

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Special Meeting

Tuesday, October 10, 2006

Called for the purpose of a TERC in-service for the School Committee, and presentations on Affirmative Action and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

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

Mayor Reeves in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. and turned the meeting over to the Superintendent. The Superintendent presented Barbara Van Sickle, Director of Student Achievement and Curriculum, who introduced Tobin School Math Coach Barbara Fox, M.L. King School Math Coach Monica Leon, and K-12 Math Curriculum Coordinator Nancy McLaughlin. Ms. Van Sickle explained that the role of a Math Coach and Literacy Coordinators is to help teachers improve what they know and can do. The Math Coaches engaged the Members in a tiling exercise that demonstrated the richness of the math curriculum, and walked them through a slide presentation, "Algebraic Thinking in Elementary and Middle School":

- Cambridge Curriculum
- Why an Algebra Problem
- Tiling Problem
- Essential Algebra in Tiling Problem
- Connection to Curriculum and Student Achievement

Discussion took place around the exercise and curriculum. The Superintendent and presenters responded to some of the following questions and comments raised by Members:

- Impressed with students' engagement with Smart Boards - do all schools have them
- Are we on the path to seeing a big breakthrough in math
- What role does the Math Curriculum Coordinator play in hiring teachers
- Are the math teachers we are hiring extraordinarily qualified to teach our children
- We should do this every couple of months in other curriculum areas

The Chair thanked the Superintendent and staff and moved to the Affirmative Action Report. The Superintendent introduced Kahriss McLaughlin, Affirmative Action Officer, and Barbara Allen, Executive Director, Human Resources. Dr. McLaughlin gave an overview of the Annual Affirmative Action Report including:

- Current Issues
- Trends
- Goals
- Recruitment Activities
- Candidate Sourcing and Support
- Collaboration & Accountability
- Action Plan

Members raised the following questions, comments and concerns:

- What is the goal for women in top administration – there has been no progress since 2001
- Is there a district that we can learn from
- Boston Principals are almost 50% - Cambridge has seen no jump
- If the number of applicants has doubled and the pool remained the same, why hasn't the percentage of people we hired doubled
- Reach out to programs like Summerbridge
- It is important to make the distinction between affirmative action and equal opportunity
- What are the plans to meet our goal
- Affirmative action needs to be a district goal
- Is there an explanation for the large number of assistant principals and deans
- What are we going to do now that is different from the past – we need to be in a pro-active role
- We need to link our students to those colleges that are involved with us
- We need to be creative in retaining our own students
- What have trips to the Historically Black Colleges (HBCUs) produced
- How many people of color have been hired as a result of the Aspiring Leaders Program
- What is the Future Teachers Club at CRLS and what does it do
- What teaching colleges do we have a relationship with
- Do we have scholarship agreements with any local colleges
- Would it make sense to develop a program for minority students to get scholarships
- Everybody needs to buy into affirmative action
- How do we know if we are doing good or bad compared to the top 10 districts
- Ask colleges and universities how we can meet our goal in this area
- Do we need to be bolder in our hiring approach
- Principals need to develop their own affirmative action plan and have goals
- Recruiting is a two-way street – students are going where they want to
- When did the on-line application start and was it helpful
- Hiring committees need to be diverse and understand the goal is to diversify staff
- Does the Affirmative Action Officer sit on hiring committees
- We do not want schools choosing people just to be choosing
- Hope that some of the system changes that were made will reap some fruit
- What will move this district forward in a positive way
- Include minorities on hiring committees
- What is the perception of the CPS and are we doing anything to make it more appealing
- What are the new avenues we are using to recruit
- Look at what the City can do to help with housing, incentives, etc.
- Why do some schools do better than others
- Concerned with the lack of Black and Asian males in our system
- We do not have any black male Principals
- Does not see anything that has been proposed to change this discussion next year
- School Committee should leave here with a plan for what we are going to do
- Get a class of graduate students to devise a recruitment plan - committee process does not yield hires

The Superintendent, Dr. McLaughlin and Ms. Allen responded to some of the above questions and concerns raised by the Members.

The Chair thanked the Superintendent and staff for the presentation and declared a two-minute recess.

Mayor Reeves in the Chair.

The time for recess having expired, the Chair reconvened the meeting. In connection with the above presentation, the Chair read the following from a September 26, 2006 letter received from D. Moschos,

the School Committee's lawyer: "One important collaborative effort the Superintendent needs to address without delay is intensification of the School District's efforts to bring diversity to the faculty. This effort should include an intensive recruitment campaign and a retention program to ensure that a diverse faculty is achieved and maintained."

The Chair turned the meeting over to the Superintendent to introduce the Adequate Yearly Progress Report. The Superintendent explained that AYP is a requirement of Federal and State law that each school must make a certain amount of progress every year in the goal of all students reaching proficient or advanced status by the year 2014. The Superintendent walked Members through a slide presentation, "Adequate Yearly Progress Cambridge Public Schools 2006", including:

- Map showing how Adequate Yearly Progress across the country is defined
- School Improvement Status Strongly Tied to Poverty
- Goal of No Child Left Behind
- AYP Targets for Schools & Districts
- Student Subgroups
- AYP Ratings 2006
- How are Schools identified for improvement
- How do schools get off the list
- AYP Status of Massachusetts Schools
- Summary of CPS Schools
- CRLS Results 2006
- CRLS Progress 2003-2006
- CRLS CD Attainment
- Next Steps

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was vote to suspend the Rules to extend the meeting to 10:15.

The Superintendent, Principals Beggy, Petner and Scannell responded to some of the following questions, comments and concerns raised by Members:

- How much are we doing on formative assessments in classrooms
- Is the jury still out on longer school days
- Are we a district that has the luxury of having an individual learning plan (ILP) for each student
- We need to work toward serving some sub-groups better
- How can the school improvement plans be changed to address some of the concerns outlined in AYP

On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to suspend the rules to extend the meeting to 10:30.

- How often do Principals get into the classroom to monitor instruction and observe teaching
- The high school experience has been great during the last two years
- Want to insure that teachers realize as much from the Elmore project as Principals are
- There is a way to grow the Elmore program over time
- Hope there can be a trickle down effect from the Elmore experience
- Include the question of a longer school day in the next parent survey
- Mystified that our African-American boys are performing below the State

On a motion by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to suspend the Rules to extend the meeting to 10:35.

- There's a real sense of urgency when I see schools in corrective action

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to adjourn (10:34 p.m.).

Adjourned
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw
Executive Secretary to the School Committee