

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Norton, Massachusetts

MEETING MINUTES

Date of School Committee Meeting: November 19, 2007

Location: Library, Norton Middle School

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

Call to Order:

Chairman O'Neil called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Review and Approval of Minutes of Prior Meetings:

On a motion by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. Werner, the committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes of the prior meeting held on November 5, 2007 at Norton Middle School.

MCAS Presentation by Principals:

Mr. Roger Parent, Mrs. Lisa Farrell, and Mrs. Danielle Klingaman were present to give a brief overview of the MCAS results for their respective schools. Their reports outlined their major concerns and accomplishments by grade level and subject.

According to Mrs. Farrell, the Henri A. Yelle School met the target for Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) this year. Her greatest concern remains the need to continue that progress. Mrs. Farrell gave the committee some examples of the questions asked on the MCAS test. She pointed out that the vocabulary used in these questions sometimes makes them difficult to understand. According to Mrs. Farrell, the students often don't understand the question being asked. She emphasized that students can do better on the test if they understand the vocabulary.

Mrs. Farrell announced that "MCAS Academy" and "Homework Heroes" will both continue at the Yelle School. Mr. Mackie commended Mrs. Farrell for the huge improvements in the MCAS scores at the Yelle School. He described the scores as fantastic progress, and encouraged Mrs. Farrell to continue to strive for improvements, particularly in the Grade 4 math scores. Mr. Mackie recommended remedial work on math facts.

Mrs. Farrell commended the teachers at the Yelle School. She explained that she has spoken a great deal with the teachers, and she gives them a lot of credit. According to Mrs. Farrell, the teachers know exactly where their students are, and where they are moving toward. Mrs. Werner also commended Mrs. Farrell on a job well done.

According to Mr. O'Neil, the Yelle School has been taken off of the "Warning" status regarding MCAS scores. He explained that Mrs. Farrell had a huge mountain to climb when she stepped in, and commended her on the drastic improvements she has made.

According to Mrs. Klingaman, the L. G. Nourse School is focusing on improvement in "Open Response" skills in English Language Arts. She said the teachers are trying to provide practice opportunities for this skill all year long. In terms of Math MCAS scores, Mrs. Klingaman reported that "Proficient" rankings at LGN decreased, while "Needs Improvement" rankings at LGN increased. She said it will be important to determine why this happened. She emphasized that the most important thing we can do is talk to our teachers, and find out what our students are having trouble with. She also said that kids don't have a lot of stamina for testing in Math. She explained that additional Math assessment will be conducted this year, in addition to the testing included in the *Math Expressions* program.

Mrs. Klingaman explained that parents are encouraged to go to the *Math Expressions* web site to review the math vocabulary. She also pointed out that the computer program *Fast Math* has been a great tool. She said she firmly believes the Math scores will get better over time, as the teachers and students become more familiar with the new program. She explained that she feels very positive overall. According to Mrs. Klingaman, she and the LGN teachers have been talking all year about improving the Math scores. She is hopeful the scores will improve a lot, and pointed out that Math and Reading go hand in hand.

According to Mr. Parent, there is some good news to tell about MCAS scores at Norton Middle School. He explained that for the first time in quite a while, the middle school made Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in Math. He said that this year the improvement was above target in Math. Mr. Parent discussed the need to make AYP next year also, in order to be taken off of "Corrective Action". He said he believes the middle school is headed in the right direction, and is very happy with what has been done.

Mr. Mackie pointed out that the Science MCAS scores at the middle score are exceptionally weak. He suggested the Science Department could need a lot of professional development. Mrs. Werner disputed this point. She explained how important it is to compare our own scores with the state scores. According to Mrs. Werner, the state Science scores reveal how difficult this test really is across the board. Mr. Mackie agreed with Mrs. Werner and said she made a good point. Mr. O'Neil pointed out that we should compare our scores to those of communities which are similar to Norton.

Mrs. Werner emphasized that what we expect from children in Math today is far removed and much harder than what we used to expect. She said she is concerned we may be teaching kids concepts they are not developmentally ready for. According to Mrs. Werner, the same is true for Science. She said little children love Science. She said Science should be fun, and students should not hate Science. Mr. O'Neil suggested it may be time to go back and review the new Science program recently adopted. Dr. Ansay concurred, and said it may be time to review the Science Curriculum Maps.

Mr. O'Neil congratulated Mr. Parent on the success of his MCAS scores at the middle school. Mr. Mackie also commended Mr. Parent and compared his success to stopping an ocean liner. He said now that the ocean liner has stopped, it must be turned around. Mr. Mackie suggested that a lot of effort will be needed. He encouraged Mr. Parent and the middle school staff to stay focused on continued improvement.

Discussion of Town Joint Budget Meeting:

Mrs. Werner and Mrs. McManus, School Committee representatives to this committee, provided an update. Mrs. McManus explained that Mr. James Purcell, Town Administrator, talked mostly about insurance at the Town Joint Budget Meeting. She said that many different options are being explored, and every department has been given a questionnaire to complete. Mrs. Werner explained that the town has no money, and it appears that revenue will be going down. She said the town expects to have less money next year because of the economy, and that the picture is very bleak.

Other Business:

Dr. Ansay reminded everyone of the Thanksgiving Day football game between Norton and Bellingham. She encouraged all to come and watch the game. Dr. Ansay also congratulated the Norton High School Boys' Soccer Team on their extraordinary season. She said she is very proud of all they were able to accomplish.

PERSONNEL:

Retirement:

Mrs. Karen Boucher, NHS Mathematics Teacher, effective December 21, 2007 after 35 years of service to the students of Norton.

Leave of Absence:

Mrs. Kristen Walsh, LGN Grade 1 Teacher, effective April 7 through June, 2008.

Appointments:

Mrs. Jennifer Smith, NMS ALP Teacher, effective November 19, 2007.

Mrs. Alice Newman, JCS Kindergarten Teacher, effective November 15, 2007.

Mrs. Doreen Browne, NHS Nurse (full-time), effective immediately.

Adjournment to Executive Session:

On a motion by Mrs. McManus, seconded by Mr. Golota, on a roll call vote, the committee unanimously voted to adjourn to Executive Session at 8:26 pm.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

Monday, December 3, 2007, 6:30 P.M., J.C. Solmonese School Library.