

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, July 18, 2006

Members Present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Grassi, Mr. Harding, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Schuster, Ms. Walser,
Mayor Reeves

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:20 p.m.

Presentation of the Records of Previous Meeting

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to accept the Minutes of the following meetings as presented:

- Regular Meeting - June 27, 2006
- Special Meeting - June 28, 2006
- Special Informal Meeting - February 28, 2006

Public Testimony on School Committee Agenda

The following individual was heard:

- Elie Yarden, Pleasant St. re green building resolution

On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to close public testimony.

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

Reconsideration of Votes Taken at Previous Meeting: None

Unfinished Business

The Members voted to pass over all Unfinished Business.

New Business

The Chair recognized Deputy Superintendent Turk who presented the following recommendations from the Report Card Task Force:

1. Baseline system for report cards & progress reports and a consistent schedule for distribution:
 - a. The baseline system for discussing and reporting student performance at the K-8 level should include a three-pronged approach to communication with families: (1) A September Open House, (2) Conferences Including Accompanying Progress Reports to be Held During November and April, and (3) Formal Report Cards to be Distributed in January and June. Please Note: This model does not in any way preclude a school from implementing additional home-school communications opportunities.
2. Development of a grade-by-grade curriculum guide for parents:

The grade-by-grade curriculum guide should:

- a. Include all content areas
- b. Indicate the Power Standards for each grade level based on the Massachusetts Frameworks and Cambridge Learning Expectations
- c. Include "helpful hints" for families to support students at home
- d. Be reader friendly
- e. Be available at the Family Resource Center

The Superintendent and Dr. Turk responded to some of the following Members' questions, comments and concerns:

- Is implementation scheduled for September 2007
- What does "power standards" mean
- Will the curriculum guide show what is taking place during the school year or what is going to happen
- What is the current practice of discussing assessments with families
- Would assessment be part of the discussion during parent conferences
- Is this task force not recommending content guidelines
- How different will this process be for some schools
- If this recommendation is adopted will some schools abandon a third report card
- Is there any concern that this might result in less communication with students
- The process used to get feedback was very healthy and inclusive
- Would like to see report cards and progress reports available on line
- Look at a different system for middle schools
- Emphasize transition from K-5 to middle school
- Put the history of each student on the 8th grade report card
- Is it possible that we could still have 64 different report cards
- Disappointed that the discussion around the number of report cards was avoided
- Looking for a balance and happy medium on the number of report cards
- What is the interpretation of why there was no agreement on the number of report cards
- The more report cards the better
- Would like to see a different report card every year
- Question whether the investment of time should be put into report cards
- Keep eye on how we communicate with parents
- Do not know of any high-level district across the country that has this many report cards
- Look at other successful districts
- The motion did not ask for a reduction in report cards, nor did it ask for a task force on report cards
- What is the possibility that the lowest scoring schools are using the worse report card
- If this were educationally sound, other districts would be doing it
- We should look at what pilot and charter schools are doing
- We need to work as a team to get this right

The Chair thanked Dr. Turk for the presentation.

Mr. Fantini moved, seconded by Mr. Harding, for adoption of items #06-116, through #06-123. Ms. Nolan removed #06-123. Mr. Grassi removed #06-119. Mr. Schuster removed #06-118. Mr. Harding removed #06-120. On the following roll call, the remaining items were adopted:

#06-116, Contract Award, Transportation for Students Placed at Schools for Children: that the School Committee award a contract to the following vendor for transportation for students placed at Schools for Children, funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget, Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

1. Schools for Children, Inc., 20 Academy St., Arlington, in the amount of \$201,938, for the period July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007.

#06-117, Grant Awards: that the School Committee accept and approve the Grant Awards in the amounts and for the periods indicated:

1. Even Start Family Literacy, for the period June 23, 2006 to September 30, 2006, in the amount of \$5,392.00, proj./grant SC06825. These funds will be used to focus on the development and initial implementation of strategic plans to incorporate family literacy programming in schools to support children's academic success. Additional funding will be used for local planning sessions with Even Start staff, parents, and community partners, curriculum and material development, and training sessions.
2. Popplestone Foundation, for the period June 28, 2006 to June 30, 2007, in the amount of \$92,712.00, proj./grant SC07695. This is a foundation grant that is intended to support music teacher salary to continue teaching grades K-2 at the Peabody School. Funds will also be used to purchase musical instruments.
3. 21st Century Community Learning, for the period June 27, 2006 to September 30, 2006, in the amount of \$2,500.00, proj./grant SC07810. This program will support learning goals to include more specific connections to the math frameworks, development of extension activities that build in additional practice with the concepts, further development of the music teaching elements, and specific group management and peer leadership elements based on the Algebra Project's Young People's Project Model.
4. Cambridge Savings Charitable Foundation, Inc., for the period May 31, 2006 to June 30, 2007, in the amount of \$2,500.00, proj./grant SC07826. These funds will be used to purchase educational software for students at the King School.
5. Expanded Learning Time, for the period July 1, 2006 to August 31, 2006, in the amount of \$13,750.00, proj./grant SC07827. The purpose of this is to augment the current Expanded Learning Time grant to provide funding for additional meeting time for staff to prepare for fall implementation.
6. Support to High Need Schools, for the period July 1, 2006 to August 31, 2006, in the amount of \$25,000.00, proj./grant SC07828. The purpose of this grant is to provide support for school improvement initiatives for the Tobin School over the summer.

#06-121, Motion by Ms. Walser that the School Committee and the Superintendent set up a series of community forums on the Achievement Gap to discuss the various definitions, contributing factors and promising strategies involving families, schools, and the entire community.

#06-122, Motion by Ms. Walser that the School Committee convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy for contract negotiations with non-union personnel as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining and/or litigation position of the School Committee.

Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. Harding YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Mayor Reeves YEA.

Non-Consent Business

Discussion took place around recess being used as a punishment and asked that the Superintendent include in the policy that recess not be banned for remedial or behavioral issues. The Superintendent was heard. On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted to refer **#06-118, Approval of Cambridge Public Schools Wellness Policy**, to a Second Reading: that the School Committee approve the Wellness Policy for the Cambridge Public Schools as detailed in the document.

Ms. Nolan was heard in support of the following motion. Members discussed the motion. The Superintendent asked Mr. Maloney to speak to the motion. Mr. Maloney was heard. Mr. Grassi moved to Calendar **#06-119, Joint motion by Ms. Nolan and Mr. Schuster**, That WHEREAS: The public schools have a primary mission of education, and one of the largest challenges that will face coming generations

is the shift from a fossil fuel to a renewable and sustainable economy, in support of what will be required of these students, the district resolves to educate and model a vision for a sustainable future; and WHEREAS: Cambridge as a city has made a commitment to environmental leadership, including adopting a Climate Protection Plan, which commits the city to high performing buildings and sustainability principles; and

WHEREAS: Many sustainability initiatives lead to healthier environments, higher productivity and long term financial benefits, and green building and construction is often cost effective with operating cost savings outweigh initial capital costs; and

WHEREAS: Other Cambridge educational institutions, including Harvard, MIT and Lesley University have all shown leadership in the area of environmental stewardship, energy efficiency and green building; now, therefore, be it

ORDERED: That all school projects involving construction, maintenance and repair, be required to consider and include environmentally responsible materials, options, and processes; and BE IT FURTHER

ORDERED: That all School Committee related building and construction and repair projects be performed to high environmental standards and include considerations of natural healthy indoor environments as well as sustainability in design and use of materials; and BE IT FURTHER

ORDERED: That the energy efficiency of all buildings be assessed and a plan developed to improve the efficiency of operations; and BE IT FURTHER

ORDERED: That the Superintendent is directed to convene an Environmental Task Force, comprised of staff, community members, School Committee members and students, to establish, consider, oversee, and monitor environmental policies related to the operation of the Cambridge Public Schools. This group would work closely with CPS staff charged with managing any related programs.

Mr. Harding asked Mayor Reeves to speak to the following motion. Mayor Reeves was heard.

Ms. Walser raised a question on the length and cost of the contract. On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Mr. Fantini, on the following roll call, it was voted to adopt **#06-120, Motion by Mayor Reeves** that the School Committee engage an attorney for the purpose of contract negotiations and personnel matters as needed: Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. Harding YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Mayor Reeves YEA.

Discussion took place regarding the EQA Report and the School Committee's goals for closing the achievement gap for minority students in the district. Mr. Grassi moved that the following be placed on the Calendar: **#06-123, Motion by Ms. Nolan** that the School Committee go on record expressing concern over the increased gap in achievement as outlined in the recent Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) draft report.

On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to suspend the Rules to bring forward Supplemental Recommendation **#06-124, Approval of Family Liaison Contract**. On the following roll call, it was voted to adopt **#06-124, Approval of Family Liaison Contract**, as follows: that the School Committee approve the Memorandum of Agreement for a collective bargaining agreement between the Cambridge Liaisons Invested in Families and Education (AFSCME) and the Cambridge School Committee for the period September 1, 2006 through August 31, 2009.

The agreement was reached by the negotiating teams and has been ratified by the members of the bargaining unit. The agreement includes the following:

- Three-year agreement: 9/1/06 - 8/31/09
- Salary schedule increases:
 - Year 1 (FY06-07) - 2% increase effective February 1, 2007
 - Year 2 (FY07-08) - 2% increase effective February 1, 2008
 - Year 3 (FY08-09) - 2.9% increase effective July 1, 2008
- One-time Bonus Payment: \$500 per employee, payable in year 1 in December 2006.
- Delete references to Citywide Family Coordinator in contract language.
- Delete language on Annual Family Involvement Forum and Family Resource Center Advisory

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to suspend the Rules to extend the meeting past 10:00 p.m.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, it was voted to adjourn (10:40 p.m.).

Adjourned
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw
Executive Secretary to the School Committee