

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, June 3, 2008

Members Present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Grassi, Mr. McGovern, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Schuster, Ms. Tauber,
Mayor Simmons

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Presentation of the Records of Previous Meetings:

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Grassi, it was voted that the Minutes of the following Meeting be accepted as presented:

- Regular Meeting - May 20, 2008

Public Comment

The following individual was heard regarding the Blue Ribbon Commission Report on Middle Schools:

- Julie Reuben, Reed Street, Parent

On a motion by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted to suspend the Rules to allow Ms. Reuben an additional minute to speak.

On a motion by Mr. McGovern, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to close public comment.

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

Reconsideration of Votes Taken at Previous Meeting: None

Unfinished Business from Previous Meetings

A. Calendar

On a motion by Mr. McGovern, it was voted to remove and place on file **#08-106, Motion by Mr. Fantini** to discuss the March 7, 2008, letter from the Educational Management Audit Council.

On a motion by Mr. Schuster, it was voted to remove and place on file Recommendation **#08-97, City Council Order #O-5**, and Recommendation **#08-98, City Council Order #O-31**.

B. Tabled Matters

C. Awaiting Report

The Superintendent was asked to speak to the items on Awaiting Report and to provide a timeline for a response. The Superintendent was heard and he will provide a timeline in the next Weekly.

New Business

A. Presentations

The Chair turned the meeting over to Principal Saheed and Assistant Principal Tynes who gave Members a CRLS Update, including:

- Status of the Class of 2008
- Graduation Statistics
- Post Secondary Plans
- College Acceptances
- Expanded Senior Year Plan
- Senior Projects
- CRLS Academic Program Highlights
- CRLS Teacher Development
- Instructional Support Coaching Program
- After-School Professional Development Program
- Professional Development Committee Recommendations
- Climate at CRLS
- Extracurricular Participation Rate for Class of 2011
- Proposal to Change Calculation of Grade Point Average
- Edline Implementation
- Electronic Textbook Database

The Superintendent, Dr. Saheed and Mr. Tynes responded to some of the following questions, comments and concerns:

- What budgetary changes have been made
- What is going well and what is not going well
- What is working and what is not working re middle school/high school relationship
- What are the challenges of teacher recruitment
- What are the challenges of block scheduling
- What is different about CRLS now and a few years ago
- Is the information on this graduation class a four-year cohort
- How many High School Extension Program (HSEP) students are graduating
- Bring HSEP Principal together with CRLS
- How is the conflict mediator position working
- Describe what peace circles are
- How are 12 elementary school students entering CRLS handled
- What are some of the trends being seen on passing rates for lower grades
- Has the diploma with distinction been developed at other high schools
- Is the diploma with distinction recognized by colleges and universities - how is it being promoted
- What are plans to get every student connected – especially students who are not involved in anything
- How is the effectiveness of professional development measured
- How is weighting of grades compared to other schools - how was .25 decided
- Insure that college-going rate is accurate
- Is there a vision that the need for prep classes will go away
- Is the parent piece in place for Edline
- What is biggest challenge/success for next year
- What is the transitional program for special ed students
- What are we doing to support special needs students around MCAS
- Do we have staff to take full advantage of the accommodations

- What is the message being sent to special ed parents if there is nothing included in CRLS' presentation
- Insure that we are hearing from all groups – what are students who are not in National Honor Society saying about their experience
- What is being done to reach out to students who would not ordinarily attend peace circle meetings
- Are freshmen entering CRLS more prepared for the rigors of high school
- Portfolios show that students are “getting it”
- Get the word out to the community to tell what is being done at CRLS
- Look at the percentage of CRLS students who are taking remedial classes freshman year in college – find out who we are under-serving
- CRLS is in extraordinarily good hands

The Chair, on behalf of the Members, thanked the Superintendent and the presenters.

The Chair turned the meeting over to Mr. Grassi and Superintendent Fowler-Finn to present the Blue Ribbon Commission Report on Middle Schools.

Mr. McGovern, Vice Chair, in the Chair.

Mr. Grassi thanked the members of the Commission for their work and presented “The Blue Ribbon Commission on Middle School Education” Report, including:

- The Goal of the Blue Ribbon Commission
- Rationale for Convening the Commission
- Current State of the CPS Middle School Structure
- Highlights of Strengths of the Present CPS Middle School Structure
 1. Alignment of CPS curricula
 2. Professional Development
 3. Assessments
 4. Visual and Performing Arts Programming
 5. Portfolios
 6. Curriculum & Instruction
 7. Special Programs
 8. Cluster Meetings
 9. New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP)
- Highlights of Challenges of the Present CPS Middle School Structure
 1. Scheduling
 2. Curriculum
 3. Program Size
 4. Students Supports
 5. Student Opportunities
 6. Communication
- An Examination of a Range of Middle School Options/Models
- Parent Responses on Middle School
- The Future of the CPS Middle School Structure

Members raised the following questions, comments and concerns:

- Enjoyed being a member of the Commission
- There are strengths and weaknesses in K-8 model and K-6 model
- Think about parent involvement in this process
- Clearly define priorities regarding structure
- Move dates further out to include community input
- Feeling pressure to move forward with a decision

- Identify issues we are trying to solve – structural challenges can be addressed
- Teacher load is very different across the district
- Insure that the report is put on the web
- Would like to receive a copy of the full report
- Are students asked what they want to do after school
- There will be many issues when a system has not been analyzed for 30 years
- Transitions are very important and significant
- Utilize the Media Arts Studio to get the message out
- This gives us an opportunity to look at our leadership model
- Make extra effort to include members of the community who do not typically attend meetings
- How do we have a strong middle school curriculum if schools are different

Mayor Simmons moved, seconded by Mr. Fantini, suspension of the Rules to offer the following amendments: that the Superintendent adhere to the recommendations on page 21; and that the Vice Chair create a School Committee Ad-Hoc Committee on Middle Schools to assist the Superintendent with the process of reaching out to the public. The Rules having been suspended, on the following roll call, it was voted to adopt, as amended, "The Blue Ribbon Commission on Middle School Education" Report: Ms. Tauber YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Mayor Simmons YEA.

Commission Members Wendell Bourne and Vincent Mili were heard regarding their positive experience of serving on the Commission.

On behalf of the Members, the Chair thanked the presenters and returned to the Agenda.

Mayor Simmons in the Chair

On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted to suspend the Rules to convene in Executive Session. On the following roll call, it was voted to convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing votes taken in Executive Session: Ms. Tauber YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Mayor Simmons YEA. The Chair announced that the Committee will reconvene in Open Session.

Executive Session

Members Present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Grassi, Mr. McGovern, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Schuster, Ms. Tauber, Mayor Simmons

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

Also Present: Attorney Demitrios Moschos, Special Counsel; Lenora Jennings, Education Advisor

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Schuster, on the following roll call, it was voted to reconsider a vote taken in Executive Session at the Regular Meeting of May 20, 2008 regarding the negotiation of the Superintendent's contract: Ms. Tauber YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Mayor Simmons YEA. Attorney Moschos discussed with Members Executive Session Minutes involving personnel matters and Attorney/Client Privilege. He advised that Attorney/Client Privilege may be waived but personnel matters are protected by law. After discussion, on a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Mr. Fantini, on the following roll call, it was voted that the School Committee release the Executive Session Minutes regarding negotiations with the School Committee and the Superintendent on his contract, and the Executive Session Minutes involving access by the Administration to the School Committee's group e-mail on its website: Ms. Tauber YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Mayor Simmons YEA.

On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Ms. Nolan, on the following roll call, it was voted to reconvene in Open Session: Ms. Tauber YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Mayor Simmons YEA.
Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

The Chair reconvened the meeting and returned to the Agenda.

On a motion by Mr. McGovern, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to suspend the Rules to take up a Late Order. The rules having been suspended, on the following roll call, it was voted that the School Committee will not have the June 17 meeting: Ms. Tauber YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi NAY, Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Mayor Simmons NAY.

On a motion by Mr. McGovern, seconded by Ms. Tauber, it was voted to suspend the Rules to extend the meeting to 10:30.

B. Action Items

Mr. McGovern moved, seconded by Mr. Fantini, for adoption of items #08-192 through #08-210. Mr. Grassi removed #08-200, #08-204, #08-206 and #08-209. Mr. McGovern was heard regarding whether #08-192 through #08-199 could be held until the summer meeting. The Superintendent was heard. Ms. Nolan removed #08-192 and #08-208. Mr. Schuster removed #08-201. Ms. Tauber removed #08-194 and #08-198. Mr. Fantini removed #08-210. On the following roll call, the remaining items were adopted:

#08-193, Amendment to Agreement for Two-Year Leave of Absence for Paul F. Toner to Serve as Vice President of the Massachusetts Teachers Association: that the School Committee approve the amendment to the agreement providing Paul F. Toner with an additional two-year leave of absence to serve as Vice President of the Massachusetts Teachers Association.

#08-195, Approval of Revisions to the Student Dress Code Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Student Dress Code Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#08-196, Approval of Revisions to the Student Publications Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Student Publications Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#08-197, Approval of Revisions to the Tobacco Use by Students Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Tobacco Use by Students Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#08-199, Approval of Revisions to the Right to Hearing to Redress Deprivation of Rights Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Approval of Revisions to the Right to Hearing to Redress Deprivation of Rights Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#08-202, Consultant Agreements: that the School Committee approve Consultant Agreements with the companies or individuals on the list, in the amounts set forth, funds to be provided as shown:

1. Cambridge Health Alliance, Medford, in the amount of \$35,000.00, account 53101, fund 15000, org. 852360, prog. 360.
2. Cambridge Housing Authority, Cambridge, in the amount of \$30,000.00, account 53101, fund 15000, org. 869415, prog. 415.

#08-203, Motion by Mayor Simmons that WHEREAS: the idea of having Cambridge Public School Family Liaisons was borne out of the school desegregation era; and WHEREAS: Family Liaisons have now become integral members of every school staff serving as support for principals, teachers, parents and children; and WHEREAS: Family Liaisons work hard to make every school a welcoming community

with love, passion, and inclusiveness for all families; NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: that the Members of the City Council and the School Committee go on record thanking each of you for all you do for the public school families of the City of Cambridge; and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: that the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to send a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to each of the Cambridge Public School Family Liaisons.

#08-205, Motion by Mr. Schuster that, in order to encourage meeting participation, Student School Committee Members have their meeting agendas and packets delivered to their homes on Friday afternoons prior to general business meetings, the same time that School Committee Members receive their packets.

#08-207, Joint motion by Mr. McGovern and Mr. Schuster that WHEREAS: As much as 26% of high school students are overweight or obese; and WHEREAS: Cambridge as a city and school system has been a leader in childhood nutrition; and WHEREAS: overweight children are at higher risk of developing diabetes, asthma, heart disease, depression and low self-esteem; and WHEREAS: poor nutrition also reduces children's ability to learn; and WHEREAS: children are over-eating food and drinks high in fat and sugar; and one source of this problem is the sale of junk food in schools; and the easy availability of candy bars, chips, and soda in school vending machines encourages unhealthy eating habits; and WHEREAS: the Cambridge School Committee and Cambridge City Council has already endorsed House Bill 4376, yet it remains in committee; NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: that the Cambridge School Committee send a letter of support to the entire Cambridge State House Delegation to move House Bill 4376, An Act To Promote Proper School Nutrition, out of Committee and pass this Bill which would direct the Department of Public Health (DPH) to establish healthy standards for snacks and beverages sold in vending machines, school stores, and cafeteria ala carte lines, establishes a Governor's Commission on Childhood Obesity to develop a coordinated Statewide plan to reduce childhood obesity, requires DPH and the Department of Education (DOE) to set guidelines for the training of school nurses to help children with diabetes and eating disorders and to collect and evaluate data on these conditions and calls for an investigation of how to make it easier for schools to purchase fresh foods from local farmers: Ms. Tauber YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Mayor Simmons YEA.

Non-Consent Agenda

Ms. Nolan raised questions on **#08-192, Year End Transfer to Capital Account**. The Superintendent and Mr. Maloney were heard. On the following roll call, it was voted to adopt: **#08-192, Year End Transfer to Capital Account**, transfer \$700,000.00 from the Salary and Wage Account and \$300,000.00 from the Other Ordinary Maintenance (OOM) Account to Capital to cover cost associated with the operational phase of the high school renovation project: Ms. Tauber YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Mayor Simmons YEA. Mr. Fantini moved, seconded by Ms. Nolan, for suspension of the Rules for the purpose of moving reconsideration of the foregoing vote. The Rules having been suspended, a motion to reconsider the foregoing vote, hoping the same would not prevail, **failed of adoption**.

Ms. Tauber moved to Calendar **#08-194, Approval of Revisions to the Student Attendance Policy**: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Student Attendance Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

Ms. Tauber moved to Calendar **#08-198, Approval of Revisions to the Student Absences and Excuses Policy**: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Student Absences and Excuses Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

Mr. Grassi raised a question on the length of contracts for Principals. The Superintendent was heard. Mr. Fantini moved to Calendar **#08-200, Approval of Revisions to the Employment of Principals Policy**: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Employment of Principals Policy as detailed in the document (Third Reading).

Mr. Schuster raised a question on flexibility in the use of the following grant funds. Dr. Turk was heard. On the following roll call, it was voted to adopt **#08-201, Grant Award**: that the School Committee accept and approve the Grant Award in the amount and for the period indicated:

1. Academic Support Summer, for the period July 1, 2008 through August 31, 2008, in the amount of \$46,700.00.
Description: This grant will serve approximately 64 students entering CRLS as 9th graders in the Fall. Students are eligible based on past MCAS performances. The program will provide 6 weeks of half-day instruction in mathematics and ELA and will include a mentoring and high school orientation component.
CPS Target Population: 50+ incoming 9th graders who scored at the warning level on their 7th grade MCAS.
Outcomes & Measurers of Effectiveness: Improved students' achievement in the 9th grade math course and improved performance on the 10th grade MCAS.

Ms. Tauber YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Mayor Simmons YEA.

On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Mr. Schuster, it was voted to refer to the Community Relations Sub-Committee **#08-204, Joint motion by Mr. McGovern and Mr. Schuster** that the School Committee establish a Cambridge School Committee Speakers' Bureau to be organized jointly by the Vice Chair and the Public Information Officer. The Speakers' Bureau will serve as a clearinghouse for School Committee Member speaking engagements with community groups with the goal of using School Committee Members as liaisons for spreading the good news about the work of the Cambridge Public Schools.

#08-206, Joint motion by Mayor Simmons and Mr. McGovern that the School Committee reinstate the "Cambridge Public Schools Peacemaker Award" in each elementary school, to be given at each school's graduation ceremony, to one female and one male student who are chosen by their school staff and who exemplify peace and community and who have improved their school's climate. Mr. McGovern moved, seconded by Mr. Grassi, the following substitute motion: that the School Committee create a "School Committee Peacemaker Award" to be given to one graduating 8th grader at each school's graduation ceremony and that this award be presented by the School Committee graduation speaker; further, that this award be given to a student who has contributed to a safe and peaceful school environment; and that, from 2009 onward, this award be given to one male and one female student. Mr. Schuster moved a friendly amendment that the award be given to two students whether male or female who promote peace. Mr. Schuster's amendment was not accepted. On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to accept Mr. McGovern's substitute motion.

On a motion by Mr. McGovern, seconded by Ms. Tauber, it was voted to suspend the Rules to take up a Late Order. The Rules having been suspended, it was voted to adopt the following **Joint motion by Mr. McGovern and Mr. Grassi**: that the Superintendent develop a policy stating that the only two awards to be given at all elementary graduation ceremonies be the Mayor's Leadership Award and the School Committee's Peacemaker Award; further, that all other awards be presented at each school's awards night. Further, that the Superintendent consult with the Principals regarding this policy.

Ms. Nolan moved an amendment that the word "and" be inserted between "CRLS teacher". On a motion by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to adopt, as amended, **#08-208, Motion by Ms. Nolan** that the School Committee send a congratulatory letter to CRLS and teacher Sarah Colby for being one of 23 schools honored statewide and receiving the State's Award for Excellence in energy and Environmental Education for the Climate Change Project.

Mr. Grassi moved to Calendar **#08-209, Motion by Ms. Nolan** that WHEREAS: there is societal pressure that varies for boys and girls; and WHEREAS: research shows that sex-segregated activities can be beneficial, but WHEREAS: the district stands strongly for equal opportunity and fairness and equity in programming; NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: that the Cambridge Public School District ensure that opportunities and programs offered separately to boys and girls be offered on an equal basis.

Mr. Fantini was heard and he will not support this motion. On a voice vote, **#08-210, Motion by Mayor Simmons**, was adopted as follows: that Mr. Schweich's proposal be referred to the Sub-Committee on Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. Mr. Fantini is recorded as voting NAY.

Late Orders

Mr. Fantini moved, seconded by Mr. Grassi, that the School Committee continue to retain the law firm of Mirick O'Connell as Special Counsel and to increase the total amount of the existing contract to an amount not to exceed fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00). Attorney MacFarlane was heard. On the following roll call, it was voted to adopt the foregoing motion: Ms. Tauber YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Mayor Simmons YEA.

Mr. Grassi moved, seconded by Ms. Tauber, for suspension of the Rules to be recorded in the negative on **#08-210, Motion by Mayor Simmons**: that Mr. Schweich's proposal be referred to the Sub-Committee on Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Schuster, it was voted to adjourn (10:29 p.m.)

Adjourned
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw
Executive Secretary to the School Committee