

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES **March 1, 2017**

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

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

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

Meeting Location: Avery Elementary School

Meeting commenced at 7:03 p.m.

Student Update

Evan Landry updated the School Committee on happenings throughout the Dedham Public Schools. Events included Spirit Weeks, Read Across America and Dr. Suess' Birthday activities, the Mobile STEAM Museum sponsored by the DEF, DMS trip to Peru, and the Dedham Police annual ski trip.

Superintendent's Update

Superintendent Michael J. Welch

The four finalists for the permanent Principal position at Dedham Middle School have been announced. The notice is posted on the DPS District Website.

Supt. Welch reported on the progress of the clearing of the Dexter School site, where the new ECEC will be constructed.

Assistant Superintendent Sam Rippin and Supt. Welch will present the FY18 Operating Budget to the Finance Committee on March 7.

On February 27, the Administration completed the second “impact bargaining” negotiations with the DEA at Dedham Middle School. The next impact bargaining session is scheduled for March 13.

On March 6, DHS will host a Culture Night sponsored by the Global Citizenship Club and the Student Council at DHS

On February 28, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released its latest figure for 4-year graduation and dropout rates. DHS dropout rate is down to .4%, its lowest rate.

Then Dedham Education Foundation will sponsor its annual Spelling Bee at Dedham Middle School on March 10.

The DESE announced that Massachusetts is the top state in the nation in terms of the percentage of the class of 2016 that scored a 3 or higher on an Advanced Placement exam. In addition, Massachusetts had the highest five- and ten year growth in the percentage of graduates who scored a 3 or higher. Last year, DPS had 191 different students take a total of 349 AP exams.

Dedham High School is still looking for host families for a one-week experience with international students from China.

Dedham High School will be hosting an exclusive showing of the movie SCREENAGERS on April 11 in the auditorium.

Reports

Curriculum Update - Dr. Ian Kelly

Dr. Kelly and Kristine Holloran, Math Department Head and Chair of the Assessment Committee, presented the Curriculum update. The presentation will be available on the DPS district website. Ms. Holloran discussed the selection of the assessment tool, Tenmarks. Tenmarks is an instructional program that provides online math curriculum resources aligned with Common Core and state standards. The system allows for automatic feedback to teachers.

Dr. Kelly reviewed the structure of the data teams from grade level all the way up the chain to the District Leadership Team. He noted the connection and importance of data to curriculum development. Dr. Kelly also discussed the social emotional needs of data derived from the MetroWest Health Survey and Panorama.

Supt. Welch asked Ms. Holloran to elaborate on Tenmarks. She explained how Tenmarks is a web based program available to all students in school and at home. She also described how the Chromebooks have become an intricate part to the access of Tenmarks.

Mr. Rippin stated that Chromebooks had been purchased for the fourth grade in anticipation of the next generation MCAS testing. The Chromebooks will be ready for this year’s MCAS testing.

Questions and comments from the Committee followed.

Mr. Coughlin was interested to know about teacher feedback on the Tenmarks system. Ms. Holloran stated that it was overwhelmingly supported by teachers who piloted the program. Mr. Coughlin asked if it helped struggling students. Ms. Holloran explained how the system is used for differentiated instruction.

Mr. Bilafer inquired into which assessments we are using now, the new ones or the old ones. Dr. Kelly explained that we are using both. An inventory is currently being explored to see which assessments are useful and which need to be revised.

Ms. Briggs inquired into how we are supporting teachers and giving them time to review the assessments. Dr. Kelly said they are working on providing teachers with the time they need. He wants to continue with the use of substitutes to allow teachers the time to collaborate. Supt. Welch noted that more time is needed for collaboration and it was something that needs to be negotiated.

Ms. Laprade inquired if Tenmarks is beneficial for students who are doing well. Ms. Holloran explained that students can be assigned challenging work.

Ms. Briggs asked if we are over- or under assessing. Dr. Kelly stated he felt some skills are being over assessed and there needs to be a balance between instructional time and assessments. He is looking at assessments now to determine what data is most useful.

Ms. Butler asked about the benefit of the data team to the students. Dr. Kelly explained how the closer we look at grade level data, the better we can help teachers and best support the students. It allows us to monitor what skills students are struggling with. Supt. Welch noted he would like get the students to understand their own data to better comprehend where they are succeeding and where they are struggling.

Ms. Laprade inquired about the use of Chromebooks over the summer. Supt. Welch explained that last year there was a signout program for Chromebooks. He would like to see students assigned a Chromebook for four years at a time. He does not want to see students lose out on summer progress.

Old/New Business

Continued Discussion and Vote on DHS Parent Health Survey

Nurse Leader Gail Kelley was unable to attend the meeting. Supt. Welch provided a copy of the parent survey to the Committee. He described how other districts are using this survey. There were no additional questions or comments from the Committee.

Ms Briggs motioned to allow distribution of the Dedham Coalition for Drug Alcohol Awareness Parent/Guardian Survey, Mr. Coughlin second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

Discussion on Dedham Middle School Revised Schedule

Dr. Margo Fraczek, Principal of the Middle School, gave a presentation on the revised schedule for Dedham Middle School. The presentation will be available on the DPS district website. She reviewed the issues with the current schedule, the development process of the new schedule as well as the proposed new schedule. Changes and additions to the schedule include three

trimesters, rotating classes, allowing for passing time, student choice subjects, band classes, chorus classes, health classes and technology electives.

Comments and questions from the Committee followed.

Mr. Ryan inquired about the move to trimesters and expressed concern about students knowing their performance in time to make changes and PowerSchool being updated on a timely basis. He would also like to see definite subjects set in place. Dr. Fraczek also feels strongly that students should be aware of their performance at all times. She noted that all subjects are in place except for the flex periods and those should be in place shortly.

Ms. Butler questioned the use of the term “Advisory” as a subject name. She suggested changing the title as not to confuse students with “Advisory” at the high school level.

Ms. White asked for clarification on the setup of the flex block. Dr. Fraczek reviewed the setup of the flex block. She also explained that teachers will be guiding students who need extra help during these periods. Paraprofessionals will also be available during flex block to assist students who may be struggling.

Ms. Laprade asked what would happen if a parent and student wanted different choices during flex block. Dr. Fraczek said a conversation would take place with the parent and child to come up with a solution. Also, the teacher may recommend that the student need extra help.

Ms. Briggs noted that scheduling is a policy change and that class selections would need to be in place in order to for the Committee to vote on the new schedule. Also, any budget or staff increases associated with the scheduling change would need to be reviewed by the Committee.

Continued Discussion on District Strategic Improvement and Restructuring Plan

Supt. Welch noted that impact bargaining is still ongoing and that the Committee should bring up any issues in Executive Session. He and Dr. Kelly have also been taking a close look at the Needham coaching model. Some of the hiring schedules have been reset due to the snow days. Supt. Welch has been asked to delay the hiring of the Instructional Coaches. He has been in communication with Learning Forward, which will be contracted to train the coaches. There were no additional questions or comments from the Committee.

Minutes

Mr. Ryan motioned to approve the minutes of February 1, 2017 as presented, Ms. White second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

Mr. Coughlin motioned to approve the minutes of February 15, 2017 as presented, Mr. Ryan second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

Donations

None

Public comment

Julie Perillo, 8 Heritage Hill, a parent and teacher in Brockton, MA, expressed concern about the increased amount of screen time being asked of students, for example, the use of Tenmarks. Mrs. Perillo also articulated what she, as a teacher, puts into her ELA curriculum and expressed concern that the proposed restructuring will not allow teachers enough time to implement the curriculum. She is also concerned that that time will be used for test preparation and not for direct instruction.

Kara Bender, 18 Quarry Road, parent, expressed her concern of the removal of reading teachers and math coaches and feels this is setting teachers up to fail. She inquired if there was any data to back up the changes at DMS and asked how long it will take to see if the new structure is successful. She urged the Committee to slow down the process.

Lora Smid, 327 Cedar Street, a parent and teacher in another district. expressed concerns with the District Restructuring Plan which she feels includes the loss of expertise to struggling readers and the loss of teachers trained in the Wilson method. She asked if the additions to Title I are meant to replace the reading teachers. She is also concerned about the content of the curriculum fitting into a forty-five minute time slot. She stated she had not seen data that shows the current structure is not working. She urged the committee to slow down the restructure.

Acknowledgements and Announcements

Supt. Welch announced that the DEF annual Spelling Bee will be held on March 10 at DMS.

Supt. Welch announced that the Alumni and Boosters Club Trivia Night will be held on March 25.

Ms. Butler announced the need to enter Executive Session under Exemption 3 and stated that the Committee would not be returning to the regular meeting.

Ms. White motioned to enter Executive Session under Exemption 3, Ms. Briggs second; a roll call vote was taken:

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

Regular meeting ended at 8:59 p.m.