

Minutes of the School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High Library
July 25, 2012

Committee Present: Glenn Pavlicek, Chair; Lynda-Lee Sheridan, Vice Chair; Mary Kelly, Kristan Bagley-Jones, Leroy Walker, Becky Padera.

Not Present:

Staff Present: Mary Gormley, Superintendent; John Phelan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Personnel; Matthew Gillis, Assistant Superintendent for Business.

Call to Order

The Chair called the July 25th meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:06 pm

Approve Agenda

The committee approved the agenda after requesting the following edits: Under Superintendent's Report, remove Item 5b and 5c; add the Social Networking Policy as part of the Policy Subcommittee report (between #7 and #8) and add an RFP to Old Business.

Citizens Speak

Mr. Pavlicek explained that only 30 minutes have been allotted for Citizens Speak. He asked if any speakers were willing to defer their time to later in the meeting. He also reiterated that no vote has been taking regarding changing the current First Grade Assignment Policy, other than to restrict incoming families from entering the French Immersion program this summer. Among the citizens who spoke (Jay Fundling, Linda Cooper, Jennifer Renz, Steven Minsky, Bruce Weinstein, Charles Karimbakas, Jane Gannon, Mary Ann Rull, Patricia MacNaught), some of their comments included:

- * Hold off on capping the French Immersion program, since this year's number may be an unusual trend
- * Support capping the program and do so quickly to allow parents the chance to make an informed decision.
- * Support for reinstating the First Grade English class at Cunningham.
- * Address the small English/large French class sizes at Glover
- * Do not cap French, meet the demand
- * Make the English program more desirable
- * Institute a cap and/or lottery, much like other communities have done
- * Increase school budget to fully fund both programs
- * Establish a third, unique program such as a math/science strand.

Mr. Pavlicek explained that the remainder of the speakers would be heard during the second round of Citizens Speak at the end of the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Pavlcek entertained a motion to approve several sets of minutes of the Milton School Committee.

The June 6th, 2012 minutes were approved with no corrections.

Move: Ms. Sheridan

Second: Ms. Kelly

Vote: 6-0-0

The June 13th, 2012 minutes were introduced.

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Kelly

Corrections: In the last paragraph, there should only be one set of "move and second" above the vote to adjourn.

Vote: 4-0-2 (Ms. Bagley Jones and Ms. Kelly abstained)

The minutes for June 19, 2012 were approved with no corrections.

Move: Ms. Sheridan

Second: Ms. Kelly

Vote: 5-0-1 (Ms. Padera abstained)

The minutes for June 27, 2012 were introduced.

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Sheridan

Corrections: Under "Chairman's Report," there is no mention of who accepted the award on behalf of the Copeland Family Foundation. Add that it was Mary Gormley. Also change "2012-2012" to "2012-2013" and change the word "if" to "that" under "Next Meeting Agenda Items"

Vote: 5-0-1 (Ms. Sheridan abstained)

Superintendent's Report

Topic One: The First Grade Data Presentation was made by Dr. Laura O'Dwyer, a MPS parent and Associate Professor, Department of Educational Research, Measurement and Evaluation at Boston College. The entire presentation can be viewed online at www.miltonps.org/documents/ElemProgramAssignmentsSCPresentationJuly252012.pdf

Ms. Gormley started the presentation, which began with a snapshot of MPS District Success, with info on AP, SAT, College Acceptance; and descriptions of the English with Spanish and French Immersion programs. A Historic Review was presented, along with enrollment trends, a summary of the World Language Committee's work, and a timeline of the process for First Grade Assignment to date.

Dr. O'Dwyer then presented an overview of the MCAS, then moved into Data Analysis. The goal was to describe the patterns in MCAS scores of 5th grade French Immersion students and 5th grade English students over a six-year period, from 2005-6 to 2010-11 and for 3rd grade French and English students for the most recent school year.

For the English Language Arts (ELA) section of the MCAS, there are differences in the percentages of 5th graders scoring in the Proficient and Advanced categories, with a higher percentage of students in the French program scoring in these categories in each of the years examined. Smaller differences were observed in the Math section of the MCAS, although a higher percentage of students in the French program also scored higher in Math.

When comparing average scores on MCAS for both groups, the students in the French program achieved higher scaled scores in both Math and ELA. It was noted that the gap between the French and English students is decreasing in the most recent years.

Dr. O'Dwyer then examined the demographics of the two groups. She compared the percentage of male students, minority students, low-income students and students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in each group. A larger percentage of students from each of these groups are in the English program compared to the French program.

Next, students from the French and English program were matched on the basis of gender, minority status, IEP status and low income status. Gaps in scores of both Math and ELA decrease to the point of no longer being statistically significant in the majority of the years examined.

In summary, the **fifth-grade** report showed:

On average, fifth-grade MCAS scores in Milton are higher than the state average.

There are differences in the scores for the French and English programs.

Students in the French program tend to score higher than students in the English program.

However, we cannot necessarily conclude that one program is better than the other. Self-selection to programs result in differences on measured and/or unmeasured characteristics.

The third-grade analysis of the MCAS scores showed many of the same trends.

The summary of the **third-grade** report showed:

Average scale scores for students in the French program were higher than for students in the English program.

Minority and low-income students scored lower than non-minority and non low income students, respectively in both programs

There were only very small differences within the English and French programs.

The **overall report** was summarized as follows:

On average, scores in the French program were higher than scores in the English program.

Families self-select into a program, therefore valid comparisons are compromised by self-selection issues.

- * There are (measured) demographic differences between the students in the two programs.

- * There are likely to be unmeasured differences between the characteristics of the students in the two programs (e.g., parental aspirations, parental involvement, etc.)

* Overall, the gap between the English and French program scores decreased when students were matched on gender, minority status, low-income status and IEP status.

Members of the school committee then posed questions to Dr. O'Dwyer. Ms. Bagley Jones asked why there was only one year of MCAS data for Grade 3 and Dr. O'Dwyer explained that the state did not provide the data in the form required to do the analysis until last year. Ms. Kelly noted that third graders have been taking MCAS for many years and said she wished there could be an analysis of all grades. She said it is part of the obligation of the school system of MPS to analyze more data. Mr. Phelan explained that they chose to analyze Grade 5 because it was the best place to capture the elementary school experience.

Ms. Sheridan asked about the criteria for the low-income demographic and Dr. O'Dwyer explained that it is based on free/reduced lunch recipients, which is a self-identifying group. Ms. Bagley Jones expressed her concern about the achievement gap. Ms. Kelly asked Dr. O'Dwyer to explain more about how she achieved "average." Dr. O'Dwyer said the issue is distribution. For example, there may be low-income children who are performing better than their classmates who are not low-income, but that is not reflected in the data.

Mr. Walker asked for some clarification on Slides 51 and 52 and wondered why, despite a large point difference, it was not considered statistically significant. Ms. Kelly asked whether all MPS students are included in the data, particularly those who are out-of-district. Ms. Gormley said the data includes all students except those who are out-of-district.

Additional questions included the impact of large class sizes in French; how many other districts who offer immersion have a cap; how are students with IEPs supported in the French program; does MPS conduct "exit interviews" with students who leave French; how difficult is it to leave the French program; should MPS conduct screening for students entering French?

Ms. Sheridan asked if there could be another line in Slide 40 to include the state averages compared to each of Milton's programs. Ms. O'Dwyer noted that she would not suggest setting goals for MCAS scores, which narrows the curriculum. Instead, she recommended setting high goals for teaching, curriculum, etc. Use inputs and not outputs.

Ms. Bagley Jones asked if the administration could work on balancing some classrooms before the start of school. Ms. Gormley replied that they have made attempts to address this issue and are working daily to balance all classrooms.

Ms. Kelly asked to establish a timeline for when a cap might be instituted and Mr. Pavlicek suggested early fall and noted that it should be "sooner, not later."

Ms. Sheridan asked if a set of Q&As could be posted on the website for parents/guardians who have questions about the assignment process. Mr. Phelan said the administration prepared a timeline and recommended it be taken in September.

Mr. Walker requested the committee hear the second round of Citizen's Speak. During this round, speakers (James Mulligan, Beverly Ross-Denny, Steven Howard, Peter Culhane, Kathryn Murphy, Carol Seidman, Hilary Farber, Stephanie Hartwell, Terence McNeil, Tara McCarthy) voiced the following concerns:

Request to post the scatter plots and regression analysis from Dr. O'Dwyer's presentation on the website.

Support for the idea of an International Baccalaureate program

Support for capping French Immersion, despite a reluctance to do so

Abolish the English-only program. All students should learn in French

Take time before instituting a cap. Parents need lead time.

A representative from the PAC voiced some concerns about lack of role models for co-taught classrooms. Mr. Pavlicek asked this speaker to email the text of the letter she wanted to read.

Request for more data on the French Immersion/English scores. SAT, colleges, National Merit info, etc. Parents need more information and more time to make decision.

Request to consider siblings when instituting a cap.

Leave the choice of program to parents. Don't implement next fall.

Suggestion to mix up the elementary students in each program, perhaps in music and art classes.

Support for capping French and promoting the English program.

Topic Two: (Happenings) Ms. Gormley announced that third-grade Cunningham teacher Tanya Walsh has been selected as a finalist for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Elementary Mathematics teaching. Ms. Walsh will be recognized next spring at the State House. Also, it was announced that Jonathan Redden has been appointed principal of Cunningham, and Courtney Walsh will be Math and Science department head.

Chairman's Report

Topic One: The School Committee calendar has circulated. Mr. Pavlicek asked if anyone had proposed changes, to email him with that information. Meetings are scheduled for August 8th and 15th. Wednesday night will continue to be meeting nights.

Topic Two: Subcommittees have openings, please let Mr. Pavlicek know about interests. Topic Three: Mr. Walker will be preparing a New Member Orientation packet for the next meeting.

Finance Subcommittee:

Topic One: The FY12-13 HRS/Non-Union Salaries issue was discussed. Mr. Walker said he thinks the committee needs to take a public vote after taking a vote in executive session so as not to violate open meeting law. It was agreed that this would be brought to legal counsel's attention.

Topic Two: The chair entertained a motion to sign an extended the lease for MPEG, through December 31, 2017 in order to help MPEG with financing. There was a motion to authorize the chair to sign.

Move: Ms. Kelly

Second: Ms. Sheridan

Vote: 6-0-0

Policy Subcommittee:

Topic One: The new Social Media policy was presented, with changes made in italics. Mostly moved sentences around and it is essentially the same policy. Third reading.

There was a motion to adopt.

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Bagley Jones

Vote: 4-1 (Ms.Padera)-1 (Ms. Kelly)

Ms. Sheridan said she will be making revision to the Michael's Law policy, which is due to be passed by September 1st.

New Business:

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for August 8th.

Old Business:

Ms. Kelly said that a parent who spoke at a prior Citizens Speak pointed out the imbalance at the Glover first grade class. She said this should be addressed.

Mr. Walker asked members to check their email for some information on the RFQ for labor counsel.

Ms. Sheridan asked if there could be some clarification of the subcommittee assignments.

The chairman agreed to postpone the scheduled Executive Session.

The Chair entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Sheridan

Vote: 6-0-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.