

**BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL
SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKSHOP / MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 13, 2009**

The monthly workshop of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held in the cafeteria of Mt. Hope High School, 199 Chestnut Street, Bristol, RI, on Monday, April 13, 2009. The Chairperson, Paul Silva, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:06 PM.

Present:

Paul Silva, Chair, Paul E. Brule, Vice-Chair, Marjorie J. McBride, Secretary, William M. O'Dell, Treasurer, Denise R. Arsenault, Diana B. Campbell, Karen A. Lynch and John P. Saviano; Edward P. Mara, Ed.D., Superintendent; Melinda L. Thies, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction; and Jane F. Correia, Director of Administration and Finance

Absent: John C. Bento

OPENING BUSINESS

All present were invited to join in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

PUBLIC FORUM

None

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation #S2009-19: That the School Committee, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, award the food service contract bid.

MOTION: Mrs. McBride motioned to approve; Mr. Brule seconded. Mr. Saviano asked about the implication of the statewide contract; Mrs. Correia explained the State had bid for a statewide contract and selected Aramark; the State wanted us to sign on with Aramark as well but the East Bay Districts were adamant that going out to bid would create competition and would result in a better food service program for all the Districts. Mrs. Correia also reported that the contract was a collaborative effort with Barrington, East Providence, Little Compton, Middletown, Portsmouth and Tiverton; Chartwells is recommended because they are the only company that made a presentation. Although Aramark was scheduled for a presentation they withdrew just moments before they were due to present, the reason being they did not have enough information to complete the bid process; Chartwells' presentation was prepared competitively and

it was thorough and informative. Dr. Mara commented that the administrators proceeded with a very open mind. Mrs. Campbell was glad to see Chartwells being considered because they have been involved with the Wellness Committee and have been very active participants in this community. Mrs. Arsenault was also pleased with Chartwells; she is impressed with their lunch offerings and quality. The motion to approved passed by a vote of 8 to 0.

NECAP ASSESSMENTS

Mrs. Thies thanked the Committee for the opportunity to present the “state of the state of our assessment.” She said there had been concerns about how we present math on the elementary level. A cohort of teachers has been developed to work together to discuss our practices and increase our capacity for teaching math; only two math classes are required for elementary math certification which some feel is not deep enough. In terms of brain research, a critical piece is to have students engaged and develop the ability to construct their knowledge and communicate their thinking; they must see the connection between what they are doing and the real world; learning is all about kids being connected and translating and applying what they learn. Mrs. Thies played a video of three Hugh Cole math classrooms (first grade teacher Ms. Richardson, third grade teacher Ms. Ursillo, and fourth grade teacher Ms. Genovese), filmed by Katie Reaves, a talented parent and graduate of RISD. The three “lab classroom” teachers opened their classrooms to other

teachers as a professional development opportunity. There are ten teachers in total on three tiers. Mr. Saviano asked if the team approach is used in self-evaluations. Mrs. Thies explained that to be filmed is to see yourself and in itself is self-reflective; this approach is not meant for evaluation but is meant for growth; the ability to come together as a professional learning community and talk about practices is how we grow. The video showed the students moving to different stations within the classroom and sharing learned information. The teachers engaged in this cohort believe this is the best way to teach math; there are far fewer behavior problems from students in these classrooms.

Mrs. Arsenault asked if this practice was used in every classroom. Mrs. Thies explained it is not, but they would like it to grow into that. Students who are struggling get intensive differentiated instruction time with the teacher; two math specialists serve all our elementary classrooms.

Mrs. Thies then did a PowerPoint presentation on the 2008 Mathematics NECAP Data Analysis. Statistics show that although Bristol Warren's growth in grades 3 to 8 from 2005 to 2008 has been consistent, steady and above the State level, Mrs. Thies does not think it is fast enough. She has concerns about the dip in proficiency for third graders from 78% in 2007 to 75% in 2008. Fourth grade math proficiency has risen from 62% in 2005 to 75% in 2008; fifth grade from 63% in 2005 to 75% in 2008; sixth grade from 62% in 2005 to 67%

in 2008; seventh grade from 47% in 2005 to 69% in 2008; eighth grade from 57% in 2005 to 64% in 2008. At the eleventh grade level the 2007 number of 29% was abysmal but the math team did a tremendous job of increasing proficiency in 2008 to 40%. They also met the SPED target which was very difficult; at 40% we are well above the State level of 27%. Mrs. Thies also reported the percentages by school as well as by “strand” (geometry and measurement, numbers and operation, functions in algebra and data, statistics and probability); geometry is our lowest strand. The longer a student is in school, the more they drop off. We need to focus on the gap between SPED and general education students; the first year of NECAP we had 0% SPED proficiency and we are up to 7%. Mrs. Thies believes it is time to begin to redirect energies and resources to math, by providing interventions to IEP students and more math professional development for teachers; also needed is more time for math instruction; we have good solid programs and engaged teachers, we just need the time for implementation.

Dr. Mara stated it is worthy to note that in grades 4, 5, 7, 8 and 11 we made significant progress moving kids from the below proficient to the proficient level. Mrs. Thies added that it is a concern of ours as well as the State that SPED students need a differentiated instruction program and more time in a small setting, they do not need to be separated. Mrs. Arsenault asked if the extra time for SPED students could come after school. Mrs. Thies explained our current model provides additional instruction in ramp up programs after school but

there are ways to insure additional time in the instructional day. Mrs. Arsenault encouraged Administration to grow the kind of teaching that was presented tonight. Dr. Mara said that especially at the middle and high schools, SPED resource teachers have had to teach everything; Mrs. Thies and Mrs. Cerullo have worked hard to provide professional development in the content area. Mr. O'Dell asked at what grade the drop off Mrs. Thies mentioned begins, and what is being done about losses over the summer. Mrs. Thies said drop off begins at the fifth to sixth grade level; however, we are finding the Bristol Warren decline is flattening out. Over the summer students are required to do a math packet; a summer math program ran for elementary students; and for the middle and high school students a summer program based most often on academic performance during the year is run; a website is also available.

Dr. Mara stated that all this and more is done in the same length of day as when he went to school; so much more is expected of students and teachers now; current administration is pushing for at least 45 minutes more instruction time per day. Mrs. Thies added that other countries have much longer and many more school days and some states have a full year of instruction. Mr. Saviano said Arnie Duncan is talking about a minimum of ten months to the school year, possibly six days per week and extending the school day by 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 hours; he is pleased the District is looking in this direction; he asked about the possibility of scheduling changes at the high school.

Mrs. Thies explained this needs to be generated from the school

level; it is important for the high school to research this and move forward with a model they believe in; a rotating schedule is doable, additional research must be done in terms of block scheduling, and professional development would have to be provided.

Mr. Saviano asked about Chicago Math and complaints from parents that they do not understand it. Mrs. Thies and Dr. Mara said this method is used in the form of “Everyday Math”; math nights to help parents are scheduled each year. The curriculum has been redesigned and aligned to GLEs, which is the pathway to true success.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT OUTREACH

Mrs. Campbell reported on the feedback received from the session held in February. The students liked the opportunity but felt the time was too limited and want to expand it. She and Mrs. Thies met with Mr. Rebello, Mr. Murgio and Mr. Crowley and propose the four possible actions outlined below.

- Provide opportunities for more in-depth discussions with students on specific topics. This activity is prompted by the students' desire for more time at the initial workshop and also, their concerns about the teacher lay-off process. We propose that the school committee, once a quarter, set aside some time at a regular workshop to discuss as aspect of school committee processes (budgeting, for example), allowing time for Q&A.

This activity will require some planning on the part of the school

committee, re: topic, format, marketing, etc. The HS administration has committed to helping us with publicity.

- Include a student liaison to the School Committee to present a high school update to the school committee at every workshop. This practice is in place in other districts, with students providing a 5-minute update at the beginning of the meeting. Usually there are 4-5 students that take turns, so that no student is over-burdened. Students don't have to stay for the whole meeting (and usually don't), but they are given an "official" place at the table.

Should the School Committee decide to follow up with this activity, it would probably not start until September, with possibly an initial "introduction" opportunity in late June. Don Rebello will work with the Student Council to discuss with them how the student liaisons would be selected and organized.

- Members of the School Committee go to the HS for "office hours" once a month during the lunch period. Two members of the SC/Administration set up at a table in a semi-private area and chat with students in an informal way about whatever is on their mind.

Should the School Committee decide to follow up with this activity, we can set up regular "First Friday" sessions, starting in April. Guy Murgo will help with publicity and staging.

- Post SC meeting agendas at the HS. Don Rebello will look into ways to post agendas for all school committee and subcommittee meetings on bulletin boards in the library and other visible locations in the school.

This action does not require School Committee approval, but I

thought I'd include it in the list because it is an idea that came out of the discussions that we had with students.

Comments:

Mr. Saviano – Rather than several 15 minute sessions, students would be more likely to come for a one to two hour informal “fireside chat” on a particular night.

Mrs. Arsenault – Agrees with more time and more discussion.

Mrs. Lynch – Agrees with Mr. Saviano that one longer session would be better attended.

Mr. Silva –Theoretically he likes Mr. Saviano’s and Mrs. Lynch’s ideas, but realistically he feels attendance would be sparse; perhaps a student liaison to the School Committee could bring the issues forward and discussion could be scheduled for a workshop.

Mrs. Campbell – Regarding student attendance, Mr. Rebello and Mr. Murgio would integrate this with social studies and require students to come; agrees that specific questions from the students is a good idea; would like to see students more involved in what is going on and in making policy; this would build a rapport and a trust.

Mrs. McBride – Noticed in the session that students were not sure of the kinds of questions to ask; agree with the liaison idea and being reactive until we get into a rhythm; concerned that middle school students should be considered to some extent, maybe for the following year.

Mrs. Arsenault – Although there are some very good ideas, she

believes we should start with more rather than less; in the past the School Committee had a goal to have a student liaison; students will participate if marketed correctly.

Mr. O'Dell suggested that a good way to see what is on the minds of the students is to attend their student government meetings; they may have to take a closer look at how they view themselves. The Committee discussed how issues would be shared or reported with and by the students. Jon Kmiecik, one of the students who film the meetings, was asked what he thought as a student. Mr. Kmiecik thought perhaps students could have different subcommittees that bring there specific issues to the School Committee; he also believes the communication between the different student groups within the high school needs improvement. Mrs. Arsenault suggested a workshop discussion with the students to create a process. Mr. Silva said the lack of communication is an in house student issue that the Committee cannot solve; our attempt is to welcome students here to give input. Mr. Kmiecik asked if the Committee could create another group that would meet quarterly; and although it is difficult to bring the students together, there would be enough students in each of the groups to create a liaison committee to meet regularly and report back to the School Committee.

Mrs. McBride believes the Committee should first work hard to educate our students and the public on the process; and perhaps put up signs "If you have a question, check website for agenda"; we need

to give them the tools to feel comfortable to come. Mr. Silva added “If you are concern about what may be cut from the budget, attend this meeting”; he commented to Mrs. Campbell that she met with high school administration but no students. Mrs. Campbell noted Mr. Silva’s point and added that Mr. Rebello has met with students on some ideas. Mr. Saviano suggested asking Mt. Hope administration to ask various students groups to appoint liaisons who would meet with the School Committee to work out the procedures, then sit with the Committee for fifteen minutes on an agenda item. Mrs. Lynch then said she thinks the Committee is over-thinking this and said Mr. Rebello should forward the agendas to all the groups who would then decide in which issues they would like to be involved. Mrs. Campbell explained that this has already started. Mrs. Arsenault believes we have to get the information out and would like to invite more collaboration and that the Committee should create a task force to address this. Mr. Silva said Mrs. Campbell is already in place and suggested she and Mrs. Thies meet again with the high school group they had met with and include some interested students and come up with a recommendation for the next step.

Mrs. Campbell stated that the “office hours” idea was well received by the students and she asked if there was any objection to her and Mrs. Thies sitting in on those. Mr. Silva asked that the time and location be sent out in case other members wish to attend. Mr. O’Dell asked who had input into the “office hours” idea. Mrs. Campbell said Mr. Rebello came up with the idea which the students liked. Mr.

Saviano had concerns that the lunch hour was too hectic and rushed for this to be successful. Mrs. Campbell explained that Mr. Murgo had students sign up and arranged for the meeting in Room M108.

BUDGET/ FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. O'Dell reported it was the consensus of the Committee to direct the Superintendent to go out to bid to replace our architect; the lift station at the high school is on schedule. Mrs. Arsenault asked if the District has collaborated with the Roger Williams School of Architecture and if the question from the Colt Andrews Playground Committee about selling seat plaques as a fundraiser should not be discussed the Bristol Historical Society or Town Council. Dr. Mara and Mr. Silva explained that the District approached Roger Williams for a press box design but they declined for liability reasons and that anything concerning the inside of the school buildings is decided by the District and the Historic Commission deals with the exterior of the buildings.

POLICY/COMMUNITY AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE

Mrs. Campbell said the field trip policy was discussed at the last meeting with some Kickemuit staff and it was decided no changes were needed; the bullying and allergy policies will be before the full Committee for a second reading at their next meeting; and the next Subcommittee meeting is May 4, 6:00 PM at Oliver.

PERSONNEL/CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. Saviano had nothing new to report but reminded members to send him feedback in regards to the Council 94 contract; there is no need for Executive Session discussion, but for the next meeting. Mr. Silva, in regards to the BWEA Contract, said there is no need for Executive Session discussion at this time; recent correspondence from Attorney Henneous will be disseminated to all Committee members for discussion at the next meeting.

FUTURE ENROLLMENT AND FACILITIES TASK FORCE

Mrs. Lynch reminded the Committee of the Special School Committee Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 22, 6:30 PM in the Mt. Hope Cafeteria when NESDEC will give their final report on the demographic and capacity study.

ADJOURNMENT – 9:16 PM

There being no further business to discuss, Mrs. Campbell motioned to adjourn at 9:16 PM. Mr. Brule seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie J. McBride, Secretary

/c