

**Milton School Committee  
Regular Meeting  
Milton High School Library  
November 5, 2008**

**Committee Present:** Beirne Lovely, Chair, Lynda Lee Sheridan, Vice Chair, Mary Kelly, Chris Huban, Glenn Pavlicek and Kristan Bagley-Jones

**Staff Present:** Mary Gormley, Superintendent; John Phelan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Personnel; Paul Hilton, Assistant Superintendent for Business

**1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.**

**2. Citizen Speak (Policy BEDH-Residents may speak for up to 3 minutes)**

Isabella Carter and Maryann Truax came to promote the High School's upcoming musical "Gypsy." This play will be presented Friday, November 7, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, November 8, 2008 at 2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Tickets are available at the Milton High School office and will be sold at the door on performance days. After singing a song from Gypsy, Ms. Carter and Ms. Truax encouraged everyone present and everyone watching to attend.

Allison Corcoran, one of the Co-Chairs of the Celebration for Education, came to promote this year's event, "Shake, Rattle, and Roll," to be held November 22, 2008 at Lombardo's. Invitations have been mailed out to all families and tickets can be purchased on the website, [www.miltonfoundationforeducation.org](http://www.miltonfoundationforeducation.org). In addition to the silent and live auctions, there will be a buffet style dinner, a Casino night with a Texas Hold'em tournament and a Bingo tournament, open seating, a DJ, and dancing. The proceeds from this event will be targeted by school and each principal has identified capital equipment, programs, or initiatives that will enhance their particular school. Anyone wishing to make a donation or be a sponsor for this event can find the necessary forms on the website. Ms. Corcoran formally invited all School Committee members and everyone watching to attend since this event raises approximately \$200,000-\$250,000 each year for our schools.

Earl Fay thanked Ms. Gormley and her staff for the improvement in communication and complimented Ms. Gormley on the Email blasts being sent. He came tonight to voice his concern with regard to special education performance, particularly at the Middle School level. He asked that the School Committee have the Director of Pupil Personnel Services, Jeff Rubin, explain what happened last year and why we fell short. Mr. Fay feels there should be a specific, written plan with bench marks along the way. He also feels Mr. Rubin should have a clear plan for Middle School students.

**3. Approval of November 5, 2008 Agenda** – Mr. Huban would like to add an announcement by Ms. Bagley-Jones regarding the budget forum Monday, November 10, 2008. Ms. Kelly asked if the Committee could touch base on the follow-up items from the last meeting. For a future School Committee meeting, Mr. Lovely would like the Policy Subcommittee to review the Milton Public School's policy regarding marijuana use in light of Question 2 passing. Mr. Lovely emphasized that although the laws of the State may have changed with regard to the possession of marijuana, the rules of the Milton Public School system have not changed with regard to marijuana use or possession on school premises. With the Committee's consent to add these items, Mr. Lovely approved the agenda for November 5, 2008.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes of the October 21, 2008 School Committee Meeting were approved as amended.

Move: L. Sheridan

Second: G. Pavlicek

Vote 6-0-0

**5. Superintendent's Report - Food Service Program** – Ms. Jacqueline Morgan, Food Service Director, updated the Committee on the Food Service Program of the Milton Public Schools. In summary, Ms. Morgan reported that:

- Breakfast is served at all six schools.
- The Elementary lunch program serves 1200 meals per day; the Middle School serves 575 meals per day; and Milton High School serves between 670-719 meals per day.
- The Snack Program complies with the Massachusetts Action for Healthy Kids and all beverages are on the American Health Generations list. Elementary students are limited to one snack per day and parents who do not want funds from their prepaid account used for the Snack Program may opt out.
- All hamburger rolls and hot dog rolls were changed to whole grain and all breads have been changed to whole grain or whole wheat.
- Milton participates in the Farm to School Program and has 21 staff certified in Serve Safe as of November, 2008.
- The prices for school lunch are \$1.75 at Elementary; \$2.00 at Pierce; \$2.00 for the main lunch at Milton High School and \$2.25 for the Deli and Salad selections. Breakfast is sold daily for \$1.00. We are currently on target with what other communities are charging for lunch.

With regard to past financial issues within the Food Service area, Ms. Morgan explained that the computerized system has helped. Elementary schools use a prepaid account system so students come through the line with no cash; Middle and High School students swipe their student IDs or use a 4 digit PIN number. The PIN number issued in Middle School remains the same until the student graduates. When asked to explain the free and reduced lunch program, Ms. Morgan stated that an application to participate in this program is sent out to every family by every principal at the beginning of the school year. She is the only person to handle these applications, and they are kept strictly confidential. Income guidelines to qualify for the free and reduced lunch program are set by the Department of Agriculture. However, if a family qualifies for food stamps, they automatically qualify for free lunch. If any resident is interested in obtaining an application, Ms. Morgan can be contacted directly or applications can be found on the Milton Public School website. In closing, Ms. Morgan attributed the success of the Food Service Program to her phenomenal staff and the cooperation of the Health and Wellness Committee. Ms. Gormley added that the Health and Wellness Committee is working with Milton Hospital to have a representative from the Hospital join the Committee. Also, any parent or student wishing to join the Committee would be more than welcome. The details of this presentation will be posted on the website.

**MCAS Science Scores** – Ms. Barbara Plonski, K-12 Science Director, reviewed the Science MCAS scores. In summary, Ms. Plonski reported that:

- Grade 5 and Grade 8 take an integrated test including Life, Physical, and Earth Science and Technology/Engineering; the High School MCAS is subject-specific (Biology or Chemistry)
- The Class of 2010 must pass a STE (Science and Technology/Engineering) MCAS; to date 95% of the Class has passed the requirement.

- Science MCAS does not count towards AYP; however, it does count for a student's graduation requirement.
- 2008 STE MCAS results show Milton has fewer students in the Failing and Advanced categories when compared to the State and more students in the Needs Improvement and Proficient categories
- 2008 Biology MCAS results show Milton has fewer students in the Failing category when compared to the State; more students in the Needs Improvement and Proficient categories; and Milton is equal to the State in the Advanced category.
- When comparing Biology MCAS scores from 2007 and 2008, results show fewer students in the Failing and Needs Improvement categories for 2008 and more students in the Proficient and Advanced categories.
- Pierce Grade 8 STE MCAS results show Milton has fewer students in the Failing and Needs Improvement categories when compared to the State and more students in the Proficient category; Pierce is equal to the State in the Advanced category.
- When comparing Pierce Grade 8 STE MCAS results from 2006-2008, results show a steady decline in the Needs Improvement category and an incline in the Proficient and Advanced categories. There has not been a significant change in the Failing category.
- The sub-groups' success mirrors what we see for Math. As part of the AP grant, Pre-AP training is being provided that will help the Middle School in both Math and Science. We are trying to introduce an Engineering program at the Middle School level that takes Math and incorporates it with Science.
- Grade 5 STE MCAS results show fewer students in the Warning and Advanced categories when compared to the State and more students in the Needs Improvement and Proficient categories.
- Tucker School showed improvement when comparing MCAS results from 2006-2008. Ms. Plonski and Principal Echelson feel having the WISP (Watershed Integrated Science Program) program at Tucker last year may have helped. This year there will be a research fellow from WISP working with each 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom across the system.

**Questions and/or requests of the Committee included:**

- Have you considered coordinating Science with the Math projects? Ms. Plonski replied that she has worked with Paul Ajemian, the grade 6-12 Math Director, to do this. They are currently using units with both Math and Science teachers and recently wrote a grant to get more engineering modules. The hope is the teaching will be shared by both the Math and Science teachers to allow students to see information in multiple settings.
- When looking at statistics, only 5% of the Class of 2010 has not passed the STE MCAS. However, looking at 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade statistics, 8%-15% are still in the failing section. What do you see as the biggest issue with the Middle School? Ms. Plonski explained the 8<sup>th</sup> grade test is an integrated test and students are expected to remember what they learned in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. That is the reason why they have since gone to an integrated Science program where each grade level curriculum ties into what students learn the following year. Also, 30% of the test is Engineering and Technology. There are comprehensive standards such as communication design, manufacturing design, etc., which would almost require a separate Technology course. The reason why students perform better in 9<sup>th</sup> grade is that their test is a subject specific test.
- How do these tests accommodate students with disabilities and how is the special education sub-group performing? Ms. Plonski replied students have unlimited time to take these tests; they can have a scribe if needed and someone to read the test to them. A student's accommodations are determined at the IEP meeting based on individual needs. As far as performance, this sub-group has similar problems as those seen in Math and Language Arts. She will get back to the Committee with more data on how sub-groups are performing on the STE MCAS.

- National data suggests there is an “anti-math” atmosphere among girls. What is the breakdown between boys/girls with respect to performance on MCAS testing at the Middle School and High School? What is being done to encourage more women within the Math and Science areas? Ms. Plonski replied that if you were to look at our AP enrollments, it would be the boys who are under-represented. Out of the 93 students in AP Biology, 75% are female; the ratio of boys/girls is almost equal in AP Chemistry. She will get back to the Committee with this data.
- With respect to the Engineering/Technology standards not being covered presently, could we get some comparative data with other districts? What is the hold up to having them integrated? Ms. Plonski stated you would almost need to have a stand alone Technology course to integrate all seven standards, which is not possible in our current budget situation. She will get back to the Committee with comparative data.
- Looking at Elementary results (Grade 5 STE MCAS), approximately 50% of students are in the Warning/Needs Improvement categories. Do they need more time on task? Ms. Plonski replied part of the problem is time; there is less time spent on Science than is spent on Math and Language Arts. She is working with Maryellen McDermott to try to do some cross-curricula work with Math. Also, most Elementary teachers are Language Arts experts who may not have the same comfort level with Science.
- Would we consider having a Science specialist? Ms. Plonski replied the problem is having the finances to do so. She feels having the WISP fellow for 5<sup>th</sup> grade will help in this area. Also, we have our own specialists in our teachers who love Science.
- For grades 3-5, approximately how much time is spent on Science? Approximately 45-116 minutes per week are spent on Science (this varies by grade level). Science is also taught in French at all grade levels.
- Is it the best practice to have 5<sup>th</sup> grade students switch classes to have the Science specialist? Ms. Gormley replied the philosophy for an Elementary student is to have one teacher. This year they are introducing the 4<sup>th</sup> grade initiative where English/French students will be integrated for some Math and Language Arts. Ms. Gormley also stated that as an Elementary teacher, you have to be an expert in Language Arts, Math, Social Studies and Science. Mr. Phelan, Ms. Plonski, and the Elementary principals are working to have 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers each teach a specific area. For example, one teacher would teach Science for both classes and the other teacher would teach Social Studies for both classes. This will help to improve lessons, help with prep time, and correlate to achievement.
- In addition to providing MCAS statistics according to gender, could you also provide racial statistics for MCAS and AP tests?

Mr. Lovely took a moment to report that he had the opportunity to visit Pierce Middle School yesterday to speak to the teachers on behalf of the School Committee. He wanted to convey to them the Committee’s confidence in their abilities and thank them for their commitment to the children of Milton. Although he takes to heart Mr. Fay’s comments that there has to be a plan for improvement, Mr. Lovely stated there has been a plan and a concerted effort on behalf of the staff to deal with the issues we are facing. Mr. Lovely does not want there to be any misconception that our teachers are not effectively teaching our students or that we are blaming them for our problems; rather, we are thanking them for their commitment to help resolve the problems. The Committee thanked Ms. Plonski for her presentation. All details from this presentation will be posted on the website.

**Diversity Report** – Ms. Gormley reported that the School Committee adopted a Diversity Policy in 2001 which was re-approved in 2006. Part of the policy states that the Superintendent will give a Diversity Report to the School Committee each year by October 15<sup>th</sup> (this report had been deferred by

the School Committee at the prior two School Committee meetings). Ms. Gormley briefly reported on the hiring practices and recruitment policies of the Milton Public School system which are put in place to ensure diversity of the staff. She informed the Committee that both she and the Assistant Superintendents meet monthly with the Citizens for a Diverse Milton's Leadership Team to discuss a variety of issues involving diversity in the Milton Public Schools. These discussions have included hiring efforts and recruitment, raising the achievement of all students attending the Milton Public Schools, improving communication, and increasing parental involvement. Meetings are also held at the beginning and end of each year among principals, teachers, and parents to brainstorm ideas to improve diversity. This year's meeting will be held tomorrow and a group of 40 will attend to brainstorm ideas for student engagement and come up with a plan for each school. The group will meet again in the spring to review their accomplishments. Ms. Gormley also reported there are several diversity initiatives that take place within our six schools and each school has established a Diversity Committee consisting of teachers, parents, and administrators. Also included in Ms. Gormley's report were enrollment statistics for the district by race/ethnicity for the years 2007 and 2008. Grade 1 statistics for 2007 and 2008 were shown by race/ethnicity, gender, and according to program (French Immersion or English). This Diversity Report will be posted on the website. The Diversity Policy (IFC) can also be found on the website.

**Field Trips** - Mr. Phelan reported that they have heard the concern of the Committee with regard to the pricing of certain field trips and the number of school days missed. He is in the process of coming up with a system for "annualizing" these trips so families know in advance what trips will take place. Mr. Phelan also discussed the possibility of alternating and scheduling the years for these field trips so families have the chance to plan ahead. Ms. Bagley-Jones agreed that having a known schedule for these field trips would be helpful for parents and students to plan in advance. Ms. Sheridan asked if the number of field trips taken at the Middle School level as compared to the High School level could be looked at when these trips are being reviewed.

6. **Facilities Subcommittee Report** – Ms. Sheridan reported that the Facilities Subcommittee is working on a new lighting project for the Copeland Field House. They are looking to switch the current 455 watt lamps with more energy efficient lights. There is a cost associated with this; however, the electric company has offered the Milton Public Schools a rebate which can be put towards the cost of new fixtures. The energy savings from the new lighting will allow us to recoup the cost within approximately 7 months. Ms. Kelly stated that people have approached her about the lights at the Pierce parking lot (in addition to the lights being on at the Cunningham/Collicot building). She asked if there was a way to turn these lights off at a certain time or to have every other light on. Mr. Hilton replied they are entertaining some performance-based contracting that will change the technology to allow us to increase savings. With regard to the lights at Cunningham/Collicot, Ms. Sheridan asked that residents email School Committee members or the Superintendent's office to report the date and time they see lights on at the Cunningham/Collicot building. Ms. Bagley-Jones asked if there were sensors in the Library at Cunningham/Collicot and, if so, why do the lights not automatically turn off. Mr. Hilton believes there are sensors; he will check on that. Ms. Bagley-Jones suggested posting some of the cost saving measures the Facilities Subcommittee has worked on to the website. Mr. Lovely is interested in knowing if an effort is being made to consolidate building use during the winter months to help save energy. This could be done by scheduling all meetings at a particular school building each week and rotating among schools. Mr. Huban inquired about the yellow tape around the fencing at the front door of Pierce. Mr. Hilton explained that the contracts for fencing in that area in the process of being signed

and the decorative rails are being fabricated for installation (this was a separate bid from the School Building project). The completion date is planned for early December. The yellow tape is there for safety reasons since there is an elevation in the patio area. Ms. Gormley added that the last two contracts of the School Building project have been awarded for the Cunningham/Collicot landscaping and fencing. The same completion date of early December is planned. With regard to the solar panel project, Mr. Hilton reported that Town Counsel has reviewed the contracts and with some minor modifications they will be signed and the project work will begin.

7. **Finance Subcommittee Report** – Ms. Kelly stated the Finance Subcommittee has met twice since the last School Committee meeting and has meetings planned for Monday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 a.m. and Thursday November 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. She invited all School Committee members to attend. Administration has presented the Finance Subcommittee with different versions of budgets and asked that the Subcommittee give them feedback. This information will be reviewed at the Monday morning meeting with the goal of presenting a recommendation to the full School Committee at the next meeting.

A motion was made by the Chair of the Finance Subcommittee for the School Committee to approve the FY09 budget as presented with a total appropriation of \$31,779,140.

Move: M. Kelly

Second: C. Huban

Vote: 6-0-0

\*This information will be posted on the website.

Mr. Lovely asked what the expectation was with regard to receiving the \$385,000 in Medicaid reimbursement. Mr. Hilton replied the \$385,000 was moved from the budget document to a revolving account. Town government officials have been notified that we fully intend to spend the \$385,000 from the revolving account, and they have agreed to work with us to cover any deficits that may arise within that revolving account. Ms. Gormley also reported to the School Committee that Pierce has hired a 1.0 teacher certified in Math and a .5 retired Math teacher previously at the High School to fill the AYP positions. Tucker is working to secure a .5 position in Reading.

8. **Old/New Business** –Ms. Bagley-Jones reported that a meeting regarding the impact of the budget will be held Monday, November 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. in the Pierce Auditorium. This meeting does not replace our legal budget hearing to be held later in the year. Ms. Kelly added that the Committee would like to hear from residents about what they consider to be important. Ms. Gormley stated that residents can either direct their questions to her at [mgormley@miltonps.org](mailto:mgormley@miltonps.org) or speak at the meeting Monday evening. Although it is important to hear what residents consider to be important, Mr. Pavlicek stressed that if we get level funded again this year the question will be what do residents want to see back next year, not what they would like to see restored. Mr. Lovely stressed that if the Schools are level funded again, we will have to come up with approximately \$1.7 million in cuts since that is the amount required just to rollover our current staff. As requested, Ms. Gormley reviewed the follow-up items from the October 21, 2008 School Committee meeting.

Motion was made to adjourn.

Move: C. Huban

Second: K. Bagley-Jones

Vote: 6-0-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.