

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING—April 30, 2008**  
**Distance Learning Lab, Middle School**

**PRESENT**

**Tracy Driscoll, Chair**  
**David Roberts**  
**Thomas Ryan** (7:20 PM)  
**Margaret Connolly**  
**Joanne Flatley**  
**John Healy**

**ADMINISTRATION**

**June M. Doe, Superintendent**  
**Cynthia Kelly, Asst. Superintendent**  
**Christopher Campbell, Asst. Superintendent**  
**Michael La Francesca, Business Manager**  
**Alan Winrow, Principal**  
**Clare Sullivan, Principal**  
**Elizabeth Cummings, Principal**  
**Holli Armstrong, Principal**  
**Heidi Dineen, Principal**

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE**

**Jacqueline Chen**

**Convened: 7:00 PM**

**Adjourned: 9:15 PM**

**SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

Ms. Doe stated that today was the 37<sup>th</sup> year of Student Town Government Day. She thanked the members of Town government that graciously support the program. She said they had seven outstanding students participate with them as school committee members.

Ms. Doe announced that the High School has received a grant from the Massachusetts Biotechnology Education Foundation. She stated the grant entails workshop training for three teachers for the purpose of integrating authentic biotechnology labs into the science curriculum, up to \$11,000 in equipment, and supplies to support the biotechnology curriculum. She thanked Dr. Kobierski for working on the grant and mentioned this is the second time Dedham has qualified for it.

Ms. Doe was pleased to announce that Dedham High School was featured in the book, *Reinventing Wood Shop: Fresh Wood*. She said it was listed under the heading of "Sign Making in a Colonial Massachusetts Town" and pictures a sign Dedham High School students made. She said it is an honor for the High School to be featured in this book. She said Stephen Dewar's wood shop is called upon regularly to make signs for the town.

Ms. Doe announced that the Math Curriculum Committee is in its second year and this year they are focusing on the elementary program and practices. She said the committee is close to making a recommendation for the program. They are currently sending teachers to observe classes in other districts to provide feedback. She said she expects the committee to have a recommendation in early June.

Ms. Doe announced that Monday is the all town music concert at Dedham High School. She said performances of the Middle School play, *The Pirates of Penzance*, would be held on Tuesday and Thursday. She announced that Wednesday is the all town instrumental concert at the High School.

Ms. Doe announced the district-wide art show, Art in Bloom, would be held at Dedham Middle School from Tuesday, May 20, to Thursday, May 22. She said the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup> would be the featured program. She said the teachers are excited and thanked them for the extra work they undertook to make this happen.

Ms. Doe announced that MCAS materials have arrived in all the schools. The principals are organizing the materials and testing begins the week of May 12.

Mr. Campbell reviewed the district's recent award of extraordinary relief for special education costs. He stated that the process began on January 31 when the Department of Education published a memorandum outlining the process for extraordinary relief claims. Mr. Campbell explained that if a district's special education costs exceed over 125% of the prior year's costs, the district can make a claim for reimbursement for some of these costs. He said that he and Mr. La Francesca attended a training on how to pursue claims. He said that training did not provide information about the amount of funds available to communities making claims. He said they worked on the claims and submitted them to the DOE at the end of March. On April 28, he received a letter from the DOE stating that Dedham would receive an additional \$264,281 for special education costs.

Ms. Driscoll stated the committee is very pleased with the result. Ms. Doe said it was a lot of work for Mr. Campbell, his staff, and Mr. La Francesca. Ms. Flatley asked if the reimbursement adjustment of \$27,000 would be a separate payment. Mr. Campbell said they should receive a separate notice about that at the end of the week. She asked when they would receive the funds. Mr. La Francesca answered that it would be received in the last quarter.

Ms. Doe announced Dedham High School seniors Katrina Fahy, Meredith O'Connor, Kelsie Driscoll, and Gabriella Iarrobino have been selected by the American Legion Auxiliary to participate in Girls State in June. The alternates are Jessica Robinson, Melissa Conklin, Andrea Hage, and Vivian Daly. Ms. Doe congratulated all of the students.

Ms. Doe stated that Mr. Gould announced that junior Melissa Caissy and senior Chris Minor have won the essay contest, "The Rule of Law". She said students had to address the premise of how the law serves the common person. She said they would attend Law Day at Quincy District Court on May 2.

Ms. Doe announced the annual Spring Clean-Up would be held on Saturday, May 10, beginning at 9:00 AM on the football field. She thanked the Boosters for supplying lunch.

Ms. Doe stated that music teacher Mr. Nicholson is working with Steve Barrett, Class of 77 alumnus, to organize a Dedham High School Alumni/Staff Chorus to perform at the spring concert on May 21. She thanked Mr. Nicholson and Mr. Barrett for undertaking this endeavor.

Ms. Doe announced that bus transportation forms are available for next year. She said they would like to have them returned by the end of the year to guarantee a seat on the bus next year.

Ms. Doe stated that they have received the Department of Education's initial report for its Coordinated Program Review. She said the administration is currently reviewing it and will respond prior to the final report. She said they are pleased with the initial report, particularly in the area of special education. She stated they were aware they would need to work on the English Language Learner component, and that is reflected in the report. She said that overall the results are positive.

### **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE'S UPDATE**

Ms. Chen stated that the students returned to school following April vacation last week. She announced that juniors would be taking the SAT on Saturday. She said that the Student Council would be participating in the Walk for Hunger on Sunday.

### **CHAIR'S UPDATE**

Ms. Driscoll announced that the School Committee is planning to present a budget overview to all schools at their PTO meetings. She said Avery is scheduled for May 6, the Middle School for May 12, Oakdale May 13, Greenlodge May 15 and Riverdale May 20. She noted the 20<sup>th</sup> is also the National Honor Society induction.

Ms. Flatley stated the Budget Subcommittee is meeting tomorrow at 10 AM. They will be reviewing the extraordinary relief information and its impact on the School Department's capital request and warrant article for special education relief from Town Meeting.

(Mr. Ryan joined the meeting.)

### **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Connolly stated that the DVAC meeting she attended today requested that participants come forward to speak into the microphone so that viewers at home can hear what is said.

Lisa Farnum said she would be speaking on behalf of Greenlodge parents who are concerned about their children. She stated the projected enrollments for grades 5 and 1 are too large next year. She said she recently learned Greenlodge will be losing a fifth grade teacher and parents are concerned about student/teacher ratios.

She said Greenlodge is projected to have grade 5 classes of 25 and 26 next year, and this does not include new enrollments or students that are held back. She said many of the students in grade 5 have IEPs and documented medical issues. They fear the students will not get the attention they deserve to perform successfully. She said grade 5 is an important year with many transitions and expectations for this age.

Ms. Farnum also commented on the large grade 1 class sizes. She said they have lost programs over the years and do not want to lose small class sizes as well, or see further program cuts. She cited the reduction of the librarian position as an example. She said the parents request three fifth grade classes and the addition of a first grade class next year.

A parent asked if they could utilize the additional special education funds Mr. Campbell spoke about to get these staff positions replaced. Ms. Flatley responded that the budget recommended by the School Department was for an 11% increase and currently the Town is expected to fund 4.5 to 5%. She said they would love to fund these positions, but cannot at this time. The parent asked if there was another way to fund the positions. Ms. Flatley said they are looking for solutions to these problems. Mr. Ryan remarked that 80% of the budget is personnel. He said the remaining 20%, which includes transportation, special education, basic services, fuel and utilities, has been cut tremendously. He said there is nowhere else to cut and they are trying to be equitable. Ms. Flatley added that the committee has done a lot to support education in Dedham. They have invested well in staff and programs. The parents thought that part of the problem was the special education numbers.

Eliot Foulds asked what is meant by a strong inclusion model. Mr. Campbell explained that special education is conducted in the least restrictive environment, which means that they try to support these students in the classroom first. He said a successful inclusion model means that they have support staff in the classroom to support students. He said this model can mean that up to four professionals are in a classroom to support differentiated learning. He said it benefits the entire class.

Ms. Driscoll said that they have tried to protect the elementary schools and every year the budget process is difficult. She said it is hard to accept they cannot afford to build. She said they have cut other areas first to save money.

Mr. Roberts said he has been amazed at how Dedham has been able to keep class sizes small through fiscally challenging times. He said he has seen a lot of cuts and mentioned that the limits of proposition 2 ½ and the economy have made this an impossible equation. He said they made known to the community what the district needed, but the reality is the funding is not there.

Ms. Driscoll said they will watch the class sizes and will make adjustments up until September, if necessary.

Mr. Healy said he was a personal victim of cuts and he assured the parents the committee would examine this and do what they can to prevent these cuts.

Ms. Driscoll said they would be presenting the budget at upcoming PTO meetings and they would discuss this further then.

Ms. Farnum said she is encouraged that they are looking at this. Ms. Doe said this is something they are constantly monitoring.

A parent asked what positions would be funded first. Ms. Flatley said they would consult with administration if funds became available. She said they would not know anything until the new growth number is known.

Parent Diane Foulds asked if there was grant money to fill the gap. Ms. Flatley answered that they do receive a number of grants which help to fund positions. She said private grants are typically not used to fund salaries because they are not a consistent funding source. Ms. Driscoll added that it is not legal to raise money to fund a salary.

Ms. Connolly said she could relate to the parents' concerns. She said her son had an unexpectedly large class size and parents had gone to a School Committee meeting to voice their concern as well. They asked for administration to keep looking for the funds. She said it turned out that the Greenlodge School, which was facing an even larger class size, was able to get an additional teacher. She said her son did well though and it worked out fine.

Ms. Doe reassured the parents that they have a competent staff and can manage the class sizes. She said they are not happy to cut staff, but can manage with what they have and will continue to look at the matter. She emphasized the district has extensive support staff and quality teachers. She said that there is equity across the district in grade 5. She acknowledged that they have had historically low class sizes and this is a painful experience. She added that grade 5 is a reasonable place at the elementary level to absorb the increasing class size and they would adjust as necessary if sizes become too great.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT ON ACTION ITEMS**

There was none.

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Kelly began the presentation by reviewing the difference in responsibilities between her position as an assistant superintendent and Mr. Campbell's. She said she is responsible for teacher preparation and licensure of regular and special education teachers, the English language education endorsement and for the high qualified status under NCLB.

Ms. Kelly said teachers and administrators professional responsibilities include remaining current in their field/discipline, holding appropriate certification, maintaining their highly qualified status in core academic areas, developing and annually updating their Individual Professional Development Plans, and tying their goals and objectives to the district and school improvement plans. She reviewed what is involved for certification and stated that her office is maintaining a database with each teacher's information.

Ms. Kelly discussed the professional development requirements for education reform act (ERA) mandates, which the district is responsible for providing at no cost to the teachers. She also reviewed the new mandate for English Language Education (ELE). Every professional working with ELE students must earn an endorsement on their license. She said there are four categories. Category I training is twelve hours, Category II is 36 and Category IV is 36. She noted that Category III is testing and is required for ELE faculty. She said that because Dedham is what is known as a "low incidence district" there is sufficient staff to perform the testing.

Ms. Kelly spoke about what professional development is, why it is necessary and how it benefits the learning community. She said that this year 345 teachers worked by grade level for their professional development. She said behavior management training has been offered and that classroom management is tied to learning social skills. She stated that the new contract with the paraprofessionals is geared to enhance their service delivery, as well.

Ms. Kelly said that third graders have been working with the Lucy Calkins program and this has been a focus of professional development for several years. She said the grade 4 teachers would like to continue with it. She stated the district receives training from Teachers 21 and Northeastern is offering programs. She said they survey staff and will offer their choices. She said they look carefully at how they spend every dollar.

Ms. Kelly spoke about the ongoing professional development for administrators. She said the administrators chose developing a professional learning community as the focus of their professional development. She stated that Northeastern is providing the training and the administrators are taking this course for credit.

Ms. Kelly reviewed the professional development offerings for the 2007-2008 school year. She stated that preschool and special education teachers participated in interactive workshops on executive functioning presented by Sarah Ward. The kindergarten, grades 1 and 2 teachers participated in ELE Category I training and grade level curriculum meetings. Grade 3 teachers participated in the Lucy Calkins writing workshop. Grade 4 and 5 teachers participated in 6-trait writing workshops. Grades 6 through 12 participated in courses designed by their department chairs. They included curriculum review, MCAS topics, pacing guides and assessment.

Ms. Kelly reviewed this year's week-long institutes and after school courses. She reported that training took place on the Responsive Classroom, Developmental Designs, ELE Category I and

II, Time 4 Exploring math, integrating mathematics with technology, teaching elementary science, and infusing technology into the elementary curriculum.

Ms. Kelly concluded her presentation with a summary of some of the initiatives and activities that have been taking place this year. She stated she has been co-chairing the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, she facilitated the Safe and Drug Free Schools and ELE audits, participated in the Coordinated Program Review financial audit, and helped to get the state mandated Education Personnel Information Management System (EPIMS) into place. She has been working with the Math Curriculum Committee, participated in the Mentoring/New teacher breakfast, worked on the advisory program, the science curriculum, and the change over to Data Warehouse/Cognos from TestWiz. She approved home-school programs, initiated moving to Stanford 10 testing and is on the bargaining team.

Ms. Connolly asked about the Lucy Calkins writing program. Ms. Kelly said it is in place in third grade but they want to expand it to grade 4. Ms. Connolly asked what the connection between the Lucy Calkins and 6-traits programs is. Ms. Kelly replied that six traits is more of a scoring rubric. Lucy Calkins is generating the writing piece, and the two programs work together.

Ms. Connolly asked how she could be sure the teachers were using it. Ms. Kelly assured Ms. Connolly that it was well received and the instructor has observed classes to help integrate the program into the curriculum. Ms. Connolly said she is worried about older teachers incorporating the program. Ms. Kelly said that is the aim of professional development.

Ms. Connolly asked about classroom management professional development with the increase in class size. Ms. Kelly said that it is offered and principals have a role in getting appropriate staff trained. She added that the Responsive Classroom is an important piece of this because it supports the creation of a positive classroom culture. Ms. Connolly wanted this to be mandatory with increasing class sizes. Ms. Kelly pointed out that the model they use involves a week long, intensive course. Ms. Connolly suggested utilizing other programs. Ms. Kelly reviewed some of the other offerings and what has been done in the past.

Ms. Connolly asked about the science curriculum. Ms. Kelly said they would be setting up a committee to look at the science curriculum.

Ms. Flatley asked who initiates the IPDP document. Ms. Kelly said there is a template and the teachers list their goals and how they will be reached. She said the teachers are responsible keeping track of their PDPs and the goals they relate to. Ms. Flatley asked about the goals. Ms. Cummings answered that teachers must have three goals corresponding to district and school goals and one personal goal. She asked if a teacher participating in all of the professional development days during year would meet the 30 PDP required minimum. Ms. Cummings answered that they would. Ms. Flatley asked if the district provides for recertification. Ms. Doe stated they are legally obliged to do so. Ms. Kelly said many teachers have additional certification and they need an additional 30 PDPs for each one.

Ms. Flatley asked about the administrators' professional development. Ms. Kelly said each workshop begins with a clearing and this gives the administrators an opportunity to discuss current issues. She said they have covered how to have difficult conversations and using the evaluation instrument.

Ms. Flatley asked about the hour long meetings. Ms. Kelly said there are 20 and they are held every other Wednesday. She noted that the faculty meetings are different and are called by the

principals. Ms. Flatley asked what the professional development for these meetings entailed. Ms. Kelly replied that the department chairs design those for their teachers. She said this year the focus has been on common assessments. The elementary level has focused on the Responsive Classroom. Ms. Dineen said the kindergarten teachers worked on a common math assessment. Ms. Sullivan also mentioned the grade level meetings, which are a priority to again this year.

Ms. Connolly asked how they handle teachers on improvement plans. Ms. Kelly said they meet with the teachers to address the issues. Ms. Connolly asked how many improvement plans there are and what they would contain. Ms. Kelly said that these plans set out goals and objectives to address deficiencies. Ms. Connolly expressed an interest in seeing an example. Ms. Doe stated that an improvement plan is contractually based and the format is laid out in a document. Ms. Flatley asked if administrators see them. Ms. Doe said they would all be involved in the process.

Ms. Driscoll asked whether anyone in the district had the new certification in math for grades 1-6. Ms. Kelly said no, but they just found out it was offered. Ms. Doe said she is hoping the elementary staff will be interested in a math or science certification, which could be incorporated into a Master's program.

Ms. Flatley asked if highly qualified teachers needed to be certified in a specific subject. Mr. Campbell said they need content specific professional development every five years.

Ms. Driscoll asked how it would be determined if the Responsive Classroom and Developmental Designs are effective. Ms. Kelly said the programs include evaluation documents, but they will be developing their own. She added that the program is research based. She said they would have evaluation results by the beginning of next year.

Ms. Driscoll asked if next year's professional development has been planned. Ms. Kelly said they have been investigating opportunities. She said they would have Lindy Johnson in for new teacher training, as well as additional ELE category training. Ms. Doe mentioned the ABA course being offered through Northeastern University, which can lead to a Master's in Behavior Support Systems.

Ms. Flatley asked about professional development funding. Ms. Kelly said they get grant money for Responsive Classroom. Ms. Doe said they provide money for teachers to attend out of district training if necessary, but try to maximize the dollars spent for district-wide or maximum benefit. Mr. Campbell said they have targeted grants for specific programs and topics. Ms. Flatley asked whether there are teachers willing to spend their own time to pursue professional development but the district could not fund. Ms. Doe said they have had to deny funding. She said they will give teachers the time to do it although they cannot provide the funding.

Ms. Connolly asked if teachers evaluate their professional development. Ms. Kelly said they do complete evaluations after their training. She said that professional development plans require evaluation and they will drop instructors that are not productive.

### **LAST DAY OF SCHOOL**

Ms. Driscoll stated June 18 would be the 180<sup>th</sup> day of school.

Mr. Roberts moved, seconded by Mr. Healy, and it was

**VOTED:** that June 18, 2008 would be the last day of school for the 2007-2008 school year.

## **MINUTES**

Mr. Ryan moved, seconded by Ms. Flatley, and it was

**VOTED:** to accept the April 16, 2008 minutes.

## **DONATIONS**

Ms. Doe announced that the Boosters Club donated \$1,000 toward the purchase of new uniforms for the varsity baseball team. She said they are very grateful to the Boosters for all that they do.

Ms. Flatley moved, with grateful appreciation, seconded by Ms. Connolly, also with grateful appreciation, and it was

**VOTED:** to accept the donation.

## **OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Driscoll stated that Mr. Wofford has officially submitted his resignation from the School Building Rehabilitation Committee and that Andy Lawlor would be replacing him. She thanked Mr. Wofford for all of his efforts towards getting the Middle School built.

## **ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**

Ms. Driscoll stated the next meeting would be May 14 and would include the Superintendent's evaluation, a report on Plato and Vantage Learning, and school choice.

Ms. Doe stated the Strategic Plan Steering Committee would like to present on May 28. She said the district improvement plan could then be presented in June.

Ms. Driscoll requested a report on exiting students.

Mr. Roberts suggested offering a tour of the Avery School prior to the mini Town Meeting. Ms. Connolly recommended the Town Administrator utilize its communication system to notify residents.

Ms. Flatley thanked Ms. Dineen for the tour of the ECEC. She said she enjoyed going. She also reported that she and Ms. Driscoll attended the School Committee Day on the Hill. She said Gov. Patrick spoke in the morning about his vision for public education. He would like to make preschool through college affordable and accessible to all. Ms. Flatley said they then visited with their state representative to advocate for state funds.

Ms. Driscoll said there is a list of bills that are coming forward that are important to encourage the representative and senator to support. She said that among them are bills related to special education transportation, regular transportation and circuit breaker. She said passage could mean additional funds for the district.

Ms. Connolly moved, seconded by Ms. Flatley, and it was

**VOTED:** to adjourn.