

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

**PRESENT**

**Tracy Driscoll, Chair**  
**Margaret Matthews, Vice Chair**  
**David Roberts**  
**Thomas Ryan**  
**Margaret Connolly**  
**Joanne Flatley**  
**John Healy**

**ADMINISTRATION**

**June M. Doe, Superintendent**  
**Cynthia Kelly, Asst. Superintendent**  
**Christopher Campbell, Asst. Superintendent**  
**Alan Winrow, Principal**  
**Jacob Santamaria, Asst. Principal**  
**John Murray, Asst. Principal**

**Convened: 6:00 PM**

**Adjourned: 9:30 PM**

Ms. Driscoll stated there was a need for executive session under exemption three. The School Committee would be meeting with the Board of Selectmen to discuss contract negotiations.

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

**VOTED:** by roll call to go into executive session under exemption three. Mr. Roberts – aye, Mr. Healy – aye, Ms. Flatley – aye, Ms. Connolly – aye, Mr. Ryan – aye, Ms. Matthews – aye, Ms. Driscoll aye.

The committee returned to open session at 7:00 PM.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

Ms. Doe reported that Dedham High School students did very well in the *Boston Globe* Scholastic Arts Awards. She stated there would be a two page announcement of it in the *Sunday Globe*. She announced Heather Brink and Rebecca Ton-That won gold keys and will go on to compete at the national level. Additionally, Kara Brink won two honorable mentions and Alyssa Kane won an honorable mention. Ms. Doe said their work is on display at the State Transportation Building in Boston until February 22.

Ms. Doe announced that there would be an Art Extravaganza at the Middle School in May. She said art work for grades 6-12 would be showcased for one week and details would be forthcoming.

Ms. Doe stated that college acceptances continue to come in. She said she has been pleased with the acceptances. She stated the full list could be found in the High School guidance office.

Ms. Doe reported that Mr. Winrow, Mr. Murray and Mr. Santamaria greeted the current 8<sup>th</sup> grade class on Monday evening to give them an orientation of the High School.

Ms. Doe announced that science teacher Laura McFarland was recognized as the January staff member of the month. Her students say that her classes come alive and that she tries to reach all of her students.

Ms. Doe reported that the Food Service Department sponsored a Patriots' week drawing. She listed the winners of the drawing and the prizes received. She thanked the department for sponsoring this event.

Ms. Doe reported that the Dedham High School Computer Club sponsored an instructional technology class for the members of the Council on Aging. She said the students showed the group how to set up their own email. Ms. Doe said she is pleased to see that the schools are reaching out to the community to support its needs and interests. She said the club plans to host another session on February 28. Ms. Doe said the feedback has been very positive.

Ms. Doe reported that Governor Deval Patrick visited the Greenlodge School last Friday. She said it was a pleasant surprise to hear of his interest in visiting the school following his state of the state address on Thursday. She said students had the opportunity to interact with the governor in Ms. Budd's third grade class and Ms. Reagan's first grade class.

Taken out of order.

### **MCAS – SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Mr. Campbell apologized for being unable to present this report on January 2, as originally scheduled. He began his presentation by explaining how students with disabilities participate in MCAS. He stated that the student's IEP or 504 team would determine this on an annual basis and document it in their IEP or 504 plan. He said the team determines whether they would take the standard test without accommodations or take an alternative assessment. He said the requirements for taking the test with accommodations are that the student uses the accommodation routinely during classroom instruction and assessment in the subject, the student requires the accommodation to participate in statewide tests and it is documented in their plan.

Mr. Campbell reviewed the standard test accommodations, which are grouped into four categories: changes in timing, setting, presentation and how the student responds to test questions. He stated that non-standard accommodations include modifications that change the way the MCAS test is presented or the way in which a student responds to test questions. He said that because non-standard accommodations alter what the test measures, teams must make the decision to require a non-standard accommodation with care.

Mr. Campbell reviewed the grade 3 reading results. He reported that 17% of the students that took the grade 3 MCAS receive special education support. He stated that the district uses TestWiz to compile and analyze this data. He reported that 66% of the students receiving a warning were special education students, but the number of students reflects only 11% of the special education students taking the test. He said the students outperformed the state average of students receiving similar services, particularly in vocabulary and open response.

Mr. Campbell reported that 17.5% of students taking the grade 3 math MCAS received special education services. He stated that Dedham students outperformed the state average on this test as well. He reviewed the numbers by category.

Mr. Campbell reported of 18.6% of the 4<sup>th</sup> graders that took the ELA MCAS were special education students. He noted that two students were excluded from MCAS administration. He said that compared to other students across the state, Dedham students outperformed them on the test, particularly in vocabulary. He said he credits this to the individualized instruction they receive.

Mr. Campbell reported that 18.6% of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students taking the math MCAS received special education support. He said compared to the state averages these students outperformed them on the test. He pointed out that although 50% of the students in the warning category were special education students, this represented seven students.

Mr. Campbell stated that 20.6% of grade 5 students taking the ELA MCAS received special education services. He said when compared to state averages of students receiving similar special education services Dedham students are outperforming their peers. He reported that 20.6% of students that took the grade 5 math MCAS received special education services. Fourteen students scored in the warning category. Mr. Campbell stated that Dedham outperformed their peers as compared to the state average. He said the district's focus on the open response is supporting these scores. Mr. Campbell reported on the grade 5 science and technology test. He said this test is cumulative, covering material from grades 3-5. The students performed comparatively to other students across the state.

Mr. Campbell reported that 13.3% of students taking grade 6 MCAS received special education support in English/language arts. He stated that compared to other students across the state Dedham students outperformed their peers. One student received a warning. He said the students were particularly strong in vocabulary and open response. He stated that the math performance was not good. One third of the students received a warning. He pointed out that math is a currently a focus for improvement at the Middle School. He said the scores compared to the state scores.

Mr. Campbell stated that 19% of grade 7 students taking the ELA MCAS received special education support. He said five students received a warning and a majority received a needs improvement score. He stated 7% of these students scored proficient. He stated that the scores were comparable to the state scores with open response and vocabulary being very similar. He said that in math 18.8% of students received special education support. He said half of the students received a warning. He reiterated that this area is targeted for improvement and the specific initiatives were addressed in the district-wide presentation of the scores. He said that the students performed comparably or slightly better than their peers across the state.

Mr. Campbell stated that 24.2% of grade 8 students received special education support in ELA. He said there were five warnings, but a majority scored proficient. The students outperformed their peers in open response, but there were mixed results in vocabulary. Mr. Campbell stated that 24.2% of grade 8 students received special education services in mathematics. He said there were a number of warnings and they were not happy about the results in this area. He said the scores were slightly lower than their peers statewide and open response results were mixed.

Mr. Campbell reported on the grade 8 science/technology results, which is cumulative test. He said twenty-eight students received a warning and the scores were comparable to the state's. He said the scores are not acceptable. He stated that a couple of students took the alternate assessment, which is a portfolio based assessment.

Grade 10 scores were reviewed. Mr. Campbell reported that 14.4% of students received special education support. He said there were no failures in this category. He stated that 18 students received a needs improvement and 38% scored proficient. He reported that the students outperformed their peers statewide in the open response. The vocabulary results were mixed.

Mr. Campbell stated that four students did not pass the math test the first time. He reported that 85% of the special education students did pass the test the first time around and they outperformed their peers statewide on a large majority of the test.

Mr. Campbell reviewed overall MCAS data for grade 10, which Mr. Winrow had provided at the original MCAS presentation. He pointed out that 95% of all students passed both the ELA and

math tests. Four percent have passed only the English test, 1% have passed only the math test, and 1% have passed neither test.

Mr. Campbell discussed the ways in which special education students' needs are addressed. He stated that an in-depth analysis of the results takes place first and then Individual Student Success Plans (ISSPs) are drafted. He said these plans might involve tutoring, course selection and after school support. He said the student's IEP is re-examined and determination is made as to whether the student is receiving appropriate support in the area of concern. He stated that at the Middle School special education students participate in team taught mathematics and the High School offers an additional MCAS math course and Strategies for Success.

Mr. Campbell spoke about TestWiz and provided an example of how teachers can use the data to analyze their students' scores. He said there are many ways to filter special education records to look at this area. Mr. Campbell presented slides to demonstrate how a teacher can perform item analysis or look at a specific question.

Mr. Campbell spoke about the Middle School's improvement plan for Adequate Yearly Progress. He stated that in September 2007 the school implemented a new math textbook with online support materials. ISSPs were implemented for all students in the warning and needs improvement categories. He said staff is analyzing and linking data from previous MCAS and Stanford-9 tests to classroom instruction (through TestWiz). They have also compared student IEPs and service delivery to ensure that that are effective. He said the Middle School has implemented the Plato program. They are using YPP to provide individualized student support. Targeted after-school programs are provided. Prior year teachers are consulted for determination of students' strengths and weaknesses. Common assessments are used to monitor student performance and drive instruction. He stated there is ongoing professional development in new instruction materials, software and assessment programs. Peer tutoring has been initiated both before and after school.

Mr. Campbell reviewed the district's special education improvement goal of supporting meaningful and measurable change that will result in making Adequate Yearly Progress for all Dedham special education student subgroups. He said this goal means looking at systemic strategies that can be employed by teachers and/or administrators and specific changes in educational practice to address students' needs.

Mr. Campbell reviewed the Plato program, which is a technology based program that provides individualized support in ELA and math. He said all students in grades 6-8 will have the opportunity to utilize the program before, during and after school. He also reviewed Vantage Learning's Go My Access. He stated this is a technology based writing program that provides student with instant feedback on writing as well as specific support on written organization, fluency, grammar, spelling, sentence structure and topic development. He said that teachers can use this program to encourage increased writing across the curriculum.

Mr. Campbell discussed how parents could show their support of improving scores through careful review of the MCAS results they receive for their children, asking their children's liaison for a more detailed breakdown of the results, being aware of standard and non-standard accommodations, and working with the IEP team to determine the most appropriate accommodations.

Mr. Campbell provided post secondary statistics for students with IEPs or 504 accommodation plans, which parents were interested in at the original MCAS presentation to SEPAC. He stated

that last year there were 36 students eligible for graduation, 21 on IEPs and 15 on 504s. He reported that 31 of these students graduated in June. One graduated in August. Three received certificates of attainment and one was a non-graduate.

Mr. Campbell reported that their average SAT scores were 441 in critical reading, 441 in math and 441 in writing. He also reported on their post secondary plans. Thirteen are attending four year schools, twelve are attending two year schools, one is attending a propriety school and five are currently working. He provided a list of the schools they are attending.

Mr. Campbell reviewed the four year college statistics. He said that of the 31 June graduates in this study, 17 applied to at least one four year college. He said that 16 of those 17 were accepted to at least one four year college. He reported that the average SAT scores of students applying to four year colleges were 466 in critical reading, 458 in math and 455 in writing. He said there was a 74% acceptance rate at all four year colleges. He provided a list of the schools accepting these students.

Mr. Campbell discussed SAT accommodations, which are known as Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). He stated there is an application process to request accommodations and every spring a letter is sent to every student with extended time written into his/her IEP or 504 plan inviting them to apply for SSD accommodations. He said that students or parents can request an SSD form from the guidance office. The first two pages must be completed and returned to guidance. The liaison or counselor completes the remainder of the form (accommodations requested and evaluative data) and compiles necessary supplemental data. He said the completed form and supporting data is mailed to the College Board for review. The College Board then informs the family and the school of their decision or requests further data. He said that approved students are issued an SSD code to use when registering for any College Board exam.

Mr. Campbell discussed the possible accommodations for the SAT. They include extended time, visual assistance, auditory assistance, manual assistance and additional assistance (e.g. extended breaks, small group testing). He stressed that specific accommodations are limited to include only those given and regularly utilized by the student in class at school. He said it was important to note that the presence of a current IEP or 504 plan does not guarantee approval for SSD services, nor does the presence of a disability. He said that, often, review of both cognitive and achievement testing is required for approval.

Ms. Connolly asked what support the current 9<sup>th</sup> grade special education students are receiving. Mr. Campbell reviewed the Strategies for Success course. Mr. Winrow said that they will be offered MCAS support programs. Mr. Murray said that at the moment they have targeted the 10<sup>th</sup> graders to prepare them for the spring test. He said they are considering a summer program to target next year's 10<sup>th</sup> graders. He added that grades for term 2 will be released on Friday and they will look at these to determine which students might need intervention. Mr. Campbell reminded Ms. Connolly that the students are team taught and therefore they would have a special education teacher providing input.

Ms. Connolly asked about the Middle School's ISSPs. Mr. Campbell said they have been written and shared with the parents. She asked about the High School. Mr. Murray said they have done ISSPs for the tenth graders. Mr. Campbell stated that the ISSPs are required by the DOE for failures and warnings. The Middle School has gone one step beyond with the drafting of ISSPs for the needs improvement students. Ms. Connolly said all needs improvement students should be addressed. She asked about peer tutoring. Mr. Campbell stated that Principal Ruggere could

answer that when he attended the meeting to report on the MCAS initiatives. Mr. Winrow said the National Honor Society does the peer tutoring at the High School. It is part of their community service.

Ms. Connolly asked if Vantage Learning has been fully implemented. Mr. Campbell said that many writing prompts have been initiated in the classrooms. The liaison has collected some statistics and is in the process of developing an analysis of the responses, use, and success rate. Ms. Connolly said she would like to see this information when it is available.

Ms. Flatley asked if students on IEPs might also receive an ISSP. Mr. Campbell said they could. He stated that parents may opt out of some recommended actions, but they encourage full participation in all of the supports offered. He said parents should be aware of what the plans are. Ms. Flatley asked about the math support. Mr. Campbell stated that a math curriculum committee is looking at the programs and texts in place to determine how they can make improvements. Ms. Kelly offered further information about how the weaknesses in the math program would be addressed. Ms. Flatley expressed a concern about language based math instruction. Mr. Campbell said accommodations are made for students with special needs in this area.

Ms. Flatley asked if the drop out rate has been looked at for the special education segment. Mr. Winrow said the state just released the four year graduation rate. He said that he believes the drop out rate was 2.9% last year. He said he believed the four year graduation rate is 85.5% and the state average is 80%. Ms. Flatley asked if he was collecting the information for this population. Mr. Winrow said the state collects graduation rate information from the SIMS reports.

Ms. Matthews stated it appears that the majority of the district's special education students are scoring needs improvement. She also stated that the district performed slightly better than the state average most of the time. She said that she understands there is variation in the special education services these students are receiving from district to district, but asked whether there are other towns that are performing better than Dedham and whether Dedham could look at what they are doing to compare with their own programs. Mr. Campbell agreed that Dedham should look at best practices and see what they might apply here, as well as how they might better use their existing resources. He said they do this already.

Mr. Ryan supported looking at other districts to see how their special education programs were modeled, particularly at the high school level. He suggested SEPAC look at this. Ms. Doe said it was important to emphasize that the High School offers three distinct special education programs: vocational, alternative and inclusion. She said they are trying to address a variety of needs through these programs.

Michelle Labadini asked for clarification about the cost of the before and after school MCAS programs. Ms. Doe stated that the remedial program is at no cost to the student, but the enrichment program is fee based.

Susan Richberg asked if the percentage increase in the special education population at the Middle School level could correlate to the MCAS scores not being what they want them to be. Mr. Campbell said that they would have to compare the scores against several years of data and look at the impact of the action plans put in place for entire grades. He said the less than satisfactory performance cannot be tied solely to the special education population.

Ann Mercer asked if there was a way to get information on drop outs that were on IEPs or 504 plans. Mr. Winrow said that they could research that. She asked if he felt that was a significant portion of the drop out population. Mr. Winrow and Mr. Santamaria both said that these students are not the typical drop out.

A parent asked if parents could choose whether their child would take MCAS. Mr. Campbell said that all students must participate in MCAS in some way. He reiterated that accommodations are made according to special education needs. He added that the portfolio assessment is limited to very select situations. The parent said she did not see how it was possible for a child performing significantly below grade level to complete an MCAS for that grade. Mr. Campbell stated that the appropriate accommodations would be provided.

Ms. Mercer asked if alternative assessments are factored into the MCAS scores reported for a grade. Mr. Campbell said they were.

#### **CHAIR'S UPDATE**

Ms. Driscoll congratulated Mr. La Francesca on the birth of his daughter. She said they would be postponing discussion of the budget tonight due to his absence.

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

Miss Chen spoke about the football trivia contest at the High School and the logo survey. Mr. Santamaria said that students and staff could vote on three proposed logos or mascots and the voting closes on February 8. He said the logo would be revealed on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Driscoll asked Miss Chen what she thought of the recent college program. Miss Chen said she was not overly impressed with it. Mr. Winrow said the speaker was not as motivational as previous years.

#### **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was none.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT ON ACTION ITEMS**

There was none.

#### **PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION OF FY 09 BUDGET**

This item was postponed.

#### **MINUTES**

Mr. Roberts moved, seconded by Ms. Connolly, and it was

**VOTED:** to accept the January 2, 2008 minutes.

#### **DONATIONS**

Ms. Doe announced vehicle donations to the High School's Occupational Education Department. They are a 1992 Oldsmobile Cutlass donated by Michael Newell, a 2001 Chrysler van donate by Annemarie Dwanarowicz, a 1998 Isuzu Rodeo donated by Matthew Coughlin, a 1996 Dodge Stratus donated by Kathleen Hayes, a 2000 Chevrolet Malibu donated by Diane Durka, a 1992 Ford Taurus Wagon donated by James Driscoll, a 1992 Ford Taurus donated by John Connelly, a 1999 Ford Taurus donated by Josephine Yakimowski, and a 1993 Mercury Cougar donated by Kevin Donovan.

Ms. Doe also reported that the Dedham Fire Department donated \$200 to the Girls' Basketball Holiday Tournament and Petruzzello Plaza donated \$1,000 to the Petruzzello Plaza Holiday Tournament.

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

**VOTED:** to accept the donations.

#### **OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Driscoll said that the Selectmen have invited the School Committee to participate in their "Town Hall to Your Neighborhood" meetings they will be hosting on February 6, March 5 and April 2. She asked if the committee was interested in attending. The members indicated they would like to participate. She said that the February 6 date was not a conflict for the committee, but the other two dates were. The committee agreed to reschedule the April 2 meeting to April 9 and decided to designate a member to attend the meeting on March 5.

#### **ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**

Ms. Driscoll said the next meeting would be held on February 13 and would comprise a presentation of the FY 09 budget and public hearing. She said that Dan Rouse would also be presenting a financial literacy curriculum he has developed for the High School.

Ms. Driscoll stated that the meeting on March 5 would include a report from the High School on leveling, college acceptances and SAT scores.

Mr. Roberts asked to hear from the new athletic director at some point. Ms. Connolly asked to hear from the new social studies department chair and guidance director as well.

Ms. Driscoll noted that she, Ms. Doe, Mr. Keegan and other officials would be visiting the Massachusetts School Building Authority on February 13.

Ms. Driscoll stated that the committee would now resume its executive session and would not be coming out of this session to adjourn.

The open session concluded at 8:50 PM.