out a system to keep that school covered and in a space where administration can also focus on educational leadership, as we're trying to move the needle forward, coming out of the pandemic, getting our kids back in school and making sure those schools are in a good space.

Questions and comments included:

1. It was stated that memorial is sizeable and the students and staff need to feel safe, and an additional SRO is an important addition to meeting the district's goal of paramount safety.
2. It is important that SROs build a rapport with students and this cannot be done through the SRO details.
3. Having this information that was provided this evening helps the Board to make a data driven decision.
4. It was stated that the cost of a social worker and an SRO is about the same and it was asked which one was more important. It was stated for safety reasons the SRO is the most important. We need the SRO to not be fluctuating as far as the person so that they can build those relationships with the staff and students. It was also stated how important the social worker would be as well.
5. Again, our schools are understaffed and this is the beginning of the building the framework.
6. Having the SROs come in and share their experiences may be helpful.
7. There are two things in play, the code of conduct states that the administrators are going to respond; however, you also have the safe school zone law and that is when the SROs are involved. When an incident happens, there is interplay between the code of conduct and where the SRO may need to take over depending on safety concerns. With the new law, discipline that is progressive must be in place. Having an SRO that is at the school all the time, will ensure that they are aware of this.
8. SROs in the schools do have offices, so that they are nearby if needed.
9. Committee Member Barbee stated that they have had two SROs at Central for a few years now and they have been able to establish a positive rapport with the students and staff and

community members. He stated it is crucial to have the second SRO now and down the line adding additional support staff, social workers, guidance counselors and other positions, as the schools are understaffed.

10. We need to look at who is in the SRO position? What is their training? What does the training look like over time? We need a clearer look at the SRO positions in the new MOU.

At this time, the motion was made to assign an additional SRO to Memorial through the end of the school year. See below for full motion.

10. Data Report

See above discussion, as the data was given during the discussion.

11. Additional SRO to be placed at Memorial High School Discussion

*On motion of **Committee Member Leapley,** duly seconded by **Committee Member Gonzalez,** it was moved to assign an additional SRO at Memorial High School through the end of this school year, which is the term of the existing contract, and to review the data and reevaluate once the school year has completed and forward this item to the full Board of School Committee for approval. All were in favor and the motion passed.*

It was stated that an amendment to the contract with the MPD will be drafted and reviewed by the PD and brought back to this committee to look at in the future, as we get the answers to the questions and more information and data.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

ADJOURNMENT

12. If there is no further business, a motion is in order to adjourn.

On motion of ***Committee Member Turner,*** *duly seconded by* ***Committee Member Leapley,*** *it was moved to adjourn. All were in favor and the motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.*

A True Record. Attest.

Respectfully Submitted,



Clerk of Committee