

Minutes of the School Committee
Regular Meeting
Milton High Library
January 4, 2012

Committee Present: Glenn Pavlicek, Chair; Denis Keohane, Vice Chair; Lynda-Lee Sheridan, Mary Kelly, Leroy Walker

Not Present: Kristan Bagley-Jones (arrived late)

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

Call to Order

The Chair called the January 4th meeting of the School Committee to order at 7:40 PM

Approve Agenda

The committee approved the agenda after adding Ms. Sheridan's report on Milton 350th under the Chairman's report, to delete the Concussion policy under the Policy Subcommittee, and to add the word "(vote)" to the Advancement Budget line under Finance Subcommittee

Citizens Speak

No one came forward for Citizen Speak

Superintendent's Report

Cunningham Site Council: This group was in attendance, led by principal Dr. Karen Spaulding. Other Site Council representatives were Roberta Williams, Jeanne Conley, Stephanie O'Keefe and Linda Thernize. The Council made a presentation on the School Improvement Plan for the 2011-12 school year. The report can be viewed online at: <http://www.miltonps.org/documents/CunnSIP12-14-11.pdf> It included:

MCAS Data: In 2011, Cunningham Elementary School met the target for Participation, Attendance, Mathematics in the Aggregate, Mathematics for the Special Education Subgroup, ELA in the Aggregate, ELA for the Special Education Subgroup. As a result, the Cunningham received a No Status for the year from the No Child Left Behind criteria. The Council showed a chart with the comparison of 2011 Growth and Percentage of Proficient and Higher. In ELA, the percentage of students who scored in the proficient or higher category went from 72 to 76% In Math, it went from 69 to 80%. The Council summarized that the data indicates the following:

For ELA, Grades 3,4 & 5 are higher than the state in every area for the aggregate

Difference between State and Cunningham ELA Open Response "Percentage Correct" increases with grade level (2%, 9%, 16%)

Areas of relative weakness in ELA for Special Education Subgroup: Language Style, "abstract" meaning.

Grades 3, 4 & 5 are notably higher than the state in every area in Math for the aggregate

Open Response Scores are higher in math than ELA for grades 3 and 4

Areas of relative weakness for Special Ed Subgroups: Measurement & Number Sense.

High Academic Achievement for All Students: Cunningham adheres to the Curriculum Common Core, which includes MPS Curriculum Documents. Dr. Spaulding discussed the Cunningham Writing Initiative, and how the writing instruction is assessed. For Common Assessments, she said that work continues district-wide and there is a discussion of data in grade-level meetings.

Addressing the student achievement gap, she said they target professional development to close the gap, and also instituted programs such as Study Island, Math Is A Slam Dunk, and After-School Support, all of which target student achievement.

Dr. Spaulding discussed the topic of "raising the bar." She said they began an Advanced Enrichment Pilot Group in grades 3 and 4, and also have had professional development for looking at student work. Council member Jeanne Conley talked about individual student achievement, citing the Spring Awards Assembly, publishing student work, Study Island recognition, the Principal's Advisory Team, Future Problem Solvers Club, Continental Math, WordMasters, the annual Science Fair, art displays and the Kindness Award.

Excellence in the Classroom: Dr. Spaulding went through three steps, which include Engaging All Students, which she said requires "Excellence in Teaching," achieved through staff meetings, evaluation process, collaborative leadership and building a repertoire of strategies. Also, she said teachers have implemented varied opportunities for students to write. Secondly, Professional Development has been taking place, linking the MPS professional development with School-Based Opportunities, with particular focus on Effective Writing Instruction. Finally, Dr. Spaulding said she has been "chipping away" at getting Smartboards installed in every Cunningham classroom.

Collaborative Relationships and Communications: The Cunningham school has a variety of communications tools, including newsletters, bulletins, parent/guardian informational meetings and principal coffees. Their collaborative relationships include the use of Curry College athletes, who volunteer to help with recess; student teachers from Curry; and several residents of Fuller Village who volunteer in our library and our classrooms. Regarding parent/guardian involvement, Mrs. Conley said the PTO meetings were both timely and informative. There have been many volunteer opportunities, including Cradles to Crayons, military pen-pals, Thanksgiving baskets for the Milton Food Pantry, etc. Morning math leagues for grades 2-5 begin in January.

Respect for Human Differences: The Implementation of the Anti-Bullying Law and the corresponding professional development regarding the law were discussed, as was the Anti-Bullying Curriculum. Dr. Spaulding explained that cultural competency means that her staff reviews the curriculum to see if there is diversity in their teaching materials and in that diverse role models are represented. Also, there is a program run by parents in the fourth grade which focuses on sensitizing students to those with disabilities and specific challenges. Also, focus on learning styles and multiple intelligence. The School Diversity Committee is working on an ethnobotanical garden in which students and teachers can see first-hand how other cultures use different plants. A book called "Everyone Cooks Rice," will be read as part of a diversity event.

Risk-Taking and Innovation for Education: Cunningham has piloted advanced enrichments groups and instituted after-school sessions, which Dr. Spaulding said had "tremendous turnout." For Research Based/Best Practices, she said that her teachers are adept at "weaving the research into the information that goes home to families." The school is preparing for National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation for the preschool program. She also discussed the Principals Advisory Team, a group of student volunteers who work with Dr. Spaulding on school government-type issues; book buddies and other student mentoring programs.

Ms. Gormley said that Cunningham school deserves credit for its intensive focus on math, and pointed out that there is no leveling in place at the elementary school level. She complimented Dr. Spaulding for addressing all students at all ends of the spectrum.

Mr. Keohane asked Dr. Spaulding about the Special Education programs in place. She discussed IEPs and how each child is assessed and their needs are dealt with "along the continuum."

Ms. Kelly asked how closely the data was analyzed. Did we "drill down" to the program choices to examine differences between French Immersion and FLES? Dr. Spaulding replied that the data was not analyzed in this fashion.

Ms. Kelly also asked what obstacles Cunningham faces that might "get you there more quickly?" Dr. Spaulding talked about effective scheduling of professional development. Ms. Gormley said that time allotted for PD is "woefully small," and said this is something that will be discussed during contract negotiations. Ms. Sheridan agreed that PD time is a problem in many school districts and welcomed the opportunity to discuss it further.

Ms. Gormley talked about students in the low income categories and how to improve the achievement gap/AYP with this group.

School Happenings: Ms. Gormley discussed the following events:

January 16th: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Memorial Celebration will be held at the Concord Baptist Church on Blue Hill Avenue. The event begins at 5:30 and features several performances by MPS students.

January 19th and 20th: Pierce Players present Guys and Dolls

January 25th: Kindergarten Information Night at 7 pm in the MHS auditorium.

January 28th: Warrant Committee meets to discuss next year's budget.

Kristan Bagley Jones asked SC members to note that February 11th will be the date for the Milton High Fourth Annual Walkathon.

Ms. Gormley also mentioned that March 29th and 30th will be the MHS Faculty Talent Show; the MFE's Celebration for Education, "The Big Beach Ball," will be held on March 10th at the Boston Marriott in Quincy; and the Best Buddies Prom will be held on March 31st at Milton High's Copeland Field House.

Chairman's Report

Budget Discussions: Mr. Pavlicek said that the School Committee is in its "road show season," and will be traveling to each of the schools to give a presentation on the FY13 budget for the Milton Public Schools and he encouraged parents to attend.

Building Report: When solar panels were installed on the roof of the Cunningham/Collicot school, the installation was funded by a grant. The funds from that grant were recently received. The amount of \$440,000 will be used to defer the cost of the debt service on the School Building project.

350 Anniversary: Ms. Sheridan gave an update on the work of the town's 350th Anniversary committee. Among the upcoming events, there will be:

A kickoff event on January 21st in the Milton Public Library, which will include an artwork display by Milton residents, a jazz duo and activities for children.

A Cunningham Park event on January 29th, with skating and bowling open to all.

John Phelan reported that our students have been working on many curriculum-related projects which incorporate the town's 350th anniversary, including video presentations, art projects and writing projects. In April, there will be a district-wide event where residents can take a trolley tour of all six Milton school buildings.

Finance Subcommittee Report

FY13 Budget: Mary Kelly said that after last week's vote, the SC discussed adding positions and requesting additional funding from the Warrant Committee. As such, the finance subcommittee would like to present the "Advancement Budget" component of the FY13 budget. Mary Gormley explained the difference between level funded or "level dollar" budget and a level service budget. The former requires cuts to maintain services and the latter is enough to advance the current system forward one year. The Advancement Budget for FY13 would be \$36,218,319. The Level Service Budget would be \$35,739,719 and the Level Funded Budget would be \$34,029,343.

A Level-Funded Budget would result in the reduction of 1.5 teachers and 6 Educational Assistants District-Wide; 5.2 teachers at Milton High; 6 teachers and .5 custodian at Pierce Middle School; 7 teachers and .5 custodians at the Elementary level.

Proposed changes for the Advancement Budget:

- * Math Coordinator for PMS: John Phelan said a new math coordinator at the Pierce would be a huge asset. "I think we are very thin in the area of providing teachers with more support," he said. The math coordinator would work directly with teachers in the areas of instruction, curriculum and assessment to improve and increase differentiated instruction.

- * Two .5 Instructional Leader positions at each elementary school. These positions would enable our elementary principals to spend more of their time as instructional leaders in the classroom, meeting with teachers, etc. The elimination of assistant principals and instructional coaches in past budget cuts has left the district at a loss in this important PD, curriculum and assessment work.

- * Supplies/Texts/Materials/Technology: A restoration of \$100,000 to the supplies, tests, materials and technology budget for the elementary and middle school was added. Last year, \$150,000 was cut from this area. The funds would be used for new math texts, and the purchase of science kits for elementary and middle schools.

- * Special Ed Chairs: 1.8 FTEs would be added for SPED chairs, which are needed at the elementary and middle school. This person would interact with teachers, students and families as they facilitate IEP services, and serve as the district liaison with parents. "Our adjustment counselors right now serve as SPED chairs, and we realize that the load for these positions is too high," said Phelan.

- * Elementary Science Specialist: In grades 4 and 5, there is a need for an elementary science specialist who can teach on the targeted areas tested on MCAS. This would improve the instruction, content and drive student achievement

Again, Mary Gormley clarified that the level service budget moves the system forward, and the \$478,000 would be required to enhance our system.

Mary Kelly asked if the list of additional positions was prioritized. Mary Gormley replied that it was not prioritized. Ms. Gormley then referred to a chart which showed how many administrators have been cut during the past several years, or had jobs "merged" into one position. She also showed another chart with examples from recent budget reductions. There have been many cuts to physical education/health education

It was moved to send the Advancement Budget to the Warrant Committee

Move: Kelly

Second: Walker

Vote: Unanimous

After the vote, SC members voiced their thoughts on the FY13 budget. Ms. Kelly pointed out that "This is not really an advancement budget, it's more of a restoration budget." Mr. Walker urged the SC not to waste too much time on the name of the budget. "Yes, it is a restoration budget, but it does advance us into next year. Maintaining where we are is not the best of all possibilities."

November Expenditure Report

It was moved to accept the November expenditure report

Move: Kelly

Second: Keohane

Vote: Unanimous

Policy Subcommittee

Ms. Sheridan informed the SC that the policy subcommittee applied for and received an extension on the Concussion Policy and that the SC now has until March to approve this. There was a second reading of the Social Media Policy and the subcommittee expects for ask for adoption at the next meeting.

Old Business

Citizens Speak Topic Response: There was no Citizen Speak at the last School Committee meeting

New Business

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for January 18th.

Next Meeting Agenda Items

Ms. Jones requested that a Health and Wellness report be included in the next meeting. She also requested that the next meeting should be geared to brainstorming about a structure that would get the SC into the mode of long-term visions. Ms. Gormley offered to share the document she used to write her self-evaluation. Mr. Pavlicek said that he would try to get something in place on this issue, and noted that a draft of district-wide goals was prepared back in September.

The Chair entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting

Move: Walker

Second: Keohane

Vote: Unanimous

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm