

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING—December 12, 2007**  
**Auditorium, 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**  
**Michael La Francesca, Business Manager**  
**Alan Winrow, Principal**  
**Jacob Santamaria, Asst. Principal**  
**John Murray, Asst. Principal**

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE**

**Jacqueline Chen**

**Convened: 7:00 PM**

**Adjourned: 10:30 PM**

**STUDENT RECOGNITION**

The committee recognized the recipients of the John and Abigail Adams Scholarships. The scholarship is awarded to students within the top 25% scoring advanced in the ELA or math MCAS tests and provides free tuition to any Massachusetts state school. The students are:

Daniel Barrett, Jennifer Boudrow, Caitlin Callahan, Kayla Cammarata, Lauren Catinella, Payal Desai, Alex Doucette, Daniel Driscoll, Nicole Renea Ezell, Nicholas Fallon, Victoria Flagg-Durkin, Joseph Frasca, Loring Goodale, Jessica Hasenfuss, Meghan Healy, Shane Hefernan, Katrina Heisler, Daniel Herson, Daniel Hynes, Peter Hynes, Sabtha Jean-Pierre, Core Jorress, Elizabeth Kempton, Mathew Malatis, James McCormick, Sean McElhinney, Elizabeth McGourty, Ryan Murray, Phillip Nash, Dylan Nauss, Michael O'Connor, Michelle O'Connor, Timothy O'Connor, Dominic Poncia, Samantha Quinn, Candice Radloff, Jose-Anthony Ramos, Robert Santamaria, Nicholas Scarlata, Joseph Scolastico, Carolyn Sliwa, Brittany Stivaletta, Molly Sullivan, Anastasia Tannous, Katelin Timmons, John Twomey, Brittany Walker, Kately Warjas, and Stephanie Welch.

The students present briefly spoke about their future plans. The committee and administration offered their congratulations.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

Ms. Doe reported that the fall athletic banquet sponsored by the Boosters Club was held on Monday. She said it was an enjoyable event and thanked the Boosters for their efforts. She added that beginning last year Mr. Winrow has recognized the academic accomplishments of the student athletes at the banquet. She said results show that this year 58% of the students on the honor roll were fall athletes and that the girls soccer team had the highest percentage of honor roll students at 70%. She said 64% of student athletes had GPA of 3.0 or higher and the field hockey team had the highest GPA at 3.5.

Ms. Doe announced that the School Building Authority has identified the Avery School as in need of major rehabilitation. She said Town and School officials met with Katherine Craven this

week to tour the school. She said they also discussed the plan the SBA is unfolding for school projects.

Student representative Jackie Chen said she was pleased to hear the Dedham sports teams were recognized for their academic achievements.

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

Ms. Driscoll invited the student representative to give an update on what is happening at the High School at future School Committee meetings.

Ms. Driscoll stated that Ms. Armstrong has invited the School Committee to hear the 5<sup>th</sup> grade chorus to perform at Central Administration on December 18.

Ms. Driscoll stated the Town of Dedham's holiday party is Friday.

Ms. Driscoll stated that the SEPAC presentation was supposed to be on this evening's agenda. She said the presentation is going to be modified based on items raised at the original presentation and would be presented at the next meeting.

A parent asked if the presentation was definite. Ms. Driscoll told her she would confirm that with her. She added that the presentation would not be as extensive as it was.

#### **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Poole asked if the next step for the Avery project is to conduct a feasibility study. Ms. Doe replied that the next step would be to identify a project manager. She said the SBA is just beginning this process and no paperwork has come to Dedham relative to how they should be proceeding. She said the district would be following the SBA's timeline.

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

There was none.

#### **OUT OF STATE, OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIP REQUEST**

Foreign language department chair Nancy Bradley and foreign language teacher Kelly Beck presented a request to take a group of students to Quebec, Canada Friday, April 11 through Sunday, April 13. Ms. Bradley said the trip would be planned through Visit Canada Touring Company, which is the same company the district used for the Montreal trip last year. She said they currently have 21 students signed up and they are excited about using their linguistic skills outside the classroom.

Ms. Flatley asked how much the trip would cost. Ms. Beck said it would be \$545 per student. Ms. Flatley asked about chaperones. Ms. Beck said she would be chaperoning along with two others. Ms. Flatley asked about lunch on day two. Ms. Beck said the students would be allowed to get their own lunch, but within a specified area.

Mr. Roberts asked that current certificates of insurance be on file for the trip and the bus company they would be using. He noted the policy period is expired for the certificate included in their backup materials.

Ms. Matthews asked if there were interested students that could not afford it. Ms. Beck said there were not any at this time. She said they did not fundraise for this trip, but it did not prove to be a real problem for the students interested in going.

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

**VOTED:** to approve the out of state, overnight trip to Quebec from April 11 to 13.

#### **SAT AND ADVANCED PLACEMENT STUDENT DATA**

Guidance director Joanne McCormick provided the committee with an overview of the academic years 2007 and 2008 as they relate to SAT and advanced placement data. She began the presentation with post secondary attendance data. She reported that the percentages have been between 84 and 89 and said that with the relatively small numbers represented, just a few students can account greatly for any variation in the percentages. She also noted the percentages reflect attendance rate as opposed to acceptance rate. She said that sometimes finances are a factor in college selection, which could explain the increase in two year college attendance.

Ms. McCormick then discussed the SAT score trends. She stated that an average of 142 students take the SAT each year. She noted that the old SAT format was in place for the 2002 to 2005 data and the new SAT format with three sections was implemented in 2006. She reported that 149 students in the 2007 graduating class took the SAT and received mean scores of 465 in reading, 489 in math, and 467 in writing. She also provided information on students that took both the SAT I and II. She said the SAT II are subject tests. She said that those that took both scored on average 563, 602, and 568 respectively. She said this second group is more familiar with the SAT test.

Ms. McCormick provided an SAT/MCAS comparison. She reported that 76% of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students scored either proficient or advanced in ELA and 85% for math. She stated the school has put a great emphasis on this test and, consequently, the students are familiar with it. She said they are not as familiar with the SAT. She pointed out that the differences in the MCAS test are its focus on state standards and that it is an un-timed test.

Ms. McCormick reviewed the 2006-2007 PSAT scores. She noted that the range for section scores is 20-80 and 60-240 for a total score. She stated that the class of 2008 had a critical reading mean of 46.7, a math mean of 48.3, and writing skills mean of 43.9. She stated the class of 2009 had means of 42.8, 43.8, and 40.5. She said that to convert these numbers to SAT scores one would move the decimal over one. She said this year, the class of 2009 scored 45.1, 48.4, and 44.0. The class of 2010 scored 41.8, 43.1, and 40.7. She stated that this test is taken by every student and the school covers the cost. She said it is a simulated SAT.

Ms. McCormick compared the SAT scores to the PSAT scores for the 23 students that took the SAT I and II. She said all but one student took the PSAT in both 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. She reported the average net improvement was 143 points and the range of increase was 20 to 340 points. She reviewed the data in critical reading, math, and writing for this group.

Ms. McCormick presented advanced placement data. She reviewed the enrollment in the ten classes offered for 2006-2007. She also provided the multiple AP enrollments. She stated ten courses are offered this year as well and there are 110 different students in the classes. She said 79 students are taking just one. She then discussed the AP trends. She said there were 100 AP test takers in 2007 and 34% got a 3 or better. She stated that a 3, 4 or 5 would give the student college credit depending upon the specific college's requirement.

Ms. McCormick showed the top twenty ranked students' college plans. She stated that she contacted students from last year's graduating class who were in the top 20% and were now in

college to find out how they were doing, if they felt they were prepared for college and to ask what input they could provide for current High School students. She said she heard from 13 of the students and would continue to seek feedback from the others over the break. She reviewed their feedback and provided observations and conclusions. She said based on this information they intend to increase emphasis on SAT prep for grades 11 and 12. She said they will continue analysis of school curriculum as it relates to SAT and AP, data analysis, and AP course prerequisites. She said they did an AP audit and the syllabi of all course offerings have met AP curriculum standards. She said that overall, the students surveyed felt prepared and well placed for school.

Ms. McCormick detailed two SAT prep offerings she is considering for Dedham. She said the first is a Kaplan course with 12 sessions and four practice tests at a cost of \$600 per student. She said the course would be offered at the High School for convenience and would begin in early March. She said they would need eight students to hold the class and parents would be contacted directly about this offering.

Ms. McCormick said there are on-line prep courses that students can do for free. She said most SAT prep companies offer this. She said students could also access the SAT QuizBank.

She said the other class she is considering is CollegePrep Plus, which is ten sessions with no practice tests. She said there would be a sliding fee scale from \$375 to \$325, depending on the number of students signing up. She said this would also be offered at the High School in early March. She stated that a benefit of these prep courses is that the organizations offer scholarships to students demonstrating financial need.

Ms. McCormick said she is planning a class presentation in the spring called "What is AP?" She said she wants students to be clear about what advanced placement is, what is expected of AP students and what AP students can expect in their courses.

Ms. Driscoll asked for copies of the AP charts for the School Committee's information.

Ms. Matthews noted the improvements with the PSAT. She thanked Mr. Winrow for getting the test in place on an ongoing basis. She said that the emphasis on writing from the thirteen college freshmen jumped out to her and thought it should be addressed in the future. She then asked about schedule issues limiting the number of AP courses a student can take. Mr. Winrow responded that an AP Committee was formed several years ago to look at the issues and one of the topics for discussion was how many AP courses students should take. He said the committee decided there should be a limit based on the data they had looked at. He added that most students are reluctant to take more than one and that their interest is generally in only one particular topic. He noted there were no AP French and Spanish courses this year because the offering is cyclical. He said they are considering an AP European course next year. He said they do try to coordinate the schedule to maximize the opportunities for the students, but it was impossible to take all AP's. He said they should be offering 13 courses next year.

Ms. Doe stated there has been an analysis of AP internally. She remarked that AP is a serious commitment. She said the administration wants to make sure the best instruction is offered and to see best possible results. She said it is important that the students are sure they are willing to make the commitment AP requires. She added that the expectations will be higher next year.

Ms. Matthews asked if the AP test is a requirement. Mr. Winrow said there is some disagreement among department chairs about this, but the wording in the course catalog is specific. The

catalog states that students are expected (purposely not required) to take the test. He noted that taking four or five AP courses can be expensive. Additionally, he said AP requires students to stretch their boundaries and was not sure they should be forced to take the test. He said they do have rising expectations, however, and want to eradicate the idea of taking the course just to have it on your transcript. He stated all staff teaching AP has to complete specialized training to teach the course and they do not always have trained teachers for this.

Ms. Matthews brought up the ongoing discussion of whether AP should be weighted differently than honors. Ms. McCormick said there is a committee with parents, school members and others interested that will look at this issue. She said they will address grades and numerical value in terms of letter grade, class rank, and a weighted GPA. She said the committee meetings are scheduled for January 8, 17, and 24.

Mr. Ryan asked what motivation there would be to take AP considering AP's and honors classes are weighted the same. Mr. Winrow said it is a good point, but students should not be taking an AP course to affect class rank or GPA. He said it is solely for working at the college level and potentially receiving college credit. He said they would like to recognize their performance in the course, however. He mentioned that if AP were weighted further a D in AP would be an A in level two.

Ms. Flatley referred to the SAT score chart. She said the written SAT scores seemed to go down. Ms. McCormick said yes and no. She said scores went down, but the College Board has cautioned them not to make those comparisons because the test has been reformulated. Ms. Flatley asked about PSAT scores. Ms. McCormick said that the means for the 2007, 2008 and 2009 classes show changes from one year to the next. She noted there was improvement in every category.

Ms. Flatley asked if Ms. McCormick has looked at the top ten student lists to find out how many took AP and received credit. Ms. McCormick said she has not looked at that. Ms. Flatley hoped the students are evaluated for the appropriateness of their course selections. Ms. McCormick said one of the benefits of the PSAT is that the district can look at this data to make these determinations and this would be one component of the decision making process.

Mr. Ryan asked Dr. Laflamme for his response to the feedback of the college students concerning writing. Dr. Laflamme responded that they are no longer waiting until grade 12 to address research papers. He said training will begin in grade 6 to develop the skills necessary to write and document a research paper. Mr. Winrow said that all department heads have taken ownership of this issue. Ms. McCormick said it will be interesting to see what more data reveals.

Mr. Ryan commended Ms. McCormick for her presentation. He asked if this was the first time the district was considering offering the Kaplan course. Ms. McCormick said that they have tried this in the past, but the difficulty has been getting the interest generated for it. She said she believes in offering more than one course and would run both.

Ms. Doe said that the more the students practice this test, the better the results are. She also said she has observed that the students are making the decision about the prep course and not the parents. She thinks parents should carefully weigh the benefits of the course. Ms. McCormick said learning the tricks of test can also make a difference.

Mr. Winrow pointed out that one test is standards based and the other is standardized with national norms. He said that for the most part the SAT questions proceed from easier to more

difficult and students should not blindly guess because it will negatively impact their scores. Ms. McCormick said it is important to take the class because it is no longer a level playing field for college admissions.

Ms. Driscoll asked if Ms. McCormick had information about students who have taken the test prep. Mr. Winrow said that the organizations that offered courses provided that information, but the numbers were small and therefore statistically irrelevant.

Ms. Matthews asked how parents can find out about course offerings in Dedham. Ms. McCormick said that they would be mailing the parents directly. She said PSAT scores were just received and there would be a presentation for both students and parents about what the scores mean. She said there would also be a guidance department newsletter going home with the report cards with this information.

Mr. Winrow said last year there were two courses offered and one online called Triumph. He said the online course was used as a resource in class, but any SAT prep the students wanted to do had to be done on their own time.

Ms. Connolly said Ms. McCormick answered a lot of her questions with her presentation. She asked about the numbers provided in the AP trends. Ms. McCormick said the number indicates the number that took the test and that 34% got a 3 or better. Ms. Connolly said that number is disappointing and would hope that some corrections could be made to improve scores. Ms. McCormick said she would like to close that gap and is working to address it.

Ms. McCormick said this is the first year the AP has approved the syllabi and all of the High School's classes have been approved, which means the College Board finds them acceptable.

Ms. Connolly asked about sending the prep course letter home with the report cards. Ms. McCormick said that she is hesitant to send her newsletter home with the reports; the letters will come directly from the companies to the parents. Ms. Connolly said the sooner the letter is mailed the better it is for planning purposes. Ms. McCormick said it would go out at the beginning of January. Ms. Connolly asked that the information be put in the *News Corner*, as well.

Ms. Connolly asked what an average increase would be for a student taking the PSAT and then the SAT. Ms. McCormick said that for the PSAT offered to sophomores there will be a significant jump. She said the College Board has that data and she could probably get it for her.

Ms. McCormick discussed the reporting and explanation of PSAT scores. She said grade 10 would receive this information in small groups when they return from break.

Ms. Connolly commented again on the feedback from students on writing and study skills. She thought there should also be a study skills course. Ms. McCormick said it was food for thought. She said they do have the academic center which would offer that support.

Mr. Healy asked how students get college credit for AP. McCormick said a student has to take the course and test 3 or better. She said sometimes a college would expect a 4. He commented on how much concern parents have about MCAS, but that college admissions do not even consider the test. He thinks that the SAT should be mandated and funded for all students.

Mr. Healy asked about additional support for the SAT test. Mr. Winrow said that the SAT is a business run by the College Board. He commented that if Dedham is not approved for AP it cannot use the AP symbol for this class. He said they would like to use their resources to support students to the greatest extent possible, but added that out of class preparation is invaluable. Ms. McCormick said some colleges are using the SAT writing component as part of the admission criteria due to the trend of outside support for the essays.

Mr. Santamaria said that the sophomores taking the PSAT are put on the mailing list for this test. He said everyone can register on the College Board site. He said those registering can get an SAT question per day. He said students receive an access code along with their PSAT scores to provide them with additional online resources.

Mr. Roberts asked to hear from the AP Committee once it has completed its review of the issues. He said there should be clarification of where they are going with it.

A parent suggested putting notice of the SAT prep course offering in the *Pipeline*.

Mr. Winrow asked the student representative for her input. She said she was interested in taking a prep course.

Ms. McCormick said any way they can get the information out is useful. She said parents should sign up for the listserv on the district's webpage, which would provide another avenue for receiving information.

#### **MINUTES**

***November 27, 2007.***

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

**VOTED:** to accept the November 27, 2007 minutes. Mr. Roberts abstained.

#### **DONATIONS**

Ms. Doe announced that Mr. Patrick Burns, a relative of a grade 6 student, donated \$50 to the Middle School's after school programs. Additionally, Dedham Civic Pride donated \$100 to the High School's vocational program.

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**

Mr. Healy said he recently attended a leadership course at Northeastern called Leadership for Change. He said he would share materials from it with the committee.

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

Ms. Driscoll stated the next meeting would include the SEPAC presentation with graduation data to be incorporated.

A parent said that Dedham's MCAS results cannot be opened on the webpage and that the special education results are not included.

Ms. Connolly asked if there would be any school improvement plan presentations. Ms. Doe said there is one coming forward this year, which is the Middle School's. Mr. Murray said the High School had its first meeting to look at its goals.

Ms. Driscoll stated the committee needed to meet in executive session.

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

**VOTED:** to go into executive session. Mr. Roberts – aye, Mr. Healy – aye, Ms. Connolly – aye, Mr. Ryan – aye, Ms. Flatley – aye, Ms. Matthews – aye, and Ms. Driscoll - aye.

Ms. Driscoll stated the committee would not be coming out of executive session to adjourn.