

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING—September 24, 2008
Lower Conference Room, Town Hall

PRESENT

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

ADMINISTRATION

June M. Doe, Superintendent
Cynthia Kelly, Asst. Superintendent

Convened: 7:00 p.m.

Adjourned: 9:35 p.m.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

Superintendent Doe announced that the MCAS scores have been released. Scores for students at the secondary level have been mailed. Students in the elementary grades will bring them home to parents. Scores will be discussed in depth at the next to School Committee meetings. Secondary level on October 7, 2008 and Elementary level on October 22, 2008. Ms. Doe states that the administration is encouraged by the results. Students are getting better at taking exams. She thanked all involved for all their efforts. Next Thursday, October 2nd is the first professional day. Students will be released early. All the staff will participate, including instructional aides.

Mrs. Kelly has a presentation on AYP data as it relates to MCAS.

CHAIR'S UPDATE

School Committee Chair, Tracy Driscoll, read a prepared statement on behalf of the Committee. We would like to apologize for reading a communication statement at Greenlodge open house last week. It was meant to keep the public informed regarding the procedures surrounding negotiations.

A few weeks ago, there was an injury at football game. Procedures that were followed were questioned. Mr. Santamaria contacted Mr. O'Brien (Fire Department). Met with members of Fallon Ambulance service and the position of the ambulance has been corrected so that they can drive right onto the field.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Parent of a football player, Susan Richburg began discussion regarding Dedham being in the wrong league or perhaps just the football team. The enrollment at the high school is about 750 – lowest enrolled school in Bay State League. This translates into low enrollments in sports participation. I don't know if it should be just football. I'm asking for a committee to study what would be the best thing for DPS. Another parent, Steve Clifford echoed Mrs. Richburg's comments. It is not a level playing field. Numbers are sobering, staggering and intimidating. It's time to discuss it publicly and act. Another parent, Carla Boudreau offered some additional thoughts. Do these boys feel proud when they put their jerseys on? She can't help but think if they're moral was boosted it would reflect in their academics. Year after year the same results are happening.

Mr. Santamaria has scheduled an open meeting Oct. 15th. 7:00 p.m., the location to be announced. It will be advertised. Would like to have a general discussion first and hear everyone's concerns. Ms. Driscoll commented from this meeting – would hope to have a committee to look into options and come back to the School Committee with some recommendations. Mr Clifford further discussed his opinions on

enrollment declining and the impact it has on the ability to put numbers on the playing fields. It's David vs. Goliath. He would like to see the teams have a chance to win on a level playing field. Supt. Doe commented it is clear to the administration that we are taking this seriously and it will not be just put aside into a committee. Mr. Ryan suggested Oct.22 meeting have a follow up to see what action plan is.

REPORTS

Mrs. Reisner presented a report on the issue of bullying. Progress has been made. Goal is to keep the topic out in the open. Would like to see more being done. She would urge any and all to get involved when they see someone is being bullied. She would like to see incorporated into the curriculum the knowledge of how devastating the effects of bullying are. Bullying does not just take place during the hours of school. Mrs. Reisner offers to be the voice of any student who feels uncomfortable reporting bullying to the administration.

Facilities Report – Brian Lynch, Director of Facilities

Painting the exterior, rear of the high school panels took place over the summer. Hope to continue by bringing the lift back over the next couple of weeks to try to complete C Wing, the Bridge and lower D Wing. Replaced cast iron radiators at the Riverdale School.

One of the larger projects the maintenance staff has been working on is an office for Tom Clinton from the Youth Commission and his staff. Completed renovations of the two vice principals' offices at the high school. Door replacement (capital project) is underway. Masonry repair project (capital project) is about 80% done – Oakdale, Riverdale and Greenlodge schools. D Wing and C Wing – light fixture replacements this summer and 2nd floor A Wing. Energy conservation is a high priority. Will be starting work to get boilers up and running for the winter months. Great staff – custodians do a tremendous job. Discussion on delaying Town Meeting for another month – does have an effect on getting capital projects in the school completed over the summer due to bidding process.

Ms. Flatley commented that any interior projects slated for Capital should be looked at ahead of time.

Mr. Roberts commented on the vehicle used to get projects started based on “approval of funding”.

Mr. Ryan had question on Mr. Lynch's interaction with DPW and the field maintenance. Maintain a very good working relationship with the town departments.

Ms. Doe commented on the significant advance on the part of the school department to work with the town to provide space for one of their agencies in the school building – maintenance staff additionally renovated Mr. Keegan's office at the Town Hall. Asbestos training was completed for entire staff as well over the summer.

Congratulations to you Mr. Lynch for keeping our buildings maintained so professionally. The sense of pride exhibited by your staff is very evident in the hallways.

Question brought up concerning windows at the Capen. Mr. Lynch commented that the windows are on a list of capital projects waiting to be funded. Ms. Driscoll inquired about plans to remove some of the fencing around the high school.

Mr. Santamaria reported on the Advisory Program at the High School

Many teachers have volunteered to be on the Advisory Committee to analyze and assess program once it has been running for a while. Plans are to institute the program October 6, 2008. Mr. Murray and Mr. Rivera will discuss their roles and plans on instituting the program.

A great deal of research went into this task. Program will be broken down by grade level with 1 faculty member paired with 10 students. Every teacher is involved with a group. One half hour every other Monday with 19 sessions scheduled. Main idea if students feel connected with their school they are more willing to get involved. This program is part of the bigger picture of Dedham Public Schools as a whole.

Statement of Purpose: To ensure every student in the school will have at least one individual to help them personalize their educational experience. Focus on academic growth, social development and civic responsibility. The foundation for program is in place, but will be an ongoing process for further development.

Mr. Roberts asked a question on how program will be evaluated. Mr. Murray answered – small groups gathering feedback on lessons from teachers and students. Review in Department Chair meetings and determine how best to fine tune.

Ms. Doe added a point of follow up. One of the obvious pieces of data will be whether or not the climate in the high school in terms of peer relationships improves. That is hard data. This is not a new program, it is widely established throughout the country. It is part of the HS improvement plan.

Mr. Ruggere and Mr. Boles reported on Middle School Advisory and Peer Mediation Programs.

The Advisory is already in place at the MS. So the students are already comfortable and will help at the high school level. It helps to share ideas and create bonds and relationships basically to make the school a smaller place. Practice social skills, talk about academic success and civic responsibility.

Discussion about Developmental Design that comes from Responsive Classroom at the elementary level. And then that flows into Advisory at the High School. Students have 8 years of a common language and social skills to go into the high school.

Mr. Ruggere further discussed the SCORE Grant: Peer Mediation that is up and running in the 7th and 8th grades. He reports a very successful program last year with 18 mediations. Focus efforts and reduced suspensions and detentions.

Question from audience: how were peer mediators picked? Is there an opportunity to still become one?

Mr. Boles answered the original group had to express an interest in becoming a peer mediator. It is handled through the Guidance office and anyone interested in becoming a peer mediator is encouraged to go to Guidance.

High School Class Size Report charts were submitted in packets to School Committee members.

Mr. Santamaria answered questions from the Committee.

Class sizes appear reasonable overall. Highest numbers 28 math and 31 in the journalism class. Mr. Santamaria wants to concentrate on numbers next year. Mr. Ryan noticed that Social Studies class sizes are missing from report. Ms. Flatley is concerned about math classes of 27 and above. Mr. Santamaria explained some students are repeating course and need it for graduation. As well, expressed concern in the honors Chemistry class. Main concern being safety – Mr. Santamaria spoke with teacher, high performing class and feels that it is manageable. Ms. Matthews commented for the record that the overall numbers for class sizes in not bad. By department: 19.4 math, 19.3 english, 18.3 science, 17.9 foreign language, 14 instructional technology, 16 occupational technology, 23 fine arts, 48 band, 20 social studies. Concern expressed over math class sizes. Mr. Murray discussed breakdown and it's highly tailored to meet the needs of many students.

Asst. Superintendent Kelly presented Power Point Presentation on AYP Status

Hand out given to SC members

HS Performance rating very high CPI 90-100, which is rated annually.

To make AYP there are 4 parts. Participation – 95%, Performance at or above State Target, Improvement (looks at group change from last year to this year), Attendance and Graduation (60% or higher).

Target CPI - 85.4 ELA 76.5 Math

HS has no status because they have made AYP

Reviewed MCAS data

MS: Remains in improvement year 1

On target

Math – no status – moderate performance rating

Special Education – made improvement target

Avery – no status – improvement on target

Greenlodge – no status – very high ELA, H – Math – no change

Oakdale – no status high ELA and Math – declined 85.4 score 85

Riverdale – no status – high ELA and Math – no change

Concept of mountain – steady move upward

ACTION ITEMS:

MINUTES

Motion to accept minutes of August 27, 2008 made by D. Roberts, second M. Matthews. Approved: with Mr. Ryan abstaining., with corrections.

Motion to accept minutes of September 10, 2008 made by T. Ryan, second J. Healy. Approved: Unanimous with corrections

DONATIONS

No donations

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Meeting either Friday Oct 3 or Oct 24 at 1:00 pm DRYVE

Community effort to create jobs for HS students - 2 school committee members
Not finalized yet.

Ms. Matthews would like a refresher course in Power School

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Next meeting date is Tuesday, October 7, 2008

Meeting in November – MS athletic program

OTHER, IF ANY

Executive Session, If Necessary

The open session concluded. The committee made a motion to go into Executive Session under exemption 3 for the purposes discussions relative to contract negotiations.

VOTED: by roll call to go into executive session. Ms. Flatley – yes, Ms. Connolly – yes, Mr. Roberts – yes, Ms. Driscoll – yes, Mr. Ryan – yes, Mr. Healy – yes. Approved. 9:35 p.m.