

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Norton, Massachusetts

MEETING NOTES

TO: ALL STAFF MEMBERS
FROM: Patricia H. Ansay, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
DATE: November 30, 2006

Date of School Committee Meeting: Monday, November 13, 2006

Location: Library, J.C. Solmonese Elementary School

Attending:

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

Call to Order:

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

Review and Approval of Minutes of Prior Meeting:

Mr. O'Neil pointed out a correction that needs to be made to the Executive Session Minutes of the prior meeting held on October 30, 2006 at the Henri A. Yelle School. Mr. O'Neil, suggested changing the figure 200,00 to 200,000 by adding one zero. Mr. O'Neil made a motion to approve these Executive Session Minutes as amended, and the Regular Session Minutes as submitted. Mrs. Werner seconded the motion, and the committee unanimously approved the Minutes of the October 30th meeting at the Henri A. Yelle School.

Textbook Adoption Vote:

Dr. Ansay explained the Massachusetts General Law regarding textbook adoptions. According to this law, School Committees should be approving textbook adoptions. Therefore, Dr. Ansay presented information on new mathematics and science textbooks to the committee, including the rationale for purchase. She offered samples of the texts to the committee, and asked them to vote on the approval of these adoptions.

Mathematics

Prentice Hall – 2007: Pre-algebra for all Grade 8 students with the exception of the AGL (above grade level group) and for the AGL (above grade level group) in Grade 7.

Science

Macmillan/McGraw Hill – 2005: for all K- 6 students and Glencoe 2005 for all Grades 7 and 8 students.

Dr. Ansay explained that these texts are more closely aligned to the Massachusetts State Frameworks than the previous textbook series. She further explained that these math and science textbooks are being suggested for the middle school students, because elementary science books were purchased last year. Mr. O'Neil wanted to be certain that athletic fees are not being used to purchase textbooks. Dr. Ansay assured Mr. O'Neil that the bus user fees, not the athletic user fees, have been utilized to make payments on monthly bus invoices. Then, funds originally earmarked for this are being freed up to purchase textbooks. She explained that the books are approximately \$75 each.

On a motion by Mr. O'Neil, seconded by Mr. Golota, the committee unanimously voted to approve the adoption of the new mathematics and science textbooks recommended for Grades K-8.

Opening of School Report- Mrs. Mary Brown:

Principal Mary E. R. Brown then presented the J. C. Solmonese School opening of school report. Mrs. Brown explained that the opening of school went extremely well. She told the committee that the school is organized into units, and that the specialists are also housed in those units. Currently there are four empty classrooms at the Solmonese School, which is something that hasn't happened in many years. However, Mrs. Brown assured the committee that all four classrooms are being utilized.

According to Mrs. Brown, the Solmonese School has 8 first grade classrooms this year. There are 7 second grade classrooms, and 7 third grade classrooms. There are also 6 classes of Kindergarten this year, which represents 3 morning classes and 3 afternoon classes. The total enrollment is currently 640 students. Mrs. Brown mentioned that the Solmonese School also has six substantially separate classrooms. She said that when these children attend their own neighborhood school, it provides a big savings for the district. However, Mrs. Brown emphasized that this arrangement is also very good for the children. She said the Solmonese School also has one Kindergarten classroom that functions as an inclusion model.

Mrs. Brown then went on to describe other changes that took place at the Solmonese School this year. She pointed out the reduction of specialists. Mrs. Brown explained that all of these changes have been absorbed by the current staff. She said all of our students in Grades 1-3 are receiving specials despite all of these cuts. Mrs. Brown explained that the Solmonese School library is still closed, however. And of all the reductions, she said the closing of the library was the hardest one of all.

Regarding the Solmonese School library, Mrs. Brown pointed out that the plastic has now been removed from the library bookshelves. The classroom teachers are planning to begin using the library by taking books out. She said they are trying to make the best of what we have by using the beautiful books instead of just leaving them on the shelf.

Mrs. Brown then discussed the Solmonese School custodial staff. She said they take great pride in the building and she is very pleased with the cleanliness of the building. Mrs. Brown said the staff has tried to replace as many windows as possible. Some windows have appeared cloudy due to condensation, and the replacement of these windows has been an ongoing maintenance project. She said they are also working on refurbishing bathrooms, and they have just one more to do. Mrs. Brown said the Solmonese School also now has whiteboards instead of chalkboards. These white boards are healthier and reduce dust. Mrs. Brown explained that the staff has also been painting the school.

She said one of her personal goals is always to maintain a high level of parent involvement, and Norton parents make that an easy goal to achieve, she said. Mrs. Brown said the Solmonese School currently has 246 parent volunteers. She said the volunteers are a key ingredient to the success of the school, and 125 of these volunteers work directly in the classroom. Mrs. Brown also pointed out that the Solmonese School was on the MCAS Needs Improvement list for a particular subgroup. However, the school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and has therefore been removed from that list.

According to Mrs. Brown, there are excellent professional development opportunities for Solmonese School teachers. In particular, she mentioned the South East Elementary School Alliance (S.E.E.S.W.). She said they offer courses and enable teachers to network. Mrs. Brown also complimented the Solmonese Parent Organization for the informal Popsicle party they organized for new Kindergarten students this year. She said this was a very successful event. The Solmonese School also has a partnership with B.J.'s this year, and has many activities and events planned.

Mrs. Brown then introduced those staff members who are new to the Solmonese School this year: Mrs. Deborah Pompei, R.N., School Nurse, Ms. Katie Kavanaugh, Grade 1 teacher, Mr. Jay Curren, Physical Education/Health teacher, and Mrs. Kerry Wall, Reading Specialist. She said that MCAS scores have improved at the Solmonese School, but emphasized that she and the staff believe student achievement is more than just standardized tests. She said it is important to develop responsible citizens, and therefore the Solmonese teachers are all continuing with the anti-bullying program this year.

Mrs. Brown then introduced the Solmonese Parent Organization: Mrs. Michelle Petersen, Director, Mrs. Pam Anderson, Co-Chairperson, Mrs. Valerie D'Amore, Co-Chairperson, Mrs. Lorie Donnelly, Co-Chairperson, Mrs. Lynne Caramanica, Secretary, and Mrs. Mary Valentine, Treasurer. She described the SPO as a lifeline, and thanked them for being so active in the school. She said each year she is grateful to have an enthusiastic and energetic group of parents. Mrs. Brown said the enthusiasm is so much fun.

Next, Mrs. Petersen spoke on behalf of the SPO. She said the Solmonese School is such a special place and Mrs. Brown is a wonderful administrator. She said Mrs. Brown really takes the time to get to know each student, and takes a great deal of pride in the school.

Mrs. Petersen said the SPO is a very active group with over 200 parents who work on many events throughout the year. She said the closing of the Solmonese library causes the parents great concern. She also said the decision not to replace Mrs. Donna Lee Lima, Assistant Principal, is a great concern to the parents. Mrs. Paula D'Ercole added that parents are also very concerned about the bus user fees. She said this is particularly distressing at the middle school where kids are riding their bikes to school from all over town. Mrs. D'Ercole said it is a safety issue. Mrs. Gradie explained that the committee is just as concerned about this issue, and is looking into it. She said the committee knows how much the parents do, and that they appreciate everything.

Next, Mrs. Rosemary Spaulding, Reading Specialist, gave an update on the Solmonese School summer reading program which was known as "Catch a Dragon by the Tail." This program culminated with the appearance of a "dragon" at an assembly this fall. Students who participated received a bookmark, pencil and certificate. Mrs. Spaulding said that about 65% of the Solmonese students participated. She also described a new reading program that is currently being initiated at the school. Students will be taking home a log to record the number of minutes they read each day. As the total number of minutes grows school wide, a large paper worm will grow in length around the walls of the school.

Lastly, Mrs. Brown explained that the Solmonese School has several classroom teachers who are working together in a job sharing arrangement this year. She said that all of these arrangements are working very well. She said many good things are happening, including a donation of dictionaries to all Grade 3 children by the Elks organization. Mrs. Brown said she thinks it is amazing the way people have come forth. She said all of the staff is working so hard, and many have had to take on additional roles due to the reductions. However, she said things are just never the same when it comes to the reduction of people.

Mrs. Werner thanked Mrs. Brown for her nice report, and the committee thanked her for the wonderful coffee and refreshments she provided.

Policy: Home Schooling:

Dr. Ansay explained that there was no policy on home schooling in existence in our policy manual. Therefore, she has gathered information from area school districts regarding home schooling. Dr. Ansay explained that we recently received a request from a home school parent, asking to have her child participate in Norton High School Wrestling. While there is no obligation on the part of a public school to allow this, Dr. Ansay said that Norton will adhere to MIAA regulations regarding interscholastic athletics. Dr. Ansay explained that the MIAA does authorize such participation by home schooled students if certain conditions are met.

Dr. Ansay included these conditions and also those that apply to our regular high school students in a “regulation” she presented to the committee. She also presented a “Home School Policy”, informing the committee that the wrestling season will be starting soon. She also pointed out that we are under no obligation to allow such participation by Charter School students. We will be requiring an up-to-date physician’s note and proof of insurance from those students wishing to participate in interscholastic athletics.

Mr. O’Neil complimented the Superintendent, stating that the “regulation” and the “Home School Policy” are both very well done. On a motion by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mr. O’Neil, the committee unanimously approved adopting the new “Home School Policy”.

Superintendent Evaluation:

Next, Chairperson Gradie explained that the committee was asked to give their annual rating of the Superintendent. She presented a summary of their evaluation, explaining that Dr. Ansay has a good relationship with the School Committee. Mrs. Gradie said Dr. Ansay listens to their recommendations, and is always prepared. She said Dr. Ansay has an “open door” policy with the community, and keeps everyone well informed. Mrs. Gradie also said Dr. Ansay did an admirable job trying to win support for the override, has improved relations with Wheaton College, attends many school activities, and always puts a great deal of thought into everything she does. Mrs. Gradie described Dr. Ansay as a cheerleader for our staff, with a “can do” attitude. She said Dr. Ansay is an intelligent educational leader who initiates action, plans ahead, prepares ahead, gets involved and wants nothing but the best for each and every student.

Mrs. Gradie added that Dr. Ansay does an excellent job on a day to day basis with business and finances, without the addition of a business manager. She said Dr. Ansay is very detail oriented with regard to finances, and has found many “holes” which she has tried to plug. She has high expectations of the staff, according to Mrs. Gradie, and has high standards for herself as well. These high standards include honesty, integrity, and trying to listen and change while keeping the peace. Mrs. Gradie said it is obvious they all think Dr. Ansay “walks on water”, and they are all grateful for her.

Dr. Ansay thanked the committee for their positive evaluation. When she does leave Norton someday, she said she hopes to leave it better than it was before. She said she does work hard, but has never had such a wonderful school board to work with. She said she always tries to be fair. She said I always try to treat others that way, because that’s what I would like done for me. Mrs. Gradie concluded the discussion by stating that Dr. Ansay is doing an outstanding job for our kids and she is an advocate for our children.

Personnel:

Leave of Absence:

Mrs. Jessica Carvalho, effective March, 2006.

Appointments:

- a. Ms. Jessica Iozzi, NHS Structured Resource Room teacher, effective November 13, 2006
- b. Mrs. Rosemary Brown, SPED Administrative Secretary, effective November 20, 2006
- c. Mrs. Doreen Browne, NHS, .4 Nurse, effective November 3, 2006

Other Business:

On a motion by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mr. Golota, the committee unanimously voted to approve the request for the Annual Thanksgiving Eve Bonfire to be held on the back field of the H. A. Yelle Elementary School on Wednesday, November 22, 2006.

Mr. O'Neil then asked the committee for permission to transfer funds from the TPC Gift Account to the Norton Athletic Complex Committee Account. The committee unanimously approved this request.

Adjourn:

On a motion by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mr. Golota, the committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:17 pm.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

Monday, December 4, 2006, 6:30 P.M., L.G. Nourse 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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