Dear Mansfield Board of Education Members,

The Physical Education team at MMS is writing to respectfully express our views on the proposed budget cuts for the 2014-2015 school year. As you can imagine we were very surprised to see a .5 reduction in our teaching staff listed in the budget cuts. We wish that someone would have spoken with us prior to the proposed budget cuts in order to make others aware of the impact on the current program. Our hope is that you will read this letter and take the contents into consideration as you begin to discuss the budget cuts.

As professionals in the Physical Education field we believe that physical activity is paramount to a child's physical, emotional, and cognitive development. We strive every day to provide a quality Physical Education program for every student in Mansfield Middle School. With three full time teachers we have been doing that successfully for years. We provide activity choices in 7th and 8th grade to accommodate all kinds of students. For example, when we are offering a team sport we also offer an individual sport as well as an individual activity class. Last quarter we offered table tennis (individual sport), floor hockey and basketball (team sports), and conditioning (individual activity). In grades 5 and 6 we rotate students through three different activities each quarter, exposing them to all kinds of activities and sports. With a reduction in our staff we will no longer be able to provide such a diverse curriculum to our students.

The reduction of a full time position in Physical Education is being justified based on declining enrollment. In 2004 our school size was approximately 656 students which gave us an average class size of 27 students with 3 full time teachers and a full time instructional assistant. Next year our projected enrollment is 512 students giving is a class size of 25 students with 2.5 teachers. In one scenario proposed by the administration the .5 teacher would be active in the 7th and 8th grade classes giving us an average class size of 23. The two full time teachers would be responsible for the 5th and 6th grade resulting in an average class size of 30 students with no instructional assistant support.

In addition to the increase in class size and the decrease in the number of activities, the reduction of one staff member will have an impact on a daily basis in many ways that are not apparent to others:

1) We will be limited on the amount of one on one instruction time that we will be able to provide students. The emphasis will switch from instruction to crowd control in order to supervise additional students.

2) A teacher needs to be in both locker rooms during changing times. Unstructured areas were an area of safety concern for students based on the school climate survey. As a result if we were to have only 2 teachers on duty (which will be the case 50% of the time) we will have to hold all students in the locker room until everyone is changed. Right now they are able to go into the gym when they are ready and sit with their class. We often allow students to get started while waiting for everyone else as long as we can supervise everyone safely.

3) X-block will have to be either limited by number of students allowed to attend or limited on the days it is offered. Right now PE X-block is offered 4 times per week for every single grade level. We also do not have any limitations on the number of students that can attend. We give out passes in the morning to those who are in homerooms that have reached their maximum number of signups (our current maximum is 3 per homeroom). We may no longer be able to offer passes to students which would decrease the number of students able to have additional activity time.

4) State mandated fitness testing would take us the entire 1st marking period. Students would start school, immediately start training for the test, and be tested. Currently with 3 staff member we can complete fitness testing in 3 weeks. That allows 2 teachers to test while one teacher supervises activities for those students not testing.

5) The adventure program offered during 7 and 8 class time in the spring would have to be eliminated. Other activities that are also questionable with 2 full time teachers are gymnastics, archery, tennis, table tennis, hiking, field hockey, and Lacrosse.

6) Increased class size would reduce individual activity time based on space and numbers. With larger classes more students will have to sit out and wait their turn to participate or it becomes a safety issue. In addition, we may no longer have enough equipment for each student resulting in the sharing of equipment and less active time.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our point of view. We feel we have a quality Physical Education program and we feel these cuts will result in major changes. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further with us please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully,

Brenda Bissell Bissellba@mansfieldct.org

Adam Ramsdell Ramsdellaa@mansfieldct.org

Karen Norton Nortonkh@mansfieldct.org

Mansfield Board of Education Proposed Budget 2014-2015
Questions from Board Members
January 30, 2014

Randy Walikonis

Regarding the proposed budget, I would like to find out the specific consequences of the reduced staffing. Particularly, how the reduction in regular classroom teachers would affect class sizes at Goodwin and MMS Please see below, the effect of a reduction of a .5 FTE on MMS PE (How does this affect student activities) Yet to be fully determined? Do we end up with more kids in a class than we can accommodate with the available equipment? No, equipment adjustments will be made as necessary.

Will it reduce their amount of activity?) No, classes will be held 3 times a week but class size may be affected, and the duties that the LA coordinator currently does that we would have to do without for the year (To what extent can the coordinator's duties be temporarily covered by the LA teachers?). Language Arts Coordinator duties will be covered for one year by the District administrators with the assistance of the Literacy Coaches and, perhaps, the Writing Center teacher at the middle school.

	Goodwin Elementary School		
	1/1/14		**8/1/14 Projected**
Preschool	15, 13		TBD
Kindergarten	17, 17		13, 13
1st grade	14, 14, 14		17, 17
2nd grade	16, 17		21, 21
3rd grade	19, 20		16, 17
4th grade	14, 14		19, 20
Total K-4	**176**		**174**
	Southeast Elementary School		
Preschool	13, 13		TBD
Kindergarten	19, 18		16, 17
1st grade	16, 16, 15		19, 18
2nd grade	18, 17, 18		16, 16, 15
3rd grade	22, 21		18, 17, 18
4th grade	18, 18		22, 21
Total K-4	**216**		**213**
	Vinton Elementary School		
Preschool	17, 17		TBD
Kindergarten	21, 21		13, 13, 14*
1st grade	15, 16, 17		21, 21
2nd grade	15, 15, 14		15, 16, 17
3rd grade	16, 16, 16		15, 15, 14
4th grade	17, 16, 16		16, 16, 16
Total K-4	**231**		**222**
District Total – K-4	**623**		**609**

	Mansfield Middle School	
5th grade	113	18, 19, 19, 19, 19, 19
6th grade	126	21, 21, 21, 21, 21, 21
7th grade	135	22, 22, 22, 23, 23, 23
8th grade	139	19, 20, 20, 20, 20, 20, 20
Total 5-8	**513**	

*Estimate, projected to increase

Class Size Guidelines:

K-3 14-18
4-5 16-20
6-8 21-23

Martha Kelly

1. Could you please clarify the $802,200 medical insurance spending (page 2)?

Last year we spent $454,430 on staff insurance; this year the figure has climbed to $802,200, which includes repaying the town's health fund for last year's "grant" of $245,000 from the medical insurance reserve balance. It has been explained to us that health costs have increased (conversely, one may assume the fund's balance has decreased) because of increased use and shifts from single to family plans, and the Board of Ed now must reimburse the town fund for last year's $245,000 reduction in our health insurance contribution. Please see page 93 of the budget book. The numbers you are presenting are not accurate. Here is the breakdown of the Board's medical insurance payments:

FY 12/13	$2,028,250
FY 13/14	$1,910,670
FY 14/15	$2,649,000

Please note – there was no "grant" of $245,000 from the medical insurance reserve balance, nor is the Board reimbursing the town fund for last year's $245,000 reduction in Board's health insurance contribution. Let me start with an explanation of the FY 13/14 budget again and maybe my explanation from last Thursday will be clearer.

The calculated premium for FY 13/14 was $2,355,670:

1. The Board covered the cost of this premium by using $245,000 of its share of the fund balance in the Health Insurance Fund. These funds came from an accumulation of Board overpayments over a number of years. This happens because when the budget is prepared, we need to estimate employee coverage for the following year. This is the amount each entity contributes to the fund for that year. We later calculate the actual premium based on current employees' coverage choices. This may be more or less than the Board's/entity payment into the fund. The employee share is not over or under paid because their payment is based on the premium for the coverage and plan they chose. The Board funds were carried forward for a number of years within the health insurance fund balance and were therefore available for the Board to use.

2. The Board also covered $200,000 of the FY 13/14 premium with savings from the FY 12/13 budget. In other words, they paid $200,000 of their 13/14 premiums with the FY 12/13 budget. This $200,000 and the $245,000 from bullet #1 are detailed in the Overview of the FY 13/14 Budget as presented by the Superintendent.

3. Lastly, the Board included and will pay in their FY 13/14 budget $1,910,670 for a total of $2,355,670

The calculated premium for FY 14/15 is $2,649,000:

1. This is based on current employees' plan and coverage choices, less adjustments for reductions in staffing. This is a significant increase over FY 13/14 not because we are paying back the fund, but because we now need to pay in the calculated amount of the premium. There are no other sources of funding to make use of.

2. So, you are actually looking at an increase from $2,355,670 to $2,649,000 or $293,330, 12.5% in actual premiums. This reflects an average 8-10% rate increases plus coverage changes. This compares favorably to the medical inflation rate which is roughly 9-10% for this year. In past years, when we have had no increase in our rates, the medical inflation rate was between 10-12%.

3. In the budget it does appear to be an increase from $1,910,670 to $2,649,000, but again that is because FY13/14 reflects payments made from other sources for the insurance (as discussed in the FY 13/14 Overview).

Last year, our medical insurance cost was $454,430, offset by a one-time use of a revenue source of $245,000 of insurance reserves. This is incorrect. Please see the explanation above. I understand that the Board of Education "is a part 'owner' in the Health insurance fund and is only using excess balances that it has paid from its operating budget into the fund for the health insurance of its employees" (April 10, 2013, memo from Cherie Trahan to Matt Hart, "Clarification of Various Budget Items"). I hope we have not reached a point where the reserve balance in the health insurance fund is in a precarious situation. Not at all, the fund is still more than fully funded and we are budgeting for it to remain that way at the end of FY 14/15. You may also refer to the Town Quarterly Financial Report dated September 30, 2013 which reflects a Health Insurance fund balance of $3,351,652. Reasoning was that "using these funds in a fiscal year that reflects a substantial increase in Mansfield's share of Regional School District #19 will ease the burden on our taxpayers." But it was also hoped "we may also have a lower increase in Region 19 in the following year" (February 18, 2013, memo from Cherie Trahan to Fred Baruzzi). Is it predicted that Region 19 will submit a lower budget to Mansfield this forthcoming budget year? Yes, as presented and discussed at the Town Council Special meeting on 1/25/14, it is anticipated that the Town's share of Region 19 will be approximately $50,000 more than the current year. Mansfield's

increase for FY13/14 was $501,964 over the prior year. So, yes it will be significantly less than last year.

However, this year, with fewer preK-8 staff, our medical insurance has climbed to $557,200 ($802,200 minus $245,000 to be repaid to the town's insurance fund), an increase from 2013-2014 of $102,770 ($557,200 minus $454,430) -- a 22.615% increase. This is inaccurate, please see the above.

Reviewing the town's Health Insurance Fund Estimated Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance ending in Fiscal Year 2013/2014, a nearly $3.8 million fund balance was projected for 2013/2014 (undated chart distributed last budget year). As I recall, to be funded fully, the reserve needs to be just under or around $2 million. Is the town's reserve compromised? Not at all, also please see the above.

Did we have no idea that such increases in medical insurance costs were forthcoming? A line item in last year's fund chart lists several thousands of dollars paid to "consultants." No warning from the consultants? Perhaps contracts might have been negotiated differently if we were aware of this situation. Was it planned last year when the Medical Insurance Reserve Balance was used to fund the budget that it would have to be repaid? Needless to say, this situation is quite confusing. ? As discussed at many of last year's budget meetings, we monitor this activity very carefully and were fully aware that sooner or later, medical inflation would indeed have an impact on our cost of claims. Medical inflation is the increase in the cost for the same service from one year to the next. The contract negotiations that are referred to are between our Anthem and the service providers, ie hospitals, doctors, etc.

2. Page 25 Questions

a. Several line items are dedicated to "substitutes," (51105, 51109, 51113, 51114). The actual amount spent in 2013-2013 approached $326,000. Is there any way we can review some of the uses of substitutes and trim this figure? While no one denies an employee time off when needed, we might be able to be more judicious. The substitute account is difficult to predict given the variety of issues and/or initiatives that occur in a particular school year. Please see below.

2012-2013	Certified- "Sub needed" (in days)	Non-Certified- "Sub needed" (in days)
Bereavement	41.3	22.71
Jury Duty	3	3
Personal Time	203.7	107.39
Professional Days	639.14	22.65
Sick	722.9	631.18
Without Pay (cert=maternity)	343.45	32.82
Workers Comp	7	0
Teacher Sub (IA's covering for teacher)	NA	196.93
TOTALS	**1960.49**	**1016.68**

b. Line 52005, Unemployment Compensation: the expense triples but by the end of the year, it is estimated to just double. We budget FY 13/14 for the maximum we expected we may have to pay out. Fortunately, our unemployment claims have been less than anticipated. Which is good not only for us, but that also means that some displaced workers may have found other employment.

c. Line 52203, Membership Fees/Professional Dues: the adopted/adjusted for 2013/2014 is about 75% higher. In 2011-2012, we used year end money to prepay several 2012-2013 membership fees thereby reducing the 2012-2013 actual expenditures.

3. Page 26 Questions

a. Line 53119, LAN/WAN Expenditures: Is part of the $112,720 covered by state reimbursement or other grants? No, see page 3, $53,280 will be paid for from the current fiscal year budget (FY 13/14)

b. Line 53304, Equipment Maintenance Contracts: The figure nearly triples this year. Is this for the new boilers or new technology equipment? This is only a very slight increase over the current year budget. FY 2012/13 actual was lower than budget in the Computer Education because the IT department has been pushing hard to avoid spending this money by getting very good at doing technology equipment repairs in-house and being adept at how far they can push out maintenance beyond the recommended cycle. But they recommend budgeting at this level in case eventually this strategy runs into trouble and we need the funding for repairs.

c. Line 53501, Tuition, Public Schools in CT: A lot of variance among actual, adopted/adjusted and estimated; reason? The two primary reasons for the fluctuations in these accounts is: 1) actual expenditures depend on where our students are outplaced (public facility or private) and whether they are district-placed or State placed and 2) the application of Special Education reserve fund varies from year to year and depends on total actual placement costs for the year.

4. Page 27 Questions

a. Line 53980, Security: Was the actual 2013-14 amount of $9450 reimbursed by a state grant? No, there have been no reimbursements from the State security grant yet.

5. Page 29 Questions

a. Line 61400, Summer School: What is the 40% increase between 2012-2013 actual and future budget? In the current budget, funds were added for physical and occupational therapy summer services, as well as a need for additional instructional assistants due to student needs.

6. Page 31

a. Line 56310, Field Trips: I note a 50% drop between 2013/14 and 2014/15. Why? This line was cut to reduce the budget. Please see Overview on page 3.

7. Page 43

In the description of the program (I realize this is not actually part of the budget): Various aspects of the language arts, writing center and reading programs are noted, but I do not read that parts of speech are taught. I assume that identifying parts of speech and correct punctuation use are part of our core instruction. Yes, they are.

8. Page 44

In the account and description section, I do not see a line for mileage reimbursement. Do we reimburse our staff who must travel among schools to perform their jobs? Yes

9. Page 47

In the description of the program (again, not actually part of the budget): How are families involved in the instruction of AIDS prevention and human development programs at MMS? Parents sign AIDS/HIV Prevention Education Permission Form at the beginning of each school year. Form is a required form for submission and is in the Parent Handbook. Parents are invited to preview the materials and/or curriculum objectives related to this topic and contact their school with any questions or concerns. Do we approach addictive drug-use, smoking and alcohol-use prevention? Yes

10. Page 55

In the description of the program, "next year...the program will purchase a new bass drum;" where is this reflected in the 2013-2014 figures? 61109-54706 Non Capitalized Equipment

Jay Rueckl

1. Is the professional development budget adequate given that we are not done with the implementation of the Common Core? Yes, at this time, we feel it is adequate to support staff development.

2. I'd guess that we've been on a slow replacement schedule for books, equipment, and supplies for quite a few years. Are we OK there? Yes

3. Does the proposed budget reflect the IT grant we discussed at last week's meeting? This budget takes into account the grant we received, as well as a reliance on the Capital Budget of $100,000 for the replacement of computer equipment.

4. Will our budget be affected by the Governor's announcement that he plans to slow down implementation of changes to teacher evaluation and other initiatives? (I'm primarily thinking about expected expenditures--it isn't obvious that there would be an impact on revenues, although I don't know enough to rule that out either.) This is hard to predict at this time, but I don't anticipate any large new expenditure.

For Information Only

Celeste N. Griffin

From: Blanshard, Bailey <bblanshard@durhamschoolservices.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 30, 2014 12:41 PM
To: Fred A. Baruzzi
Cc: Stewart, Randy

1-30-14

Fred,

As a follow up to our phone conversation, as of January 2, 2014 we have had two, three and sometimes four drivers out almost daily with the stomach bug, there have been several different versions of this flu going around and in a number of cases, drivers and staff have been ill for as long as three to four weeks before they actually start to feel 100%. This flu has been impacting a number of the other Durham yards. The -0 cold temperatures have also been a challenge which impacted us this past Monday morning (1-27-14)

Thanks

Bailey Blanshard
Site Supervisor
Durham School Services
CSC 4023 Mansfield,CT
1725 Stafford Road
Storrs, CT 06268
Office 860-429-1225
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STATE OF CONNECTICUT

GOVERNOR DANNEL P. MALLOY

January 28, 2014

Dear Members of the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council:

In light of your meeting tomorrow, we write to you today to urge you to amend the Connecticut Guidelines for Educator Evaluation to provide our educators greater flexibility in the implementation of the new evaluation and support system, and to relieve the significant demands and pressures on teachers and administrators who simultaneously must also implement the Common Core State Standards.

Since the beginning of the school year, we have heard from teachers and administrators voicing their concerns that too much change is hitting their classrooms at once. This confluence of changes jeopardizes the success of our teachers, and thus our students. We've heard their concerns loud and clear, and understand. Too much change all at once impedes teachers' ability to be effective in their classrooms. Teachers and administrators understandably are feeling burdened and together we must take action to relieve this pressure.

Just as the evaluation and support system is about improvement and professional growth, so must we adapt and improve the system to make it more usable and helpful to teachers and administrators. It is more important that we get it right than to do it fast and all at once.

Today, we ask you to make the following changes to the PEAC guidelines:

1. Enable the exclusion of state standardized test indicators (CMT, CAPT, or SBAC) in next school year's evaluation (pending federal approval). Last summer, PEAC waived the state standardized test indicators for the current school year.

2. Enable school districts to have flexibility in the implementation of evaluation in the current school year and future school years – and alleviate unnecessary burdens on educators– by providing districts with the option of reducing the number of time-consuming formal observations and by clarifying that the minimum number of goals/objectives required for each educator can be 1.

3. Streamline the data management requirements at the classroom level while ensuring the protection of data from unauthorized users and access to technical assistance to all school districts.

It is imperative that we smooth the process of evaluation implementation, and not get bogged down in rigid compliance and time-consuming paperwork. By easing the rules around evaluation our hardworking educators can focus on and put more energy toward implementing the Common Core with fidelity. We all want our students to be successful, but they won't succeed unless teachers have the support to succeed.

In addition, we ask PEAC to convene an ongoing subcommittee of classroom teachers and administrators to share obstacles faced in the implementation of evaluation and make recommendations to improve the evaluation system in future school years. We ask that the subcommittee make its recommendations not only to PEAC, but also to the four of us, the General Assembly, and the State Board of Education by January 1, 2015. We must have a continuous dialogue on improving our evaluation and support system with the teachers and administrators doing this work if we are to make it effective.

Furthermore, we encourage PEAC to meet as a full body over the coming year so that additional clarifications and revisions can be made to make the evaluation and support system more effective and usable.

We know this work is difficult, particularly adapting to the Common Core State Standards. It is a very heavy lift to implement the Common Core and we have the greatest respect for the hard work our teachers are doing to prepare our youngsters to be college and career ready. We hear these concerns and share the desire to get Common Core implementation right.

To that end, we believe we must engage in a more robust dialogue to improve the implementation of Common Core and address gaps in Common Core preparation. In the next two weeks, I will establish a Common Core State Standards working group that will include teachers and other educators from across the state to make recommendations on Common Core implementation. We need to hear about the gaps and needs in the classrooms of our state if we are to implement the Common Core well and enable our teachers to prepare students and enhance their learning experience. It is important that we listen to educators' concerns and get this right.

Thank you, in advance, for taking action tomorrow to make improvements during this school year; we look forward to continuing this dialogue.

Sincerely,

Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

Nancy Wyman
Lieutenant Governor

Donald E. Williams Jr.
Senate President Pro Tempore

J. Brendan Sharkey
Speaker of the House

Delivered electronically

courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-common-core-push-back-0128-20140128,0,4058443.story

Courant.com

Malloy Calls For Slowdown Of Teacher Evaluation Program

By KATHLEEN MEGAN, kmegan@courant.com

The Hartford Courant

11:57 AM EST, January 29, 2014

HARTFORD — Faced with growing criticism of the roll-out of new academic standards and other school reforms this year, Gov. Dannel P. Malloy Tuesday called for a significant slowdown of a new teacher evaluation program, a major component of his education strategy.

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"Since the beginning of the school year, we have heard from teachers and administrators voicing their concerns that too much change is hitting their classrooms at once," Malloy and Democratic leaders wrote in a letter to an advisory council of educators. "This confluence of changes jeopardizes the success of our teachers, and thus our students."

"We've heard their concerns loud and clear, and understand," Malloy wrote in the letter to the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council. "Too much change all at once impedes teachers' ability to be effective in their classrooms."

Malloy, in a letter signed by Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman, House Speaker Brendan Sharkey and Senate President Donald E. Williams, called for more flexibility and the delay of an important component of the new evaluation system: linking a teacher's performance rating with students' standardized test scores. Malloy also said he would create a working group to make changes in the implementation of the new Common Core State Standards. The administration will also scrap a $1 million marketing campaign for the Common Core.

The council, which includes teachers' union leaders, administrators and state officials, is the organization that created the new teacher evaluation system. Malloy asked the council to make these changes in the teacher evaluation guidelines at its meeting Wednesday morning. Once the council makes a decision on whether to revise the guidelines, it will go the State Board of Education for final approval.

Malloy's letter came on the eve of a news conference planned for Wednesday by Republican legislators who are expected to raise concerns about the Common Core and call for a public hearing on the new standards and their roll-out.

A Republican spokesman reacted to Malloy's letter.

Pat O'Neil, spokesman for the Republican caucus said: "Clearly the governor was responding to steps that we were proposing to take. They apparently got wind of what we were proposing and which way

the wind was blowing … We are going to be heard on these issues. We'll have more to say [Wednesday]."

This school year, educators faced changes that included the new Common Core standards, the new teacher evaluation system and the field test of a new computerized testing system.

The changes in the teacher evaluation system recommended by Malloy include reducing the number of times administrators observe classroom teachers in action and streamlining data management for teachers and administrators.

In addition, Malloy suggests that the council agree to allow districts to exclude the use of state standardized test scores in teacher evaluations next year. The council already took that step for the current school year because of concerns in the transition to the new computerized standardized test known as the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

Education Commissioner Stefan Pryor said that Malloy's recommendations are derived from feedback received from educators. "These are among the issues that teachers and administrators most frequently cited as being the sources of concern and anxiety," Pryor said.

House Republican leader Larry Cafero and other Republicans said they would like to see a slowdown on the implementation of the new standards and the Smarter Balanced Assessment test. "We've got to take a pause," Cafero said.

"We need to hear from people on the ground level ... how this is going," Cafero said. "I've been hearing from parents, a lot of parents, that their children have been cruising along in school getting excellent reviews, report cards, tests ... All of a sudden, teachers are administering tests [based on] the Common Core. Parents are calling in: Johnny is not doing as well on these tests … It's causing panic throughout the state."

Sheila Cohen, president of the Connecticut Education Association, the state's largest union, said that among hundreds of teachers attending meetings with legislators, "the overwhelming feeling is that the implementation [of the Common Core State Standards] is just not going well at all."

She said educators are concerned that the Common Core State Standards may not be "developmentally appropriate" for each grade and that students may not have been adequately prepared for the Smarter Balanced Assessment test that will be administered in most schools in the spring. For such students, she said, taking the test could prove "traumatic."

She said there has been "an outpouring of anger, angst, frustration and fear" from teachers of all levels of experience. "Kids are getting stressed out, it's taking so much time from teaching. It's sucking the joy out of the profession and it's turning the kids off to education."

Informed about Republicans' support for possibly slowing down the roll-out of the new academic standards and the Smarter Balanced Assessment test, State Board of Education Chairman Allan Taylor said he feels "very strongly about the value of the Common Core standards ... It would be a tragedy for the state if we backed off."

In an effort to raise student achievement, the State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010. Forty-four other states have also adopted the standards.

Several Republicans raised questions about whether the legislature should have been involved in that process, but Taylor said that for decades the State Board of Education has adopted academic standards without the involvement of the legislature. He said there is a lot misinformation and "mythology" connected to the Common Core and he would be glad to discuss the standards with legislators.

"Somehow the Common Core has become the whipping boy for everything that people are unhappy with in education," Taylor said.

Rep. Andy Fleischmann, D-West Hartford and co-chairman of the education committee, said the "overwhelming evidence shows that it makes sense to bring this additional rigor" of the Common Core to the state educational system.

"I can understand that there would be anxiety ..." Fleischmann said. There is "no doubt that we need to adopt the Common Core, that the approach taken for the last few decades has been leading to the decline of how our children stack up against other children in other parts of the world."

Although the new standards have been supported widely by teachers' unions and others, many questions have been raised lately by educators and legislators about the quality of the standards, the rush to implement them and the computerized test based on the standards.

That new test — the Smarter Balanced Assessment — will be tested this spring in most Connecticut schools as a replacement to the Connecticut Mastery Test. Next year, the test is slated to completely replace the mastery test.

Part of the impetus for the Republican action has been meetings the Connecticut Education Association has been holding between teachers and legislators across the state.

Rep. Gail Lavielle R-Wilton, a member of the education committee, said she attended a meeting in Trumbull this week that was attended by close to 500 teachers.

"What you hear is that there is growing concern about the Common Core among both some parents and a large body of teachers," Lavielle said. "On the standards themselves, the opinion is mixed. There are many who think they are just fine and some who don't. The biggest issue you heard ... was how they are being rolled out."

Democrats and Republicans have raised concerns that students might be asked to take the Smarter Balanced test without having covered all of the material in class because the Common Core-based curriculum is still in development in many districts.

Williams said he thinks the principles behind the Common Core are sound.

"I don't think anyone questions the idea of having a basic benchmark for education and learning," Williams said. "What I've heard from some is that it's important to make sure that any testing to gauge the effectiveness of the Common Core be aligned to the roll-out of that curriculum … So we're not testing prior to the effective date of the" new curriculum.

Any legislation to undo the Common Core, Williams said, would be "over-broad and unwise."

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Celeste N. Griffin

From: mmsoffice@mansfieldct.org
Sent: Wednesday, January 29, 2014 11:39 AM
To: Fred A. Baruzzi
Subject: MMS December 2013 Concerts To Be Broadcast on Channel 17

Channel 17 will broadcast the December 2013 MMS winter concerts on the following schedule. (If you get cable, you may wish to view and/or record them.)

All three performances will run Wednesday to Wednesday every night during the week at 8:00 pm. The schedule will be as follows:

- 1/29 - 2/4 - winter band concert at 8pm
- 2/5 - 2/11 - choral winter concert at 8pm
- 2/12 - 2/18 - orchestral winter concert at 8pm

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