

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING— February 25, 2009**  
**Town Hall, Lower Conference Room**

**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: 7:00 PM**

**Adjourned: 8:21 PM**

**SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

Elementary School update

Avery School – morning MCAS Prep classes are underway. Attendance has been consistent. Lunchtime basketball league has started with 54 boys and girls make up 6 teams. This program allows the students to practice teamwork and good sportsmanship. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade is conducting a bottle and can drive on February 28<sup>th</sup> – this is one of the many ways they raise funds for field trips at the Avery. Next field trip will be to the Paul Revere House in late March.

The PTO just completed another successful Joe Corby fundraiser.

Greenlodge School would like to extend an invitation to the School Committee members to stop by this Friday for the annual variety show at 6:30 p.m. Thanks to Kathy Burns for her help in organizing this big event. Monday, Ms. Maura Duggan has scheduled a series of events to celebrate “Read Across America Day” which commemorates the birthday of Dr. Seuss. Technology and Maintenance departments were busy over winter break mounting screens for overhead projectors in all 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms. Greenlodge staff thanks them for their efforts.

Riverdale School is celebrating Black History month. Grades 1 and 2 are kicking off “Read Across America” with a field trip to the Wheelock Family Theatre. Grade 1 has focused their project based learning on Dr. Seuss’s life and many works written by him. Parent Day will be in April. The before school MCAS program is going well. 27 students are enrolled. Wally Came! On February 13<sup>th</sup> after the students wrote persuasive essays to get Wally to come to the Riverdale School. Thanks to Mrs. Nancy Coppola had organized events including the Red Sox and has tied them to motivational programs to enhance student learning. We would like to recognize her for her continuing efforts.

Oakdale School – morning MCAS programs are going well. Attendance has improved. The student council raised over \$400.00 in the “Lollies for Life” fundraiser. Gift certificates to Stop& Shop were given to families in the Oakdale district who are struggling in these hard economic times. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade students went to the Science Museum the Friday before February vacation.

They are working on standards of behavior, which include being respectful, reliable, cordial and hard working. PTO will be hosting a Trivia night on March 6<sup>th</sup>.

ECEC - Received a thank you from VA hospital in West Roxbury. The children made valentine cards and collected toiletries. They are also collecting new stuffed animals for Boston’s Children’s Hospital. On Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> will also be celebrating Dr. Seuss’s birthday. The children will be wearing Dr. Seuss hats. A special thanks to Mrs. Aileen Newton for spearheading this project.

Update from Student Representative – Milo Carpenter

Things have been interesting. We have been doing a lot more with Black History Month, definitely more than in the past couple of years. It is good to see the administration working to promote anti-racism. AP students are getting real stressed out right now. I apologize for not joining you the past couple of meetings. The SADD blood drive is scheduled for the end of next month. Sixteen year

olds are now allowed to donate blood with parental permission. There is a downside – large student complaint toward the Academy – students feel there are a lot of resources given to a small group of kids and others are being left behind not receiving the same treatment. It is causing some stressful situations especially in the freshman class.

Update on Winter Sports Teams from Mr. Murray: Monday night, the girls' hockey team had an impressive win over Medfield. Boys Basketball had a heartbreaking loss to Bishop Stang. They had a spirited season, fought hard, and practiced hard – lot of seniors on the team. The girls basketball team is playing tomorrow night in Rockland. The wrestling team has a meet Friday and Saturday – All States. The team is having a great season. Spring signups are next week. We will be making an announcement and encouraging participation.

Update on Anti-Bullying Initiatives:

Superintendent Doe reviewed reports from all the building principals.

Avery –the number of out of school suspensions has decreased. Compared to eleven incidents by this time last year, this year there have been only four incidents to date. The number of reported incidents has decreased by a third along with the severity of the incidents. As more teachers are trained in Responsive Classroom Strategies, the atmosphere in the classrooms has had a marked change.

Classroom rules were established at the beginning of the school year and consequences for breaking the rules were clearly spelled out. In the upper grades, Apology of Action – simply saying sorry is not enough. There is a need to help fix the feelings.

Oakdale –the number of overall discipline referrals to the Principal's office down – thirty two last year in comparison to twenty students to date. The overall climate and attitude in the school appear to be more positive. Morning meeting occurs in all grades and allows students to start the day on the right foot.

Riverdale – there have been four less out of school suspensions compared to last year. Eleven bullying incidents were reported last year as compared to five this year. The positive affects of Responsive Classroom morning meeting occurs in each classroom, it is a time to bond and form relationships. Students know they can learn from their mistakes but must not continue misbehaving. Collaborative problem solving – for example, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade boy had his jacket ripped at recess and a new one was purchased by the students. This was discussed in a morning meeting and it engaged the students in discussion.

Greenlodge –there have been no out of school suspensions to date. There were four reports of bullying which resulted in conflict resolutions meetings with the Principal and the students involved. All schools have discipline books and the events are recorded. The numbers have diminished. We are seeing fewer issues in the classroom and on the playground.

ECEC – no out of school suspensions (as one would hope) but last year at this time there was one.

We have had several incidents with behavior on school buses. We work with the students and parents as well as the drivers of the buses since this is the first time the children are exposed to riding a bus.

Kindergarten teachers are currently being trained in Responsive Classroom.

MS – reports one less incident of fighting this year from last year. There were thirty-one reports of harassment last year and this year to date on sixteen reports. This represents a reduction of approx. 50%. These are all positive affects of Developmental Designs (which is the advanced version of Responsive Classroom). Most teachers have been trained. They are working toward working this model into the Advisory program. Mrs. Kelly Schultz has volunteered her time to develop curriculum extensions to incorporate into these models.

HS – Based on a two-year comparison the overall trend is down approximately 40% bullying down. Suspensions are down 22%. Overall, there is a notable improvement in the overall tone and student management skills in the HS. Advisory program implemented this year and the purpose of that is to ensure each student will have at least one adult in the school to enhance their educational experience.

Comment from Mrs. Reiser. She would like to say thank you –“you've listened and responded”.

Ms. Matthews asked the student rep, Milo if he feels a difference. He feels it's hard to gauge from his perspective – notes there is still a long way to go. There is a more diverse population in journalism class so he sees a lot more suspensions and acting out in class.

## **CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Budget presentation will be going to the PTO's in a condensed version to present an overview. A meeting is scheduled for next week with the Special Education sub-committee meeting next week at 5:30 at March 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. Coffee hour will be from 6:00-6:30.

## **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

**none**

## **REPORTS**

Fy10 Budget Presentation: Mr. La Francesca, Superintendent Doe

March 10<sup>th</sup> will be the presentation to Finance Committee

Supt. Doe states that this budget represents what we minimally need to maintain a level of service that we are operating with this year. We took aggressive measures in early fall to freeze the budget to preserve for this year on how we operate. In developing the FY10 budget we clearly understood there were limited resources. We built this budget with that recognition and worked hard to bring in a conservative budget one that would not allow us to bring in new programs, new support services. This budget presented tonight is certainly not an easy one for me to feel comfortable with a reduction of 19.6 personnel is not taken lightly. I will be looking to the future to rebuild what a year like this has done to our school instructional practices. I am mindful of the reality of a nation-wide financial crisis and its impact on cities and towns. We clearly are concerned about the future. This situation is not allowing us to build programs, it's simply allowing us to maintain a level of delivery of services we currently have in place this year.

Questions: Board

Most questions SC members and the budget sub-committee have spent an enormous amount of time going over the budget and many questions we have had already been answered.

Mr. Ryan asked to elaborate on what impact the additional positions would have. Supt. Doe replied the most dramatic hits would be in classroom size and hits at MS and elementary level. Support positions also included.

Ms. Driscoll asked why when we hear in the news that education will not be cut why we are seeing these cuts. Mr. La Francesca responded. Grants will not be funded at the same level as they are today. Circuit Breaker reimbursements will be reduced from 75% to 66%. The Governor announced that Chapter 70 money would not be affected but there are many aspects school programs that rely on other monies to function. The foundation formula for spending not funded at the same level. Dedham has always exceeded the foundation spending.

Motion made by Mr. Roberts and seconded by Ms. Connolly to enter into public hearing on the proposed FY10 budget. Roll call – Mr. Roberts-yes, Mr. Healy-yes, Ms. Connolly-yes, Ms. Flatley-yes, Mr. Ryan-yes, Ms. Matthews-yes, Ms. Driscoll-yes.

What is the Circuit Breaker? Mr. La Francesca answered. It is relief set up by State – all children being serviced in and out of district. State determines what the net claim is for the district. They fund 75% of the net claim. In March, if the net claim is 125% over then we qualify to redo the process to get Circuit Breaker relief, which we did last year.

Liz O'Donnell, parent. I understand contract negotiations are still ongoing. Is there any anticipation on how that will affect the fte's? The School Committee replied they cannot comment.

How will reductions affect class size at MS? There would be two teams in each of the grades. We would no longer have a half team shared between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. Incoming enrollment projections would place less than 110 students on each team, which is still very desirable.

Dedham has had a long history of having the most desirable class sizes. We can no longer continue at the level we have.

Mr. Martin – what is the state foundation budget for Dedham? – \$25,429,625.00.

Michelle Labadini – class size – increase Special Ed legally mandated to meet the least restrictive environment for Special Ed. In-district we’ve only seen an approximate 10% increase over 6 years. Out of District is 65% increase and is more problematic. Dedham can be proud of the fact we have very strong Special Ed services in place, which make it more desirable to remain in district. Susan Richburg you talked about increase in bus and athletic fees. Have you looked at surrounding towns and where we fall? We are the lowest in the area as far as fee schedules. Ms. Reiser has health concerns – with cutting custodians, MRSA and staph, how are the buildings going to be cleaned? Again, we are obliged to provide clean buildings. All of these cuts are painful. Mrs. Kelly asked if the town doesn’t accept your budget what can the people here do help the school department get what they need. Next step to finance committee –all are welcome to attend and would love to have an audience. Contact your board of selectmen members, finance committee members, town meeting reps. A key question for the Town side – we are taking a minimum of a 19.6 staff hit and that is minimally what we prescribed for ourselves. We are the largest employer in the town. Ms. Matthews would like to know how proportionate the hit is across the town. Motion to close the public hearing by roll call: Mr. Roberts-yes, Mr. Healy-yes, Ms. Connolly-yes, Ms. Flatley-yes, Mr. Ryan-yes, Ms. Matthews-yes, Ms. Driscoll-yes. Motion made by Ms. Flatley and seconded by Mr. Roberts to accept the FY10 budget as presented – \$32,288,898.16. Unanimous

#### **MINUTES**

**None**

#### **DONATIONS**

Dedham Educational Partnership has donated \$1500.00 to the MS – specifically to purchase “My Access Software” from Vantage Technologies. This is a great donation. Program is specifically to target MCAS improvements. This is a funding source that is badly needed. Also, the MS has received a donation from the Verizon foundation of \$750.00 presented by Mr. James Marr – also used for “My Access Software” supporting technology to enhance math and ell skills. Motion to accept these donations with grateful appreciation by Ms. Matthews and seconded by Ms. Connolly - Approved

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

The Chair is creating the Supt. Evaluation will email it to everyone. Need to have the response back by March 11. March 25 will be the evaluation. Update from Superintendent on goals

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

Presentation of Athletic League Tri Valley Conference – question and answer.  
March 11 is public hearing – comments  
Discussion of Educational Model  
Middle School for next March 4th meeting

Need for the SC to go into executive session for the purposes of contract negotiations and non-union contract negotiations.

Roberts so moved and was voted by roll call: Mr. Roberts-yes, Mr. Healy-yes, Ms. Connolly-yes, Ms. Flatley-yes, Mr. Ryan-yes, Ms. Matthews-yes, Ms. Driscoll-yes.

VOTED: to adjourn.