

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING—February 24, 2010
Town Hall, Lower Conference Room

PRESENT

Dave Roberts, Chair
Margaret Connolly, Vice Chair
Thomas Ryan
Tracy Driscoll
John Healy
Kevin Coughlin
Joe Heisler

ADMINISTRATION

June M. Doe, Superintendent
Cynthia Kelly, Asst. Superintendent
Michael La Francesca, Business Manager

Convened: 7:00 PM

Adjourned: 9:40 PM

Chairman Dave Roberts opened the meeting and stated there would be a break from the posted agenda due to invited guests present.

Mr. Roberts introduced Betty Kilcoyne is the organizer for the high school all-night party. She represents a large number of parent volunteers and community organizers who put together the all night graduation party for graduating seniors. This is privately funded through donations. It provides a safe environment for the seniors to gather for the night. Graduation is Wednesday, June 2nd. A fundraiser, Trivia Night, will be held on March 5th at the VFW at 7:00 p.m. The all-night party is a very expensive event to run. The plans this year include hiring a hypnotist, a caricaturist, henna tattoos. In the past we have had an ice cream sundae bar.

Bullying Issue:

Mr. Roberts introduced Representative Paul McMurtry to provide an update on the legislature that is currently unfolding in the State House on bullying and cyber-bullying. Rep. McMurtry passed out a handout, which highlights the bill in its initial stage and is now in the Senate. He commented on Mr. Halligan's presentation and its powerful impact. Much of what is composed in the Massachusetts law was taken from Vermont law. Hope to take a final vote in April. The focus is on prevention and cultural change. Schools will be required to implement a bullying prevention plan for every student, every year.

Discussion and Questions:

Has there been any research in the effectiveness of bullying laws in states who have adopted this type of law? The view is the culture and behaviors won't change overnight. They are confident in the tools and research done that the impact will have some "teeth". There is no criminal aspect to the law. There is some debate on the merits of requiring school districts to report to DESE. Rep McMurtry feels that's a two way street – there will be standards set by the DESE and the schools responsibility to implement. School committees will need some guidance in this area. Superintendent Doe asked if there is any fear this bill won't be voted in this session. What is the timeline? There is sincere support in favor of this for the Speaker to move this bill along. "This bill prohibits bullying at all schools and at all school facilities, at school sponsored and school related functions, whether on or off school grounds, on school buses and school bus stops, through the use of technology or any electronic device owned licensed or used by a school and at non-school related locations and through non-school technology or electronic devices if the bullying effects the school environment." Ms. Doe noted that is the important part "effecting the school environment".

Presentation by Administration:

Don Langenhorst stated all information on internet safety is located on the school website (technology). This is a federal law and we are required to have these policies in place to continue to receive E-Rate funding. This policy was updated about a year and a half ago. His staff developed a comprehensive, systemic, internet safety plan which includes dealing with cyber-bullying. It covers the younger grades through high school. It is very important for everyone to understand what we are doing. He stresses the importance for everyone to look at these documents and understand them. Our library/media specialists and technology staff have been I-Safe certified. It is a comprehensive internet safety program. Cyber-bullying is bullying. We work with law enforcement to determine what requirements constitute a threat. There is live monitoring on the computers, there is a log in process, and issues are flagged and students are caught if they are inappropriately using the

computers. Parents have to step in as well, get the computers out of the bedrooms, and know who their cyber-friends are just like you have to know who their regular friends are.

Cathy Orevetz discussed the comprehensive program at the Middle School on internet safety.

The program is broken down by grade. Grade 6 – the topic is personal safety. Safe information, email names and passwords, blogging, chat rooms, revealing personal information and predator awareness. Grade 7 curriculum builds on what was learned in the 6th grade. Topics include cyber community which talks about the correlation between the dangers in the physical community and dangers in the cyber community. Topics include: inappropriate sites, on-line advertisements, spam, being mouse trapped. Cyber bullying is discussed. What is the definition, what should you do if you feel you are being cyber bullied, how to keep from being cyber bullied. The story of Ryan Halligan is shared with the students. Cyber predators are discussed. Who are they? Who is the prey? The grooming process, similar interest, trust, secrecy and helping the students understand online solicitations are not always unwanted. Dangers of the chat room and what to do if they feel they are being groomed by a predator. In grade 8, is very web driven, research driven. Talk about copyright guidelines, fair use, and security and privacy issues. Dangers associated with credit card use on the internet, evaluating website, not everything is factual or credible.

Mouse trap explanation – get into a website that you can't get out of it. Students are taught what to do and what not to do.

Discussion and questions:

It was suggested Rep. McMurtry should have a conversation with Mr. Langenhorst to possibly add more meat to the bill in the Senate. What is the consequence when someone is found cyber bullying in school. It is the same consequence as bullying. These consequences are going to be discussed.

The Superintendent stated each principal will now highlight the programs in place.

High School: Mr. Murray, Mr. Rivera

Discussed the measures taken at the high school level both in a proactive state and when situations arise. The staff is deeply committed to the physical, social, and emotional safety of every student at DHS. Handout was passed out to committee members that outline the Bullying/Harassment Complaint Process adopted at the high school. The assistant principals are the complaint managers. Whether it's a student, parent, teacher. It is our job to investigate the complaint and we work diligently to keep the student out of the process. Depending on severity, we can work with the student and their parents. If it is more severe, we work with Officer Matthies to file harassment charges, suspend students from school etc. We provide counseling and education, disciplinary actions, community service. The support staff meet regularly behind the scenes – Student Assistance Team (SAT). We are providing training for coaches on bullying in the locker room and sensitivity training for them as well. Everyone gets their due process. Violations of this process and reprisals or retaliation against a student will be dealt with severely. A major theme in the Advisory Program is school culture, diversity, and respect. There is an anti-bullying club called Front Line that has met several times and want to make an impact.

Committee member asked for a specific example of if a student is being bullied on Facebook, how is it handled? Unfortunately, suspension is an answer to show that something has been done. But, we take it seriously and we do educate that student on his behavior to prevent reoccurrence. We make them aware of the profound impact they are having on someone else's life. Superintendent Doe wanted to make clear that every incident is difficult but also different, there are severe measures taken up to involving the police department and the district attorney's office.

Middle School: Ms. Gately

The biggest tool that can help us with this issue is to maintain open communication between parents and students. One of the biggest hurdles when dealing with a bullying situation is finding out about it days or weeks after it happened. We have relayed an open door policy for any student to come to their teachers, guidance, or administration at any time. We have implemented increased presence in the hallways and locker rooms. Mr. Boles and I like the element of surprise – we pop into areas during the day and the kids are surprised to see our presence. Development Designs program is being used for team building throughout the year. The Advisory program is very well established. In Grade 7, teachers receive training in conflict resolution. There is interest in establishing a “Girls Group” for support topics. Possibility of a “Boys Group” has come out of the discussion as well. The I-Safe program is a huge element. In Grade 8 students learn about bullying in health class and guidance seminar. The guidance seminar showed students a video from United Streaming entitled “Surviving High School” which appeared highly effective in grabbing the attention of

students during the period. All students in the Middle School attended the Halligan presentation at the high school. Detention is the first line of defense. Parents are called and brought in for a meeting. There is a fine line for maintaining the rights of the offender in reassuring the parents of the victim that the appropriate steps were taken.

Oakdale: Principal Armstrong

All teachers in all elementary schools are trained in Responsive Classroom. At Oakdale, there are standards of behavior posted and consequences that go along with the standards. Discipline logs are maintained. We are working on behavior management. All of the fifth graders went to the Halligan presentation at the high school. A poll of 5th graders at Oakdale place 1/3 of them on Facebook already. We have discipline referral forms and district reflection forms.

Riverdale: Principal Claypool

We held an anti-bullying assembly on January 22nd. There are signs “Be a Buddy not a Bully” posted throughout the school. Mr. Sances made 250 anti-bullying buttons. Bullying is being talked about in the health curriculum for grades 1-5. Past speakers have come and spoken to parents. These are organized through the PTO. Parents need to be educated about bullying. Due process has to be given to all students.

Greenlodge: Principal Kiewlicz

The principal holds weekly meetings with the Adjustment Counselor to discuss the students. Morning meeting and Responsive classroom can also be a problem solving format.

ECEC: Principal Dineen

It starts with the youngest population. We serve ages 3-5, and it starts with “teachable moments”. Our teachers are embedding into daily curriculum teaching students how to get along with each other, to accept differences. We introduce social skills with scenarios and problem solve with the teacher. The adjustment counselor has friendship groups. We have bus incidents. We work on bus safety and bus etiquette.

Avery: Principal Sullivan was not able to be here tonight.

Ms. Doe wanted to specifically acknowledge the Director of Health and PE, Marge Bohan and Director of Nursing, Gail Kelly who worked very closely administration for programs that are appropriate for Pre-K through 12. Dedham is also fortunate to have a staff of guidance counselors, adjustment counselors, and school psychologists. We would like to have more counselors; we are seeing an increased need at the elementary levels.

Mrs. Reisner noted this is a much different kind of meeting then the first one she attended back in July of 2007. At the end of Mr. Halligan’s presentation for the adults a question was asked what to do if all the channels have been approached and still nothing has been resolved. She would like to revisit the policies in place. A very important part of bullying – need to find a way to reach out to the bystanders to give them the tools to step in and help. Parents need to be educated to learn how they can snoop into Facebook to find out what their kids are doing. Bullying is a violation of a student’s civil rights. She would like the School Committee to form another sub-committee to look at the policies in place. It is a very hot button issue. Bullying affects the entire community.

Superintendent Doe clarified that “bystander language” is in every anti-bullying curriculum we are using.

The education piece is the bystander piece and is imbedded in the curriculum.

Chairman Roberts suggested scheduling a policy sub-committee meeting to re-examine the policy on bullying. It was suggested to do research in order to recommend age appropriateness for cell phones and Facebook and make recommendations available to parents.

Mr. Healy proposed a Policy Sub-Committee meeting on March 10th to review the policy on bullying. 6:00 p.m. prior to the regular School Committee meeting. Mr. Heisler asked for real numbers on how many incidents are occurring or are being documented for the sub-committee meeting. Mr. Healy stressed the importance to keep in mind confidentiality and privacy rights of these juveniles. It is frustrating for parents, but the school department has an obligation to abide by and due process is important.

Representative McMurtry offered some final comments. Provisions for autistic children will be included in their IEPs. The bystander aspect has been intentionally omitted by legislature at this point because the true intent of the law is to develop a culture where we won’t have bystanders. The criminal act was also intentionally omitted from the legislation because if and when the bullying reaches criminal intent there are laws in place to deal with that. He commends the proactive approach in the Dedham community.

Science Textbook Presentation: Assistant Superintendent Cindy Kelly, Ruth Dorsey, Ken Toomey, and Greg Hazell.

The Science Curriculum Committee also includes: Fred Springer, Kerri Bryant, Carolyn Pettey, Samantha Bradley, Mary Joyce, Shelly Pagnotta, Christopher Carucci, Louise Young, Laura McFarland, Karen Jones, Linda Kobierski, Maureen Sargent, Marguerite Polito, Dr. Ralf Heilmann (parent).

Harcourt School Publishers Science program for grades 4 and 5 (Science Up Close). Following a 2-year search by the Science Curriculum Committee the program was selected because of all materials and support, both in print and online. Samples of the new textbooks were available for committee members to review. Superintendent Doe spoke about the process and timeline. She recognized the efforts of the three teachers and their great passion for the work they do. They took the initiative to work during the summer months to get this process moving forward.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Tabled

CHAIR'S UPDATE

Tabled

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Tabled

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Brian Keaney addressed the Committee. The Chair read a prepared statement to Mr. Keaney that said:
Mr. Keaney:

“At the last School Committee meeting held on November 4, you once again addressed the Committee concerning a matter on which you have been focused for months. This matter concerns your efforts to publicly second-guess a decision made by the administration to provide tutoring to a special education student.

You have repeatedly been a distraction and a disruption to School Committee meetings. Some of these disruptions have occurred because you seem to feel that your role as a reporter allows you to decide and control where you will sit, where you will place your tape recorder, or where you will work on your laptop computer at Committee meetings. None of the other reporters who attend these meetings present these distractions.

Just as frequently, however, you have been a distraction and a disruption at these meetings when, as you did at the November 4 meeting, you go on and on, in an argumentative and badgering fashion, demanding to discuss what you want to discuss, and demanding answers to questions because you feel they should be answered.

On November 4th you tried to imply that the Committee was treating you differently from other citizens who address the Committee. The truth of the matter is that *it is you* who have behaved differently from others who address the Committee. No one else has presented the distractions and the disruptions to the Committee that you have.

It is my decision as Chair that from this time forward I will no longer recognize you at School Committee meetings for purposes of addressing the Committee, either under the hearing of visitors or otherwise.”

Mr. Keaney attempted to address the Committee without regard to the statement read and the decision of the Chair. Mr. Roberts continued to deny Mr. Keaney recognition and would not allow him to speak. Mr. Keaney continued and the Chair warned him if he did not cease and desist, he would take appropriate action to have him stop talking.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ACTION ITEMS

none

MINUTES

Motion made by Mr. Ryan and seconded, by Mr. Coughlin to approve the minutes from January 27, 2010 and February 3, 2010. Approved: Unanimous

DONATIONS

Donation of \$1000.00 from the Dedham Junior Woman's Club was made to the Middle School Library to purchase audiovisual materials, fiction and nonfiction books.

Donation of woodworking equipment was received from Rosario Cabinets. The items are a CR Onsrud 3025 Inverted Router and a SCM Sliding Table Saw. Total value of these items is \$4750.00

The Occupational Education Dept. received the following vehicles: 1990 Cadillac DeVille donated by Bob Rinn; 1992 Saab 900s donated by David Malek.

Ms. Connolly moved, with grateful appreciation, seconded by Mr. Healy, also with grateful appreciation, and it was **VOTED:** to accept the donations. Unanimous

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

School Calendar for 2010-2011 school year was reviewed. Motion to accept the 2010-2011 School Calendar was made by Mr. Ryan and seconded by Ms. Driscoll. Approved: Unanimous

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Meeting: March 10, 2010

Summer Program and Grant possibility

School Improvement Plans: Oakdale beginning of April. Greenlodge beginning of May.

Presentation to Finance Committee is March 9th at 6:30 p.m.

RFP for Dexter Lease – suggested a morning Budget Sub meeting to discuss.

Update on athletic survey and last year's results. The Superintendent said the winter season is ending so there will be results coming out from that survey.

Motion made to adjourn made by Ms. Connolly and seconded by Mr. Coughlin. Approved: Unanimous