

# SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## (Official Report)

**Special Informal Meeting**

**Friday, April 4, 2008**

Called by Her Honor Mayor E. Denise Simmons, in accordance with Chapter I, Section 3, of the Rules of the School Committee, for the purpose of a follow-up retreat to discuss team building, goals and objectives, and any other business that may properly come before the Committee.

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

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

Also Present: John Wofford, Facilitator

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and turned it over to Mr. Wofford who proposed the following Agenda:

- Arrivals and Food Available
- Review of Agenda and Ground Rules by Facilitator
- Debrief Retreat of March 14
- Wrap-up; summary; any next steps
  
- ISSUE 1: DISCUSSION OF OPERATING PRINCIPLES – introduced by Governance Committee
- Wrap-up; summary; any next steps
  
- *Break*
  
- ISSUE 2: DATA – How do we ask for it? Should the Committee agree on what data is needed? What do we do if the Superintendent does not provide it? Are we asking for an appropriate level of detail? Are we asking for too much? Too little? What constitutes a “report?” What data requests are simple to fulfill? What require analysis? Should we have expectations on when and how to deal with data issues in the media? Does the Committee have shared understandings of how to deal with data? If not, how to deal with it? (*Preparation for possible meeting on April 9*)
- Wrap-up; summary; any next steps
  
- ISSUE 3: SCHOOL COMMITTEE/ADMINISTRATION BOUNDARIES  
Definitions of “Policy;” difference between “What to do” and “How to do it;” Superintendent as the “employee” of the Committee; realities and potential of “partnership;” level of detail - “micromanaging” vs. “setting directions” (*Preparation for discussion with School Administration*)
- Wrap-up; summary; any next steps
  
- *Break*
  
- Preparation for Friday, April 11 Retreat with Superintendent, Dr. Turk and Mr. Maloney  
NOTE: April 11 Retreat to include TWO sets of issues:
  - Issues of Committee/Superintendent Interaction
  - Discussion of Vision and Goals for District

*Possible Homework before April 11 Retreat (request of Mayor): Draft a paragraph describing your vision for CPS and review CPS Goals. Suggest revisions to Goals.*

- Wrap-up; summary; any next steps
- ISSUE 4: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT – What are the facts? What are we measuring? Where are we succeeding? Where do we need improvement? How do we get there? What data is needed to measure and evaluate? Are we getting it? If not, what should be done? What are we using the data for? What is the Committee's role on this issue (cf the Superintendent's)? Are we meeting national standards? State standards? Cambridge standards? Are we "teaching to the tests" or allowing for flexibility of curriculum and methodology? To whom should we compare ourselves?  
*(Preparation for discussion with School Administration)*
- Wrap-up; summary; any next steps

Members discussed the above Agenda items and it was agreed that:

- Mr. Grassi and Ms. Nolan will work with Ms. Jennings to prepare for the April 16 roundtable meeting on data.
- Mr. McGovern and Ms. Tauber will meet with the Superintendent, Dr. Turk and Mr. Maloney to continue the work on Operating Principles
- Members will send a one-page statement to Ms. Bradshaw re vision and goals

**Summary:**

- Good discussion
- A+
- Got a lot done – hopefully we can build on it
- On the road but not there yet
- Productive
- Sets good framework
- We're getting there

On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Mr. McGovern, it was voted to adjourn (9:53 p.m.)

Adjourned  
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee