

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Norton, Massachusetts

**MEETING NOTES**

TO: ALL STAFF MEMBERS  
FROM: Patricia H. Ansay, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools  
DATE: December 11 , 2006

**Date of School Committee Meeting:** Monday, December 4, 2006

**Location:** Cafeteria, L.G. Nourse Elementary School

**Attending:**

**Committee Members:** Chairperson Donna Gradie, Vice-Chairman Kevin O'Neil, Mrs. Margaret Werner and Mr. Thomas Golota. Mr. Jonathan O'Reilly was absent.

**Call to Order:**

Chairperson Gradie called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.

**Review and Approval of Minutes of Prior Meeting:**

A motion was made by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. Werner, to approve the Regular Session Minutes of the prior meeting held on November 13, 2006. On a 4-0 vote, the committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes.

**Science in Action Classroom Demonstration- Mr. Peter Leddy:**

The committee received a presentation from Mr. Peter Leddy, Academic Coordinator/Department Chair of Science at Norton High School. Mr. Leddy gave a presentation on the district's new Glencoe/McGraw Hill science texts, as a way of demonstrating to the public how teaching and learning have changed today. According to Mr. Leddy, the texts provide a nice transition as the students move along through the grades, and include content, lab activities, math applications, and learning opportunities beyond the classroom.

Mr. Leddy also described the interactive chalkboard which is currently used in many classrooms, and the many different links to audio clips, video clips and on-line clips to various web sites. Mr. Leddy displayed the spectacular interactive images which are available, such as the NASA Image Gallery, and the "internet labs" used in the classroom, in the computer lab or at home. The books are also linked to both state and national standards, and have opportunities for students with special needs.

Mrs. Diane Giordano, Grade 7 Science teacher, was on hand to explain how the new science texts help students with reading, writing and math skills at Norton Middle School.

Mrs. Giordano has set up a link to the new textbook series on EdLine. Students can access their science textbook from a home computer, as long as they have high speed internet access at home. In summary, Mrs. Giordano stated that she likes the new textbook series very much for content, readability and the accommodations for students who have difficulty. Mrs. Jacqueline Romaniecki, Grade 7 Science teacher, was also present to announce how happy the middle school teachers have been with the new program.

Mrs. Gradie stated how wonderful it is to have the teachers excited about the new science program. She said that excitement trickles down to the students. Mrs. Werner added that children are “born scientists”, and yet they sometimes lose that enthusiasm along the way. She was pleased to hear Mr. Leddy’s excitement for the new science program. The committee thanked Mr. Leddy for his informative presentation.

### **L.G. Nourse Opening of School Report:**

Mrs. Gradie introduced Mrs. Linda Ashley, principal of the L.G. Nourse School who presented her opening of school report. Mrs. Ashley introduced her new staff members including Mrs. Danielle McNeill-O’Brien, a new learning specialist. Mrs. Ashley also explained that Mrs. Sharon Roberts, Grade 1 teacher, has taken a year off to work on her degree in school administration.

According to Mrs. Ashley, class sizes range from 20 to 28 students at the Nourse School this year. She said the buses have been working out fine. They are no longer issuing bus passes, however, unless an emergency arises. Also, all children have been coming together to see programs presented to the entire school. According to Mrs. Ashley, these programs have focused on community building and social skills. Also, this year the Nourse School has a central theme of “C.A.R.E.S.”, which stands for cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy and self control. Mrs. Ashley said guidance counselors have been visiting classrooms more in an effort to build a more positive learning experience.

This year, Project Early has visited Ward’s Berry Farm in Sharon, MA. The Nourse teachers have focused on D.R.A.’s, Dibbles, the “Metro” program, taking graduate courses, piloting a new math program, math coaching, professional development, a school crisis team, a crisis drill, and a new school security system. Student teachers from Wheaton College have been assigned to the Nourse School, and a partnership with the Wheaton International Studies Department has made it possible for international teaching assistants to be placed in grade 3. The Nourse School has also focused on the “Visions” program, an Open House, and replacing the boiler system and playground equipment. Mrs. Ashley also complimented her custodial staff, announcing that the school is “spic and span” under the leadership of Head Custodian, Thomas Araujo.

Mrs. Ashley’s goals include making sure that teaching is aligned to the standards, a school wide approach to social skills, D.R.A.’s and math testing. She also thanked her staff and parents for their help in the Nourse School mission.

Next, Mrs. Beth Blakeley appeared before the committee on behalf of the L. G. Nourse School Parent Teacher Organization. She thanked Mrs. Ashley for her support of their organization. Mrs. Blakeley also announced that the Nourse School recently won a \$5,000 grant from Lowe's Home Improvement store for the purpose of building an outdoor learning center at the school. The grant was written by a Nourse parent, Mrs. Sharon Gauvin. Baker's Landscaping and Blueview Nurseries also helped in the design and building of this new outdoor classroom.

Mrs. Blakeley also described the Nourse School annual fund drive held in late September. She explained that families are asked to make a monetary donation, and these funds are then supplemented by a holiday plant sale, participation in "Box Tops for Education", participation in the "Hannaford Supermarket" program and the Nourse School Winter Carnival. Mrs. Blakeley explained that the school also has many fun activities which are not considered fundraisers such as "Breakfast with Santa", a "Holiday Shop" and the annual "Teacher Appreciation Luncheon". Mrs. Blakeley said the Nourse School has a phenomenal staff, and the parents cannot thank them enough for all they do for children. Lastly, Mrs. Blakeley described the annual "Ice Cream Social" held at the Nourse School. She said it is a sweet way to end the year. In June, the P.T.O. also gives each teacher a monetary gift, and purchases supplies for the teachers.

Mrs. Gradie thanked the Nourse School P.T.O. for everything they do. She said she knows it takes a lot of time and energy to accomplish all that they do. Mrs. Susan Monez also spoke to the committee on behalf of the school Site Council. She explained that the emphasis so far has been on the School Improvement Plan.

Mr. Golota then spoke about the crowded classrooms he has recently witnessed at the Nourse School. A parent in the audience asked the committee whether class sizes would be getting any smaller. Dr. Ansay explained that we are in the process of hiring some additional support staff, so that the adult/child ratio will improve at the school. Dr. Ansay also took the opportunity to compliment Mrs. Ashley, saying she has been a wonderful addition to her administrative team. She said Mrs. Ashley is doing a wonderful job, and appreciates all she is doing.

### **MCAS Analysis- Elementary Principals:**

Next, Mrs. Ashley and Mrs. Lisa Farrell, principal of the H. A. Yelle School, provided the committee with an in depth item analysis of the MCAS results received from the Department of Education for their schools. Each principal briefly described areas of strength and weakness in their test results. They reviewed each of the items and discussed the rationale for the results received in terms of why many students passed a certain item, and why an inordinate amount of students failed a certain item. The principals also provided suggestions and recommendations for instruction to remediate those issues. By undergoing this MCAS analysis, the principals are aiming to find the root causes for

success or failure on individual items. In some cases, it is as simple as the students not being exposed to the vocabulary that was used in the question. In other cases, the students may have had little or no exposure or practice with reading long selections of non-fiction materials. Through closely examining student test data themselves, the principals hope to be better able to set clear priorities for their students, and improve student achievement on state mandated testing.

Mrs. Gradie thanked both Mrs. Ashley and Mrs. Farrell for the excellent job they both did on their in depth item analysis. Mr. O'Neil also commended both principals. He encourages parents to click on the link to the MCAS schedule on the Norton Public Schools website. By doing so, parents will be able to view school and district performance results for the MCAS.

**Personnel:**

Appointments:

- a. Ms. Leslie MacDonald, JCS Speech Therapist long-term substitute, effective November 27th.
- b. Ms. Heidi Loring, NMS SPED Educational Assistant, effective November 6th.
- c. Mr. Eric Paulus, NHS SPED Educational Assistant, effective November 30th.
- d. Mr. William Foley, Boys' Assistant Basketball Coach.
- e. Mrs. Jennifer Cedrone Moon, Girls' MS Basketball Coach.
- f. Mr. Adam Moon, Boys' MS Basketball Coach.
- g. Ms. Jeannine Fritsche, Freshman Girls' Basketball Coach.

**Other Business:**

Dr. Ansay announced that she is collaborating with the Solmonese School to explore a new partnership with the World Language Department at Norton High School. This partnership would involve high school students visiting the Solmonese School to teach French and Spanish to third graders. Dr. Ansay is exploring a similar partnership with Wheaton College. In addition, she is seeking state approval for some all day Kindergarten programs. Dr. Ansay also announced that senior citizens in the Norton community are being invited to the upcoming holiday performances planned in our schools. Invitations are going out to adult daycare centers and the Norton Senior Center she said. Lastly, Dr. Ansay reported that work on the '08 School Budget is underway. She said it is important to her that we get this information to the finance committee in a timely fashion.

**Adjourn:**

On a motion by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mr. Golota, on a roll call vote, the committee unanimously voted to enter Executive Session at 8:50 pm.

**NEXT MEETING DATE:**

**Monday, December 18, 2006, 6:30 P.M., Norton Middle School**

*Enjoy the season!*



*These Meeting Notes are intended to keep the school district and the community informed in a timely fashion following a meeting of the Norton School Committee. They have not been officially approved by the committee.*

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