

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING—April 8, 2009
Town Hall, Selectmen’s Chambers

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

Convened: 7:18 PM

Adjourned: 8:58 PM

Delay in the opening of the School Committee meeting due to posting of meeting missing. Posting was located at the Library and meeting was opened.

Mr. Santamaria introduced the Speech and Debate Team. He also introduced Kathleen Crouse and Carol Margolis who are the coaches. The members are: Victoria Sliwa, Sarah Della, Melissa Caissy, Rani Aljondi and Kate Rocha. Two members of the team received medals this year. Superintendent Doe introduced members of the AP staff along with Dr. LaFlamme, Department Chair for ELL, who has voluntarily worked with 5th grade teachers on writing process this year. Dr. LaFlamme initiated the Speech and Debate team. We are highlighting our AP program to share publicly our efforts to improve student achievement. We would like to recognize the people doing the extra work. Carol Margolis, Christine Halloran, Barbara Smith, Dr. Kobierski. We are committed to expanding the number of AP course offerings and the number of teachers teaching – teachers require additional training. We honor them tonight and are pleased with the caliber of AP teachers.

SUPERINTENDENT’S UPDATE

Elementary Schools

Avery: A Spring Book Fair will be held on April 16 and 17. The Library Committee is holding a fundraiser, “One for Books”. Children are asked to donate \$1.00 to purchase books for the library and Scholastic matches the donations to provide books for children and families in need. The classes with the highest participation in “Wild about Reading” incentive program were treated to the movie Jumangi, last Friday. The fifth grade students recently attended the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The first and second grades will be attending the Berklee Performing Arts “Junie B. Jones and James and the Giant Peach”. April 28th is the “All Town Chorus.

ECEC: Four-year-old screening will be held on April 16th for students enrolled in the 2009-2010 school year. Our Kindergarten teachers are incorporating Responsive Classroom techniques from their recent training.

Greenlodge: Students and teachers participated in “National Start Walking Day” and a lunchtime recess walk was organized by Mrs. Torchio. A “Spring Book Fair” will take place on April 13-15. The first and second graders will attend a presentation on “Curious Creatures”, funded by a grant through Harvard Pilgrim. Next week, Sharon Kennedy will be speaking to fourth grade students about her life as an Irish immigrant. The Dedham Education Foundation funded this program. We are providing parents with suggestions to succeed during the upcoming “National TV Turn off Week”.

Oakdale: After School Enrichment classes ended last week. The program is completing its first year and a survey will be sent home to parents for feedback and suggestions. Mrs. DeNoble had a program called Test Worry Tamers for students to help with anxiety and stress associated with test taking. A group of 4th graders developed a Compost Club. They will be collecting scraps from lunch to add to the compost recycling bin. Fifth grade students will have tryouts for the talent show next Thursday.

Riverdale: Mythmasters visited on March 23rd. This was made possible by a grant from the Dedham Cultural Council. The Riverdale students won the DEF Spelling Bee held at the Middle School on March 27th. Congratulations to the team: Perry LeTourneau, Sam Rowley, Tomas Gonzalez and James Duncan. The staff team came in second during the final round. Thanks to Mrs. Sheehy, Mrs. Simonson, Mrs. Jovin and Mrs. Ouellette for being some of the best spellers in Dedham. The Riverdale parents were also represented – Nora Sotomayor, Meg Duncan, Mr. McGregor and Mrs. Heilmann. On April 9th the students will have Twin Day. There will be many staff and students who look alike that day. Riverdale's Enrichment Program will begin on April 6th.

High School

The American Legion recently hosted an essay contest "Soldiers, past and present...America, Honor your Veterans". Victoria Ellis – 1st Place, Emily Mosca – 2nd Place, and Sarah Edson – 3rd Place. Victoria will now advance to the regional contest. Congratulations to all participants. Julia Berkey and Leeann Coogan went to Beacon Hill last Friday as our school representatives for State Government Day. Journalism classes recently completed a "Letter to the Editor" assignment. They were to read an article in a newspaper and respond either positively or negatively in the form of a letter. Milo Carpenter's was chosen for publication. It appeared in the Boston Globe on March 31.

Facilities Update: Superintendent Doe presented a report on the school facilities for Mr. Lynch who was out of town at a conference. He identifies the locker rooms as being a first priority to upgrade much needed electrical and lighting, replacement of stalls, toilet, sinks and shower stalls. In addition, replace all lockers and add three new shower stalls and a stall in the coach's room for referees.

Ms. Doe reported on working with Dedham Country Day. They recently received a grant, which they will be partnering with 8-10 first grade students to participate in a 6 week summer enrichment program. The Horizons Program is a first in Massachusetts. Ms. Doe would like to commend three principals: ECEC – Heidi Dineen for working with DCD, Clare Sullivan at Avery – address some of the income based needs and location. Doris Claypool – Riverdale – confirmed five students on record and facilitating outreach with parents to work out details with the rest.

CHAIR'S UPDATE

Supt. Evaluation has been postponed to the next meeting, April 29, 2009.

Motion made by Mr. Roberts and seconded by Ms. Matthews to vote the last day of school, Monday June 22, 2009. This will be a half day for students and a full day for teachers.

Approved: Unanimous

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Riverdale parents are present to address SC members. We are very concerned about pending class sizes for 3rd and 5th grades. Debate regarding class size and has gone on for years. Please

think long term. This will be a three-year commitment to these students. Please consider best classrooms for these large class sizes. Parent expectations for learning for these children will remain high. Superintendent Doe stated she has met or spoken with many Riverdale parents and wants to convey that classroom size is a priority. The budget is still in flux. The first priority is to restore staff. We have increased class size in each elementary school.

Reports:

Mr. Morton Orlov – from Mass Insight Education and Research Institute presented highlights on the Massachusetts Math and Science Initiative Grant recently awarded to Dedham Public Schools. Ms. Joanne McCormick, Director of Guidance will be the facilitator for the program. Milton and Randolph will be a part of the cohort. Out of sixty schools that were solicited, fifty-eight responded and fourteen were chosen. This program is not an experiment; they have over twelve years of data. The goals of the program are to increase participation by taking students to the right and to the left, to increase performance and develop a collaborative working relationship with a challenge. Mr. Olov expects to make a formal public announcement with a kickoff event at the high school in the fall.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ACTION ITEMS

none

MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Healy and seconded by Ms. Connolly to accept the minutes from the following meetings: February 11, February 25, and March 25, 2009. Approved: Unanimous

DONATIONS

Mr. Scott Blizzard on behalf of Dedham Youth Baseball, donated a new pitching machine and extra baseballs for the season. A motion was made by Ms. Matthews with grateful appreciation and seconded by Ms. Connolly with grateful appreciation to accept the donation. Approved: Unanimous

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Special Education Sub-Committee meeting will be posted for April 29, 2009 at 5:00 prior to the School Committee meeting.

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Elementary lunch price increase
1 out of 2 lease agreements – vote –waiting on VNA
Supt. Evaluation
Update on Strategic Plan
Reorganization