

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING—September 8, 2010
Town Hall, Lower Conference Room

PRESENT

Tom Ryan, Chair
Kevin Coughlin, Vice Chair
Tracy Driscoll
Dave Roberts
Joe Heisler
Dimitria Sullivan
Mayanne Briggs

ADMINISTRATION

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

Student Representative

Convened: 7:00 PM

Adjourned: PM

Principal Santamaria introduced the new administration at Dedham High School. Mr. Scott Abrahamson, Director of Fine Arts and Marching Band Director. Mr. Michael Plansky, Director of Athletics. Mr. James Forrest, Assistant Principal. Principal Gately introduced Dr. Margo Fraczek, Assistant Principal at Dedham Middle School.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE:

Superintendent Doe reported another successful school opening today. Students and staff were eager to be back. Tomorrow will be the first day for students at the Curran Early Childhood Education Center. Mrs. Doe expressed condolences to the family of Dick Boudrot who was a teacher at Riverdale and Dedham Middle School. He taught over thirty years in the district. Dedham High School was recognized as one of the top 50 high schools in the September edition of Boston magazine. Mr. Santamaria commented it was a nice way to start the school year. Update on the AP scores at the high school and are very pleased with the results. Mr. Santamaria acknowledged the district wide effort.

English/Language/Comp: 37/34 received qualifying scores
English/Literature/Comp: 15/14 received qualifying scores
Calculus: 25/20 received qualifying scores
Statistics: 20/13 received qualifying scores
Biology: 15/13 received qualifying scores
Psychology: 28/24 received qualifying scores
US History: 30/18 received qualifying scores

The math coach has been hired for the Avery School remediation program. Mrs. Bonnie O'Neill will be starting on September 13, 2010.

The district calendar that was mailed out last week should be discarded due to errors printed on the calendar. A new calendar will be mailed out next week.

Two employees received recognition on the Opening Day for teachers for the service to the district. The Ed Kelly Award recipient was Jim Dellot, a High School employee with over 30 years in the district. The Shad Araby Award recipient was Scott Downey, a custodian at the High School.

AYP letters went out with the preliminary results under NCLB federal law requires letter be sent home before the start of school. AYP remediation plans at HS, MS, and Riverdale will be presented at the next school committee meeting.

Mrs. Doe talked briefly on the information circulating regarding elementary recess. The facts are:

The 15 minute snack break with activity is not being eliminated. The daily recess of 30 minutes following the 20 minute lunch period is not being eliminated. 40 minutes per day for special subjects for all grades: PE, Health, Art, Music, Library/Media is not being eliminated. There is an adjustment in the schedule following the snack break. When examining the elementary schedule, by 10:00 a.m. students had not received one full

hour of instruction. Added over time, concern has been raised over the past two years about not meeting the 900 instructional hours. The principals will share the rationale at the next meeting. This will be a pilot program for seven weeks and principals will report back to the Committee the first week in November on the effects of the schedule change on teachers and students. First grade is not included in this adjustment. Smart Moves, a research based program designed for use in the classroom to energize and help re-focus students will be used during snack time. This software was donated to the schools last year.

Dedham partners with the School to Careers Partnership. This is the 4th year Dedham students have been involved in the bioengineering symposium. Brendan Gessler, Meaghan Dwan, Michael Cullen attended the program this summer. Students also participated in the Neponset Valley Leadership Institute which is a weeklong program where students meet with key private sector leaders. Those students were Kelly Black, Carmen Dello Iacono, James Riley, Aleetha Bartolome, and Jason Riley.

CHAIR'S UPDATE

Mr. Ryan touched on the Avery School, with the plan in place to address AYP. Principal Sullivan and staff are identifying students who would qualify for program – will start the week of September 20th. Presentations are scheduled for the next SC meeting for remediation plans and recess. Mr. Ryan recognized and thanked Principal Santamaria and Assistant Principal Murray for attaining the high school ranking of top 50 schools in the state. Thanks also to Superintendent Doe and Mr. La Francesca – formula based on staffing and per pupil ratios and expenditures are used to achieve this ranking. Good job in tough fiscal times – funding is going to the right areas. The other groups to thank are the Selectmen and Town Manager, and Town Meeting members for approving the funding for the schools.

REPORTS

Update on Siemens Project, Roland Butzke

The project is well underway to successful completion of the first phase of the project. The rest of the project is on schedule for completion. There are 14 measures that are going on in the various schools. Lighting, building envelop work, domestic water systems, energy management systems, steam traps, network controls, univentilators, pipe insulation, and boiler replacement. A temporary domestic hot water system has been installed at the high school for use during the completion of the boiler installation so there is no interruption of hot water when school starts. The project should be done this year (December) but there will be tweaking that will carry through next year. The work on the univentilators will be done during 2nd shift so not to interfere with the students in the classrooms. The Committee thanked them for a great job, the work has been outstanding.

Class Rank Recommendation, Joanne McCormick – Director of Guidance

Documentation was provided to the School Committee members prior to the meeting.

Why: There have been changes made in the past couple of years based on parent and student input. There are fewer schools using the ranking system. Some changes specific to DHS occurred with the inclusion of MMSI grant, the open door policy for students to take more rigorous classes, and the desire to encourage students to do that. Students have mentioned when dropping a more rigorous class is because of class rank.

Class rank is calculated with a quality point system. Each grade is given a numeric value reflective of the weight of the class and level of the grade. It does not give students an idea of where they fit. We have moved to a GPA system (weighted and unweighted).

Key Points: The direction is to discontinue reporting class rank and report weighted GPA for the Class of 2012. This system serves all students better. Half of all high schools in the nation no longer report class rank. Dedham High School is now using Naviance. It is more personal and realistic for the student and it helps the student determine where they fit. The Guidance department recommendation is to eliminate class rank as currently done, revise class profile, and continue to explore this topic.

The Chair recommends referring this topic to the Policy Sub-Committee to further explore. Included in the discussions should be Administration, principal and parent groups. It is important to have current feedback

from a variety of schools, private and state schools, as well as a more recent survey of schools in eastern Massachusetts. The formulas should be universally used and accepted.

Mr. Roberts brought up the Memorandum of Understanding that exists between the schools and the police department was last updated in 2004. This is a living document, and in looking at the systemic changes in both departments it is time to update.

Three items for Policy Sub-Committee:

Bullying Policy

Class Rank

MOA between school and police department

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Ms. Sullivan, and seconded by Mr. Roberts to approve the minutes from June 9, 2010.

Approved: unanimous

DONATIONS

Dr. Laflamme returned the stipend he receives as a department head in the amount of \$1,250.00 to the schools to allow the English department to continue replenishing novels for students.

Dedham Womens Exchange donated \$1000.00 to be used for the Middle School Library.

Motion: DS, JH – approved unanimous

Motion was made to accept the donations by Ms. Sullivan with grateful appreciation, and seconded by Mr. Heisler with grateful appreciation.

VOTED: to accept the donations.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Comments were made regarding the removal of recess at the elementary level. Research should have been done prior to the removal of recess. Brains need a break. There is not parent support for this move. The goal of removing recess is appreciated, but doubt there is evidence to support this is a good move. The process of notification was cryptic. The letter sent home was not straight forward. The students shouldn't be punished by removing recess; the elementary schools don't have a cafeteria and are in the classroom most of the day. Concerned about the psychology involved and hope the children don't hate school and stop listening. Found out about this issue in the Dedham Times. This seems like an issue that should have been talked about last March. What process was used to make this decision and how are decisions communicated? Will 10 or 15 minutes help MCAS scores or hurt them without recess. This decision was poorly communicated and how sound academically, psychologically, or socially is the decision. There is no research to show taking 15 minutes away will improve scores or learning. Concern expressed that "all parents" are opposed to the decision. It is not a black and white issue, it will become more organic and managed by the teacher. Adding up the hours during the day, there is one hour and 45 minutes of classroom instruction. To take 15 minutes back equates to 7 days of instruction added onto the school year.

The Chair thanked everyone for sharing their views and concerns. The administration has been talking about this issue for two years. It has come up as a topic during contract negotiations, not for the purpose of improving MCAS scores, but more time on task. This year, AYP is at issue and we need to address it. The School Committee does not control what happens during the school day. The process may have been a little backward, but was made in response to what is happening in the schools collectively. An in depth explanation will occur in two weeks and a review of the pilot program in 7 weeks. Our primary concern is to move academics forward. The Chair supports the decision of the Superintendent. Mr. Coughlin expressed

his disappointment in the process and was blindsided by this. The communication within the Committee and the administration needs to improve and he expects it will.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Cafeteria Workers Contract was settled and ratified. Recommendation of the Superintendent is to ratify as well. Three year agreement, increase from one to two personal days with accrual of up to three days.

Increase of longevity for each level. Salary increase of 1%, 1.5%, 2% for each of the three years.

Motion made by Mr. Coughlin to approve the Cafeteria Workers Contract as recommended, and seconded by Ms. Briggs. Approved: Unanimous

Avery School update: SBRC is waiting for an announcement for the schedule of ground breaking. Mr. Coughlin requested a neighborhood meeting concerning the construction. There was a request to have a report on the outcome of students requesting field usage from last meeting. Mr. Ryan replied that the project manager reported field usage would be available September and beginning of October. The position of the administration due to safety issues, bathroom plumbing has been shut off, parking, and visitor stands being dismantled it will be used for practice only. Mr. Santamaria communicated to Mr. Dello Iacono his surprise to hear parents felt this field decision was sprung on them. It was clear from the beginning there would be an inconvenience but administration would make arrangements for games to be played on suitable fields. Games are played on Stone Park, Nobel and Greenough, and Westwood HS.

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Invite Dedham 9's, baseball team, who advanced into the New England Region Tournament in September, to be recognized.

Motion to adjourn made by Ms. Driscoll, and seconded by Ms. Briggs. Approved: Unanimous