

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Norton, Massachusetts

MEETING NOTES

TO: ALL STAFF MEMBERS
FROM: Patricia H. Ansay, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
DATE: November 1, 2006

Date of School Committee Meeting: Monday, October 30, 2006

Location: Cafeteria, H. A. Yelle School

Attending:

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

Call to Order:

Chairperson Gradie called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Review and Approval of Minutes of Prior Meeting:

A motion was made by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mr. O'Neil to approve the Regular and Executive Session Minutes of the prior meeting held on October 16, 2006, and the Executive Session Minutes from September 25, 2006. On a 4-0 vote, the committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes. Mr. O'Reilly abstained from this vote due to his absence at these meetings.

Opening of School Report- Mrs. Lisa Farrell:

Mrs. Lisa Farrell, Principal of the H.A. Yelle School, presented the Opening of School Report for the H.A. Yelle Elementary School. Mrs. Farrell announced that the Yelle School has a school-wide theme this year. The theme is "Making Connections". She reported that there are currently 241 students enrolled in Grade Four, and 253 students enrolled in Grade Five. Also, the building has been newly organized this year. The Grade Four classrooms are all situated together in the front of the building, and the Grade Five classrooms are all situated together in the back. Mrs. Farrell also announced the new staff assignments and introduced her new staff.

According to Mrs. Farrell, there were a number of senior citizens who helped with building projects at the Yelle School during the summer. All of the steam traps were replaced, and the doors were numbered. Mrs. Farrell reported that the senior citizens were tremendously helpful and their efforts were very much appreciated.

Mrs. Farrell then explained the new "Citizen of the Month" initiative which she has begun at the Yelle School. Each month, students who exhibit the quality of good citizenship are recognized. According to Mrs. Farrell, she has also begun a "Word of the Day" initiative. Morning announcements are also broadcast each day, including a "Thought for the Day".

Mrs. Gerri Quigley, Guidance Counselor, reported on the "Make a Wish" initiative at the Yelle School. Mrs. Quigley spoke about this national fundraiser which helps a child with a life threatening illness by granting that child's wish. The Yelle School students are trying to raise money for the organization. The average price of each wish is \$6,000. This year, Theme Baskets will be raffled off to raise money. Mrs. Quigley reported that the kids are really excited, and the teachers have shown a tremendous amount of support. According to Mrs. Farrell, all Yelle students were shown an informational video provided by the "Make a Wish" foundation. She said the students were able to see that they really can do something to make a difference.

Mrs. Rachel Young, Title I Reading teacher, reported on the Summer Reading program at the Yelle School. According to Mrs. Young, this year the Yelle School had an increase in participation, as 97% of the Yelle students participated in the Summer Reading program. Mrs. Young attributes this high rate of participation to the fact that students are given free choice. She said the program also received a lot of community support.

Next, Mrs. Farrell reported that the Yelle teachers are finishing up the DRA assessment. They will also be reviewing the Stanford test results, and the "Visions" program is now being piloted at the Yelle School. Mr. Golota said that the "Visions" program is very eye opening. He said it is a great program that really shows what teachers go through in the classrooms. He said it's a great program, and wished Mrs. Farrell well with this initiative. In addition, "Movie Night" was recently held at the Yelle School. Mrs. Farrell described this as a nice family activity which is free of charge to all Yelle families. The Yelle School also has a program on anti-bullying, and just finished the "Step" program. Mrs. Farrell's goals include a volunteer program, identifying students at risk, and doing "walk throughs" in the classrooms. Progress Reports were also recently distributed. Mrs. Werner commented that Mrs. Farrell is doing a nice job. Mrs. Gradie complimented Mrs. Farrell on the Yelle School handbook and its theme of education as a team effort.

Energy Education Inc. Presentation:

Mr. John Young, Energy Education Manager, updated the committee on the Energy Conservation Program. Mr. Paul Hamman from Energy Education joined Mr. Young for the presentation which provided actual data of cost avoidance since the program began. This is the first time that we've had nearly one full year of usage. According to Mr. Young, as time goes on, we are learning how to best utilize our buildings without added expenses. He said the custodial staff is doing an excellent job. According to Mr. Young, everyone is really getting into the program and participating, and it's starting to work well. The total cost avoidance for 8 months was \$103,004. Cost avoidance for 10 months was \$120,657.

Mr. O'Neil asked whether comfortable temperatures are being maintained during the day for the staff and students. Mr. Young assured Mr. O'Neil that temperatures are being maintained between 68 degrees and 72 degrees during the day. Dr. Ansay explained that teachers and custodians are using their own judgment with regard to reduced lighting.

Policy- Questionnaires and Surveys:

This policy was tabled at the last School Committee meeting. At that time, the committee expressed the desire to have all surveys and questionnaires that focused on sensitive issues approved by its board, and not the Superintendent. Dr. Ansay presented a newly written policy to the committee. Mr. O'Neil made one suggestion this evening for a change in the language. Dr. Ansay and the committee were agreeable to the change. Mr. O'Neil then made a motion to accept the Questionnaire and Surveys policy as amended this evening. Mrs. Werner seconded the motion. On a 5-0 vote the committee unanimously approved the new policy, as amended.

2006 MCAS Results Slide Presentation - Mrs. Amy Berdos:

Mrs. Amy Berdos, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, K-12, appeared to provide the members of the committee with a summary of this year's MCAS results and how we are doing. Mrs. Berdos spoke globally concerning the results. At a later date, building principals will be presenting an item analysis of the MCAS tests that their particular students have taken. These results are being provided to the school department with the aid of TestWiz software, provided by the state, to demonstrate graphically the results. Mrs. Berdos' report provided the committee with comparisons between years, and comparisons between the same group of students over time. She reported on how students performed in Grades 4, 6, 8 and 10, as well as comparisons with surrounding communities.

Mrs. Berdos stressed the importance of looking at the MCAS results. She said it is important to look at the scores to see if we are moving in the right direction. Mrs. Berdos identified our need to improve in the skill of adding and subtracting decimals and fractions. She said we are looking at ways we can bring concepts in earlier in the year, so that they are continually practiced. Mrs. Berdos emphasized that constant exposure to the concepts is very important. She explained that our instruction is curriculum driven, not textbook driven. Mrs. Berdos explained that the curriculum map is very important. She said the textbooks are utilized as a resource. The expectation is that the teachers will use the textbooks as a tool with which to follow the curriculum map. She mentioned that seasoned teachers are experienced at supplementing the textbooks with other things to give the students more exposure. Mrs. Werner pointed out the importance of assisting new teachers so that they will also be able to supplement the textbook, rather than depending on it exclusively.

Mr. O'Neil mentioned that he is concerned about the Fifth Grade science scores. He said these scores are below the state average, and yet we have new science textbooks. Mrs. Berdos explained that there is not one science textbook that matches up with the

Massachusetts frameworks. She emphasized that the teachers use the textbook as a resource along with the curriculum map. Mr. O'Neil asked if we should expect to see improvements in the Fifth Grade science scores next year. Mrs. Berdos said we should expect to see improvements in every subject next year. Mrs. Berdos said the teachers are working so hard.

Mrs. Werner mentioned how helpful it is to see the charts and graphs which Mrs. Berdos presented tonight. She thanked Mrs. Berdos for coming and for her exceptional presentation. Mrs. Berdos concluded by emphasizing that change is not made without inconvenience, even from worse to better. According to Mrs. Berdos, corrections are easy, improvements are hard. She also emphasized that corrections are quick, improvements take time.

Mrs. Gracie commended Mrs. Berdos for her excellent presentation, noting that the enthusiasm exhibited by Mrs. Berdos makes a great deal of difference. She thanked Mrs. Berdos for her dedication and commitment to the children of Norton. Mrs. Berdos remarked that we are very lucky to have our exceptional staff. Mrs. Gracie concurred, saying she has tremendous respect and admiration for the school staff.

School Liaisons' Update:

Committee members provided an update on activities at the individual schools. Mrs. Gracie reported that the J.C. Solmonese School has just completed a successful fall fundraiser. The Solmonese School also created a float for the annual Chartley Halloween parade, and recently conducted a Pizza Supper night for students and their families. For the spring, the Solmonese School is planning a Pancake Breakfast, the Annual Spring Fair and a Providence Bruins Night. In addition, the Solmonese School participates in Box Tops for Education, and the school fundraiser programs offered at Target and Hannaford stores. An enrichment program is also coordinated by the Solmonese Parent Organization, along with a recycling program. At holiday time, the students will conduct a "Giving Tree" to help those in need.

Mr. Golota reported on fall activities at Norton Middle School, including the successful Yankee Candle fundraising drive conducted by the middle school students. Mr. O'Reilly updated the committee on activities at Norton High School. In particular, he encouraged everyone to attend the upcoming home football game vs. Medway on Friday, November 3, 2006 at 7:00pm. At this time, a special ceremony is planned to honor the late Lee Burchill, the inspirational former quarterback of the Norton High School Lancers. The team will be retiring Lee's football jersey number in honor of his inspirational life and the influence he had on so many at Norton High School, in the Norton community and beyond. This is the first event of its kind ever conducted at the high school.

An update on activities at the L.G. Nourse School will be provided at a future meeting.

Personnel:

Resignation:

Mr. Andrew Young, NHS Structured Resource Room

Appointments:

Mr. Mark Sullivan, NMS Adjustment Counselor

Mrs. Brande Tarantino, NHS SPED Educational Assistant

Ms. Kim Bray, Swim Coach

Adjourn:

On a roll call vote, the committee unanimously voted to enter Executive Session at 8:40 pm.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

Monday, November 13, 2006, 6:30 P.M., J.C. Solmonese School Library

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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