

Milton School Committee Retreat

July 17, 2018

Milton School Committee Members Present: Dr. Kevin Donahue, Sheila Varela, Margaret Eberhardt, Dr. Elaine Craghead, Ada Rosmarin, Elizabeth White

MPS Administrators and Guests: Mary Gormley, Janet Sheehan, Dr. Glenn Pavlicek and MASC Executive Director Glenn Koocher

Meeting called to order at 9:35am

After a brief introduction, Dr. Donahue turned the meeting over to Mr. Glenn Koocher who was invited to facilitate the School Committee Retreat.

Mr. Koocher distributed the District Strategic Plan goals and objectives with questions to guide discussion as committee members prepared to develop goals for the 2018-2019 school year. Guiding questions focused on the relevance of recent goals, the importance of issues that were raised during the 2017 retreat (space, academic goals, personnel issues, inter-municipal relations), and other priorities within a variety of categories (curriculum and instruction, technology, data use, cultural competency, social emotional learning).

Dr. Donahue stated that the Committee moved the ball forward on 17-18 goals and is on the right track, but as they continue to move forward, he hoped the committee could focus more on metrics. Discussion on each of the 2017-2018 goals followed.

Goal #1 – Facilities

Ms. Varela stated that a more solid action plan is needed on what needs to be done regarding enrollment and space issues. She is hoping the committee can have a stronger interim plan in place. Enrollment is increasing steadily and there is still August to get through.

Dr. Craghead said that this is a matter of great urgency and stated that space/enrollment should be the committee's priority this year – a short-term and long-term solution is needed. Ms. White agreed on the urgency and state that she never thought we would see this after the building project.

The Committee discussed what was driving enrollment. Ms. Varela stated that people are moving in with 3 or 4 children vs. 1 or 2. Superintendent Gormley added that NESDEC has seen greater growth in Milton than in other Massachusetts communities. Some neighborhood schools are full and children are assigned to schools only with openings.

Assistant Superintendent Pavlicek reported that approximately 1,000 children live in Milton and attend private schools but more are staying in the Milton Public Schools during the transition years (6, 7 and 9). He added that 10-15 years ago 20% of K-5 students attended private schools; now that number is under 10%.

Ms. Rosmarin noted that the Facilities Goal is yet to be included in the Strategic Plan.

Goal #2a – ELA Scores and Achievement Gap

Superintendent Gormley reported that MCAS data is not back yet. The School Committee has committed funds to literacy over the past years. Recently the district invested in a new K-5 literacy program.

Dr. Donahue feels it would be helpful to have another academic benchmark other than MCAS. The group discussed the new *Reach for Reading* program. Dr. Donahue would like to look at the internal metrics and asked if our internal data is better representing our achievement or does MCAS. Assistant Superintendent Sheehan explained that MCAS is an achievement measure and internal assessments generally monitor progress.

Goal #2b – Differentiated Instruction

Superintendent Gormley felt it would be beneficial to work with the department heads and have them site concrete examples of differentiated instruction. Ms. Varela stated that it could be a report back on Grades 6-12. Ms. Varela gave a brief history of the levels at the middle school. She said that she receives frequent feedback from parents that there is too big of a jump between College Prep and Honors classes. Ms. Varela asked how things were going in grades 9 and 10. Superintendent Gormley stated that teachers are raising the bar for all students in combination classes such as Modern World Culture which is unlevelled at grade 9. Ms. Eberhardt wanted to know how changes at the middle school play out at the high school. Ms. Gormley suggested we look at grade 9 scores and AP data and also look for increased participation of students of color.

Dr. Craghead asked for an explanation of leveling at Pierce Middle School, noting that there is only one above level English and Math on each team at Pierce. She would like to see how that has played out at Milton High School. Ms. Varela reported that parents have asked why there is not Honors 1 and Honor 2 in grades 9 and 10. She added that the “word on the street” is that when you take honors at grades 9 and 10, it is high honors – these students do well in AP classes. Chairman Donahue asked how we make this topic a goal if it is not measurable.

Goal #3 – Increase Faculty of Color

There was discussion of the district’s membership in the MPDE (Massachusetts Partnership for Diversity in Education) and access to additional opportunities for recruitment of minority staff. It was also discussed that this goal should be written to reflect an increase in the number of new teachers of color who are hired.

Goal #4 - Athletics Participation

Ms. Gormley reported that she expected the extra-curricular data to be ready to review the first week of August.

Goal #5 – Social Emotional Learning

The Committee discussed goals and objectives incorporated into the Strategic Plan in the area of social emotional learning including an assessment plan that would provide for consistent assessment data. The “Wait Until 8th” initiative was also discussed.

Goal #6 – Creation and Implementation of a Technology Plan

A Technology Plan has been developed under the leadership of our new Educational Technology Director and in collaboration with district-wide teams. The 2018-2019 school year will be the first full year of implementation.

Mr. Koocher asked if the School Committee needed to think about goals as a body. Dr. Donahue replied that Ms. Varela would like the School Committee to look at the subcommittees and the charges for these subcommittees.

Ms. White commented that she liked the School Committee meetings with forums. She suggested that the Committee think about the way it conducts meetings. Perhaps one meeting per month could be reports or presentations. Another meeting could be involving the community--a Collicot night, a Cunningham night, Community nights, etc.? She noted that very few community members come to Citizen Speak at the regular School Committee meetings. Could the format be changed to be friendlier to the community at large?

Mr. Koocher discussed the various meeting formats he has seen. Ms. Varela stated that the forum on school budget and space at the end of the year was one of the most valuable nights to interact with parents and members of the community. Mr. Koocher stated that Arlington reserves 1 meeting per month for presentations and reporting. Cambridge has a 3rd meeting per month for that same purpose.

Dr. Craghead stated that she would like to ensure that meeting formats are streamlined. Presenters need to know presentations are for the committee and the community. The School Committee needs to keep presentations to a particular time so all are attentive.

Mr. Koocher then asked about the various subcommittee/advisory committees and frequency of meetings. Committees were named including the following: Town/School Consolidation Capital Planning, Policy, Finance, Transportation, Strategic Planning, Facilities, Health and Wellness. Frequency of meetings was also discussed and Mr. Koocher noted it was highly unusual for the Finance Subcommittee to meet as often as once per week and as early as 6:45 a.m. He asked what the issues were with the subcommittees. Ms. Varela stated that Dr. Donahue had received feedback from members on the charges of each committee. Mr. Koocher asked if they needed a committee to review the subcommittee/advisory committees, and the School Committee agreed that it was not necessary. Mr. Koocher suggested that the Committee determine if the goals are set for 2018-2019 or if they need to be revised or rewritten. He questioned if these goals relate to the Strategic Plan and do they need to be periodically fine-tuned or redesigned? Ms. Varela suggested going back to the topic of subcommittees and who will chair.

Mr. Koocher recorded notes to summarize discussion of above topics and goals.

The committee adjourned the retreat from 12-12:35pm and resumed after the lunch break. Mr. Koocher suggested that the Committee draft goals based on topics and notes recorded.

Dr. Donahue asked if SEL should be added.

Ms. Eberhardt brought up facilities and stated that we are not “growing” our PreK program but still service children with needs. Ms. Varela felt this topic needed more discussion. She stated that there is a committee that is going to be led by the Selectmen. There will be discussion of a shared space – youth center and senior center or an Early Education Center at the senior center. She would like to have a concrete plan in place for 2019-2020. Dr. Craghead suggested developing an RFP to look at the Cunningham Library as a possibility for a number of classes. Mr. Koocher suggested revising the Strategic Plan to include a long-term plan for space. The Committee discussed the possibility of an internal facilities feasibility study. Ms. Rosmarin noted that whatever comes from the study should then be proposed to the Town. It would be a pre-study. Dr. Craghead asked if a study is conducted internally, would the Committee need approval from the Town. It was determined that approval would only be needed for allocation of funds. Ms. Varela said that she would like to know if a building project is part of a town-wide plan. Ms. White asked if the Committee could have the Fire Department look at the Cunningham library or 4th floor plan before the study is done to see if it is even feasible. A discussion followed about how spaces in buildings were being utilized to accommodate art, music and computer classes and challenges involved.

Mr. Koocher continued to record topics and notes for goal setting as he guided discussion. Following is a summary of notes posted along with Committee suggestions for consideration in the development/revision of goals.

Goal #1 – Facilities

- Internal Facility Study
- 2019-2020 Short Term
- Long Term
- Educate the Town

Goal #2a and Goal #2b – Academics – ELA Scores and Achievement Gap, Differentiated Instructions

- Expand Goal 2a to include AP courses, SATs, and internal assessments
- Look at transitions to MHS
- Look at college acceptances and see where underserved populations are. Consider looking at this for next year's goal and gather data now.
- Track where students apply and the percent of students who are accepted
- Has the Pierce Middle School had any impact as they transition to Milton High School?
- Look at AP course participation and the lack of students of color
- Is there a deterrent to students choosing honors and AP? Who is not being recommended for upper level classes at PMS?

*The Leadership Team has yet to review proposed goals.

Goal #3 and Goal #4 – Diversity – Increase Faculty of Color, Athletics Participation

- Consider revising goal #3
- Survey interests of students re participation in extra-curricular activities
 - Do you participate?
 - Why or why not?
 - Do you feel welcome?

Goal #5 – SEL – Social Emotional Learning

- Ask exSEL team to recommend a goal for School Committee
- Consider BRYT?

Goal #6 – Technology – Creation and Implementation of a Technology Plan

- Ask Technology Task Force for a School Committee Goal
- Consider implementation of the Tech Plan, 1:1 devices, digital citizenship

Following are topics discussed and to be considered for goal setting.

Budget and Contract Issues

- What needs to be put in the budget?
- What to increase and what to decrease—consider reappropriations to prioritize needs
- New staff vs. redeployment
- What is the collective bargaining strategy? Look at changes that need to be renegotiated.

School Committee Meetings

- Discussed having one meeting per month at one of the schools rather than holding all meetings in the MHS studio
- Changing format to include a forum at the beginning of some meetings to be considered
- Consider creating a subcommittee to present options to recommend to the Committee at a meeting

Committee members assigned the following to be responsible for developing goals around topics:

Facilities – Ada Rosmarin and Kevin Donahue

Academics – Central Office

Diversity – Cultural Competency Committee

SEL – SEL Committee

Technology – AJ Melanson

Budget/Contract – Margaret Eberhardt and Dr. Elaine Craghead

School Committee Meetings – Kevin Donahue

The Committee voted unanimously to adjourn.