

DOVER SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
November 16, 2010

Members Present: Jennifer DaSilva, Chairperson
Dawn Fattore
Karl Johnson
Carolyn Ringel
Bob Springett

Also Present: Valerie Spriggs, Superintendent
Steven Bliss, Assistant Superintendent
Dr. Deb Reinemann, Curriculum Coordinator
Christine Tague, School Business Manager
Cheryl Chase, Librarian
Anne Nolen, PTO co-president
James Stuart, Warrant Committee
Dave Stapleton, Warrant Committee

1. Call to order

Ms. DaSilva called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm in the Chickering School Library.

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Dover School Committee minutes:

- Ms. DaSilva requested a motion to accept the October 19, 2010 minutes. Mr. Springett motioned, Ms. Fattore seconded. **10-28 Vote: Unanimous**

b) Ms. DaSilva noted the October 5, 2010 Dover Sherborn Regional School Committee minutes.

3. Community Comments--None

4. Reports

a) **Business Manager's Report** – Ms. Tague

- FY' 11 Budget Update: All salaries and encumbrances have been recorded, including the 1.75% increase for support staff which represented a \$33,953 adjustment which leaves a balance of \$14,047 in the legal settlements account. The fixed portion of transportation has been encumbered with \$25,508 remaining for the fuel adjustments which will be done on a quarterly basis.
- Out of District (OOD) budget:
 - There is currently a \$72,000 favorable variance for OOD, last year we turned back almost \$250,000.
 - Ms. DaSilva asked if we have details on the number of students. Ms. Tague stated that she can't provide any details on this publicly. Mr. Springett stated that we have always been provided the number of children and the kinds of service they are receiving, but we don't see the names. Ms. Tague will check with counsel. Ms. Spriggs stated that we can look at the programs on a universal level; a composite of the total number should not be a concern.
 - Ms. Tague stated the Department of Education has lifted the freeze on OOD tuition and as a result the costs increased about 1%. Ms. Tague stated the current OOD budget has a positive variance of \$72,422.
 - Mr. Springett referenced the monthly report and stated that with having the money encumbered he would have expected the remaining balances to be mostly \$0, as an example the Teachers, Classroom account reflects a \$2.6M budget, \$284K actual and \$2.3M remaining. Ms. Tague stated that this report was generated before the salary encumbrances were completed, they will be reflected in the November reports.
- Utilities--Ms. Tague reported that we haven't received an oil delivery and expect a surplus due to the usage and rate. The Temperature Monitoring report was provided in the packet.
- FY' 12 Budget—The timeline was distributed to the Committee. Work is being done to refine the budget between now and 12/1 when it is given to the Committee. Presentation for the regional budget is 12/9; presentation for Chickering is 12/21. The Annual Town Meeting for Dover is 5/2/2011. Mr. Springett stated in the past we had an interim meeting to review the budget.

b) **Principal's Report**

- World Language--Leslie Cutler and Tammy Goldfisher

- Ms. Cutler presented the proposed program which will be held two mornings a week from 7:20-8:20 and short day Wednesday's from 12:00-2:00 (includes a 20 minute lunch).
- This will be an opt-in extracurricular activity funded by the student's family. Students must commit to a full year; there will be no student drop in. They will look for grant funding in the future.
- Estimates are that three teachers will be needed. The goal is to immerse and expose students to a different language and culture. Each class will have a maximum of 20 students. The next steps are to figure out how to sell the program and the structure.
- Ms. Ringel stated that ideally the program would be during the school day instead of extracurricular and asked how this fits with other extracurricular activities. Ms. Cutler stated they found this would be the best way to get a strong program going, in the long-term how to fit into the school day will be looked at. The only issue with other extracurricular activities is 5th grade band, and this will be worked on. Parents will likely have to make some choices in the beginning. Ms. Goldfisher stated they have reviewed the schedule with Dr. Nugent and determined that after school is too difficult a time to hold the program.
- Mr. Springett asked about the Global Child program. Ms. Goldfisher stated that program is once a week, which is not the program we want to have. Mr. Springett spoke of the options previously presented by the group and the ideal being 3 days, but we would only have three days two weeks a month, and two days the other weeks.
- Ms. Goldfisher stated that if we have 24 students we would get two teachers if we max out at 12. One section will be 1st and 2nd grades; another section can be grades 3, 4 and 5. On Wednesday's we will have multi-age classes with some mentoring provided by the older students.
- If the program has 24 students, for 37 weeks with 185 school days, \$15 per class, the yearly tuition is \$1,388 which would be paid up front in two installments. We have budgeted for teacher salaries, curriculum planning and potential scholarships. Mr. Springett asked Ms. Spriggs if this would be run out of community education, Ms. Spriggs responded that we would have to explore it.
- Ms. Spriggs would like to look at the early arrival and how the METCO students and students who are involved in multiple extracurricular activities will be able to participate and to see what we could do to be able to offer them the program.
- Mr. Johnson stated that some of the key success criteria were three days with high integration into the existing curriculum, not an add-on. We are throwing too many things on the front and back end. Ms. Goldfisher stated that we won't be able to get a curriculum based program in a short amount of time; it will take a few years to do that. Ms. Spriggs spoke of reexamining the entire day to see if there is some movement in the day. Mr. Springett stated that we had just completed that exercise with Mr. Ferrari and Mr. Downing, that's why we moved to two early release days.
- Mr. Johnson asked where this type of program has been done. Ms. Cutler spoke of a program that has been run this way for the last 10 years in Chicago. Ms. Cutler stated it may be watered down and not strong enough if it is added into the curriculum right now. This would be a short term solution until we can find time in the school day.
- Ms. Ringel asked if we have surveyed the parents. Ms. Cutler responded that she has only received informal feedback and hasn't done a survey yet.
- Ms. Spriggs asked if the Amigos School in Cambridge was looked at, Mr. Bliss stated they are funded to by a federal program. Ms. Spriggs spoke of that school using an immersion program. Ms. Cutler stated they have a ½ day in Spanish, ½ day in English. Mr. Bliss stated we have looked at the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP), but there is currently no funding. We will look into this again for FY'12, but the FLAP contact shared that they are looking for applicants offering non-traditional languages such as Mandarin, Chinese or Arabic.
- The best we could schedule in the existing curriculum was a day, but that wouldn't give a strong enough program. Mr. Johnson stated the key successes that were previously presented are not going to be in this program. Ms Goldfisher stated it won't be a watered down program, it will be a robust program by having it after school. Mr. Johnson asked if this is even a School Committee issue since this is an after school program. Mr. Springett stated that having it through community education is different. Mr. Johnson stated since it won't be implemented as part of the existing curriculum, it won't be weaved into math and science or other parts of the day. Ms. Ringel stated that she hopes that it does become part of the curriculum, that because we have this separate program we don't lose having it become part of the school day.
- Ms. Cutler stated a discussion will need to take place to fund the program in the school. Ms. Spriggs stated there would need to be an academic assessment to extend the day, and if the foreign language program is what the community agrees on, it will take time to do this. Ms. Spriggs stated she is very supportive of a foreign language program, she doesn't want to start and stop the program, but we have to be clear on what the curriculum is and who will manage it while the other issues are being resolved.

- Mr. Springett would not like to see something shoehorned into the curriculum that is being balanced well and have it done poorly. We have gone through the allocation of time, if we move something in then something has to be expanded or taken away. To get something done in reasonably short order is a different turn, there is still more work to do before we get to a firmer implementation and we need to clarify who owns it. Ms. Cutler stated that since we seem to have the support to move forward we can move in that direction. Ms. Spriggs offered to sit with Ms. Cutler and Ms. Goldfisher to get more information before they make a decision on implementing this program.
- Dr. Reinemann reported that Balanced Literacy continues with Carl Anderson working with the teachers. Ms. Ringel stated that she received nice feedback about Sheila Harper.
- Dr. Reinemann reported that the Curriculum Coffees continue. Ms. Ringel stated that she has also received nice raves about Dr. Reinemann. Dr. Reinemann reported that there were five attendees at the morning session, four at night, five the second morning session, and none the second night.
- Accelerated Learners--Dr. Reinemann
 - Everyone learns differently, including what and how we learn best, and speed. Ms. Ringel asked about how a Math lesson would work. Dr. Reinemann spoke of two scenarios, the first being when the teacher teaches the main lesson for 20 minutes, then the students may go into groups for 25 minutes which for some will be intervention and for others will be an extension of the lesson. The second scenario could be the main lesson for 20 minutes, and the kids who finish faster are given more work. Dr. Reinemann stated the challenge is how you do that in a day. Every lesson runs differently, math has a continuous hour a day, while literacy is 90-120 minutes and may be broken up by reader and writers workshops at different times in the day.
 - Teachers may be teaching the same topics at the same time because they are sharing an aide.
 - For example, 1st grade: for Chapter 3 mid-chapter in Every Day Math they working on odd/even numbers, skip counting, and number lines. A pretest of 5 questions is given with major secured goals to see if anyone has mastered. We also look at student worksheets. For the odd/even piece they have a laminated chart and are practicing skip counting, they have a higher chart for students who have mastered; we have a smaller number line for those who need more support. When you pull a group together you may use more difficult problems or less depending on the pretest information.
 - A lot of people equate homework with rigor, it's meant to actually practice skills learned during the day. A parent may want to teach the homework, but if it's not done the same way as in class it can be confusing. Dr. Reinemann invited Committee members to come spend a ½ hour in a classroom to see how this works. Dr. Reinemann stated that typically everyone is together for the 1st part of the lesson, some will go off for independent practice for their level, and some go off for small group. There will be differences within the classroom.
 - Dr. Reinemann provided a 5th grade example: for drawing and measuring angles the Every Day Math lesson has too much going on for some students, in Number Worlds it's presented simpler for an intervention piece. The exemplar "A Very Tall Lady" has four levels of responses to see how they think and explain mathematically. It is good to use as a break before a test, it has a lot of pieces, and it can be used before teaching a lesson. Another 5th grade example: Quick Checks for Multiplication has four problems; if you are successful you do another computation, if not you stay with the classroom teacher and practice. We spend a lot of time finding out where the kids are. Mr. Springett stated we have had numerous discussions on this over the last few years, we get feedback from the parents that the child is bored, we discuss it and he walks away feeling we are doing the right things. We are getting much closer to individual student instruction instead of teaching to the mean. Once you get to the point of personal education it's difficult to explain the program you use, it's individually tailored; we need to articulate this better to the community so they understand all of the work that is being done to optimize the students learning. Maybe by grade we could have general guidelines, protocols, statements about what we expect to achieve using resources this way, how much time/what percentage of students are in advanced programs and the power of the model that we have invested in for years. The work is being done, but we need to communicate it better.
 - Ms. Nolen suggested having a Curriculum night where you go through what your kids does in class. Ms. Spriggs spoke of parents experiencing it firsthand so they have a better understanding. Mr. Johnson would see this as taking the place of Back to School Night, and having the opportunity to sit with the teacher to hear their expectations and how they implement them. Ms. Spriggs would like to see this as a goal for this or next year. Ms. DaSilva spoke of how well the Middle School does this.
 - Ms. Ringel asked if the teachers are comfortable with the small group model. Dr. Reinemann stated that it's a lot more work than it's ever been, you have to have a purpose for the group, moving them around can be complicated and needs to be fair. Ms. Spriggs stated you have to demystify the process for the child.
 - Mr. Johnson stated there is a perspective among the Chickering community that we are inconsistent in how we do this across classrooms, each teacher could explain how they practice this at Back to School Night to alleviate their concerns. Mr. Springett is looking to find a way to better explain what we are doing. We

have a big opportunity to show parents at open house what they are doing, at parent conferences there should be a conversation on how their child is specifically benefiting from the use of differentiated learning. Most adults get the information about what's going on at school from their kids. For the School Committee we look at how the system is working as a whole at a high level. His debate for years has been how the overall program is applied consistently across the grade but not consistently to the child. Ms. Spriggs reiterated the invitation to have School Committee members come in to Chickering to observe how Differentiated Learning is applied in the classroom.

c) PTO Report – Ms. Nolen

- The curriculum enrichment Drumming Session was held today.
- We are bringing the Wizards back this year for fundraising.
- The next meeting PTO meeting will be held on Friday.

d) Superintendent's Report – Ms. Spriggs

- Email content policy—The Policy Subcommittee wants to have this brought back to the next subcommittee meeting. Ms. Spriggs provided a summary of the different policies in her memorandum. Mr. Springett stated he didn't see the community organizations issue addressed in the any of the information, for questions of policy he believes that can come to the School Committee so item d) may need to be modified. The committee discussed the status of the development of the policy.
- Coordinated Program Review—Ms. Spriggs provided details in her memo on the amount of time being requested by the state, the amount of time being required and the data being accumulated.
- Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan – Ms. Spriggs met this morning with the Principals and Joann Kenney to go over all the input provided. One more parent group will be meeting which will conclude the public input, then an updated version will be provided to the Committee for the First Reading.
- Superintendent's Goals—Ms. Spriggs thanked Mr. Springett, Ms. Hunter and Ms. Hanlon for their extra work. The final copy was provided in the School Committee packet. Ms. Spriggs stated that we learned a lot and invested a lot of time in a very worthwhile process.
- 2010 Town Report – Ms. Spriggs stated that the report needs to be submitted to Bente by mid-December to be included in the Town Blue Book. Ms. DaSilva stated she will prepare the report.
- Boiler Exhaust Stack Repair—The actual bid received was \$2,500. Approval for up to \$6,000 was already given by the Committee.
- MCAS
 - Ms. Spriggs referenced the additional information requested by the Committee to reflect individual classroom teachers. The Committee clarified that they want the information by classroom.
 - Mr. Springett spoke of this as the goal for benchmarks and performance standards, he feels reporting is an important ingredient. When we looked at the high level data in October, one of the things we didn't talk about was the sub-group data where you would see instances where 2/3rds of a group was NI or failing. Mr. Springett asked what kind of information we should be looking at here at the School Committee so we can understand what's going on with kid's academic learning. We were getting bi-monthly Math and ELA reports which are more real time and we have been looking at last year's annual report to run this year. If we are going to stick with MCAS and look at grade level cohorts we need to see the range of performance by class in the grade level.
 - Mr. Springett stated the Committee should decide what they need to understand what is going on at the school, anecdotal is ok, but it doesn't explain the other kids in the program. From a school point of view we need to know what the learning outcomes are for the time and money spent. It's been a tough struggle to get timely coherent information about what is going on in the school.
 - Mr. Johnson stated that he appreciates the objective and intent; he gets worried from the Administration perspective of having to resource three different entities with three different requirements, he suggested that each Committee could give up a body to see what a sensible structure and frequency would be, look at what's actionable and appropriate and make it consistent. Mr. Springett stated that we have invested more in systems and programs and that is providing the teachers with a lot of information, it's not clear that Pine Hill has those programs. Mr. Springett stated that we've invested in the tools (Guide EM, Galileo, DRA) and that he wants to see the data as a Curriculum Coordinator, Principal or Superintendent would to see if interventions are needed. Because of the investments we've made he would like to shift the focus from last year's MCAS to this year's data captured by the systems we've invested in. Mr. Springett stated that he has offered for the last three years to define reports so that we don't create an administrative burden. We spend almost no time looking at data on how kids are doing and if the programs we have put in place are

having an impact. It would be more valuable to spend time on this than on financial reports on a \$8M budget with a \$100K variance.

- Ms. Ringel stated she needs to understand exactly what kind of data the teachers gather, how it's generated and how often the assessments are done so that she can have this discussion. She worries about time spent generating data vs. teaching. Ms. Fattore stated it's a struggle being one Committee for one school; we demand a lot of reporting from Administration and may dive too deep. Mr. Springett stated we should sit down and see what it is we want to see, this hasn't been done since Ms. Gill-Body and Ms. Hackney were on the Committee. Mr. Johnson expects the group would consider the difficulty gathering the information, what we will do with the data and reporting frequency. He recommends someone from each Committee and Mr. Bliss look at it and determine the appropriate information to look at while sticking to our governance roll and not micromanage. Ms. DaSilva stated it is important to hear from the Administration what they are gathering, how they are using it and how often they look at it; she would assume that Dr. Nugent looks at it on a class by class basis. Ms. Fattore spoke of how SAC looked at this by classroom two years ago.
- Ms. Spriggs stated she appreciates the conversation tonight, she spoke of when building the collaborative relationship how we didn't want to create special reports for each Committee, and we have to put our energies into the school. What would we be doing if we weren't putting so much time into the requests? She needs to be in the building with the Principals and seeing what the students are doing. Mr. Springett stated that nobody wants to add to the burden of Administration, but we want to see what's going on to help those students who need it.
- Mr. Bliss spoke of last year when he was in the building and classrooms a lot, this year he's not able to be in the classrooms as much. When Administration hears discussion of additional reporting, we are concerned about spending more time away from the classroom. Ms. Spriggs suggested we could ask the Principals what they are using that we can take forward to the School Committees. She believes there are pieces the School Committee is not currently seeing that could be brought to them.
- Ms. Ringel spoke of the first next step being to get a better understanding of what systems and data exist and how often it is reviewed. Ms. Spriggs spoke of the large value she has of a teacher's judgment that isn't reflected accurately from a report. Mr. Springett asked if that comes together in the system. Dr. Reinemann responded that it does. Ms. DaSilva suggested we have further conversations on this in January. Mr. Bliss stated that this will involve all of our Principals.
- Class Size Policy:
 - Mr. Springett would like to review the current class size policy of 17-22 which was set before we added the teachers' aides; we haven't reflected that change into the policy.
 - By adding 15 aides we added about \$600K of expense. The Tennessee Star study determined that 1:14 was optimal, once you get to 18-20 there was no break till 30. We got to the 1.5 over time because we had large class sizes; we added aide time to help teachers work through large sized (23-24) classes. With the implementation of the RTI model we got to this ratio.
 - Over the next couple years the bulge is going to the Middle and High schools, faculty may need to be added there and the Region may have a hard time doing that. Ms. DaSilva raised the issue that the contracts are separate and can't be switched between buildings. Mr. Springett spoke of needing to look at the data to see if we are getting the value for the money adding these positions.

5. Special Items -- None

6. Future Business

- a) December Dover School Committee Agenda Items – FY' 12 Budget, Bullying
January Dover School Committee Agenda Items -- Reporting
Interim Meeting -- FY '12 budget review -- Bente to schedule between 12/8-17

7. New Business -- None

8. Routine Business

- a) Enrollments as of November 1, 2010—reports distributed.

9. **Adjournment**—Ms. DaSilva requested a motion to adjourn. Mr. Springett motioned, Ms. Fattore seconded. The meeting adjourned at 9:32p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deb Savastano