

TRANSCRIPT OF RECORDED MINUTES

OF

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

WORKSHOP/BUSINESS MEETING

OF

JANUARY 22, 2018

SUBMITTED FOR THE APPROVAL OF:

THE METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE

AND

THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

“AN OPEN MEETING ADVANTAGE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF METHUEN”

RECORDED BY:
MARTHA SIROIS, PUBLIC RECORDER

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METHUEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
WORKSHOP/BUSINESS MEETING
JANUARY 22, 2018

This Workshop/Business Meeting of the Methuen School Committee was held at Methuen High School, Media Center, and was posted for 6:30PM

ROLL CALL

Mr. Robert F. Vogler (P)
Ms. Susan M. Nicholson (P)
Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (P)
Ms. Jana DiNatale (P)
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (P)
Ms. Jana Zanni Pesce (P)
Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (NP)

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Robert F. Vogler (P)
Ms. Susan M. Nicholson (P)
Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio, Vice Chairperson (P)
Ms. Jana DiNatale (P)
Mr. Dennis D.J. Deeb, Secretary (P)
Ms. Jana Zanni Pesce (P)

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

Mayor James P. Jajuga, Chairperson (NP)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs. Judith Scannell, Superintendent of Schools
Brandi L. Kwong, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Edward Lussier, Director, Instructional Technology
Ms. Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Nicholas DiZoglio called this Workshop Session to order at 6:30PM with a quorum of members in attendance, and listed above.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler motioned to accept the agenda as presented
Mr. Deeb seconded the motion to approve as presented

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: 6-0-0 APPROVED

Next Generation MCAS-Update
Presented by Ms. Brandi Kwong

Superintendent Scannell-Ms. Kwong has been working diligently with staff and students getting them ready for the upcoming testing.

Ms. Kwong-Her presentation will be an update on the MCAS 2017 scores and an update on the MCAS 2018 new process and planning.

Ms. Kwong gave her presentation (handout)

Mr. Vogler-Grades 6 & 7 scores look very strong. Grade 8 scores dropped.

Ms. Kwong-Grades 4 & 8 were the first to take the test on the computer. Grade 8 had a difficult time adjusting to the change of taking the test on the computer. Grade 4 students were very happy to take the test on the computer. They adapted very well. She was in every Grade 8 class during testing.

Mr. Deeb-Are the question type the same?

Ms. Kwong-No. They changed the question type. The content and standards do align. The questions are much higher. The paper based test will now be an accommodation.

Mr. Deeb-The Grade 10 paper test was graded for grammar. Does the new test grade for grammar?

Ms. Kwong-Kids should go back and check spelling on the previous pages.

Ms. DiNatale-How are we helping students catch-up when they have not had spelling and grammar in class?

Ms. Kwong-It is woven into our Lucy Calkins Writing Program.

Ms. DiNatale-Would you expect when parents see writing coming home that they should see student editing?

Ms. Kwong-Yes. It is mostly student correcting.

Ms. DiNatale-What is the State average? She cares about State average of meeting and exceeding expectations.

Ms. Kwong-It does not work that way. They are by categories. Those categories are in black or red. Black is above State average and red is below State average.

Ms. DiNatale-Can you get that information?

Ms. Kwong-No. Just meeting and exceeding information.

Ms. DiNatale-She asked Ms. Kwong if she viewed tests from each grade level and did she feel the questions were in-line with our curriculum?

Ms. Kwong-She is not able to do that. Teachers felt the practice tests were mirrored to questions on the test.

Mr. Vogler-It is important that people see the student movement in and out of the system. This makes a difference in our scores.

Superintendent-She will have updated numbers at the next meeting. There was a large flow of students that registered in the past few weeks. We have extremely needy students coming into

the district. This will definitely impact our data at the high school. This will also impact the budget.

Mr. Vogler-Is there any remediation that can be done in a quick manner to help these students before the MCAS? He has no problem funding a program for all students.

Ms. DiNatale-Are the students that are registering coming from a particular place or a particular circumstance?

Superintendent-All from different areas and also circumstances.

Ms. DiNatale-How many students?

Superintendent-Grades K-8, between 50 and 60 students this month. MHS 18 students.

Ms. DiNatale-With kids coming in she agrees with remediation. She disagrees that they should spend time and money on having kids be taught for a test. She does approve of immediately getting students coming in the resources they need to get them to where they need to be.

Mr. Vogler-He agrees, but it seems the State is directing us to do that.

Ms. Kwong-It is very complicated. The focusing is on teaching and learning and what kids need to do to be successful. We try to do everything we can for kids. We also have an afterschool program to help students. We are having lots of conversations about math and increasing those scores. We have remediations in place and we need to talk about that more.

Mr. Deeb-Are the highest performing districts the same city/towns that are usually at the top?

Ms. Kwong- Yes

Mr. Deeb-Do we know what the transient population is in these city/towns?

Ms. Kwong-Yes, we can look at their profiles.

Mr. Deeb-It is incredible the number of students coming into our district. He feels that other city/towns are dealing with the same issue. Have you spoken to other districts about this issue?

Ms. Kwong-Yes she has. There are 4 districts that she works together with on curriculum and they have had many conversations about this issue.

Superintendent-She thanked Ms. Kwong for her presentation. The handout slides will be posted on the website for parents. We have sent home a flyer with students for the Methuen Innovation Learning Lab (M.I.L.L) S.T.E.M enrichment after school program. The flyers went home Friday and within 3 hours we had 82 students sign up.

Ms. DiNatale-Is this information online?

Superintendent-Yes

Methuen Public Schools Website-Update

Presented by Edward Lussier

Superintendent Scannell introduced Mr. Lussier

Mr. Lussier gave his presentation.

Ms. DiNatale-Can parents sign up to auto receive flyers when they are updated on the website?

Mr. Lussier-Some pages you can auto receive when they are updated, but not the flyer page.

Ms. Zanni Pesce-Are there trackers on the website?

Mr. Lussier-Some pages may have some but overall, no.

Ms. Zanni Pesce-Is there a general tracker for the website?

Mr. Lussier-It would be difficult to differentiate visitors from student use. The students go into different places using the website during the school day.

Ms. Zanni Pesce-She was thinking more about the Eureka Math videos on YouTube. Would YouTube have a tracker?

Mr. Lussier-YouTube would have their own tracker and whomever posted the video on YouTube would have access to those statistics.

Mr. DiZoglio-Where do parents go on the website to find information about the Parent Center?
Superintendent-Mr Lussier and Christine Castle are in the process of creating a Parent Center page for the website.

Ms. DiNatale-She receives calls from parents about bus stops and snowstorms. It might be a good idea to have a place on the website for parents to share information that is not student specific. The parent could go on the website and post their question and the appropriate person would provide a response so the public could see.

Mr. Lussier-It would have to be a social media account and would need a moderator. You could not just allow any messages to be posted. We have discussed embedding Twitter feeds.

Ms. DiNatale-Her concern is a lot of parents were going on Facebook complaining. She feels that they had legitimate concerns that had already been addressed by the District. It was frustrating to her to see them posting negative remarks on social media where if there was a place to go on the website they could receive a response to their issues, they would not be frustrated and making negative posts to Facebook. She is looking for an alternative to social media where parents can get a factual response from the District.

Mr. Lussier-This leads into something else we have been working on. We have been using Blackboard Connect to contact parents. We are now going to use the Infinite Campus Portal. Students in Grades 7-12 will see their grades and attendance. Parents will have control over how they will be contacted, phone, email or text. They can update contact information. The difficult part has been getting parents to sign up for the parent portal. His team has been working hard to make that happen. They have also been sending messages every Friday asking parents to sign up for the portal.

Mr. DiZoglio-He thought every parent would have to set up an account when they updated student information.

Mr. Lussier-They are working on that. They have been working on getting all the modules up and running.

Mr. DiZoglio-Where are we with implementation of the remaining modules?

Mr. Lussier-The modules left that we are working on are the Human Resource module, which is complete we are just waiting for the approval, online registration, and online bill paying. Report cards are currently available through the portal. We may eventually only mail home report cards if a parent request to receive it that way, otherwise, they will be available in the portal.

Ms. DiNatale-She feels that everyone has access to technology and that maybe the means to get the report cards should only be through the portal. Why not make this shift? It will give the parent communication that they so desperately need from the parents. We can also use the portal to push out more information to the parents and get them included in what is going on in

the schools. The only reason she was on board with Infinite Campus was the communication piece. She would like to see the report card piece be put into place as soon as possible. Mr. Lussier-Mr. Barden put out on Twitter that he did not want to send out paper report cards. They are in the process of updating email addresses. Freshman parents are at 45% on the portal.

Superintendent-She made the final decision they will still print report cards. She couldn't take the chance of not printing report cards with the low parent portal numbers. We will continue to work on this.

Ms. DiNatale-Report cards online would motivate the parents to sign up for the parent portal. When we ask parents to update their student information, we should also ask for their email address. It is so important to get this done.

Mr. Vogler-Our website has more information than other school districts. What is the breakdown for each class? He doesn't like to make people do something that they don't want to do. If they don't want to do it, they won't do it. You may be more successful at the lower school level. There are still some people in this world that don't have access to the internet. We have such a diverse group of families you will be lucky to get 90% to participate in the parent portal. It will be a major task to get them to do it.

Mr. Deeb-He commended Mr. Lussier and his team on the website. He agrees with Ms. DiNatale about communication and do this through Infinite Campus but he also agrees with the Superintendent. People would be surprised how little parents utilize the website, even if they have access. He feels 45% participation is a high number. He also likes the old school report cards. The District is doing a great job trying to get the parent portal to happen.

Mr. Lussier-100 % of our students here at the high school do have accounts. We have over 15 thousand visits to the portal just from the high school students. The students are very comfortable using the portal and hopefully parents that are not comfortable using it will be looking over their students shoulder to see the portal and ask to see their grades. If a new student is enrolled, they automatically get an account. The parent associated with that student can go on right away and create their account.

Ms. DiNatale-She wasn't suggesting all parents be forced to look at the website. Using digital registration, at some point we are going to make the push. Other districts are finding a way to get it done. She knows that Mr. Lussier is working very hard and the website is awesome. She feels it is important for families to find a way to get on board with this system.

Mr. DiZoglio-If we have the report card online, will we be able to see if parents look at the report card?

Mr Lussier-No. There is no check box capability.

Mr. DiZoglio-Is there any notification when a grade is put into the system?

Mr. Lussier-Parents will get a popup.

Ms. Nicholson-She would like to ask Asst. Superintendent Kwong a question. You said this is the 3rd year for Eureka Math and you attributed some of the increase in the Student Growth Percentiles to that program. You also mentioned the Lucy Calkins Writing program. What year are we in for the Lucy Calkins Writing Program?

Ms. Kwong-Year 4.

Ms. Nicholson-Is that used in all grade levels?

Ms. Kwong-It is used in grades K-8. Eureka Math is also used in grades K-8.

Ms. Nicholson-What year are we in for the Foundations?

Ms. Kwong-We are in year 1 for kindergarten and we will start the program in grade 1 next year.

Ms. Nicholson-How is the Foundations program?

Ms. Kwong-It is fantastic. They had all the teachers participate in some Professional Development (PD). She was able to visit all the classrooms in the District during their Foundations and it was great. Watching the students and seeing the teachers, it was amazing.

Ms. Nicholson-She thanked Ms. Kwong and Mr. Lussier for their presentations. The Committee appreciated them.

Ms. Zanni Pesce-She has a son that is in kindergarten. He receives his Foundations packet on Monday or Tuesday and wants to do the entire packet right away. He loves it. She thinks it is a great program.

Ms. Kwong-The format of Foundations is amazing. She visited the classrooms in December and the students knew their letters and were reading. They are so engaged.

***ADJOURNMENT:**

With no further business to discuss at this Workshop Session, Mr. Dizoglio entertained a motion to conclude the Workshop Session for the evening at 8:22 pm.

MOTION: Mr. Vogler moved to adjourn the Workshop Session at 8:22 pm.

Ms. Nicholson seconded the motion

VOTE: 6-0-0 UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Sirois, Public Recorder

Methuen Public Schools