

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING—August 6, 2008
Selectman's Meeting Room, Town Hall

PRESENT

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

ADMINISTRATION

June M. Doe, Superintendent
Cynthia Kelly, Asst. Superintendent
Christopher Campbell, Asst. Superintendent,
Michael La Francesca, Business Manager

Convened: 7:00 PM

Adjourned: 8:25 pm

Ms. Driscoll opened meeting with a request for motion to go into executive session under exemption three. Ms. Matthews moved, Ms. Connolly second, and it was

Voted: by roll call Mr. Roberts – aye, Mr. Healy – aye, Ms. Flatley – aye, Ms. Driscoll – aye, Mr. Ryan – aye

The committee returned to open session at 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Driscoll made a brief announcement on death of MS student and her affect on the community regarding her untimely death. Ms. Doe stated that Robin completed 7th grade year. Our condolences are with her family and relatives as well as the teaching staff. A moment of silence was held.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

1. Asst. Supt. Chris Campbell moving on to Plymouth. Congratulations on career move. We wish him well and are proud of him.
2. Introduce Mr. Nelson Rivera – new asst. principal HS – highlights of background. Came from Holliston. Working on Doctorate at BU.
3. Allison Potter has moved on to work as the assistant to the Town Manager in Medway.
4. Summer programs at MS -TREK. Run for the past 4 years. This year there was an overwhelming response – 93 students participated. Commend staff: Kathy Oravitz, Karen Jones, Susan Lyons, Dan King. They conducted a parent survey – very positive response.
5. Initiated new math programs MS & HS. In the MS, Academy Math program to add additional support to students entering the Academy team. MS math program 8th grade entering 9th grade who needed summer remediation. Mr. Murray launching his HS math program.
6. Hosted training for 150 teachers for the Responsive Classroom at the Middle School. 10 slots were free for us for Dedham teachers. I want to especially complement the Custodial and secretarial staff for handling this large crowd. Not easy to accommodate these special programs when trying to get the school ready for the year.
7. Started ELL support program – English Language Arts. Ms. Margolis and Ms. Crouse.
8. Teacher training for Everyday Math – Kindergarten teachers will be going to Holbrook on August 19th and 1st and 2nd grade pilot teachers will be doing training at MS on Aug. 26th, with the publisher.
9. Mr. LaFrancesca launched renovations for the asst. principals to be located on the first floor – coming up with plan. Could not be done without Dave Overko and Steve MacDonald. Ken DeAvila – outside painting the exterior of the HS this summer.
10. Security system installation in HS, telephones, and doors. Ongoing since July, doing wiring, new doors.

11. Talked w/Brad Dore, Architect for Dore & Whittier – progress with MS and the field and phase 3 of landscape. We are 2/3 way through final elements of punch list. Studies on heat loss – identified – work is being done on ventilation units, not properly insulated – complete before school opens in September. Fence – is being repaired locally through Bradbury Fence in Dedham. In addition, we have never accepted the playing field. Stella Corp. has agreed to have their landscaping architect come out and address the deficiencies in the field. That work will be done in September to regrade and reseed field. Phase three bids received on landscape architect. Will go before Building Committee next week. – Millennium, I believe, will be doing phase 3 of landscaping of MS. Hope to be done by end of September.
12. Avery School – painting done by Norfolk County House of Correction. Commissioner O'Brien is very supportive in expediting all our requests and allows us to take full advantage of the services of this program.
13. Ms. Kelly update – the DOE accepted our response to the – Safe and Drug Free Schools audit and asked for progress report.
14. Hiring process unusually busy this summer. Several positions still trying to fill. 14 new HS, 19 new MS, in addition elementary openings. Challenge in finding experienced, qualified Science teachers this year. Resignations –employees are indicating they are able to find jobs 10 minutes from their homes. Financially in their best interest to do that. Unanticipated...but we're making good progress.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Celata would like to make arrangements to appear before the board on matters of real estate. Looking for surplus property for the senior citizens in Dedham. Apologize for not working harder for override for facility. Ms. Driscoll will continue to keep in contact with the Council on Aging. Assured Mr. Celata that the property is still available for their use. Mr. Roberts suggests he put proposal together.

M. Labadini had question concerning ECEC? Is it being moved to the Dexter School? Will this be a positive thing? Ms. Doe – intention in Educational Master Plan to move to Dexter – within the next 3 years. More appropriate building and site to house early childhood education ctr. J. Connors asked what then, will happen to ECEC building. Ms. Doe explained that we're not there yet, it involves the town government and school committee discussion.

Discussion Items:

STATION 250 ENROLLMENT AND SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT

Ms. Doe states they've had a conversation w/rental manager. Phase I the rental units that have been occupied do not have any school age children. This also includes the subsidized units.

Underway with Phase II. We will keep in touch with them as it develops. No changes in enrollment at this time.

ACADEMIC REPORTING COMMITTEE

Ms. Doe provided lead in – refer to packet there was a handout from Mr. Santamaria & Mr. Murray – info on a weighted GPA chart. Met with Mr. Murray today and he was in contact with the committee – we are ready to put forth what we feel is a reasonable process for implementation in September. Refer to “yellow sheet”.

Recommendation from Ms. Doe – w GPA chart on left of hand out is what we will recommend for students entering the 9th grade. To the right is another chart and that is the one we would use for class

rank. We feel this is a reasonable approach. Administrative team will analyze data as we progress through the year and come back with solid data on the consequences and outcomes. Is there anything unanticipated?

Ms. Driscoll thanked members of the committee for being present tonight. Spoke on the process and the two distinct sides and it is obvious you've come to a middle ground.

Mr. Murray had opportunity to go through several revisions of proposal with healthy disagreements – hopefully this proposal will support and benefit all the students at DHS.

Mr. Murray provided a review of the process. Several things have been voted on and will be implemented in the fall. Some items have not been implemented along with the yellow sheet.

Recommending a WGPA instead of quality points for the incoming freshman class.

Class rank will be reported both numerically and in percentiles.

All students will have a weighted and unweighted GPA and AP will be assigned more weight than Honors courses. Also have changed the designation of grades in the A range. A+=97-100, A = 92—96, and A-=90-92. Level designations have been changed from 1 and 2 to College Prep 1 and College Prep 2. Final class rank will be determined after conclusion of student's senior year.

Valedictorian and Salutatorian will be determined after conclusion of 3rd term. Transfer students must complete 2 years to be included in class rank. Discussed some other procedural things that will be handled internally.

Same chart proposed at earlier SC meetings

2nd chart – proposed by members of committee – reward students for rigorous classes

Consensus – strongest way to send message by use of 2 charts. And use of both charts will be the strongest method across the board.

Questions:

Ms. Matthews: Will there be an interim class rank for college applications?, Yes

Ms. Connolly: clarification – 2nd page - typo on class rank – fall?

Ms. Flatley: clarification – WGPA chart can you tell me about the unlevel classes

Gym, health, Special Ed.

Ms. Doe: important – doing everything. WGPA, unweighted GPA, class rank, numerical, percentile.

Mr. Healy: Am I to understand that this ranking sys. to ensure students challenge and push themselves – consideration Admin & teachers push them as well. Mr. Murray feels we do this currently.

Mr. Ryan: Apologizes for his salty dog appearance. Thank the committee and administration. Have reservations on what is proposed tonight. My understanding is: W GPA for 2012 – similar to state university system uses. Mr. Murray responds: gone away from UMASS system – award not appropriate. Not an industry standard. UMass system tended to give same weight to CP1 and CP2. Major issue with other chart. Flip side – why take honors and not do well – gives students truer idea of matching up w/college.

Mr. Ryan: So the W GPA chart isn't the industry standard but it is the standard to address what the college gpa to be averaged. Concerned about kid in the middle, the average student. By adopting class rank chart – your basically telling a child who takes level 1 classes they cannot graduate in top 50% of class. Class rank isn't in the best interest of the child in the middle, its in best interest of Honor student.

Ms. Driscoll: quality points – look at top 30 that just graduated were not all taking honors.

Mr. Murray: Establishment of CP1 chart is standard benchmark – don't feel they are unfairly penalized.

Mr. Ryan – OK w/w GPA, my concern is with Class rank. I don't see how they can compete.

Ms. Flatley: NHS, Honor roll? How are they affected?

Mr. Murray: need to recalculate – criteria for NHS is totally different (4 elements)

Mr. Roberts: statement – end result of initiative started 4 years ago. Product assists students to determine clearer picture as they go to college. Spur on Average kid to achieve.

Mr. Murray: Want to report student in best light.

Audience:

J. Scholastico –Implementing new GPA, also implementing Academy program – top 30 kids will have the extra push. Who will push #31?

Ms. Doe: Fundamental issue – effort to raise standards for all students – has been the mission of the administration for past 2 years. What are we teaching? Clearly defined expectations – holding teachers, parents and students accountable. Guidance – take a look individually to advise where they should stretch themselves. This is the mission of academic program. Academy team – expectation – PILOT program. Not all “A” students. I want to strongly convey the message that the mission is to improve DHS for all students. We are committed to do that. Part of putting grades on line – effort for parents to take full advantage. Current and frequent feedback what a child is doing. It is a process.

Ms. Driscoll: The Administration will be coming back at the end of the year to re-evaluate how it’s affecting students. Make sure we are doing what we can to ensure all students who want to go to college will be accepted.

Ms. Flatley: Expectations expressed in Course descriptions? Yes they have been redone and accurate.

J. Hardy – what if new proposed wGPA fails?

Ms. Driscoll: Have two – we can easily move from one to another.

J. Hardy – why can’t this be run at the same time and figure out which one is better?

Ms. Doe: Changed A grading levels. Can’t test something that hasn’t existed.

M. Driscoll: Every student gets unweighted GPA

J. Hardy – my own personal belief is that the gap between the middle and high is getting bigger. Feel implementation at this time is unsafe.

K. Bonnano – pressure – what if kid can’t push himself.

Ms. Driscoll – students don’t seem to be overly competitive w/standing on class rank.

JD – not increase negative pressure. Each student reach own potential. Goal is to be sure we’ve placed child in appropriate place – and making nice progress.

Motion made Mr. Healy, second Ms. Matthews to accept chart on the recommendation of the administration with the understanding that they intend to analyze the data throughout the year and report back.

Vote: Approved majority 6 yes, 1 no

Motion made by Ms. Connolly, second Mr. Healy to accept final procedural changes to student handbook final class rank, valedictorian, salutatorian, transfer student ranking .

Vote: Approved unanimous

Mr. Roberts: Note to notify parents at high school regarding all these changes.

SUPERINTENDENT GOALS

Ms. Flatley: Items refer to strategic plan. Ms. Doe states the Strategic plan will available next meeting

Motion: to accept Ms. Flatley, second, Mr. Healy

Vote: Approved unanimous

Action Items:

Intent to enter into a contract with the Superintendent

Motion: Mr. Roberts, second Ms. Matthews

Vote: Approved unanimous

MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Roberts, second Ms. Matthews to accept June 25, 2008 Minutes.

Vote: Approved unanimous

Need minutes from June 11, 2008 for next meeting

RECOMMENDATION – ACADEMIC REPORTING COMMITTEE

Ms Doe wanted to present report on AP scores:

110 students participated at some level. Less than 3 score not acceptable.

Chem 1.9 average – note AP Chemistry is not being offered this fall.

English 3 average

Computer Science – 3.5 average

Art – 2 sections - Design 2.6

Drawing 2.0

Will have conversation on how to address student performance in these two areas.

Psychology – 2.1 average – not acceptable

Statistics – 3.1 average

US History – 2.4 – below what is considered acceptable

Calculus – 3.4

We have some work to do with AP. Student performance throughout the district. AP courses cost a lot of money to run. – expectation reasonable – results need to be better.

Ms. Matthews: comment – healthy # of students taking AP courses

Ms. Matthews: Do you have any sense of why range of scores? Administration takes responsibility for curriculum and teacher expectations.

Ms. Matthews: Analysis of grades and scores? Disparity in grading. - yes

Mr. Murray: Increase summer work to prepare for AP classes.

DONATIONS

None

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

None

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Meeting 8/27/2008

Station 250 Enrollment update

Report on new hires

Status of schools ready to open

Strategic plan – in draft form for feedback before present final version

OTHER, IF ANY

JM plug for summer academic center still open – great turn out. It is open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 9-12 drop in program. (2 more weeks)

Summer reading assessments– dates on website – recommend connect Ed msg.

Freshmen orientation 8/21/08 – 9:30 – 11:30

The open session concluded at 8:25 p.m. The committee resumed its executive session.