

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Special Informal Meeting

Thursday, March 20, 2003

Called by Mayor Michael A. Sullivan, in accordance with Chapter I, Section 3, of the Rules of the School Committee for 7:00 p.m., for the purpose of a workshop on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) at the secondary level.

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 7:15 p.m.

The Chair turned the meeting over to the Superintendent. The Superintendent made opening remarks and introduced Maryann MacDonald, Executive Director of Student Achievement and Accountability.

Ms. MacDonald introduced Barbara Black, Director of Development and Assessment; Sybil Knight, CRLS Principal; and Paul Toner, CTA President, who walked Members through the following:

- Status of Senior Class 2003
- Supports/Options for Students
- Plan for CRLS
- Plan for K-12 including CTA Recommendations

Mayor Sullivan recognized and welcomed Councilor Simmons, George Luse and Buddy Stevens from the Massachusetts Teachers Association.

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

- Need clarity on appeal process
- Provide MCAS support during class time
- Whose responsibility is it to insure students have appropriate classes
- What will happen to student who passes local requirement but not MCAS
- What is the transition for a senior who fails MCAS
- Unacceptable that 64% of students have been in our system over five years and 40% for 12 years
- Need to insure that teachers know that there are students who are on ed plans
- What is a real extended day program
- There is too much accountability placed on students - accountability needs to be shared
- How long after a student's class graduates can we offer them services
- Does a student have the option of doing a 5th year of high school
- What's the difference between our figures and what the newspaper reported
- Publicize the fact that our 84% pass rate is higher than the State
- Why aren't the two students who boycotted showing up
- How many students are within four points
- How many drop outs did we have
- What does "we are currently integrating MCAS supports into our curriculum" mean
- Does disproportionate number of minorities lend itself to legal problems
- Put data on spread sheet and post on the web
- Why do we have a high stakes test where validity will not be proven for years out
- What are intentions around graduation ceremony
- The real issue is the achievement gap
- It is unacceptable that 110 children have not passed

Ms. Turkel in the Chair.

- When does K-12 next steps get implemented
- When is promotion policy going to happen
- Is there an action plan to respond to children who are not achieving
- What is the accountability plan
- Members need to speak with one voice on the importance of MCAS
- Develop a Cambridge assessment model with high expectations to put up against MCAS
- Teachers need to be involved in the creation of learning expectations
- Pass learning expectations down to parents to empower them

The Chair thanked the Superintendent and her team for a very well designed presentation.

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Mr. Price, it was voted to adjourn (9:40 p.m.).

Adjourned
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw
Executive Secretary to the School Committee