

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

January 2, 2018

(Approved January 30, 2018)

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Mayanne Briggs, Chair
Steve Bilafer, Vice-Chair
Kevin Coughlin
Joshua Donati
Lisa Laprade
Melissa Pearrow
Tracey White

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ABSENT:

None

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:

Michael Welch, Superintendent
Dr. Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent
Samuel Rippin, Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance

Meeting Location: Early Childhood Education Center

Beginning at 6:30 p.m. the Committee held an open “meet and greet” with community members.

Meeting commenced at 7:00 p.m.

Student Update

None

Reports

Legislative Update

State Senator Michael Rush and State Representative Paul McMurtry were in attendance to answer questions from the Committee or the public on education legislation occurring at the State House.

Representative McMurtry thanked the Committee for the opportunity to be at the meeting. He stated that the students and public education are a top priority. He thanked the School

Committee, Administration and teachers for all of their hard work. He introduced Senator Rush.

Senator Rush reviewed the importance of the School Committee's role in the community. He acknowledged that Dedham set a precedent by being the first District to offer free public education.

Mr. Coughlin thanked both gentlemen for being in attendance. He also thanked them for all of their efforts at the State level for supporting the building of the new ECEC. Mr. Coughlin noted that 31 new students have enrolled from Puerto Rico and was wondering if there will be any funding from the State to help with the education of these new students.

Rep. McMurtry noted that Governor Baker has established a task force to look into the matter. He thanked the Town for welcoming and embracing the new students and families. He will help with communicating at the state level the need for aide in offsetting the expenses of educating these new students. He also mentioned that he was very proud to be a part of the efforts to build the new ECEC which will be a model for other districts.

Ms. Laprade inquired into school start times.

Rep. McMurtry stated that there is definitely a grassroots effort occurring to have schools open later. He supports the legislation to look into the issue and feels that if it has better outcomes for students he supports having the conversation.

Senator Rush also stated that he supports the bill to look into later start times for middle and high school students.

Mr. Bilafer thanked both men for their support of the new ECEC and noted that the project greatly relied on funding from the MSBA. He inquired about Chapter 70 funding and asked if the Committee should expect any issues this year.

Senator Rush stated that legislation has been filed to review the current formula.

Ms. Briggs stated that Dedham has worked hard to keep Special Education students in-district, however that decreases "circuit breaker" funding.

Rep. McMurtry stated that the State needs to continue looking into funding and changes. He applauded Dedham for keeping students in-district.

Supt. Welch thanked both the Senator and Representative for attending the meeting. He discussed Dedham now offering free full day Kindergarten as well as Dedham being the first town to have funding from the MSBA for an Early Childhood Education Center. He noted there has also been an increase in requests for Preschool programs and inquired if the State was looking into Pre-kindergarten programming?

Senator Rush noted that discussions begin with innovative community initiatives like Dedham. He agreed early childhood education is important. He would like to work with Dedham as a model for other Town's and colleagues.

Rep. McMurtry made special mention that Jen Barsamian who currently works at the State House was in attendance. Ms. Barsamian was a former Chair of the Dedham School Committee.

The Committee introduced themselves to the audience.

ECEC Presentation

Principal Dr. Paul Sullivan provided the Committee with an update on the Early Childhood Education Center. The presentation which will be available on the District Website included the history of the Capen School; development of the Early Childhood Education Center under the direction of Dr. Thomas J. Curran; current Preschool and Kindergarten programs; a focus on early learning; enrollment numbers; Childcare program; and the MSBA supported new Early Childhood Education Center currently under construction.

Principal Sullivan made special mention of two new valuable positions at the ECEC derived from the District Restructure - Rebecca McCabe, Early Childhood Coordinator, and Kristen Cannon, the Instructional Coach.

Questions from the Committee followed.

Dr. Pearrow inquired into the capacity of the new ECEC. Dr. Sullivan noted the MSBA formula allowed for a facility of 300. He also stated there will not be any stairs in the new building.

Supt. Welch explained how he had contacted the MSBA after arriving in Dedham and asked if there was any way to increase capacity. The MSBA stated that a change in capacity would mean the entire application process would have to start over. He noted the new school will have 10 Kindergarten classrooms, 6 Preschool classrooms and 2 Sub-separate classrooms.

Dr. Sullivan explained the difficulty in having to turn Preschool parents away, but explained the model of the Preschool program was designed around Special Education programming and balancing special education with regular education.

Ms. Briggs asked for questions from the audience.

Ms. Margaret Hutchinson, ECEC Paraprofessional, expressed her concerns about the size of the planned playground at the new ECEC.

Mr. Sullivan explained there will be two playgrounds.

Ms. Briggs stated that, because of the cafeteria, lunch periods can alternate allowing for varied lunch and playground times.

Supt. Welch also noted there will also be an outside discovery space along with a large indoor playroom. He stated that all play spaces will be much safer for the children.

Ms. Julie Lally, Special Education Teacher, inquired about the need for a full time adjustment counselor at the ECEC

Dr. Sullivan noted he did request a full time councilor going into the new building.

Supt. Welch noted the new position of Director of Counseling Services, Dr. Ashley Dube, who now oversees all the psychologists and adjustment councilors in the district. He agreed stress and anxiety has increased in the student body and he will review this need with Dr. Dube.

Dr. Pearrow stated that she hoped the District is looking into partnering with the Community when needs become too overwhelming.

Dr. Sullivan introduced his staff in attendance- Kindergarten Teachers Julie Lally, Marie Lynch, Emily Hutton, Julie Morrison, Aileen Newton, Margaret Wilds, Janice O'Connor and Lauren Fay; Preschool Teacher Jennifer Guidoboni; Paraprofessionals Margaret Hutchinson and Eileen Verocchi; Instructional Coach Kristen Cannon; and Early Childhood Coordinator Rebecca McCabe

Special Education Presentation

Special Education Director Elizabeth O'Connell updated the Committee on the Special Education Department. The presentation will be available on the District Website.

Ms. O'Connell introduced her staff in attendance- Early Childhood Coordinator Rebecca McCabe; Educational Team Leaders Jenny McGowan, Dr. Marjorie Goldstein-Fradin, and Mary Bruhl; Out of District Coordinator Meredith Becker; and Director of Counseling Services, Dr. Ashley Dube.

The report included the achievement of compliance through the district Restructuring; the new Special Education Team Leader position; professional development; the new Director of Counseling Services position; enrollment trends; out of district placements; in-district programs at each of the schools; the new PACE program; and curricular initiatives.

Ms. Jenny McGowan, Elementary Educational Team Leader, spoke discussing inclusionary practices which include commitment to principles of least restrictive environments, understanding differences, and mirroring societal norms and expectations. She also discussed the implications of inclusive programming and inclusion continuum.

Ms. Mary Bruhl, Secondary Education Team Leader, discussed the co-teaching model which includes partnering a general education teacher and a special education teacher, common planning time and targeted professional development.

Questions from the Board followed.

Ms. Laparde likes the growth she has seen in Special Education programs. However she is concerned about the 21 percent growth number and wondered if it were possible to review Individual Education Plans and pinpoint where general education can be improved. Ms. O'Connell stated that they do have this ability as well as looking at assessment scores to determine issues. Also, the new Educational Team Leader positions will help to narrow down needs.

Ms. O'Connell noted when she started the growth rate was at 26 %. Internal programs have been developed to help reduce numbers over the past few years, she views the 21% as a spike.

Dr. Kelly noted the need to continue to clearly identify the curriculum and properly provide assessments in able to identify needs in the general education curriculum.

Mr. Donati inquired if this number was due to new students moving into the district. He also inquired into the current screening process. Ms. O'Connell stated there has been a significant change in pre-referrals. Ms. Bruhl spoke to the STAR 360 program and the ability to identify struggling students before a referral process and evaluation.

Dr. Kelly explained that STAR 360 is an early math and literacy assessment administered three times a year.

Dr. Pearrow noted there was not a significant increase at the secondary level. She compared the state and national averages to Dedham's numbers. She is concerned about the numbers at the Elementary level stating they are above state and national averages.

Supt. Welch commended Dr. Goldstein-Fradin, who until the restructure was covering the Special Education needs of five schools. She now has more support at the Elementary Level which should have an impact on the numbers.

Dr. Ashley Dube discussed the mental health providers across the District. There are currently 10 at the High School, 5 at the Middle School and 3 at the Elementary level. She feels problems are being detected through interventions. She is focused on bringing in outside agencies and Professional Development to help support the staff and students. She noted the collaboration between mental health counseling and special education.

Mr. Coughlin referred to the 2013 Special Education Review and the current trend of keeping students in district. He hopes the Special Education Department continues to work off that report and continue moving in the right direction to support student needs.

Ms. White stated she was impressed with the PACE program and meeting the needs of students being kept in district.

Mr. Bilafer commented on the expense of education and the more specialized it is, the more expensive it is. Money will never be eliminated from the conversation. The focus needs to be what is best for the children and he stated Ms. O'Connell's report did just that.

Ms. Briggs was on board when the 2013 Special Education Review was conducted and likes the progress she has seen that has come from that report. She is pleased with the collaboration between the Special Education Department and General Education. She is impressed with the PACE program and seeing students staying within the schools. She noted the importance of social emotional learning.

Superintendent's Update

Superintendent Michael J. Welch

Greenlodge Elementary School experienced a water main break yesterday afternoon and the school was unable to reopen today because the water was shut off to the entire building. Supt. Welch thanked the DP W and Dedham -Westwood Water crews for their prompt response and repair. School will be open tomorrow.

On December 12 Riverdale School experienced a small oil leak. A fitting cracked on the oil supply line to the furnace and a small quantity of heating oil leaked onto the floor in the boiler room. DPS Maintenance crews and Dedham Fire Department responded immediately and repaired the leak. An evacuation was not necessary.

We continue to enroll new students from Puerto Rico. To date, 32 students have enrolled across the District. Superintendent Welch is looking to DESE for possible funding for additional staff needed to support ELL teachers in meeting mandates. He thanked the Committee for graciously accepting these new families into the District.

The DPS Equity & Inclusion Task Force is planning a community celebration at Dedham Middle School's cafeteria on Monday, January 15, 2018 in honor of Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy. The district is sponsoring an essay/speech contest for all students in the district. Winners of the contest will be invited to present their speeches on the night of the event.

Old/New Business

None

Subcommittee Reports & Updates

Policy

Ms. Laprade summarized the third reading of four new proposed policies to Support Services (Section E) of the Policy Handbook. The policies are listed in full on the District website. The Policy Subcommittee met on December 6 and voted to accept all four policies and is recommending to the Board to approve.

- *EEAA- Walkers and Riders*
- *EEAEA Bus Driver Examination and Training*
- *EEAEA-1 Drug and Alcohol Testing for School Bus and Commercial Vehicle Drivers*
- *EEAJ- Motor Vehicle Idling on School Grounds*

Ms. White motioned to approve policy *EEAA- Walkers and Riders* as presented, Mr. Donati second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

Ms. White motioned to approve policy *EEAEA – Bus Driver Examination and Training* as presented, Dr. Pearrow second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

Dr. Pearrow motioned to approve policy *EEAEA-1- Drug and Alcohol Testing for School Bus and Commercial Vehicle Drivers* as presented, Ms. White second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

Mr. Donati motioned to approve policy *EEAJ- Motor Vehicle Idling on School Grounds* as presented, Ms. White second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

Budget

No update at this time.

Equity and Inclusion Task Force

The Task Force is putting together a celebration for Martin Luther King Day on January 15, 2018 at Dedham Middle School beginning at 5:30pm.

Negotiations

Ms. Briggs stated that the Committee would be entering Executive Session this evening to discuss contract negotiations.

SBRC

No update at this time.

Donations

Ms. Laprade motioned to approve with grateful appreciation a donation in the amount of \$1000 from the Boecher family to the Dedham Middle School Band program, Ms. White second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

Public Comment

None

Acknowledgements and Announcements

None

Ms. Briggs stated the need to enter Executive Session under Exemption 3, Contract Negotiations.

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

- Lisa Laprade - Yes
- Joshua Donati - Yes
- Melissa Pearrow - Yes
- Kevin Coughlin - Yes
- Tracey White - Yes
- Steve Bilafer, Vice-Chair - Yes
- Mayanne Briggs, Chair - Yes

Ms. Briggs announced that the Committee would not be returning to the regular meeting.

Regular meeting ended at 9:21 p.m.