

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING—September 26, 2007
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
Michael La Francesca, Business Manager
Alan Winrow, Principal
Jacob Santamaria, Asst. Principal

Convened: 7:00 PM

Adjourned: 9:20 PM

Ms. Driscoll stated there was a need for executive session under exemption three to hear a grievance.

Mr. Roberts so moved, seconded by Mr. Ryan, and it was

VOTED: by roll call. Mr. Roberts – aye, Mr. Ryan – aye, Mr. Healy – aye, Ms. Flatley – aye, Ms. Connolly – aye, Ms. Matthews – aye, and Ms. Driscoll – aye.

SUPERINTENDENT’S UPDATE

Ms. Doe reported that a Strategic Planning session was held on Monday, September 24, at Dedham Middle School. She stated the community was invited to participate in this planning process and that liaisons representing various constituencies were selected to help gather the community’s input throughout this year-long process.

Ms. Doe reported that the Superintendent’s Advisory Council met today. She stated that the students commented on how quiet the building seemed this year. She remarked that it was possibly due to the relocation of central administration to the school this month. Ms. Doe once again extended an invitation to the community to visit the new offices, located at 100 Whiting Avenue. She stated that as of last Tuesday, the staff is moved into its permanent offices.

Ms. Doe announced she would be commencing a Superintendent’s Advisory Council at the Middle School. She said it is valuable to hear the students’ perspectives of their school and the issues taking place within it. She said she meets with Mr. Winrow to discuss the issues the High School students raise.

Ms. Doe reported that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (SBA) contacted all communities that submitted a statement of interest this summer to ask each community to state what their district’s priority is. She informed the committee that they confirmed that Avery is Dedham’s priority. She said the SBA has made two visits to the school. She reminded the committee that the school is classified as a four, which is the worst rating a school can receive. She stated that she and Ms. Kelly would be attending a meeting on Monday morning with SBA Director Katherine Craven to get an understanding of the SBA’s selection process.

Ms. Doe reported that the school year is going well. She said the principals have reported that teachers are putting in an excellent effort. She stated professional development begins next Wednesday and they have many projects going forward. She said they would hear tonight about the efforts around common assessments.

Ms. Doe stated the elementary staff would be receiving training on the responsive classroom. She said several teachers received training this summer and would be training the rest of the staff with the intention of creating and aligning social programs at the elementary schools. She noted that the Middle School piece is about to be scheduled.

Ms. Kelly thanked the School Committee members who attended Monday's strategic planning session. She stated that the parent groups chose three representatives by level. Craig Weiner represents the elementary level, Ellen Bruder-Moore, the Middle School, and Betty Kilcoyne, the High School. She stated Mr. Winrow and Ms. Claypool represent the administration, Maureen Sacoco and Tracey White represent school employees, Janet Mattozzi is the community representative, and Tricia Rocha and Nancy Clement represent the alumni. Mr. Ryan added that David Martin represents the elected officials.

Ms. Kelly reported on the AYP progress. She stated that she, Principal Ruggere, Assistant Principal Boles and Middle School faculty met last week to analyze the results and discuss possible means of addressing the situation. The following day they met with the special education staff to discuss this student group's performance. She stated that Mr. Boles is applying for grant to help address this issue and that administrators will be doing further training in TestWiz to assist with their data analysis. Ms. Doe added that Mr. Boles just informed her that they did qualify for the grant. She said it is a substantial grant but there is a cost to the district of \$17,000. She said they would do some outreach to see if it could be funded, as the money is not available in the school budget. The value of program is \$120,000.

CHAIR'S UPDATE

Ms. Driscoll thanked the new staff for attending the last School Committee meeting. She said unfortunately the meeting was scheduled on the eve of Rosh Hashanah. She said she has invited the staff that could not attend due to this religious observance to another meeting.

Ms. Driscoll reported that meetings are now posted on Town's website thanks to Mr. Munchbach. She noted that the committee is back on for its October 17 meeting, which is no longer in conflict with a planned SEPAC event.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

There was none.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ACTION ITEMS

There was none.

DEPARTMENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS 07-08

Ms. Doe stated that they would like to develop a schedule of common assessments so that subject areas have one measure for all classes to gain a baseline of the students' mastery of the subject. She said that common assessments at the elementary level would be district-wide. She said that at the High School level, the two to three instructors teaching a specific course would develop assessments together.

The presentations by the chairs began with the Occupational Education Department Chair, Mr. Dellot. Mr. Dellot said he does not have more than one class that has two sections, and he and the other instructor work together on that class. He reviewed the professional development planned for his department this year. He stated that the TV staff for the Middle School and High School would be developing production outlines for a new weekly news/sports show, revising the curriculum guides to reflect the ongoing changes to the TV programming, and revising the scope and sequence of these programs. He said they would also receive training on the Comcast installation that was recently completed. He said that the engineering staff will be working on engineering lessons. He noted that the elementary students can cycle through their class area to do projects. Ms. Doe said the purpose of addressing engineering in 5th grade is to accommodate the MCAS science and engineering test.

Mr. Dellot reported that the funding has come through for the education channel, which will allow them to expand programming. He said the cable funds amounted to \$151,000 and of this \$53,000 was received by the School Department. He said that some of the planned improvements will need to be put on hold while funding is sought for them.

Ms. Matthews asked how many girls are in engineering. Mr. Dellot said they only have one engineering class, CAD, but the number is small. Ms. Matthews remarked that there is a lot of money out there for women in engineering.

Mr. Brogan, Fine Arts Director, K-12, stated that common assessments would not apply at the secondary level, as most of the classes are unique. He said that the elementary level is the base of common assessments. He noted that he has two new teachers and would be working to get them familiar with the curriculum. He said that that he is interested in introducing journals and portfolios at the elementary level. He stated that one of the professional development topics will be the Koldaly teaching method.

Ms. Doe mentioned the new technology in the Middle School. Mr. Brogan stated that it is used daily. He stated that that the technology has changed the curriculum for the Middle School and the music teacher, Mr. Taylor, is an excellent resource for that type of teaching.

Mr. Brogan mentioned that the musicals have been highly praised recently. He remarked that they have always been excellent, but that the new auditorium, with its acoustics and new technology, have brought the productions to a new level.

Ms. Connolly asked what Koldaly is. Mr. Brogan said it is basically “do re mi” and the hand signals associated with it.

Mr. Gould presented the Social Studies Department professional development plans. He stressed that his interest is in allowing students to become sound, independent thinkers, and to achieve this includes learning the five dimensions of historical thinking. He said they are chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research capabilities, and analysis and decision making relative to historical issues.

He stated that his staff completed an ELL course and various workshops over the summer. He said he continues to teach at the college level.

He said that in terms of common assessment he is emphasizing the skill sets necessary to write a term paper through various grade levels. He reiterated his interest in making the students good

thinkers, organized and analytical. He said if you do the right things MCAS will take care of itself.

Mr. Gould said he would emphasize curriculum mapping this year. He would like his staff to look at primary sources to teach history. He said that using primary sources keeps the subject interesting and tricks students into learning. He is encouraging his department to embrace this and the teachers would have a lot of input with the process.

Mr. Healy said he is impressed with his method. He thought it would keep it fun for the kids and still keep the curriculum there to address MCAS.

Mr. Gould said that he is interested in using local resources to teach history. Ms. Matthews stated that the Historical Society has met to develop the 8th grade program. She said they were trying to have something for the fall, but it might be the spring.

Ms. Flatley said she was impressed to see his staff's commitment to professional development. She asked about his plans for the full day professional development. He said all staff would hear a professional speaker in the morning, but the latter half of the day would be a trip to Boston's oldest library. He said he would be introducing the staff to primary source materials, how to investigate them and how to utilize them. He said the Athenaeum is a treasure and the staff is very excited by it.

Dr. Laflamme, English department chair, thanked the committee for reinstating the English teacher, which has helped to keep classes at a reasonable level. He said the current practices for common assessments include the mock MCAS and SATs, which the department has done for three years. He said the first mock MCAS would be administered next week. He stated that grade 12 would be working on a research paper. He said the department would also be introducing students to research at an earlier grade.

Dr. Laflamme said the professional development would be on the topic of sentence fluency and the identification of the traits to help students to understand why a paper receives a grade that it does. He said a paper can be broken down at the organizational level and by grammar weaknesses. He noted that grammar taught as part of writing process is most successful.

He said that writing rubrics for students and parents have been posted on the website to give an example of what meets and exceeds expectations on the MCAS. He said they would also like to annotate examples as well. Dr. Laflamme also said that teachers were going to be developing common assessments for required titles. Teachers would then be able to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and examine the practices that yielded the best results at each grade level. He said that last year he developed a chart for higher ordered thinking skills, tied to the school's mission statement and core values, which will be a focus of instruction.

Ms. Flatley asked about the elementary professional development. Ms. Kelly responded that the third grade teachers are working on Lucy Calkins. Grades one and two are working on English language learner training.

Ms. Matthews said that two out of four years her child's class did not get to the spring required readings. She asked if they are looking at the timing of the curriculum to ensure the required reading is done. Dr. Laflamme said there are logistics involved. He said they do not have enough books to have all students reading the same book at the same time.

Mr. Ryan asked about the writing expectations for grades nine through eleven. Dr. Laflamme said he is asking teachers to incorporate research into the curriculum. He said this will take time to coordinate, however. He stated they have adapted the MLA guide sheet.

Mr. Healy asked what the MLA was. Dr. Laflamme answered that it stands for Modern Language Association. He said this reference lists all possible sources and how to cite them. He noted that the web has added a level of complexity to citations.

Mr. Ross reviewed the professional development for the science department, which is a continuation of last year's professional development. The focus is on writing and communicating in science. He said templates and rubrics have been created and aligned with the standards. He said last year the department wrote guide "How to Write Like a Scientist", to address how scientific writing is different from other subject areas.

Mr. Ross said there is an MCAS science tab posted on Blackboard, which has helpful hints on how to improve on test vocabulary and definitions. He said they are making an effort at the beginning of the year to get parents invested. He said the parents should review materials and curriculum with students at home.

Mr. Ross said that this year he would like to review how to read science textbooks and journals and how to deal with vocabulary. He stated he would also like to look at math. Ms. Matthews said she liked the practical application of math concepts in science.

Mr. Healy said he liked that Mr. Ross incorporated an outreach to the parents.

Ms. Doe stated that the elementary science center is now located at the High School. Mr. Ross said that the science teachers are looking at the center's science kits. He said that he would like to tie in more website support to expand upon the kits. He said that the department trains High School students to be peer coaches, and they do the squid lab with the elementary students.

Mr. Hickey, math department chair, said he is excited to have several new staff members with strong skills. He reported that Ms. Dunleavy and Ms. Smith attended a week long training this summer to teach AP math. He said they have a new AP calculus program. Several teachers are going to workshops. He added that there is an upcoming Texas Instrument workshop that will provide training on its calculator and free calculators along with it.

Mr. Hickey said that the professional development this year is geared toward common assessments. He said they would like to institute periodic assessments to see how the students are progressing. They will look at strengths and weaknesses for MCAS.

Mr. Hickey commented on the new textbook in grade 8. He said the teachers are very excited about it and have been trained in its associated resources, including the on-line component. Ms. Connolly asked if the on-line component included access for students. Mr. Hickey said the students would have on-line access to the text materials. Ms. Driscoll asked if there was feedback from grade 7 on that book. Mr. Hickey said he could find that out for her.

Mr. Langenhorst said that with Smart MCAS parents can make their own test and tests for their children. He said every MCAS question is there.

Mr. Langenhorst discussed the professional development for the Technology Department this year. He stated that Ms. Marini would be facilitating the library/media specialists' professional

development. The objective of the professional development is to infuse technology into project-based learning strategies in the schools' media centers. He said at the High School the objective is to help the library/media specialists facilitate classroom instruction in the areas of research and identification of quality resources across all disciplines. He said the specialists will be identifying best practices and training the trainer.

Mr. Langenhorst said he would be teaching the High School and Middle School computer and technology teachers. He said that they mostly do project based assessments. Common assessments are used by all teachers of a particular course. He said they use the LASW model, and with defined rubrics they are evaluating the grading practices to ensure equality across the courses.

Mr. Langenhorst stated that the department has integrated Internet safety and the teachers are iSafe certified. He spoke about their use of this training as a teaching tool. He said iSafe content is used for specific projects designed for students beginning in grade 6 through grade 12. He said he is working with his staff to better evaluate the use of electronic resources. There is a strong emphasis on this from an early grade. He said intellectual property would be addressed at the secondary level.

Mr. Langenhorst spoke about improving instructional strategies. He would like to continue using broadcast sharing by students. The department will also seek opportunities to share best on-line teaching strategies with cross-disciplinary colleagues.

Mr. Langenhorst spoke about on-line pedagogy. He said that Blackboard would be utilized more. He said that three High School classroom teachers and Ms. Marini are using on-line teaching strategies to give college level experience to the High School students to better prepare them for college.

Mr. Roberts asked Mr. Langenhorst if he was tracking the use of Blackboard. Mr. Langenhorst said the instructor can keep track of hits in various areas. He added that Blackboard was upgraded this summer and will allow for expanded analysis. He said he would like to create observer logins so that parents can observe but not tamper with their children's work on-line. He said the obstacle to achieving this is finding the time to create the logins.

Mr. Langenhorst reported that John Spears underwent a successful surgery last week, and the doctors expect a full recovery. He said Mr. Spears should be back in a couple of weeks.

Mr. Roberts asked how much the staff uses Blackboard. Mr. Langenhorst said in many cases have they have enrolled department chairs and principals in courses so that they can supervise the staff's use.

Ms. Connolly asked when he thought the observer logins would be set. Mr. Langenhorst said that it would be a good time to do when the on-line grading tool is unrolled. He said he would like to attempt it in a couple of months, but the workload is somewhat prohibitive. Ms. Doe said she hoped that this would be available for parents for this year.

Ms. Matthews asked how many students had Internet access at home. Mr. Langenhorst said this is a huge issue. He said a recent survey said 8% did not have reasonable access at home. He said he recently met with new economic development director Karen O'Connell, Chris Poole and Veronica Barnes to discuss a town-wide wireless mesh system with CVE Technologies. He said there are many benefits to town-wide access. He wants to ensure this is at forefront so that all

students can have on-line access. He said Mr. Keegan in favor of doing this and they intend to present two models for him to consider. A demonstration for department heads would be set up at Cisco in Marlboro.

Mr. Healy asked what the cost of access would be for the average resident. Mr. Langenhorst said that depends on the business model financing it the service provider. He said he expected that economic conditions met by a family would allow for free access.

Mr. Langenhorst said the distance learning lab has been wired and now needs to be programmed. He said he is looking forward to the completion of this lab so that classroom learning can be expanded.

Ms. Doe said that Marge Bohan is in a course this evening and could not present the professional development for the health and physical education department. Ms. Doe reviewed the program. She said the focus would be primarily on the elementary level with the introduction of new games and training in the Michigan Model health curriculum. She said they would be doing a youth risk survey at the secondary level. They are currently deciding on a vendor for the survey.

Ms. Matthews asked what a youth risk survey is. Ms. Doe said it is done every couple of years and looks at such topics as smoking, alcohol, dating violence, safe schools, and suicide. She said the results provide a picture of students as compared to their cohorts nationally.

Mr. Ryan asked how the community is informed of the survey results. Ms. Doe said the results are presented to the School Committee and the report becomes available for all. He asked if this data is similar to what Needham publishes in its annual booklet. Ms. Doe said select data from such a survey is published in their annual report.

Ms. Flatley asked about the morning speaker on the full day professional development day. Ms. Kelly said it is Rob Evans. She would get the topic to them. Ms. Flatley asked what the elementary teachers are doing on that day. Ms. Kelly replied that grades four and five are doing math, kindergarten through grade 2 are doing Category I training, grade 3 is doing Lucy Calkins. Ms. Flatley asked if they were doing anything on math. Ms. Kelly replied that was worked on this summer. She said they have developed pacing guides and they are posted on the website. Ms. Flatley asked if they were still doing grade level meetings. Ms. Kelly said they are doing grade level meetings across the district.

SUMMER READING

Dr. Laflamme delivered a preliminary report on the summer reading. He said the testing was just completed last week and he was still inputting data. He cautioned the committee that the report was incomplete. He said they may have students not attending school listed on the report and the required reading titles have not been verified.

He said they have seen dramatic changes in the honors level participation. He reported eight students were moved from honors to level one. He said that other data does not show much improvement; it is essentially status quo. He stated the ninth grade score for level one is disconcerting. He said most groups showed a small decrease. He noted that there are currently 22 students under review and arrangements for making up testing have been made.

Ms. Matthews thought the results for honors show incentives work. She asked what happened to the others. Dr. Laflamme said that readership is down for this age group. Reading not a top priority. He said they have made efforts to encourage and to motivate students.

Ms. Matthews said his flexibility was commendable. She asked about the requirements for levels one and two. Dr. Laflamme said level one has a required title and two does not. He said level two must get permission to read a selected title, however. He said repercussions for not completing the summer reading are seen on the report card. Additionally, he said all students are responsible for an essay related to their summer reading when they return in the fall. They want to tie summer reading to the curriculum.

Ms. Flatley asked about previous data. She said that as the students advance there is less buy in and more factors competing for their attention. She said they need an incentive program for all students. Dr. Laflamme suggested that they challenge the students as opposed to taking a punishment approach.

Mr. Ryan said there was a suggestion that the summer reading testing could be done at library. Dr. Laflamme said supervision would be an issue. Mr. Langenhorst said the test would be difficult to maintain outside the system.

Mr. Santamaria said he discussed the end of summer test rush with Ms. Connolly. He said that during crunch time they could add dates with administrators present to supervise. Dr. Laflamme said that students even at peak test times do not wait more than 15 minutes. He said 50% of students come in during the summer. He said they have also mailed tests. Ms. Matthews added that after the school year begins accessibility increases.

DONATIONS

Ms. Doe announced that the Noble Day Camp Director, Emily Parker, donated \$125 in earthenware clay to the Dedham Middle School.

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

VOTED: to accept the donation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

September 12, 2007

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

VOTED: to approve the September 12, 2007 minutes.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE CALENDAR

Ms. Driscoll said the committee received a draft calendar. She said she has three meetings scheduled in January because there would only be one in February. She noted that Town elections and meeting have changed, and could influence schedule. She also noted that one year from this November would be the election, September 16 is the state primary, and the presidential primary is March 4.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE GOALS

Ms. Flatley reviewed the goals. They address the strategic plan, curriculum, instruction and assessment, financial management, negotiations with units A and B, the secretaries, custodians and crossing guards, and culture and communication. She noted two changes under the financial management goals.

Ms. Doe said that the master plan goal should be identified as an update of the existing master plan. She said the update does not include an analysis of other towns' master plans and would require additional funding. Ms. Flatley said the committee could consider funding such a study. Ms. Matthews felt it was important to find a way to do it within the next couple of years.

Mr. Roberts asked if the master plan update would have to go out to bid. Mr. La Francesca said yes. Mr. Roberts said that the update should be done first. He said once the results were analyzed, the committee could then consider looking at the processes used by other towns.

Mr. Ryan said the shifting populations in two areas of town are impacting the current educational model. He feels that they will need to respond to this fairly quickly.

Ms. Doe said the updated plan will include recommendations about what needs to be considered. She said the process that should be followed would be clear from the results of the updated plan. Ms. Connolly was worried about missing a year by doing it this way. Ms. Doe said they would not lose time with this approach.

Ms. Driscoll said they are looking at an update to ensure that they can accommodate the populations and the financial ramifications of the changes. The primary objective is to support funding for new Avery School.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Flatley reported that the Budget Subcommittee met today. They would be putting together a schedule of meetings for the remainder of the year. The subcommittee reviewed the budget to date. They are within the budget. She said the committee would be receiving quarterly reports.

Mr. Roberts said the Policy Subcommittee would be meeting tomorrow at 6:15 PM.

Mr. Roberts updated the committee on the Middle School project. He said there is an issue with the field. Ms. Doe said the field and the property to the side had its seed washed away in the rainfall. She said Stella will re-seed. Mr. Roberts said they are wrapping up the first phases of project to get state reimbursement. They are down to a last few issues in the existing building. Ms. Doe assured everyone that the field, which is part of phase 3, is under warranty.

Ms. Doe said they met with the Recreation Department about rededicating the field as Lowen Field. They will target the spring for a ceremony.

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Ms. Driscoll stated the next meeting's agenda would include a brief update on the wellness policy and its implementation, a budget calendar and the School Committee goals.

Ms. Doe announced parents' night at the High School is Monday. Mr. Winrow said it is a mock schedule at the request of the parents. He said there would be brief opening statements beginning at 6:30 PM, followed by departmental presentations.

Mr. Winrow said Homecoming weekend begins on October 5 with a football game and a Homecoming dance on October 6.

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

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

The committee would not be coming out of executive session to adjourn.