

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, June 15, 2004

Members Present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Grassi, Mr. Harding, Mr. Lummis, Mr. McGovern, Ms. Walser,
Mayor Sullivan

Mr. Harding in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m.

Presentation of the Records: None

Public Comment on School Committee Agenda

The following individuals were heard:

- Eileen Span, Gray St., re Intensive Studies Program (ISP)
- Sophie Karasek, Student, Cogswell Ave. re ISP waiting list

On a motion by Mr. Grassi, it was voted to closed public comment.

Reports and/or Comments from Student School Committee Members: None

Reconsideration of Votes Taken at Previous Meeting: None

Unfinished Business

The Members passed over unfinished business.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to suspend the Rules to allow Mr. Karasek to speak. Robert Karasek was heard in favor of opening a second ISP class.

The Chair turned the meeting over to the Superintendent for updates on state test results and promotion/retention policy. The Superintendent said that third grade reading and CRLS results have been received and other results will not be received until August. Maryann MacDonald pointed out that there was a significant increase in the percentage of CRLS students achieving competency determination from last year's juniors (62%) to this year's seniors (84%). Ms. MacDonald presented the following summary of the preliminary results from the 2003-2004 Grade 3 MCAS Reading Test, including all third graders with the exception of five students who took the Alternate Assessment (results from the Alternate Assessment will be available in September):

- % Passing & Proficient
- District and State Results
- Passing & Proficient by Race/Ethnicity
- Passing & Proficient - Lunch & SPED
- Passing & Proficient by School

Mayor Sullivan in the Chair.

The Superintendent and Ms. MacDonald responded to Members' questions/comments/concerns:

- How does the Alternate Assessment factor into scores
- How do we sustain the increase in scores
- Let students and families know that this is major news in education
- What is the difference between passing and proficient
- What are the red flags the system should pay attention to
- Concerned with how we are educating our Black and Hispanic students
- The gap between Black and Hispanic and White students is alarming
- Will passing or proficient come out on the benchmarks
- Need to see results disaggregated by school
- Will we be able to measure the level of improvement for individual students
- In the future, use average proficiency index to compare our schools with others
- We will have a serious challenge if the State increases MCAS passing requirements
- Include numbers rather than percentages in reports where possible
- It will be difficult to make comparisons by grade level if classes are under 20
- Who makes the decision on which students are granted the Alternate Assessment

The Members thanked the Superintendent and Ms. MacDonald for the presentation and commended the staff, teachers, students, and families on the improvement in scores.

The Superintendent asked Dr. Turk to give an overview of services in place this school year to support the promotion/retention policy. Dr. Turk read the following key recommendations of the policy:

- The Cambridge School Committee recognizes that each child develops socially, emotionally, and intellectually at a rate unique to that child and that each child must be afforded the opportunity to progress continually through school community environments that meet their individual needs. A student who struggles to be successful in school may advance to the next grade when in the judgment of the principal, based upon input from school staff and parent/guardian, advancement is in the best interest of the student.
- Students are expected to progress through the grade levels. When a student struggles to meet grade-level standards, school staff, students, and parents/guardians will work together to customize support services to help the student succeed. Retention should be considered a last resort and will take place only after very careful consideration and implementation of a retention intervention plan. With the exception of kindergarten students who due to age may remain in the same grade for a second year a student may be retained no more than once prior to entering high school. Decisions made regarding students with IEP's must be consistent with the IEP team findings. The decision to retain a student shall be made by the Building Principal K-12, in consultation with appropriate staff members and parents/guardians. At the elementary level, should the parent/guardian disagree with the principal's decision, the principal will write a letter to be placed in the student's cumulative folder attesting to the recommendation of the principal while allowing the parent/guardian to have the final decision. At the secondary level, the accrual of appropriate credits determines the student's status of grade enrollment unless otherwise determined by the IEP team findings.
- No student who has completed a grade successfully shall be retained or allowed to repeat a grade in order to improve his/her ability or lengthen his/her eligibility to participate in extra-curricular athletic programs.
- The Superintendent shall establish administrative guidelines to implement this policy and establish administrative procedures that are to be followed by teachers when retention of the student is considered.

At the request of Mr. Grassi, it was agreed to postpone the presentation to give Members time to read the document.

New Business

Ms. Walser moved that items #04-088 through #04-092 be placed on the calendar. #04-086, Approval of Home School Application for School Year 2003-2004, is withdrawn at the request of the Superintendent, and placed on file. On a motion by Ms. Walser, on the following roll call, items #04-081 through #04-087, were adopted, as follows:

#04-081, Cambridge Public Schools Vending Machine Policy: that the School Committee accept and adopt the Vending Machine Policy for the Cambridge Public Schools.

#04-082, Cambridge Public Schools Toxic Storage Policy: that the School Committee accept and adopt the Toxic Storage Policy for the Cambridge Public Schools.

#04-083, 2004-2005 State School Choice Program - Recommendation for Non-Participation: that the School Committee vote not to participate in the Statewide School Choice Program for school year 2004-2005, for the following reasons:

1. The need to maintain the quality and integrity of the Cambridge Program of Controlled Choice
2. The need to maintain flexibility for appropriately-sized classrooms in the public schools.

#04-084, Approval of Settlement of Petition Pending Before American Arbitration Association: that the School Committee approve the Superintendent's recommendation relative to the settlement of a pending matter before the American Arbitration Association in accordance with WR04-38.

#04-085, Transfer to Capital Projects Budget: that the School Committee approve a request to the City Manager and the City Council for the transfer of an amount, currently estimated at \$266,110 but subject to adjustment by the state, from the School Department's end-of-year balances to the School Capital Projects budget, such balance resulting from State Department of Revenue requirements for accounting procedures relating to the Special Education "Circuit-Breaker" reimbursement 4th quarter payment to be received in July or August, 2004.

Further, based upon discussions with the City Manager and City financial staff, the transfer is to be made from the City "free cash account" in September 2004, once the exact amount of the circuit-breaker 4th quarter reimbursement is known.

#04-087, Grant Award: that the School Committee accept and approve the grant award in the amount and for the period indicated:

1. FY04-05 Technology-Enhanced Learning in Science, project/grant SC05783, for the period June 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005, in the amount of \$40,000. Technology-Enhanced Learning in Science grant is to study how instructional technology can benefit teaching and learning in science. The Cambridge Public Schools was named one of the six participating school districts in the TELS project. The grant will fund training for middle grade and high school science teachers in the TELS science curriculum software modules, and for lead teacher training.

Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. Harding YEA, Mr. Lummis YEA, Mayor Sullivan YEA.

Late Orders

On a motion by Mr. Harding, it was voted unanimously that the School Committee send a Resolution to Leslie Kimbrough, Dean of School 4, congratulating him on his retirement.

On a motion by Mr. Lummis, it was voted unanimously that the School Committee send letters of thanks to Mary Wong, Cambridge Kids' Council, and to the students who participated in the "1st Annual Cambridge Middle School Youth Summit" held on June 11: Billy Andre, Elie Chery, Joas Desravines, Kenny Desravines, Juliana Maynard, Nephtaly Paul, Lidija Ristic, Jessica Scotland, Katie Shetterly, Meggie Shurcliff, Rehan Siddiqui, Sumbul Siddiqui, and Hashim Siraji. Further, that the Superintendent plan a presentation to the School Committee in the fall.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, it was voted unanimously that the School Committee send a letter of congratulations to the members of the CRLS Lady Falcons girls' softball team for having a very successful season: Lauren McAuliffe (Co-Captain), Helen Sullivan (Co-Captain), Rachel Sheketoff (2004 Class Valedictorian), Jess Ferreira, Dominequica Anderson, Grace Laubacher, Ashlee Tomczak, Krista Kelley, Kira Montagno, Justine Bonitatibus, Lilly Benham, Jess Bermudez, Kristin McManus, Erikah Gethers, Brianna Yearwood, Sade Johnson, and Kelly Doherty.

On a motion by Mr. McGovern, it was voted unanimously that the School Committee send letters of congratulations to the CRLS Athletic Department, including the track team, tennis teams, baseball team, volleyball team, and softball team.

On a motion by Mr. Harding, it was voted unanimously that the School Committee send a letter of congratulations to Alan Price for a job well done on the completion of his book *"Ready to Lead"*.

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Grassi, it was voted to adjourn (6:00 p.m.).

Adjourned
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw
Executive Secretary to the School Committee