

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES **January 11, 2017**

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Susan Butler, Chair
Mayanne Briggs, Vice-Chair
Steve Bilafer
Kevin Coughlin
Lisa Laprade
Tom Ryan
Tracey White

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ABSENT:

None

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Michael Welch, Superintendent
Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent
Samuel Rippin, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance
Elizabeth O'Connell, Director of Special Education

Meeting Location: Dedham Middle School

Meeting commenced at 6:37 p.m.

Ms. Butler made an opening statement, recognizing the elected officials in attendance and rereading the School Committee goals for the 2016-2017 school year. The goals are posted on the DPS website.

State of the Schools Address

“State of the Schools Address” delivered by Superintendent Michael J. Welch

The full presentation of the State of the Schools address will be available on the DPS website.

Main topics of the presentation included:

- District Strategic Improvement Plan- including the District's 20/20 vision and the 5-year strategic improvement plan
- Update on early childhood education initiatives-investments Dedham is making in early childhood education including a new ECEC, free full-day kindergarten, partnership with Lectio (early literacy specialists).

- Restructuring of the educational model for the 2017-2018 school year
 - Reviewed findings from recent District audits- Special Education Audit 2013 and Teachers21 ELA Audit 2016
 - Outlined District restructuring goals
 - Discussed curricular foundation
 - Reviewed the proposed organizational chart for the Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, and Office of Pupil Services
 - Explained the conversion of resources- budget neutral and head count neutral
 - Reviewed timeline of events from June 2016 through June 2018
 - Reviewed comprehensive search committee timelines
- Presented timeline for past 10 years for special education students placed out of district
- Explained the aggressive investment in teacher and student technology use, training and infrastructure
- Athletics & Fine Arts update
- Reviewed additional actions that are aligning the schools with the strategic improvement plan
- Future ideas being explored

Discussion - Questions and Answers from the Committee followed

Mr. Ryan inquired about the instructional core. He wanted to understand more clearly what it meant and how it relates to the reorganization. Dr. Kelly answered that the instructional core was the interaction of teachers, students, and the curriculum. It is the way students become engaged. The instructional core is constantly evolving and it is important for the district to provide a strong curriculum and people to help support the teachers in delivering this curriculum. This support would be provided by the new curriculum positions and instructional coaches.

Mr. Coughlin inquired about the 18 positions that are being eliminated and what the district was offering those teachers for employment? Supt. Welch explained that all staff can apply to be a coach, curriculum coordinator or any classroom teacher position that may become available. Teachers have the right to "bump" non-professional staff. Supt. Welch is hoping there will not be a need for bumping, but it is a possibility.

Ms. White inquired if our teachers can handle this change and whether the District could support them through a change of this magnitude? Dr. Kelly stated that the staff can absolutely handle the change with the proper support and that support starts by getting a proper curriculum in place.

Ms. Laprade inquired about Special Education programs and the impact the restructure would have on IEPs, 504 plans and RTIs. Ms. Liza O'Connell, Director of Special Education, stated that all Special Education services will continue and nothing would be taken away. The restructure will allow for a better integration between regular education and special education teachers. There will also be more support so principals will not have to chair Special Education meetings. Dr. Kelly added that RTI (Response to Intervention) students will be supported by the new structure with the intent of preventing intervention. The new phonics program and consistent curriculum will help to improve services and outcomes.

Public Comment

Sue Carney, 47 Greenlodge Street, inquired on how many of the reconfigured positions included tenured employees. Supt. Welch answered eleven. Ms. Carney also inquired on the development of a full-day

curriculum for Kindergarten. Mr. Welch stated that curriculum development is in the works and that Lectio is being contracted to help with that process.

Rachel Petto, 57 Maynard Road, inquired on the difference between a reading teacher, a literacy specialist and a coach. Supt. Welch explained that reading teachers work with small groups of children who are pulled out of the classroom. The coaches will work with teachers and students inside the classroom. Ms. Petto also asked if there were data to support using coaches. Supt. Welch answered in the affirmative and said the key is for the coaches to be well trained in order to support the needs of the teachers.

Liz Straghalis, 15 Dominic Court, asked for an explanation of the word “rigor” that was used in the presentation. Supt. Welch provided some examples such as the number of quality pieces of work a student completes, peer input and ownership of material.

Chris Chalifaux, 50 Sanderson Ave, asked what drove the decision to restructure and what the process was. Supt. Welch explained the decision was derived from meetings with people throughout the district; reviewing documentation, analyzing data, and reviewing audits. All teachers were provided with a copy of the Teachers21 ELA audit and a day of professional development was focused on reviewing it. Teachers21 spent a great deal of time in the classrooms as well as interviewing teachers. Mr. Chalifaux also inquired on differentiated teaching and training. Supt. Welch explained that coaches will be in the classrooms working daily with the teachers on their individual needs. The coaches will undergo an intensive training and will continue their training throughout the year.

Melissa Pearrow, 76 Dartmouth Ave, stated she appreciated the transparency of the restructuring. She inquired on how the curriculum will align with the state standards and what will be the metrics of success. Dr. Kelly answered that the state standards are being used to build the curriculum and are being used to make sure the frameworks are aligned across all grade levels across the district. A universal screening is needed to measure progress and success as well as identify students with needs. This will be developed along with the curriculum work.

Stephanie Matern, 153 Thompson Street, inquired on what is being used as a starting block and what is being done to help students catch up. Supt. Welch explained that we are building on current practices. Dr. Kelly elaborated that we could copy another district’s curriculum, but that we want to rely upon the expertise in our district. He also feels the starting point to helping kids “catch up” requires an assessment to find out where students currently stand.

April Wilmar, 18 Stephen Lane, felt it was unclear how we are going to achieve this goal and who will be given special instruction. Supt. Welch explained that 80% of classroom students meet the standards, there will be no change to Special Education services, and Tier 2 students will receive classroom instruction from Title 1 teachers and instructional coaches. There will still be some cases where students will need to be 'pulled out' for services.

Monica Linari, 72 Paul Street, has been a teacher for twenty years and has recently become an Academic Coach. She explained what she does on a daily basis and believes coaches are critical to teachers. She applauds Dedham for moving in this direction. She also stated she would be happy to speak to anyone who would like to know about instructional coaching.

Julie Kilgoar, Shiretown Road, is a teacher at Greenlodge. She made a statement recognizing that students are the most important thing to teachers. She felt the presentation indicated teachers just pass off students to specialists. She explained that the reading specialists and math coaches are experts in their field and are relied upon to help with struggling students. She doesn’t want to see Dedham lose these experts.

Carol ElKurdi, 34 Top Hill Avenue, inquired on how the teachers were going to find the time to learn a new model. Supt. Welch answered that there is an additional day of professional development in the schedule as well as 5 half professional days and 20 one hour afterschool meetings. The focus will be on providing coaches where they are most needed.

Dalia Walsh, 82 Lower East Street, expressed concern about the children who benefit from a challenge and how this restructure is going to help them. Supt. Welch responded that coaches will provide differentiated instruction for all levels. They will be available to provide resources for students who need to be challenged.

Jen Shuley, 60 Leonard Street, asked if tracking was going to be eliminated in the Middle School. Supt. Welch stated that issue still needed to be discussed.

Kara Tierney, 14 Spruce Street, asked Dr. Kelly to describe Title 1 funding. Dr. Kelly explained Title I funding is federal support for students who are economically disadvantage. Currently our Title 1 teachers are deployed at Avery. Dr. Kelly has been working with the state to determine the parameters on how other funds and resources may be dispersed around the district. Ms. Tierney also inquired on the monetary impact of having a cohesive district-wide plan and if money were no option would we still be restructuring. Supt. Welch noted that the goal is to focus on the District as a whole and not individual schools. The current plan is to re-deploy all staff with professional status. The goal is to move to a different philosophical model.

Mr. Bilafer commented that he wanted people to understand that the Committee is willing to take tough steps for improvement.

Ms. Butler made a closing statement summarizing the evening and announced a five minute break.

Old/New Business

None

Executive Session

None

Mr. Bilafer motioned to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Coughlin second; Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 9:01 p.m.