

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

March 20, 2018

(Approved April 24, 2018)

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Mayanne Briggs, Chair
Steve Bilafer, Vice-Chair
Kevin Coughlin
Joshua Donati
Lisa Laprade
Dr. 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: Avery Elementary School

Meeting commenced at 7:02 p.m.

Student Update

None

Superintendent's Update

Supt. Welch explained that school was cancelled due to inclement weather on March 8, 13 and 14. He provided the Committee with maps showing cancellations and delays for districts in eastern Massachusetts. He noted there have been five snow day cancellations to date and that the last day of school will now be Monday, June 25, except for the Greenlodge School which will be Tuesday, June 26.

Due to the closing of Town Hall last week, the DPS FY19 Operating Budget presentation to the Finance Committee (originally scheduled for March 13) was postponed. The new date for the presentation will be Tuesday, March 27. Supt. Welch shared with the Committee a list of upcoming Finance Committee meeting dates as well as supporting documents for the FY19 Budget requests including the FY19

Operating Budget, the FY19 Capital Budget, the FY19 Security Cameras Capital Request, and the 2017 Benchmarking Report.

The ECEC Principal Search committee has met four times and has selected candidates to interview. Despite the delays from snow, the timeline for selection is still on track for the naming of a new principal before April vacation. Mr. Donati is the School Committee's representative on this search committee.

Supt. Welch has continued to gather information from faculty, students, and parents about the appointment of a permanent principal for Dedham High School. He sent a survey to all parents of Dedham High School and Dedham Middle School last week. There have been over 100 responses so far with the survey closing tomorrow. This information will be used to determine the next steps in this process.

Supt. Welch reviewed the administration's steps in anticipation of the call for national school walkouts during the school day on March 14. Supt. Welch sent a letter home to parents on March 12 with general information about his views and position on this matter and informed parents that individual principals would provide more instructions. Principals then sent letters to parents that were specific to their schools.

March 14 was a snow day and school was cancelled. Students at DHS held their event in the gymnasium the following day and did not leave the building. The event occurred at 10:00 AM during x-block and about 125 students participated. No class time was compromised and all students returned to class in time for their next obligation. Supt. Welch stated he was proud of the way the students mobilized themselves and their classmates, and worked together with Mr. Forrest to identify their goals and develop methods to achieve them. He also thanked Chief D'Entremont and his officers for their assistance in supporting the schools and students with their guidance and presence during the day.

Earlier tonight was the annual DHS Winter Athletics banquet sponsored by the Boosters' Club. Supt. Welch thanked Ms. White for attending on behalf of the Committee.

Supt. Welch will emcee this Saturday night's All Dedham Trivia Night sponsored by the DHS Alumni Association.

Mr. Coughlin thanked Supt. Welch for his efforts in making the call on whether or not to cancel school when snow is predicted. Mr. Coughlin also thanked Joe Flanagan, Director of Public Works, for all his and the DPW's efforts in clearing snow.

Reports

Panorama Parent and Staff Survey Update by Assistant Superintendent Ian Kelly

The presentation will be available on the district website. The report reviewed systems and structures in place to support professional staff, expected outcomes from the restructure, the term "perception" and its association with the Panorama Survey, survey results and next steps.

In May of 2017, a baseline survey was delivered to educators and staff. In November, a second survey was conducted. Tonight's presentation is a comparison of May's results and November's results. The term "staff" is used in this presentation to describe those who interact with children, but are not in front of students all day long. The term "educators" refers to those in front of students all day long.

The survey results included the following:

- Professional Learning Perception increased for both staff and educators
- School Leadership Perception increased for both staff and educators
- Feedback and Coaching Perception has only slightly increased both staff and educators

Family surveys will be conducted in April. Student surveys along with faculty and staff surveys will be done again in May.

Questions from the Committee followed:

Ms. White asked the percentage of the overall staff that responded to the survey. Dr. Kelly stated that approximately 70% of the educators and staff completed the survey. Ms. White asked whether, if the number of employees who took the survey the first time differed from the second time, the numbers would be skewed. Dr. Kelly explained that Panorama accounts for such adjustments. However, he feels that work needs to be done to increase the amount of employees who complete the survey.

Supt. Welch noted that one of the reasons the results are being released publically is to let the staff members know that the administration is reading the results and listening to what they have to say. Dr. Kelly added that the principals are analyzing the data with their staff as well.

Mr. Donati inquired about the amount of time to take the survey in relation to the length of the survey. Dr. Kelly explained it is a difficult balance acquiring all the information needed and keeping the survey short enough for staff to complete. He stated the student survey is relatively short. He is also having difficulty keeping the parent survey short since there are so many questions he would like to ask.

Mr. Donati stated that he felt the feedback on coaching was low because in September and October the coaches were engaged in a lot of training, thus not a lot of growth is shown in this area. He is hoping to see a big jump in the next survey.

Supt. Welch also noted that the coaching model is occurring in grades K to 8 and is not instituted at the High School level. He feels we need to break the survey out by levels in order to get accurate feedback information.

Ms. Laprade noted that, in her experience, an 80% response rate to a survey is considered good and the district is almost at that level.

Dr. Pearrow noted the importance of acquiring qualitative information as well as quantitative. Dr. Kelly agreed that it is important to give the data a voice. He also explained that neutral data falls into the unfavorable measurement.

Dr. Pearrow asked if the coaching model were used in other departments, such as Guidance and Nursing. Dr. Kelly explained there is no direct coaching model, but there is Professional Development in all relevant areas.

Mr. Bilafer asked if there were any numbers that surprised the administration. Dr. Kelly stated that many of the numbers in the spring were concerning to him. He is not satisfied with the increase and wants to see more improvement and higher percentages. However, he was not shocked by any of the numbers.

Supt. Welch added that the principals are using the feedback to have conversation with staff for improvement. The surveys are new to everyone and it will take time for people to adapt to them.

Mr. Bilafer asked about surveying the community on the perception of the school system. Dr. Kelly stated that Panorama does have the capability if that is something the Committee would be interested in pursuing.

Dr. Kelly provided the Committee with the questions from the survey. Supt. Welch also reviewed the fact that the questions are ranked on a scale from 1 through 5. The top two options appear in the favorable category while the bottom three, including the neutral answer, are considered unfavorable.

Mr. Donati stated that, regardless of the results, he feels the process is extremely valuable and appreciates that the principals are responding to the information provided and teachers feel they are being heard.

The Committee discussed how the data is analyzed by Panorama and the different methods that can be used to evaluate the information.

Ms. Briggs stated she wants to allow educators and staff the appropriate amount of time to answer the survey. She inquired into how students are allotted time to complete the survey. Dr. Kelly explained that the students are given certain blocks of time during the school day to complete the task.

Mr. Bilafer would like to make sure that parents complete the survey and suggested taking into consideration the length of those questions.

Counseling Services Update by Director of Counseling Services Dr. Ashley Dubé

The presentation will be on the district website. The report included a detailed role of Director of Counseling Service, a breakdown of Counseling Services at each of the schools, Percentage of Special Education students receiving Counseling Services, blending Health and Wellness with Counseling Services, review of hospitalizations and Stabilization Program (PACE- Providing an Alternative Caring Environment), goals of Counseling Service that align with the School Committee's goals, professional development opportunities, communication with families, community mental health partnerships, and Multi - Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).

Questions from the Committee followed:

Ms. White expressed concern about the numbers at Oakdale and Riverdale and the work load of the councilor. Dr. Dubé stated that the case loads can be difficult to manage and is working on a solution to the disproportionate numbers at the schools. Supt. Welch added that this is one of the reasons the Director of Counseling Services position was created, to find alternate ways of servicing students rather than just using a 1 to 1 model. There is a need to implement structures and systems to help manage case loads as well as implementing tiered level of supports. It is not feasible to continue sustaining 1 to 1 intervention.

Dr. Dubé stated that at Riverdale they are testing class-wide curricula.

Ms. White asked how staff is being managed as students are promoted from school to school and the numbers at each level change. Supt. Welch stated that Dr. Dubé now oversees all of the counselors and is able to deploy staff to the appropriate school. Counselors are a team and need to assist where they are needed. The role is not school based. Issues need to be looked at systemically. Dr. Dubé noted that she has already changed assignments to accommodate needs.

Ms. Laprade noted the difference in numbers between DMS and DHS and inquired about the resource placement. Dr. Dubé stated that there is a .5 SEL coordinator to assist with tier training at DMS, but feels that school is at complete capacity. Next year there is a large 5th grade class moving up to the Middle School and decisions will need to be made in the spring on staff placements.

Ms. Laprade noted that she would like to see more parent programs at the elementary level allowing for increased parent involvement. Dr. Dubé stated that this idea has been on her radar and she would like to see more sharing of parent recourses at parent nights.

Dr. Pearrow noted that Dedham is well resourced in the area of counseling and agrees that the district can no longer only deliver 1 to 1 services. The direction needs to move to a tiered system. She also noted that it is difficult to compare schools on the numbers alone and that there needs to be more systematic screening to deploy resources accordingly. Dr. Dubé agreed, noting there are great screening systems on the market that can be used for baseline testing and she has been working with Dr. Kelly to start the process.

Mr. Donati inquired as to how soon the test could be administered. Dr. Kelly stated that the district is at capacity and the process needs to be well considered.

Mr. Coughlin asked how the staff is doing managing stress. Dr. Dubé said that she is trying to incorporate self care and stress management into her monthly meetings.

Mr. Bilafer discussed the college preparation process. He expressed interest in surveying parents who have gone through the college application process with their children. He would like to see how students and parents feel the school is performing in this area. He noted his appreciation of the transition workshops provided for seniors. He would love to see juniors exposed to these workshops as well.

Ms Briggs reiterated the Committees concerns regarding school capacity, family participation programs, and one to one counseling. She wants to make sure students are supported but the system cannot sustain 1to1 intervention.

Supt. Welch stated that a lot is being asked from Counseling Services. He feels that there needs for some restructure in this area, but is going to take time. Also, problems need to be examined on a district level.

Old/New Business

Superintendent's Evaluation

Ms. Briggs read the following statement in regard to Supt. Welch's evaluation:

Superintendent Welch is evaluated by both the school committee and completes a self evaluation annually. He is evaluated based on mutually approved goals. The Superintendent's goals must reflect the overall district improvement plan. The 3 criteria on which the state bases its evaluation system are

1. Professional Practice, where the Superintendent earned a score of 3.4 out of a possible 4
2. Student Learning where the Superintendent earned a score of 3
3. District Improvement where the Superintendent earned a score of 3.2

The board rates Superintendent Welch as highly Proficient and believes that he has a high impact on student learning

Under each of these over arching criteria are several Smart goals

Professional Practice:

Utilize available regional and state educational leadership organizations and professional development opportunities to better evaluate and incorporate statewide “best practices” in the Dedham Public Schools.

Complete comprehensive goal development and observational visits with principals at all schools in September-October 2016. Perform mid-cycle reviews in January-February 2017, and summative evaluations in June-July 2017. Use principal observations to inform best practices and improve teacher effectiveness. Provide comprehensive feedback to all principals and directors during visits. For these, the Superintendent was rated as very high with a combination of met and exceeded goals.

Student Learning:

Utilize all available data to evaluate the effectiveness of educational services delivered throughout the district. Employ data teams to increase faculty understanding and facility with student growth and proficiency feedback through the use of formative assessments and universal screenings of all students. Utilize technology to assist with the management of data through the ongoing “4-I’s” (Information Integration for Instructional Improvement) initiative.

The board feels that this goal has been met.

District Improvement Goals

*Use the results of the Spring 2016 **Teachers 21 “District ELA Audit”** and the **2013 Special Education Program Evaluation** to develop a comprehensive response to the recommendations detailed in these two studies.*

Develop and advance an FY18 Operating and Capital Budget that supports the needs of our students and educators. Pursue a Fall Town Meeting appropriation of \$100,000 removed from the FY17 Budget during Finance and Warrant Committee negotiations so that district needs can be met.

The School Committee feels that the Superintendent has met this goal.

Areas of Opportunity

Mr. Welch can make improvements in his ability to inform and build consensus with all stakeholders in the district, especially when taking on major projects like the restructuring. He would be the first to admit that ongoing communication within and outside the school community is a challenge and a needed focus going forward.

Now that the restructuring is in motion, I would like to see less focus on the Superintendent’s “outside the district” activities and more focus on the day to day 'steering of the ship'.

The Superintendent strives to meet the needs of our diverse district, continuing to recruit and hire faculty and staff that reflect our district needs to remain a priority

Areas of Strength

The Superintendent’s vision for the district is forward thinking and has the potential to set Dedham up for great things in the future. He has done a great job of providing resources to his staff, in the form of both professional development and in terms of technology and building a comprehensive curriculum. The technology that is afforded to our staff and students is leaps and bounds ahead of our neighboring communities and that is because of the vision of the Superintendent and the Administrative Staff that he has works within our District.

Superintendent Welch continues to push the Dedham Public Schools forward to becoming the best in Massachusetts. His dedication to the staff, faculty and students of Dedham is to be commended. He holds his administrative staff and school leaders to high standards, but also provides them the resources and guidance they need to work positively to meet those standards. Superintendent Welch manages through direct and positive engagement, communicates his expectations clearly, and leads by example. He is committed to fostering an inclusive district and providing his staff and educators with opportunities to grow and improve.

In my opinion, his ratings of his performance appear accurate, and if anything, he seems to maintain extremely high expectations of himself. His commitment to his own professional development and openness about his own evaluation serve as a model for other staff as they continue with the growth mindset.

As far as the budget, initiatives such as the aggressive implementation of free full day kindergarten one year earlier than planned, the lowering of AP test and Athletic fee's within the operating budget. A Capital Budget, including continuation the hardening of our schools, such as door and door locks repair/replacement and the construction of the re-configured High School lobby. Each and every decision promoting excellence in student learning in a safe comforting environment. Superintendent Welch has developed several working groups from PTOs, fundraising groups and the newly established Equity and Inclusion Task Force. He is committed to meeting with stakeholders to help with gaining insight into community issues.

Our students are reaping the benefits of highly trained professionals and this speaks volumes as to where the Superintendent's priorities lie. The technology that is afforded to our staff and students is 'leaps and bounds ' ahead of our neighboring communities and that is because of the vision of the Superintendent and the Administrative Staff that he has working within our District.

Ms. Briggs stated that overall the School Committee feels fortunate to work with Supt. Welch and expects to see the district continue moving forward.

Supt. Welch stated that he read each member's evaluation of him and thanked the Committee for its feedback. He would like to meet with each member to see what he can do to improve. He stated he is most proud of the changes the Committee supported over the past year.

The Committee discussed changing the Superintendent's evaluation to March. In the past evaluations of the Superintendent have taken place in the fall, but since elections are held in April it is difficult for new members to properly conduct an assessment. The Committee agreed it made sense to change the Superintendent's performance evaluation to occur in the month of March moving forward.

Subcommittee Reports & Updates

Policy

Ms. Laprade summarized the third reading of five new proposed policies that were unanimously voted to be accepted by the Policy Subcommittee on February 13. The following policies are posted on the district website and can be found in full in the February 13, 2018 minutes.

GBGE - Domestic Violence Leave Policy
IHAI - Occupational Education
IHBAA - Observations of Special Education Programs
IMG - Animals in School
JFABC - Admission of Transfer Students

No further discussion occurred.

Mr. Coughlin motioned to accept policy GBGE, Domestic Violence Leave Policy, Dr. Pearrow second; the Committee voted unanimously 7-0.

Mr. Donati motioned to accept policy IHAI, Occupational Education, Mr. Coughlin second; the Committee voted unanimously 7-0.

Dr. Pearrow motioned to accept policy IHBAA Observations of Special Education Programs, Ms. White second; the Committee voted unanimously 7-0.

Mr. Coughlin motioned to accept policy IMG, Animals in School, Mr. Donati second; the Committee voted unanimously 7-0.

Mr. Bilafer motioned to accept policy JFABC, Admission of Transfer Students, Mr. Coughlin second; the Committee voted unanimously 7-0.

Ms. Laprade noted the rest of the policies under review are in the hands of the MASC Representative for rewrite and should be returned to the Subcommittee in a couple of weeks.

Budget

Due to inclement weather on March 13, the FY19 Budget Presentation to the Finance Committee has been rescheduled to Tuesday, March 27.

Mr. Rippin stated he attended the Finance Committee hearing on the School Facilities budget on Saturday, March 10 with Director of Facilities Denise Moroney and Assistant Director of Facilities Amy Colleran.

Equity and Inclusion Task Force

Due to inclement weather, the March 14 meeting was cancelled. The next meeting will on Wednesday, April 11.

Negotiations

Due to inclement weather, the March 14 meeting was cancelled. Both parties are working on rescheduling the meeting.

SBRC

On Monday, March 26 the SBRC will be asking the Planning Board for consideration of offsite mitigation on High Street.

Minutes

Ms. Laprade motioned to approve the minutes of March 6, 2018 as presented, Ms. White second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

Donations

Ms. White motioned to accept, with grateful appreciation, 100 books donated to the Dedham Public Schools Libraries from Direct Federal Credit Union, Dr. Pearrow second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

Public Comment

None

Acknowledgements and Announcements

Mr. Bilafer announced that the Dedham Boosters Trivia Night will be on Saturday March 24, as well as the Dedham School of Music's Comedy Night.

Ms. White noted that she attended the Senior Class production of "The Wizard of Oz" and commented on the outstanding performance by the students.

Ms. White also mentioned that elementary report cards came out today and inquired as to when discussion would begin on reviewing the reports. Dr. Kelly noted he has brought it up with elementary principals and considerations have begun.

Ms. White motioned to close the meeting of March 20, 2018, Mr. Coughlin second; the Committee voted 7-0 in favor.

Meeting concluded at 9:33 p.m.