

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Norton, Massachusetts

**MEETING NOTES**

TO: ALL STAFF MEMBERS  
FROM: Patricia H. Ansay, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools  
DATE: January 5, 2007

**Date of School Committee Meeting:** Monday, December 18, 2006

**Location:** Library, Norton Middle School

**Attending:**

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

**Call to Order:**

Chairperson Gradie called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

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

A motion was made by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mr. O'Neil, to approve both the Regular and Executive Session Minutes of the prior meeting held on December 4, 2006. On a 4-0 vote, the committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes.

**MCAS Item Analysis - Principals:**

Principal Raymond Dewar, Principal Roger Parent, and Principal Mary Brown were present to discuss their school's MCAS Item Analysis. The principals provided the committee with information relative to a more in-depth item analysis than was touched upon earlier in the fall when the MCAS results were received from the Department of Education. At that time, results only were reported. At this time, the principals briefly described areas of strength and weakness in their test results. They reported on reviewing each of the items on the test and provided a dialog focusing upon rationale for the results received in terms of why many students passed a certain item and why an inordinate number of students failed a certain item. Following that type of analysis, the principals provided suggestions and recommendations for instruction to remediate those issues.

The purpose of the MCAS analysis was to find root causes for success or failure on individual items. The principals explained that in some cases, it is as simple as the students not being exposed to the vocabulary that was used in the question, or they have had little or no exposure or practice with reading long selections of non-fiction materials. The analysis was completed in an effort to improve student achievement on state mandated testing.

**Proposed NHS Course Additions - Mr. Raymond Dewar:**

Mr. Dewar presented his recommendations for course additions for the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years.

2007-2008:

- Video/TV
- United States History 1: Pre-AP
- Multi-Cultural Literature
- Wellness
- School to Career
- Principles of Business Management (DECA) – Level 1
- Advanced Principals of Accounting – Level 1

2008-2009:

- Advanced Placement Chemistry

Mr. Dewar explained that Mrs. Heather Albritton, Business Department Chair at the high school, is trying to establish a relationship with Bristol Community College to provide opportunities for college course students. He said hopefully we can form a similar relationship with Wheaton College, so that high school students can challenge themselves more, and perhaps earn college credit for a course. Mr. Dewar mentioned that such a relationship with a college raises the students' expectations for themselves. He said this is thinking outside of the box, and we need to let kids get outside the box and see what they can do. He said our high school is small, but the world is very big. Mr. Dewar explained that we want to raise the bar for our kids. He said he is excited about the possibilities for students to really shine.

On a motion by Mr. O'Neil, seconded by Mrs. Werner, the committee unanimously voted to accept the proposed new course additions for 2007-2008 and 2008-2009. Mrs. Werner commended Mr. Dewar on his wonderful work at the high school.

**MCAS Item Analysis - District-Wide - Mrs. Amy Berdos:**

Mrs. Amy Berdos, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, presented the MCAS Item Analysis for the entire district in the area of science/technology. She said we need to be sure that a particular concept is not just a "theme" in a certain grade. For example, if the students are learning about simple machines in Grade 3, but not again, they may experience difficulty when tested on simple machines in Grade 5. She said we need to be sure that we embed concepts again and again, and return to concepts again and again so that strands are woven through. Mrs. Berdos emphasized that we are really starting to see some nice improvements. She said teachers are excited about the curriculum and are doing a lot of work with it. She said they are also thankful for all of the resources. Mrs. Berdos emphasized the importance of focusing on the standards from September through June. She expects we will be seeing some nice gains.

Mrs. Gradie discussed her opinion that the Science Fair should be brought back for fourth and fifth graders. Mrs. Berdos concurred with Mrs. Gradie and said she thinks the Science Fair is very important. Mrs. Werner agreed and stated that she believes the Science Fair is more developmentally appropriate for fourth and fifth grade students. Mr. O'Neil commented that it is very beneficial for students to get to see each other's work. He said he believes a Science Fair would provide a great value to the H. A. Yelle School. Mr. O'Neil said that when he looks back at his own school experience, his project oriented assignments are the most memorable of all. Mrs. Werner commented that kids may not understand the abstract processes of a Science Fair in the third grade.

Mr. O'Neil suggested that a Science Fair may be the missing link at the H. A. Yelle School. Mrs. Berdos commented that Science Fairs take up an enormous amount of time, and we need to find a balance. Mr. O'Neil emphasized that he believes we can find that balance. He said what's most important is finding what gives the best return on our investment. Mrs. Werner suggested that our society seeks to do everything fast. She said that the secret might be devoting more time to one unit, such as a Science Fair, throughout the whole year, rather than trying to accomplish that large endeavor in a short amount of time. She reflected on her recent visit to a school in Italy, where schools might run a single unit for an entire year.

#### **School Committee Representative to the Middle School Roofing & Flashing Remediation Team:**

Dr. Ansay explained that the committee needs to appoint a representative to the Middle School Roofing and Flashing Remediation Team. The Application for Design Service calls for a Design Selection Committee comprised of the Superintendent, a School Committee member, and a designee of the Superintendent/School Committee. The committee will review all proposals that come in. The deadline for proposals is January 24, 2007. Mrs. Werner made a motion, seconded by Mr. Golota, to appoint Mr. O'Neil to the Middle School Roofing and Flashing Remediation Team as a School Committee member. On a 3-0 vote, the committee unanimously approved this motion. Mr. O'Neil abstained from the vote.

#### **Update on School Starting Time Survey:**

Dr. Ansay explained that she and Mr. Dewar met with a Site Council/PTO representative from each school. The result was a unanimous opposition to resending a survey relative to altering school starting times. Representatives felt that potential associated costs would be better spent on needed staffing and instructional materials for the next school year.

#### **Personnel:**

##### **Resignation:**

Mrs. Debora Fiore, System-wide Physical Therapist, effective January 6, 2007.

**Maternity Leave of Absence:**

Mrs. Dianne Bruno, Grade 5 Teacher, effective May through December, 2007.

**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 9:20 pm.

**NEXT MEETING DATE:**

**Monday, January 8, 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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