

Minutes of the School Committee
Retreat
Superintendent's Conference Room
August 15, 2012

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

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 August 15th meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:02 pm.

Approve Agenda

The committee approved the agenda after requesting the following edits: move Superintendent Evaluation Tool as a separate item (bullet #2)

1. School Committee Self-Reflection of FY11/12 Goals (Attachment)

Preview of Superintendent's Self Reflection:

The chairman referred to a handout titled "School Committee Goals 2011-12," which was a list taken from the July 13, 2011 minutes. He asked for an evaluation of how the committee did with respect to the goals.

Mr. Walker suggested that, despite several discussions on this topic and agreement on some points, the committee did not convert the discussion into goals. Members then discussed the next handout, which were the voted-upon goals from 2011-12. The chairman noted that there is a new evaluation tool that DOE is encouraging districts to use, which calls for professional, student-growth goals and district-wide SMART goals.

The second handout was the Superintendent's Self-Evaluation from 2011-12.

The third handout was the list of SMART goals drafted by the Superintendent.

The chairman described the new evaluation process, noting that, for teachers, the process will remain largely unchanged. For the superintendent, however, it will be a more radical departure from the current evaluation tool. The DESE offers districts the ability to adopt, adapt or modify, but strongly encourages districts to adopt. Mr. Walker said it is probably a better course to adopt this and move forward. Ms. Gormley noted that the Reading public schools implemented this process, and that it is possible for Milton to go back and change parts they don't agree with.

Presentation of End of Year Assessment (Summer 2012)

At this point, Ms. Gormley informed the committee that Sean Walsh had prepared a draft presentation for the End of the Year Assessment. This report was a

summary of the data and information requested by Mr. Walker. Mr. Phelan said that this report could be presented every year in this format, now that the DESE is providing data in more easy-to-use formats.

Mr. Walsh proceeded to detail the 23-page report, which included information and charts on enrollment, demographics, staffing, student achievement, finances and districts highlights/shortfalls.

School committee members asked several questions about the document, including the following:

- Why are there two categories that appear to be the same group? "First Language Not English by School/District" and "Limited English Proficient" -- aren't they the same thing? (answer: no, they are not the same)
- How is low-income determined, and can we re-name it "Free/Reduced Lunch?" (answer: we used DESE data for Free/Reduced and yes, name change ok)
- Page 10: Why are only 99.3% of core academic classes taught by teachers who are highly qualified? Why not 100%? (answer: long-term substitutes, etc.)
- Page 8: Does Special Education include 504s? (answer: yes)
- Can we add more staffing data to include staff by race/gender, divided into each category, eg principals, business office, etc. (answer: yes)

Mr. Walsh explained that on Page 11 - 13, there is a new MCAS ranking system. In addition, there is a new category called "High Needs," which includes students with disabilities, IEPs, ELL students and economically disadvantaged children.

Mr. Phelan explained in more detail how the MCAS will be measuring data differently, recognizing aggregate scores and making sure every score counts. Committee members continued with their comments on the report, including:

Page 13: Why are all the numbers the same? (answer: typo. will change #s)

Page 11: Have there always been levels, or is this new? (answer: it is new)

Can the data be broken down by French/English? (answer: it is possible)

Suggestion to add a summary page or graph to compare school to school.

Page 13/14: possible typo, since the #s are the same

Page 14: Why is there no category for race? (answer: it's called "ethnicity")

Ms. Kelly noted that some AP courses have very low enrollment. She suggested that resources to keep these classes might be better used elsewhere in the district. A discussion followed on this point, as well as how far you can "drill down" data on some of the smaller AP courses before the data will identify individual students.

** Note: Kristan Bagley Jones arrived at 7:57 pm ***

Mr. Walker said the committee should discuss this point with counsel. He thinks it is important to know how the AP students are doing, if they're passing, and in what percentages. Ms. Sheridan noted that the administration likely keeps track of achievement in AP classes, and would address any irregularities in test scores. Ms. Gormley noted that AP test scores are one of the best indicators of college success. There was discussion about the value of offering so many AP courses at Milton High. Ms. Kelly requested a list of AP courses being offered. She said perhaps the resources could be used to fund elementary art.

Committee members referred to Page 16, the Finance Report. It was noted that Milton spends \$12,612 per pupil, compared to the state, which spends \$13,369. However, the state figure is not entirely accurate, since they don't calculate spending for Regional/Vocational schools. Ms. Kelly also noted that Milton spends \$67,431 on out-of-

district placement, compared to \$20,459 for the state. She asked for future reports to include and "Out of District Spending" category historically. Mr. Walker observed several problems with the Page 16 chart. He said faulty conclusions could be drawn from this chart. Without pages of context, he said, it makes no sense.

Ms. Gormley said the draft report is a useful tool. All the data is one place. This is a first draft, and we can add or subtract whatever the committee wishes.

Regarding the Highlights/Shortfalls page, Ms. Kelly noted that all the shortfalls are budget-related. She would like to see more performance-related shortfalls. Ms. Gormley suggested there be a new category called "Achievement Shortfalls." Ms. Kelly suggested more detail be added to #1 and #2 under "District Shortfalls."

New Superintendent Evaluation Tool

The chairman suggested the committee return to the Superintendent Evaluation. He noted that it will have to dovetail with the district goals. Regarding the timeline, it was noted that the requirement is to implement by 2013. If the committee chooses to adopt the new tool, they should plan to fit the goals into the four categories. Ms. Sheridan then made a motion to adopt the superintendent evaluation model with the standards as recommended by DOE.

Move: Ms. Sheridan

Second: Mr. Walker

Vote: 6-0-0

Mr. Walker then noted that there should be an amendment to the motion, and moved to re-open.

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Kelly

Ms. Sheridan then stated that the motion will be: "We, the School Committee, adopt the DESE model for the Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation."

Move: Ms. Sheridan

Second: Mr. Walker

Discussion: this would be a substitute for the prior motion.

Vote: 6-0-0

2. School Committee Goals FY 12/13

Members then discussed what should be the next steps in terms of goal-setting and they read through the goals that Ms. Gormley had drafted for next year. (See handout) Ms. Kelly suggested the development of a strategic plan be considered as a goal. She mentioned they could bring in a consultant to help. The Sharon Public Schools hired a consultant recently for their strategic plan at the cost of \$8,000. Mr. Walker made a motion as follows: "Move to set a goal to have a fully-completed

strategic plan in place by June of next year." Ms. Kelly added a friendly amendment as follows: "The School Committee will be responsible for identifying the source of funds and initiating this process, but the Superintendent will play a leadership role once the process is initiated.

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Sheridan

Discussion: Ms. Sheridan mentioned that, with upcoming teacher contracts, it may be unwise to add this to the plate. The Chair noted that the committee had the option to vote each goal singularly, or put together a list of goals and vote as one motion. Ms. Kelly said this goal should be voted singularly. Ms. Gormley noted that, with 3 principals in new positions, the timing for a strategic plan is excellent.

Vote: 6-0-0

Ms. Kelly noted that, since the Superintendent is supposed to set specific goals, it would make sense to look at her goals before developing the school committee goals, in the spirit of collaboration. Ms. Gormley said district improvement goals should be determined by the school committee and ultimately all goals should be determined by the school committee. Mr. Phelan noted that on Page 7 of the evaluation tool packet, there are guidelines for Cycle Step 2: Analysis, Goal Setting & Plan Development. This gives information and a "road map" for setting the goals.

The committee then referred to District Goals, as follows:

First Grade Student Assignment

STEM implementation

Teacher Contracts

Elementary Curriculum Maps & Assessments

Mr. Walker said he was pleased the advancement budget presented last year. He would like to hear from Ms. Gormley about the resource challenges; what talent/skill sets are needed; what are the bigger ideas about district improvement? How can we get Mary & John, to some extent, out of the day-to-day challenges? What can we do to create significant improvements? Ms. Gormley was asked to name three things she would prioritize for this year.

She began with the need for an elementary science coordinator. After some discussion of wording, it was agreed that "increasing the student achievement in science for all student would be a goal of the Milton Public Schools." Ms. Sheridan said that some districts put actual science teachers in the classrooms. Ms. Kelly noted that there is a difficulty, since French students learn science in French. She disagreed that science should be taught in French.

For a second goal, Gormley explained that we need someone on the educational technology side of the fence. A districtwide educational technology person would be a great improvement. Ms. Padera asked if Ms. Gormley is suggesting standardizing the technology curriculum and Ms. Gormley answered yes, that one technology specialist could move the system forward. There was an agreement that more technology is needed, including professional development for teachers to integrate technology into the classroom. There followed a discussion about the current technology standards need to be enhanced; whereas technology needs to be improved. Mr. Walker wondered

if the current technology director could perform this job. Mr. Pavlicek said they are two completely different jobs. School committee members discussed potential wording for this goal. "To enhance technology from top to bottom;" "to enhance science curriculum"; "to improve science achievement." There was also discussion about how to measure technology achievement. Mr. Phelan suggested "to increase the amount of professional development offered and taken by instructional staff in the field of technology."

Ms. Sheridan noted that she had a different mindset for the retreat meeting. She expected to brainstorm goals, not take each goal to such a high level of detail. Members then discussed how much detail should be included. It was asked whether any other committee members had goals in mind.

Ms. Padera said she would like increased participation in clubs and sports, especially at the middle school level. She suggested all Freshman be given one free sport or club. Freshmen should not be cut. Ms. Bagley Jones suggested it be expanded to include increasing engagement in general.

Ms. Gormley suggested "creating common planning time for teachers," be a goal, encouraging teachers and staff to work together."

Mr. Walker suggested "developing a coherent and clearly articulated strategy for closing the achievement gap. Also, regarding adding more PD to the technology field, we should just do it. This should not be a goal. Finding more planning time for teachers doesn't rise to the level of district goals.

Ms. Bagley Jones said her goals would include program assessment, program evaluation and data collection. She feels that the committee sometimes makes a lot of requests for data and she feels there should be a better method for this. Ms. Kelley suggested that the school committee comes up with a list of data points and submit them as a list. Also, develop benchmarks/lists of things the committee needs on a regular basis. Ms. Gormley noted that some districts have a data specialist. Committee members agreed that this could be a valuable addition. Another of Ms. Bagley Jones' goals is to pursue the customer service model. She asked members to help with the wording. The chair suggested "community engagement" as one of the new parts of evaluation that crosses all the objectives. Ms. Kelly suggested "for every person in the MPS to be similarly evaluated in terms of how they do their job." Ms. Kelly said a goal could be to have an organizational chart. This would help action plans to be put in place. Mr. Walker noted that at the last retreat, he handed out a customer service model. (See handout). Mr. Pavlicek noted that there is a section in the handbook about what community engagement entails and this could mesh with the customer service model. Ms. Kelly said she would argue that this is not a goal. It needs to be done. Mr. Walker said the school committee needs to send a very clear message.

The chairman declared a 5-minute recess .

RECESS

The chairman called the meeting back to order. At this point, it was decided that the committee could develop the student achievement goals at the September 5th meeting.

3. Policy Subcommittee (Attachments)

Ms. Sheridan explained that this was the first reading of policy JLC, Student Health Services and Requirements. Mr. Gillis reviewed some of the differences between this plan and the prior plan. Ms. Sheridan suggested several edits, but because an edited version of the policy was not available at the time of the retreat, no vote was taken.

Next, Ms. Sheridan began the first reading of Policy EBC, Emergency Plans. The committee discussed this policy and Mr. Gillis explained that one of the edits necessary was, under "Student Illness and Injury," to change the wording of the ambulance policy. An edited copy of the policy was requested. While that was being prepared, the committee decided to move on.

4. Regional Educational Laboratory Proposal.

The Chairman said that after Dr. O'Dwyer's presentation, she approached the committee with a great opportunity. There is a federal research center named the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL). Dr. O'Dwyer suggested that if the school committee were to submit a series of questions regarding the French Immersion program, their experts will conduct a study.

Ms. Gormley said that the topic of an International Baccalaureate (IB) program was brought up at Citizens Speak. Dr. O'Dwyer and another parent have agreed to split the cost of bringing in a representative. There was some discussion as to the merits of the IB, with members split on the issue of whether to have a presentation in open session or to a subcommittee. There was concern that anyone wanting to present an idea to the committee be given time, for example "Six Sigma" and there should be a process as to who could present at school committee meetings. It was agreed that the chairman would speak to Dr. O'Dwyer about whether the IB program could work in our district.

Ms. Jones voiced her opinion that STEM should not have been implemented so soon. She said it feels reactionary. Mr. Walker asked to defer Items 5 and 6 on the agenda, since sufficient progress was made.

With the presentation of a clean copy of the EBC policy, Ms. Sheridan said that regarding the Policy Subcommittee, the MASC and Milton School Committee differ on Point #6. We detail out every person, but the MASC simply says "school staff." Mr. Walker said we should be sure certain people get mandatory CPR and first aid training. It was suggested that school secretaries be trained to use the AEDs, since they are closest to the equipment. Ms. Kelly said it may not be part of their job description. There

was a suggestion to change the wording. Rather than "providing access," it could be changed to "providing training." Because of a state-imposed deadline to pass this policy, the chairman entertained a motion to approve EBC as amended.

Mr. Pavlicek said that, regarding Collective Bargaining, in the past, the MEA usually convene a subcommittee to work with the Superintendent and one other person. They have offered to do that again this year with their current evaluation instrument outside of the usual bargaining. This process would still require ratification, but the opportunity to sit down with small group to draft it out is a good idea. The chair said he would need a motion to authorize negotiations with the MEA on the subject of their evaluation instrument.

Move: Mr. Walker

Second: Ms. Sheridan

Discussion: Ms. Kelly asked how this would impact future bargaining. She suggested it be a smaller group, and said to never have a quorum of school committee members present as a bargaining tactic.

Vote: 6-0-0

Next Meeting Agenda Items: Executive session for contracts.

The chairman entertained a motion to adjourn.

Move: Ms. Sheridan

Second: Ms. Bagley Jones

Vote: 6-0-0