

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

**Followed at 9:00 pm by Joint Acton Public/Boxborough Public/Acton-Boxborough Regional SC/
Regional School District Study Committee Meeting (see separate agenda)**

MINUTES (approved 11/15/12)

**Library
R.J. Grey Junior High School**

**October 18, 2012
7:00 p.m. APS SC Meeting**

Members Present: Mike Coppolino, Xuan Kong, Kim McOsker, Paul Murphy, Deanne O’Sullivan
Members Absent: Dennis Bruce
Others: Don Aicardi, Marie Altieri, Deborah Bookis, Liza Huber, Steve Mills, Beth Petr

Chairperson Kim McOsker called the Acton Public School Committee to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. STATEMENT OF WARRANT

APS warrant #201308 dated 10/16/12 in the amount of \$323,314.13 was signed by the Chairperson and circulated to the Committee for signatures.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the 9/20/12 APS Meeting were approved as written. Xuan Kong abstained because he was not at the meeting.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Parent Jim Yarin asked why the McCarthy Towne School’s curriculum, in his opinion, does not allow for as much “stratified by ability learning” as he believes is found at the other Acton elementary schools. Dr. Mills responded.

5. EDUCATION REPORT

David Krane, Principal of the McCarthy-Towne School presented on “Measuring and Examining Student Growth at McCarthy-Towne”. A key element of informed instruction is using a variety of data to show growth. This includes using: benchmark and interim assessments, performance assessment, student-led conferences and MCAS Math & ELA results. Interim assessments to guide instruction in literacy include: running records, teacher/student conferring, guided reading groups, student/student conversations (teacher observed), interactive read aloud, and writing prompts. Math assessments include: ADM (Kathy Richardson), end-of-unit, pre-, and post tests, performance assessment, anecdotal (observational) assessment, student/teacher conferring, and writing prompts. Reading stamina, when children can read quietly to themselves, is an important skill in First grade and one that students can measure. A final slide showing the McT 6th grade archeological dig highlights many aspects of genuine and authentic learning.

Mr. Yarin asked again why McCarthy-Towne School’s curriculum was different from others’. Parent Jonathan Chinitz spoke about his many years of excellent experience at McT and said that he would not pay any attention to a 4th grader’s math scores because there are so many other ways to measure a child’s learning and growth.

6. SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS

6.1 MCAS Update

Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Deborah Bookis summarized the aggregate 2012 MCAS performance and growth data. MCAS results can be used to illuminate strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in curriculum and instruction. They can also be used to fine-tune alignment with the ELA and Literacy, Mathematics, and STE State Frameworks. These results can also help to identify students who may be struggling. Beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, accountability reporting has changed significantly as a result of Massachusetts’ approved ESEA/NCLB flexibility waiver.

Regarding English Language Arts (ELA) District Analysis, Deborah reported that the literature strand is one that requires attention. Students did not perform well on questions that required an analysis of the text, inference, and using text evidence to support conclusions, or evaluating the arguments and claims in a text. This is also one of the shifts in the Common Core.

Regarding the Mathematics District Analysis, Elementary Mathematics Specialist/Coach, Jean Oviatt-Rothman reported that overall, our students demonstrated that they are well prepared by the end of their elementary careers. Open response questions continue to be challenging, but students' success with these questions improves as they move up in the grades.

The STE (Science, Technology and Engineering) MCAS District Analysis was reported by Curriculum Specialist Eileen Sullivan. In the report, she stated that the High Needs subgroup (includes students with disabilities and those from low-income families) requires attention. Eileen reported that our weaknesses in the Science test tend to reflect items not addressed in our curriculum. The revised MA Framework for Science is expected in late spring 2013.

Ms. Bookis' report included a valuable page of Action Items and Initiatives (page 28) that the School Committee was very interested in. She concluded that MCAS data is one snapshot of how our students are learning and by that measure, our students continue to do well. In response to a question, Deb said that each principal has access to his/her own data and shares it with the teachers. Mike Coppolino said that the SGP for students with disabilities is alarming and he hopes something good will happen for this group. Deb was meeting with the math specialist and Liza Huber the next day to discuss this.

Deb will report back to the School Committee in January on progress made. Mr. Yarin spoke again from the audience stating that this presentation illustrates the importance of objective assessment and that success is not measured only by MCAS scores.

6.2 ALG Update on 10/17/12 meeting

Kim reported that ALG met with the other Boards on Monday night and then on Wednesday morning for a presentation by Don Aicardi and Steve Barrett. Xuan reported that the School Finance Director's projections for state aid are higher than the Acton Finance Committee's. ALG talked about the split a little but no decisions were made. Xuan will forward the Fincom Point of View (POV) first draft to School Committee members for input to take back. All are hoping for a good foundation for school and town to work together this year on the budgets.

6.3 Health Insurance Trust (HIT) Update on 10/18/12 meeting

Kim reported that HIT met today and had a preliminary conversation about rates for next year. It will be a higher rate this year based on demand for services. If HIT did not have reinsurance they would be down quite a bit this year. Cook and Co. sees this year as an anomaly.

6.4 Long Range Financial Planning

Don Aicardi presented a Historical Spending Review from FY07 to FY12. He began by stating that the annual APS budget is a statement of the educational values of our community. He noted an important point to understand is that Federal funds (ARRA SFSF, ARRA IDEA) used to support the budgets are "non-recurring" and their loss affects future budget availability. Circuit breaker is an important recurring Federal source. Don summed up:

- Chapter 70 Increased by 2.5M from FY06 - FY09, then flattened out at 5.1M FY10 – FY12.
- Total # of Students increased 4.5% from FY02 - FY10 and then dropped -4.6% to similar FY02 level (2,500) in FY13.
- Total Staff has been increasing; with emphasis on "non-certified staff"
- Even though population is decreasing, class size average has been held steady due to decrease in K-6 sections.

The Committee asked about some of the special accounts and preschool enrollment (slide 17). These will be on the next meeting agenda. Liza was asked if it was a good decision to hire more preschool staff last year and she said that given the regulatory requirements for staff-student ratio, it was. Liza will provide more specifics at the next meeting. Xuan pointed out that PTO funds are not in these numbers and therefore, not in any of the spending figures. Don was asked about how substitutes are shown. Spending in substitutes is now offset by the vacancy factor line item.

Because members of the public were waiting to hear the school gift votes, the Committee skipped to 6.7:

- 6.7 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Conant School PTO
- 6.8 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Douglas School PTO
- 6.9 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Gates School PTO
- 6.10 Recommendation to Accept Gift from McCarthy-Towne School PTSO
- 6.11 Recommendation to Accept Gift from Merriam School PTO

Paul Murphy moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the donations of the PTOs to the elementary schools, items 6.7 thru 6.11, with much gratitude.

- 6.12 Recommendation to Accept Gift from APS Preschool Parents and Staff

Xuan Kong moved, Mike Coppolino seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the gift from the APS Preschool Parents and Staff in honor of Debbie Bennett's retirement.

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

At 9:04 p.m. the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee, the Boxborough Public School Committee and the Regionalization School District Study Committee were called to order.

See separate agenda and Joint School Committee minutes.

At 9:48 p.m., the Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee, the Boxborough Public School Committee and the Regionalization School District Study Committee adjourned.

ACTON PUBLIC SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS continued.

- 6.4.2 FY14 Preliminary Budget Priorities and Calendar

Dr. Mills' preliminary FY14 proposal is an investment budget based on the Long Range Strategic Plan and sound financial management. He proposed adding:

- FTE Special Education Teacher New Resource Room at Douglas School
- More Classroom Assistants Funded From Operating Budget to Alleviate Fundraising Stress by PTOs
- Additional Assistant Principals (one for Douglas)
- Increased Opportunities For Professional Learning

Revenue assumptions include: Chapter 70, Circuit Breaker and Regional Transportation. The budgets also assume the Fall, 2012 preliminary planning rate from the Health Insurance Trust. Dr. Mills stated that Deborah Bookis will be very involved in next year's budget requests. His goal is to add one or two more professional development days for staff. He concluded that the budget discussion will continue from now until it is voted at the Town Meetings.

- 6.5 Regionalization Update

See minutes from Joint School Committee meeting earlier in the evening.

- 6.6 Enrollment Report, October 2012

Marie Altieri reported that the Oct 1 Report is in the packet. Peter and Mary Ann Ashton will present enrollment projections at the November 1st meeting. Highlights include:

- Total enrollment for PreK-6 is flat from last year to this at 2500 students
- Kindergarten has 273 children, much lower than previous years
- Dropping kindergarten sections as we have has been a good decision
- Pockets of large classes are currently at 3rd and 6th grade, with 21 new 3rd graders who came in this year, 17 over the projection
- Acton to Boxborough enrollment percentages are shifting as expected.
- Enrollment by Race Report shows that overall the percentage of K-6 minority students increased from 34% to 38%. Asian K-6 graders increased from 31% to 32.65%, Conant students went from 51% to 56.6% and Conant Kindergarten is 70% Asian. This is a big jump. McCarthy-Towne School also increased by 2.5%.

The Committee discussed how and why enrollment was changing. The Ashtons' report will include some of this. Marie pointed out that the last time the economy tightened some families put off moving until their children were older, like 2nd or 3rd graders instead of before Kindergarten. Some may have also left private schools. This could explain the increase in older students moving in.

Xuan said that regarding the enrollment by race data, he doesn't believe in quotas but educationally most people would like each school to reflect the community's diversity. He asked, "What have we been doing or plan to do to align the numbers to better reflect our community?" After much discussion with attorneys in his previous job, Dr. Mills said that there is no obligation to do anything because people do have a choice. The District cannot tell families that they cannot go to a particular school, unless there is no space in the classes. That said, one of our core values is diversity and that is not happening as much at Conant. Dr. Mills has talked to Principal Damian Sugrue and will ask other principals to reach out to their Asian families to see if they can welcome other Asian families to their schools. This will be discussed over the next few months.

Back to Regionalization Discussion

Xuan asked the Committee if they could discuss and vote on the position statement from the three School Committee chairs regarding regionalization. He emphasized that parents would like to know these answers as soon as possible. Given the late hour, the Committee decided to consider this statement at their 11/15/12 meeting.

NEXT MEETINGS: November 1, 7:30 p.m. in the RJGJHS Library, ABRSC Meeting
November 15, 7:00 p.m. in the RJGJHS Library, APSC Meeting

The APS SC adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used: agenda