

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Special Informal Meeting

Tuesday, January 20, 2004

Called by Mayor Michael A. Sullivan, in accordance with Chapter I, Section 3, of the Rules of the School Committee for the purpose of a workshop on the Promotion/Retention Policy.

Members Present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Grassi, Mr. Harding, Mr. Price, Ms. Turkel, Ms. Walser, Mayor Sullivan
Mayor Sullivan in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

The Chair turned the meeting over to the Superintendent. The Superintendent walked Members through the following Agenda:

- Introduction Thomas Fowler-Finn
- Speaker Gary Orfield, Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education
- Comments Thomas Fowler-Finn
- Question/Answer Period School Committee Member

The Superintendent introduced Dr. Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent, who gave an overview of the process used in developing the promotion/retention policy and guidelines. Dr. Orfield was heard regarding multidimensional, sensitive and thoughtful ways to deal with promotion and retention.

The Superintendent and his Team responded to Members' questions and comments:

- Research shows that retention can be detrimental
- What happened to the 70 students who did not pass MCAS
- How does a teacher teach who consistently get kids who are not learning at any level
- Need standards that say a student will reach a certain benchmark before a child moves on
- How is the issue being addressed of students arriving at the high school who cannot read
- There are evils around retention and there are evils around social promotion
- What interventions work for children not achieving at grade level
- Need a middle school summer program
- Need successful interventions in middle school
- How is everyone brought together to make successful interventions
- Are there resources available to start a pilot program this summer
- How can the recommendation be infused with supports for children
- Rename intervention checklist
- How much emphasis should be placed on summer school
- At what grade level do students who are retained drop out
- Is there a safety net when supports and benchmarks are in place
- Allow flexibility in schedules to allow for collaboration
- Some students who need summer school will not be able to go for lack of resources
- Unsure whether model will work in all schools

The Members thanked the Superintendent and Dr. Orfield for the presentation.

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Mr. Lummis, it was voted to adjourn (8:30 p.m.).

Adjourned
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw
Executive Secretary to the School Committee