January 31, 2016

Members of the Board:

Because I have spoken with some of you who haven’t quite understood what I presented on the twenty fifth and because the newspaper coverage of the “zero” issue contains statements misrepresenting the history of the situation, I offer what I hope is a very simple and clear set of facts.

On November 12, 2015, the Board of School Committee convened a special meeting to receive the district’s Smarter Balanced Assessment results. Those results are accessible in the icon below. In case it doesn’t work, they’ve been attached with the email transmitting this letter.



Because of the question about whether or not zeros for students who did not take the SBA due to parental refusals were included in the district’s scores, the following motion, found on page 36 of the November 12th minutes, was made:

**Mayor Gatsas** stated so the motion would be that we cleanse these results and bring them back to the board at the next meeting.

***Mayor Gatsas*** *moved to cleanse the Smarter Balanced Assessment results. The motion was duly seconded by* ***Committee******Member Beaudry****.*

Presumably, the presentation given to the board and the press release distributed to the media was to show that the removal of zeros caused the district’s scores to climb. Here are the documents:



Again, they’ve been attached in the event they do not open.

Clearly, the administration made the case that removing zeros for non-SBA takers caused the district’s scores to rise.

However, if you compare the November 12 scores as presented to the January 11 scores “W/O zeros,” it is clear to see their statements are not factual. In fact, the Nov. 12 scores and the January 11 “W/O zeros” are identical.

As you’ve all seen the emails I received from Heather Gage and Scott Mantie of the state Department of Education, you all know, without a doubt, that the state never included zeros for students who did not take the SBA.

So, where did the January 11 scores “W/zeros” come from?

The district.

Something admitted by district personnel to me in a meeting on Monday, January 25th and at the board’s meeting that night.

Why?

Assistant Superintendent David Ryan said it was because the board wanted to see a side by side comparison of the scores. What’s clear is that the board wanted that information IF the state had actually included zeros for non-SBA takers in the scores. But the state didn’t, so there was no comparison that could have been done.

Why didn’t the administration simply tell the board that the scores released in November we, in fact, “without zeros” and, therefore, accurate and correct?

Why did the administration choose to create an otherwise nonexistent set of scores, lead the board and the public to believe they were the scores reported by the state, and then claim that when adjusted “per the board’s direction,” the district’s scores improved?

That are the questions what we are tasked with determining.

One more thing, it is also not true that the Smarter Balanced Assessments are going away, unless the administration knows something neither we nor the state seems to know. While the statewide assessment for 11th grade is being switched to the SAT, it remains for grades 3 through 8.

This is a distressing and troubling situation to be sure. While I sincerely wish it did not exist, it does and requires our attention and remedy if we are to trust the administration and the public is to trust us as the fundamental credibility of both the administration and the board are in question.

With regret that this issue has surfaced, I remain

Very truly yours,

Richard H. Girard