

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Norton, Massachusetts

MEETING NOTES

TO: ALL STAFF MEMBERS
FROM: Patricia H. Ansay, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
DATE: May 31, 2007

Date of School Committee Meeting: May 21, 2007

Location: Library, Norton Middle School

Attending:

Committee Members: Chairman Kevin O'Neil, Vice-Chairman Thomas Golota, Mr. Andrew Mackie, Mrs. Beth McManus and Mrs. Margaret Werner.

Call to Order: Chairman O'Neil called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Review and Approval of Minutes of Prior Meetings:

On a motion by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. Werner, the committee unanimously voted to approve both the Regular and Executive Session Minutes of the meeting held on April 30, 2007.

Presentation of Thank You Gift to Donna Gradie:

Chairman O'Neil then presented Mrs. Donna Gradie, outgoing Chairperson of the Norton School Committee, with a thank you gift. Mrs. Gradie was present in the audience to accept the gift from the committee. She thanked the members of the committee for their passion and dedication to the students of Norton. Mrs. Gradie said she was privileged and honored to be a part of the Norton School Committee for six years. She said she is confident that the present committee will do all it can for the students of Norton.

Mrs. McManus then read aloud a poem entitled "100 Years from Today". She explained that she was very inspired by this poem when it was first given to her. She wanted Mrs. Gradie to know that these same words held true for her influence on the students of Norton. According to the poem, 100 years from today, the world may be a little better because one person was important in the life of a child. Mrs. McManus said Mrs. Gradie should be very proud of the hundreds of children's lives she has touched over the years.

DECA - National Competition Summary:

Norton High School students Anthony DaSilva, Mark Ledbetter, Brendan Hughes, Nadya Kaltsunas and Amy Michael were in attendance to discuss their experience at the National DECA Competition in Florida. Business Department Chair Heather Albritton and DECA Advisor Cory Rogers were also in attendance. Anthony DaSilva spoke first about his experience, and explained that competing in the DECA National Competition is not an easy task. Mark Ledbetter and Brendan Hughes spoke as representatives from the

state level of DECA. They are both elected state officers, and have campaigned and made speeches in front of over 1,000 people. Mark Ledbetter explained that the students learned how to run a press conference. He said the speakers really knew what they were talking about and made the experience interesting and fun. Among the seven state officers from Massachusetts, two of them are from Norton.

The students commended Mr. Rogers as an excellent chaperone. Anthony DaSilva showed his winning medals to the committee members present. He explained that he competed against other students from all over the country and Mexico. Bendan Hughes added that the DECA National Competition was an excellent opportunity to boost the confidence of the students. Mr. O'Neil also commended Mr. Rogers, the DECA Advisor for the high school. He said it was very important to recognize the efforts of Mr. Rogers, and said the program has blossomed because of his leadership and that of Mrs. Albritton.

Vote to Award NHS Telecommunications/PA System RFP

Dr. Ansay recommended that the committee vote to award the Telephone Based Communications and Public Address System for Norton High School to Metropolitan Telephone in the amount of \$56,995. She explained that a Request for Proposal for a new public address/telephone system at Norton High School was sent out. She said the one that is currently there is aged and is not working properly, and is a threat to student and staff safety. Dr. Ansay further explained that her concern is mainly focused around the fact that we have other needs that cannot be provided by the current system. According to Dr. Ansay, the matter became a top priority when she discovered that there was no communication from the classroom back to the main office at the high school. She said this puts the staff and students in danger, and she was not comfortable with that.

A representative from Webb Consulting, Mr. Joseph Webb, was present at the meeting to discuss the proposal. Mr. Webb had analyzed the problem at the high school and put together the Request for Proposal that would address the public communications problems at the school. He designed the Request for Proposal and received four proposals back. Mr. Webb explained that Metropolitan Telephone was the lowest qualified bidder. Mr. Raymond Dewar, principal of Norton High School, was also present to make comments regarding this award. Dr. Ansay explained that the process was a lengthy one, and the Request for Proposal was at least two inches thick. She said she felt they had done a good job with it, and are reusing existing cable to keep the cost down. The new system will also allow for expansion in the event that the high school is ever added on to.

A discussion ensued about the proposal. Mr. Golota asked how we ever lived without this telecommunications/PA system before. Chairman O'Neil thanked Mr. Webb for his services. He said the Request for Proposal was very well thought out. Mr. Mackie asked how many companies presented proposals. Mr. Webb informed the committee that four vendors submitted proposals. According to Mr. Webb, Metropolitan Telephone fit into the requirements very well and gave us a price that was affordable. On a motion by Mr.

Golota, seconded by Mrs. Werner, the committee unanimously voted to award the NHS Telecommunications/PA System RFP to Metropolitan Telephone in the amount of \$56,995.

Approval of Textbook Adoption - *Math Expressions* - Mrs. Berdos:

Mrs. Amy Berdos, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, K-12, principals, math liaisons and the math Academic Coordinator, Mr. Michael Ward, were present to discuss the proposed textbook adoption, *Math Expressions*, from the Houghton-Mifflin Company. Also present was Mrs. Sharon Roberts, newly appointed .5 Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Mrs. Lynn Wiegel, Supervisor of Technology, Dr. Jenny Tsankova, professor at Roger Williams University, and the following classroom teachers:

Mrs. Jennifer Branco
Mrs. Gloria Bzdula
Mrs. Virginia Charpentier
Mrs. Carol Collins-St. John
Ms. Jennifer Fernandes
Mrs. Lisa Gardner
Miss Nancy Grant
Mrs. Erin Haglund
Mrs. Eleanor Johnson
Mrs. Judith LaConte
Mrs. Karen Monteiro
Mrs. Ellen Reinhart
Mrs. Sandra Ross
Mrs. Jennifer Ryan
Mrs. Linda Thomasian

Mrs. Berdos presented a video which highlighted students engaged with the *Math Expressions* program. With her video, Mrs. Berdos said she intended to give the committee an indepth look at what *Math Expressions* looks like in the classroom. She explained that the program is based upon ten years of classroom research which studied the way children around the world learn math. According to Mrs. Berdos, two teachers at each grade level have been piloting the program since September of 2006. She explained that piloting a program is alot of extra work, and she went on to publicly thank all of the pilot teachers this year for all that they have done in their classrooms and the numerous meetings. Mrs. Berdos went on to illustrate Problem Solving with "Math Boards" at the Grade 1 level, "Math Journals" at the Grade 2 level and "Proof Drawings" at the Grade 3 level. She went on to discuss other advantages of the program such as technology for teachers, a test generator, a lesson planner CD-ROM, web resources such as web-based student activities, resources for families such as parent letters, resources for students such as unit overviews and strategy cards, resources for teachers and games which are included within every single unit in the program.

Dr. Tsankova remarked that the *Math Expressions* program does challenge students. She also commended the classroom teachers who piloted the program at each grade level. She commended Mrs. Monteiro, a Grade 1 teacher at the J. C. Solmonese School who did a wonderful job with the program. She said Houghton-Mifflin could have hired Mrs. Monteiro on the spot. She also pointed out that children in our country have less exposure to the concept of money. She mentioned that the *Math Expressions* program recognizes that fact and challenges children to become more experienced with that concept. Dr. Tsankova also commended the program for the way in which Geometry is "spiraled" throughout the school year so that students will not forget those important concepts.

Mrs. Berdos also informed the committee that Professional Development is free to us for the life of the program. Houghton-Mifflin will tailor it to whatever we need. They have a Level One Institute and also a Level Two Institute. Again, this is provided to teachers in our district at no cost to us. They will offer the same training to parents as well at no cost. Lastly, Mrs. Berdos shared many positive parent comments with the committee. She said the comments speak for themselves. She pointed out that the *Math Expressions* program is difficult and challenging and raises the bar for our students. She said teachers find the program to be very comprehensive, with good logical pacing, good retaining elements, wonderful manipulatives and great differentiation.

Lastly, Dr. Tsankova commented on Algebra, calling it the "pipeline to college". She said Algebra shouldn't be the "shock" of the upper levels. She commended this program for familiarizes students with the terminology of Algebra at a very young age. Dr. Tsankova said *Math Expressions* helps children take ownership of mathematics. Mrs. Berdos concluded by recommending that the school district adopt the *Math Expressions* program for Grades 1 through 5.

Chairman O'Neil thanked Mrs. Berdos for taking the time to present this program. He said it as an outstanding presentation, and that the piloting of the program was phenomenal. Mr. O'Neil said he was so glad Mrs. Berdos put together such a great presentation so that the entire community could benefit and learn from it. He also thanked Dr. Tsankova for coming. Mr. Ward added that the *Math Expressions* programs works very well with the program used in the upper grade levels. He also commended the *Math Expressions* program for teaching students to think, and said Mrs. Berdos should be commended for the work she has done. Mrs. Werner thanked all of the teachers for all of their dedication and hard work. Mr. Golota expressed his faith in the teachers and their knowledge of what works. He said if the teachers are recommending this program so highly, the committee ought to approve it tonight. Chairman O'Neil concurred and again thanked Mrs. Berdos for her outstanding presentation.

On a motion by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. McManus, the committee unanimously voted to approve the adoption of the *Math Expressions* program by Houghton-Mifflin for Grades 1 through 5.

School Improvement Plans:

Mrs. Linda Ashley, Principal of the L. G. Nourse School, Mrs. Mary Brown, Principal of the J. C. Solmonese School, and Mr. Roger Parent, Principal of Norton Middle School were all on hand to present their School Improvement Plans. Dr. Ansay mentioned that the School Improvement Plans mirror the District's Improvement Plan. She further explained that Dr. George Ladd from Boston College worked closely with each of the building principals to ensure that the School Improvement Plans were not only data driven, but focused on improving student achievement.

On a motion by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. Werner, the committee voted 4-1 to accept the School Improvement Plan for the L. G. Nourse School. Mr. Mackie abstained from the vote. On a motion by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mr. Golota, the committee voted 4-1 to accept the School Improvement Plan for the J. C. Solmonese School. Mr. Mackie abstained from the vote. On a motion by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. Werner, the committee voted 4-1 to accept the School Improvement Plan for Norton Middle School. Mr. Mackie abstained from the vote.

Proposed Handbook Changes: Norton Middle School:

Mr. Parent, Principal of Norton Middle School, discussed the handbook changes he is proposing. The committee was provided with a summary of the changes proposed. Chairman O'Neil explained that the committee did not need to approve the handbook changes, but he thanked Mr. Parent for presenting them to the committee.

New Daily Schedule: Norton High School:

Mr. Raymond Dewar, Principal of Norton High School, was present to answer any questions regarding the new daily schedule he is proposing for Norton High School. In the interest of time, Mr. Dewar postponed the presentation of his School Improvement Plan for Norton High School. He discussed "Block Scheduling" and explained it is a schedule they are comfortable with at the high school. Chairman O'Neil explained that a schedule change does not involve a curriculum or staff change. Therefore, he said the change would not require a vote by the committee.

New Summer Reading List: Norton High School:

Mr. Dewar presented the committee with the summer reading list for Norton High School which was compiled by subject and grade. He commented that each department came up with some very good choices. He said the English Department did a lot of renovation of their reading list. Mr. Dewar remarked that he is very excited about the reading list and thinks it is one of the best in the state. Mr. Dewar emphasized that there are some truly great books on the list.

Proposed Change in Graduation Requirements - Norton High School:

Mr. Dewar explained the changes in graduation requirements he is proposing and the rationale for the changes. He explained that these changes would take effect with the

Class of 2011. Mr. Dewar explained that currently students are required to earn a minimum of 112 credits to graduate. He would like to change that figure to 125. Mr. Dewar said he does not believe any student will be negatively affected by this change. He said he does not expect the number of drop outs would increase as a result of this change. On a motion by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. Werner, the committee unanimously voted to approve the proposed change in graduation requirements at Norton High School.

School Building Authority Statement:

Chairman O'Neil postponed the discussion of this item until the next meeting of the Norton School Committee. He explained that a vote will be required to authorize the Superintendent to submit this Statement of Interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority for the renovation and construction of Norton High School. The deadline to submit the Statement of Interest is July 31, 2007.

User Fees:

Chairman O'Neil postponed the discussion of User Fees.

Policy - Surveillance Cameras:

Chairman O'Neil postponed the discussion of a Surveillance Camera Policy.

School Liaison Assignments:

Dr. Ansay explained that each School Committee member is assigned a specific school to represent. According to Dr. Ansay, members customarily attend PTA meetings at the school they are assigned to, when they are available. Mr. Mackie was assigned as the liaison to Norton High School. Mrs. McManus was assigned as the liaison to Norton Middle School. Mr. Golota was assigned as the liaison to the H.A. Yelle School. Mr. O'Neil was assigned as the liaison to the J.C. Solmonese School. Mrs. Werner was assigned as the liaison to the L.G. Nourse School.

Other:

Dr. Ansay thanked Roche Brothers Supermarket for donating \$5,000 to the school department. She explained that the donation would be used to purchase student planners and a changeable electronic sign for the high school.

She also asked the committee to vote on declaring a piece of special education equipment as surplus. Dr. Ansay explained the this particular student is aging out of the program and could really use this particular piece of equipment. She said it has no value to the school department, and if it is declared to be surplus, the family can purchase it for \$1.00. On a motion by Mr. Mackie, seconded by Mrs. McManus, the committee unanimously voted to declare that piece of special education equipment as surplus.

Dr. Ansay also recognized Miss Tanya Benoit, Biology teacher at Norton High School, who recently received a prestigious Bio-tech award. She also commended the organizers

of the pre-prom mock accident staged at the high school, and publicly thanked Fire Chief Richard Gomes and the entire Norton Fire Department for their efforts.

It was also necessary for the committee to repeat the votes taken at the prior meeting on April 30th. The new committee members, Mr. Andrew Mackie and Mrs. Beth McManus, had not been officially sworn in at the time of those votes. All votes taken on April 30th were retaken. All members voted the same, except for the final vote taken on April 30th. Mr. Mackie abstained from that vote this time.

Personnel:

Retirements:

Mrs. Gloria Solomon, LGN Ed. Assistant, effective June 19, 2007 after 18 years of service.

Mrs. Diane Dennis, HAY Cook, effective June 19, 2007, after 19 years of service.

Resignation:

Mrs. Linda Ashley, LGN Principal, effective June 25, 2007.

Leaves of Absence:

Mrs. Julie Gill-Dooley, JCS Reading Teacher, effective October 1, 2007 to February 1, 2008.

Mrs. Jennifer Ryan, JCS Grade 3 Teacher, effective October 29, 2007 to March 17, 2008.

Appointments:

Mrs. Sharon Roberts, Director of Curriculum & Instruction (.5) effective 2007-2008.

Mrs. Marjorie Bettencourt, LGN Assistant Secretary, effective May 14, 2007.

Mrs. Margaret Gentili, Director of Norton Summer School Program for 2007.

Adjournment:

On a motion by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mrs. McManus, the committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 10:20 pm.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

Monday, June 4, 2007, 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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