

Minutes of the Milton School Committee  
Retreat Meeting  
Superintendent's Office, Milton High School  
July 27, 2011

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

**Not Present:** Kristan Bagley-Jones

**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 meeting to order at 7:07 P.M.

### **Approval of Agenda**

Committee members approved the Agenda for July 27, 2011 with no additions or changes.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Pavlicek entertained a motion to approve the June 29, 2011 minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Milton School Committee.

Move: Walker

Second: Keohane

Vote: 3-0-2 (Kelly and Sheridan abstained)

Mr. Pavlicek entertained a motion to approve the July 13, 2011 minutes of the Milton School Committee Retreat.

Move: Walker

Second: Keohane

Vote: 4-0-1 (Kelly abstained)

### **Chairman's Report**

#### School Committee Goals

The Chair reviewed the School Committee discussion of goals from the July 13th meeting. Ms. Gormley stated that she had started the process of developing her own measureable goals for FY12, and hoped to align her goals with School Committee recommendations.

Ms. Kelly began the subsequent discussion by emphasizing that the goal-setting process should establish a three-five year plan in a collaborative effort with the administration, although she acknowledged that development of a multi-year plan would be difficult to initiate this year. Ms. Kelly also emphasized that the committee and administration think beyond the state and federal standards and requested that the standards of the MPS be documented and posted online by grade and by subject.

In response to a question from Mr. Walker, Mr. Phelan summarized the work being done to establish standards and outcomes for each grade in line with the common core. He stated that the standards are available for K-8, and meetings have been planned to review work done over last year establishing math and science unit assessments for the system. Per Mr. Phelan, the MPS has set the bar higher than the state's requirements in many areas. Ms. Sheridan requested that the committee receive copies of the state common core requirements.

Subsequent School Committee discussion focused on the need, as stated by Ms. Kelly, to tie together the standards and funding needs. Ms. Gormley suggested that her curriculum experts present monthly to the committee on what the subject matter expectations are and whether they are in line with the core or beyond state requirements. Ms. Kelly recommended that the MPS standards reflect the long-term plan and benchmarks established by the committee and administration. Mr. Pavlicek remarked that the committee needed to develop a plan for rolling out three-year expectations for the MPS. Ms. Gormley responded that the math curriculum presentation at a prior School Committee meeting was an example of how expectations are derived and the subsequent impact the budget. She stated she would encourage the leadership team to provide other examples of how the system is moving forward. For example, system-wide assessments are done after each test and provide valuable, detailed information about the areas of strength and weakness.

Ms. Sheridan questioned how much detail from the internal data is necessary for the School Committee and expressed concern about efficient use of the administration's time. Ms. Kelly suggested that the committee receive the information in general terms, i.e., is the system on target or not. Ms. Sheridan responded that the committee should assume things are proceeding as planned—that the teachers are working to address shortcomings. Mr. Walker asked when is the appropriate time for the School Committee to know if there is a problematic trend, and when should parents know about individual/school/grade trends? Ms. Sheridan responded that if there is a big problem, the School Committee should definitely be alerted right away. But, in general, there are peaks and valleys throughout the year. It should be the administration's job to alert the committee about a troubling trend. Parents, on the other hand, need to be informed at all times about their children's performance. Mr. Walker stated that the committee ought to be informed in the near term if there is a significant shift in performance—not at the end of the school year.

Ms. Kelly stated that the AYP and growth models from the state were not necessarily as informative as internal assessments. Ms. Gormley said she would ask the administrators at their upcoming retreat about developing a reporting tool that would be more user-friendly than the annual MCAS assessments.

In response to concerns expressed by Ms. Kelly about the need for improved parental access to information at the high school, Ms. Gormley reported that the team there was working toward common assessments. She also reported the good news that all MHS students passed the science MCAS. Also related to MHS issues, Ms. Gormley informed the committee that Dr. Drottter had proposed establishing a behavioral program, staffed

with a specialist, so that students don't have to be put out of school. Ms. Kelly requested further clarification about the format of this program and the number of students who would be involved. She also stated that there should be clarity around intervention for behavior problems at the elementary level.

Further School Committee discussion focused on the need to evaluate graduation requirements at MHS—what are the current standards, and how do they differentiate Milton from other communities.

The School Committee and administration then worked to establish some high-level goals for FY12, tied to the five core values of the MPS. Ms. Gormley stated she would then take the committee's input back to the leadership team to develop more specific and measurable goals for her performance.

The following is a summary of the goal-setting discussion as related to the five core values of the system:

#### High Academic Achievement

- Grade by grade performance standards and outcomes/assessments available to community online
  - Skills outcomes greater than government-mandated standards
  - Relate to common core and MA common core
  - Include the arts
  - Follow curriculum and programs
- Multi-year program for closing the achievement gap
  - Meet all children's potential
  - Identify the gap and close it with targeted instruction, e.g., the inclusion program, which has raised the bar
- Involve parents
  - The schools do a good job with this and should continue to improve
  - Develop a mentoring program
  - Provide help to parents for navigating the system
- Full-year kindergarten certification

#### Excellence in the Classroom

- Teacher evaluations
  - Professional development on teaching/learning
  - Present staff accomplishments to others
  - Provide School Committee with information on the state document for teacher evaluations—a form and protocol that may be mandated—and is very close to MHS tool; used in turn-around schools
  - Include nuts and bolts in the evaluation process; e.g., showing up on time; no screaming at students
  - High standard of interaction with parents
  - Establish clear chain of command for parents to voice complaints
  - Set a positive classroom culture

- Ensure that all teachers have the same standards
- Performance plans with process in place to move the poor teachers out of the system; inform parents about the process
- Annual reviews
- Document and implement the current rubrics that have been negotiated
- Improve customer service at all levels
- Set high standards for interactions with parents and students
- Professional development—excellence begins with good teachers, materials, support
- Analysis of data to highlight successful teachers
- Extending co-taught model to middle and high school; evaluate and present results to School Committee
  - Ensure appropriate supports are in place

#### *Collaborative Relationships and Communication*

- Improved customer service for parents and students
  - Customer service brought all the way down to the classroom level
- Maintain good collaboration with other town departments
- Strengthen existing high level of collaboration and communication
  - More specificity required about with whom and why
- Focus on partnerships, universities, museums, rotary, etc.
- Market MHS—e.g., monthly cable shows

#### *Respect for Human Differences*

- Improved opportunities for socialization for sped students
  - On play grounds, for example
- Bullying curriculum available to parents—developed by teachers and others—simple and user friendly; available online
  - Move forward rather than reacting
- Structured activities for all students' backgrounds and interests to be validated by educational process
  - Ensure that there are opportunities for building of students' self esteem
  - Engage students in discussions about background and interests; where parents are from; sharing of cultures and traditions should be high value activities
  - Through literature, teachers; name what is already being done
- Make up of classes consisting of all the subgroups should be constant and vigilant
- Makeup academic and support staff reflect the community
  - Creative ways to involve all parents, e.g., support for Haitian families through CDM and Ada Rosmarin

#### *Risk Taking and Innovation*

- Looking out toward the future
  - Science at elementary level; constrained budget requires creativity
  - Create passion about subject matter which can be disseminated through system

- Personal Finance as a part of the MHS curriculum
- Redesign MFE grant writer position
- Emphasize technology in classroom and learning
- Encourage innovation in the staff through incentives rewards and supports
  - Create a model to encourage people to be innovative and take risks in support of innovation
- Americorp/mentoring program
- Success in new consolidated facilities environment; success in maintaining the buildings is crucial

After the goal-setting exercise, Mr. Pavlicek recommended that this discussion be continued in public and televised. The committee agreed to a televised meeting on August 29th.

#### Parks & Recreation Update

The committee decided to discuss issues related to the Parks & Recreation Department's request in the Finance Subcommittee meeting on August 16th. Ms. Sheridan requested that the minutes from the Finance Subcommittee meeting be distributed to the other members in a timely fashion.

Mr. Pavlicek then entertained a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations with Mr. Bill Ritchie for the Director of Coordinated Facilities position and to adjourn directly from Executive Session and not to return to Open Session.

Move: Walker

Second: Sheridan

By a roll call voice vote, the School Committee voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations and to adjourn directly from Executive Session and not to return to Open Session.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 P.M.