

City of Attleboro
School Committee Meeting
Monday, January 09, 2012
School Committee Conference Room
Attleboro High School

Present: Michael Tyler, (At Large), Chairman, Brenda Furtado, (Ward IV), Vice Chairperson, Barbara Crow (At Large), Secretary, Teri Enegren, (Ward I), William Larson, (Ward II), Christopher O'Neil (Ward III), Frances Zito, (Ward V), Kenneth Parent, (Ward VI), David Murphy, (At Large)

Also Present: Pia Durkin, Ph.D., Superintendent, Nancy Sprague, Director for Teaching and Learning Excellence, Marc Furtado, Business Manager, David King Interim-Business Manger, Taylor Beland, Student Representative, and Judy Nelson, Recording Secretary.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Salute to the Flag: Mr. Tyler led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Tyler welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new school committee and introduced each member to the community.

Notice of Electronic Recording: Chairman Tyler noted the meeting was being electronically recorded.

Community Update: School Sponsored Events: Student Representative, Taylor Beland updated the committee on the upcoming events (see attached Power Point presentation attached hereto and therefore made a part hereof).

Consent Agenda:

A motion was made to accept a donation in the amount of \$1,902.32 from LaPrade Studio to be deposited in the Wamsutta gift/donation account: Discussion: None. Vote: 9-0

A motion was made to accept a donation in the amount of \$1,984.24 from LaPrade Studio to be deposited in the Coelho gifts/donation account: Discussion: None. Vote: 9-0

A motion was made to accept five (5) computers valued at \$160 each to be used at the Brennan Middle School in Room 218: Discussion: None. Vote: 9-0

A motion was made to accept a donation in the amount of \$24,357.00 from the Studley PTO for the Studley Playground project: Discussion: None. Vote: 9-0

A motion was made to approve the Field Trip Proposal: from Attleboro High School for concept approval of a Field Study Proposal for 35-40 Grade 10 Advanced Placement students to attend Washington, D.C. on 04-14-12-04-16-12 (funding sources parents/fundraiser): Discussion: None. Vote: 9-0

Minutes: A motion was made to approve the Minutes from 01-03-12: Discussion: None. Vote: 9-0

New Business:

Attleboro High School Discussion: Honors/Advanced Placement Courses: Dr. Durkin gave a brief summary of the presentation (attached hereto and therefore made a part hereof). She introduced Principal Newman and Assistant Principal Sawyer. Mr. Newman explained the presentation format for this evening. He stated the administration was here to answer questions and clarify any concerns.

What is Changing for 2012-13: Mr. Sawyer noted the administration has neither changed its philosophy regarding honors nor mandated any changes to our programs. There are no changes to honors offerings in Grades 9 and 10. Three honors classes will be discontinued: English III Honors; English IV Honors; and U.S. History II Honors. One honors class is being reinstated: Honors Chemistry.

The factors driving these changes: the historic shift away from three levels of curriculum; the need to improve college-readiness; a fundamental change in how we view our Advanced Placement courses; acknowledgment of how colleges view our courses; analysis of data; the decisions of the teachers in these departments, and a reduction in the commitment required by Advanced Placement Courses.

Ms. Furtado asked that the historic shift away from three levels of curriculum be better explained.

Mr. Sawyer explained that in 1999 Ed Reform called for certain requirements. The three levels exist, but are slowly being eliminated. Mr. Sawyer noted the lowest level has been eliminated. He noted Physics Honors was eliminated two years ago and we have seen good results.

Dr. Durkin stated the rigor is higher versus what used to be. She noted the courses were not properly preparing students for college.

Ms Enegren inquired what would occur when these were phased out. Juniors and Seniors would be all Advanced Placement.

Mr. Sawyer noted Pre-Calculus Honors would be available at the junior level.

Ms. Enegren asked Mr. Sawyer to explain the Advanced Placement and Honors.

Mr. Sawyer noted the data for these courses would be forthcoming. College readiness is the key. The College Boards provide specific data. He stated the students still have the ability to take the dual enrollment which provides a college atmosphere and allows students to be ready on a different level. Mr. Sawyer explained the different scores (1-5). It was noted that students who take the Advanced Placement courses are much more likely to have better grades in college. The habits and rigor of the courses better prepare students.

The next few slides showed the graphs that provided data regarding the Advanced Placement Courses and college-readiness. They also defined how we view our Advanced Placement courses. It was noted all college-bound seniors should aspire to graduate with at least one qualifying AP score. The honors courses prepare student for future AP coursework. Advanced Placement courses have rigorous, nationally developed college-norm curricula. Honors classes follow the college-prep curricula.

Dr. Durkin noted the AP test is the same nation-wide. The AP test is a better barometer.

Mr. Sawyer explained colleges know exactly what the Advancement Placement designation means and can verify that the College Board has approved the syllabus. He explained the process for approval. Colleges do not know what our non-AP courses cover or what the grades our students receive in these courses mean. Selective colleges ignore our reported GPAs and recalculate them according to their own undisclosed criteria. Selective colleges target students who take the most rigorous courses offered. Where there are two levels, they prefer honors over college-prep. Where there are three levels, they prefer AP over honors.

Mr. Sawyer explained that all college-bound students can be successful in AP courses, if they are committed to the challenge. Honors classes do not serve an identifiable group of students with the ability level (determined by the College Board using AP potential) between college-prep and advanced placement. Advanced Placement students generally achieve at a higher level than Honors students, eve if we control ability levels. Increase participation in AP courses has not diminished the quality of our AP courses.

Mr. Sawyer noted the College Board uses PSAT data to identify students who may be successful in AP courses. The College Board uses Expectancy Tables (slide 9) to determine a student's statistical likelihood of success in a given AP subject. The resulting classification is called AP Potential, which predicts a student's chances of achieving a qualifying score in that advanced placement subject.

Studies show that PSAT scores are stronger predictors of students' AP scores than the more traditional factors such as high school grades. All students can achieve success at the AP level. Mr. Sawyer explained Slide 10. He stated the idea is that a student who commits to an AP course will succeed at some level. The commitment of the students, teachers, and parents results in some form of success.

Mr. Sawyer explained the AP Potential Distribution by levels: college, honors, advanced placement (Slide 11). He noted Advanced Placement students out perform honors students with comparable abilities as seen in Slide 12. Mr. Sawyer reiterated that the increased AP participation has not had a negative impact on traditional AP students. The number of students earning fours and fives has increased.

Mr. Sawyer introduced Mr. Gorman who explained the process of the shift away from three levels of curriculum. He noted the shift away has already been made by the Math and Science Department. The English and History have been independently preparing for these changes for some time. Among the reasons for changing now is the significant recourse for teacher training currently available under the grant with the Massachusetts Math Science Initiative (MMSI).

Ms. Furtado asked what type of parent involvement has occurred during this process. She wanted to know if parent/student input has been given.

Mr. Newman noted there has been active involvement with parents. During the Open Houses information has been available for parents. Students have received help and input through their guidance offices. There have been various dialogue options.

Ms. Rosa explained how teachers speak with the sophomores in their September meeting. Parents and students are able to discuss their questions and concerns with teachers and guidance counselors.

Ms. Furtado asked if a lot of feedback had been received from parents. She wanted to know how many parents were involved. Ms. Furtado expressed concern for the student who has taken honors courses during their junior and senior years.

Mr. Gorman explained the process. He noted the third tier complicates the process. He noted the AP is a more rigorous process that better prepares students.

Mr. Boone noted the rigorous terms of depth to the national curriculum. Honors are a step up from college prep. The homework is more rigorous, but is manageable. Time management is key and students make the adjustments necessary to succeed.

Ms. Enegren asked how this affects the CTE students.

Mr. Sawyer stated this led right into Slide 15. The school is looking to change its schedule in part to allow a reduction in the time commitment required by our AP courses. To increase access to AP students other coursework, such as advanced foreign language, CTE programs, art and music programs, we would reduce the AP from 10 to 7.5 credits. Advanced Placement training and increase AP enrollment have significantly changed both the culture of AP classes and teacher attitudes about an appropriate workload.

Ms. Enegren asked what would occur when a child finds the advanced placement rigor too difficult.

Mr. Sawyer explained that we work with students. If a student is willing to make the commitment, they usually can handle the AP expectations. He noted anyone is capable to do this work. If they feel this is not for them, the option of dual enrollment is also an option. This gives a student another option and perspective. This also gives the student college credits.

Ms. Enegren noted some colleges do not accept the credits.

Mr. Sawyer noted the experience alone is a positive factor.

Ms. Enegren stated she has heard mixed thoughts from parents.

Mr. Sawyer explained the job of the teachers/administration is to work with the student, counsel them, and determine what would work best for that student. He encouraged parents to involve the teachers/guidance counselors.

Dr. Durkin noted if a student has the motivation and will; they can be successful on some level.

Mr. Murphy asked if this information was being communicated to the student body.

Ms. Rosa described the process of presenting the checks from the MMSI program. Students were very interested to hear about the incentives for taking Advanced Placement courses. Students asked questions and seemed very motivated.

Mr. Murphy asked if it seemed like the culture was shifting.

Mr. Sawyer stated it was and has been over the past few years.

Mr. Newman explained that high school students visit the middle school students to explain the coursework. Students have the ability to ask questions of other students. They encourage students to think about the Advanced Placement courses.

Mr. Murphy commented on the systems in place. He asked about the focused data and if it included students, families, and teachers information.

Dr. Durkin noted these were good points. System data is collected and could be reported on.

Mr. Newman stated a senior survey is done every year. This information gathers good information and feedback.

Ms. Furtado asked how long the MMSI grant would be in place.

There are two more years remaining on the MMSI Grant.

Ms. Furtado asked what would happen when the grant incentives go away.

Dr. Durkin noted the grant monies are used to train teachers and provide student incentives, etc. The change in the culture should keep the AP courses moving forward.

Mr. Newman explained the incentive is a small portion of the culture change. The increase and extra push toward college-readiness generates a lot of excitement for students.

Ms. Rosa felt the incentive money was not necessary and at this time is a bonus for students.

Ms. Craw asked about the teacher stipends provided through this grant.

It was explained the stipends are provided based on the qualifying scores.

Dr. Durkin reiterated that she felt the money award played a small part in this process.

Ms. Enegren asked about the training for the Advanced Placement teachers.

It was noted the grant provides monies for the extra training. She asked if at the end of the two years, the system would have to absorb the training costs.

Mr. Newman noted the professional development expense has always been present.

Mr. Murphy asked if we were progressively pursuing other grant opportunities.

Ms. Sprague noted the Race to the Top Grant had three more years and provides training as well. She explained it is hard to project what opportunities will be out there, but we are always reviewing any options.

Dr. Durkin stated Attleboro is considered a "bright star" in this process. We are always thinking ahead on how to benefit the district.

Mr. Parent asked with the increase in enrollment for Advanced Placement, are the qualifying scores going up as well.

Mr. Sawyer explained the process. He noted the thinking would be in the terms of average; we are moving away from that theory and focusing on how to get more 3, 4, and 5 scores. The scores have improved.

Mr. Newman noted the number of courses have increased as has the success rate.

Dr. Durkin noted the Interim Business Manger, David King was also present this evening.

Personnel Report: Ms. Sprague one (1) resignation and six (6) appointments (School Committee Personnel Report dated 01-09-12 attached hereto and therefore made a part hereof).

Open Forum: Mr. Tyler explained the guidelines of Open Forum. Mr. Tyler noted there was a public record request regarding minutes. The committee is aware of this request and realizes the importance. Mr. Tyler stated counsel had been contacted and the current committee is in the process of resolving this request.

Leanne Isabella: Ms. Isabella stated two concerns. The first being the length of the bus ride. Her daughter was arriving home at 4:00 p.m. She noted with the timing of the arrival it was difficult to attend extra-curricular activities. Ms. Isabella acknowledged the cutting of the buses due to budget constraints, but recommended that the district consider returning to the staggered start times. The second item was the added 20 minutes to the school day. Ms. Isabella noted the surrounding towns seem to have kept the same schedules. She stated the state regulations and the minimum of 900 hours for elementary students. Ms. Isabella noted Attleboro was in compliance with 6 hours and 20 minute schedule. She noted if the district had lengthened the hours due a contractual obligation, perhaps the teachers could remain at the end of the day to meet this requirement and the students might be released. Ms. Isabella was here to express her concerns and seek what she felt was best for her child.

Lorie Brewster: the parent of two Hyman Fine students stated she had been working closely with Ms. Isabella fielding the frustration of several parents. An informal petition had been distributed. She recommended returning the school hours back to the staggered/shorter hours. Approximately 100 parents signed this petition. She noted her second grader used to love school with the change in hours, longer bus rides, and late arrival home, he seems more irritable. Her kindergartener had the ability to have full day kindergarten and she opted out noting the day was long enough. Ms. Brewster did not want any unnecessary stress placed on her children. Ms. Brewster would like to know where the 20 minutes is being used. When this question was posed to teachers there were several different answers. She shared some of the comments from parents: too much time on the bus; not in the best interest of the children; family lives have been altered; buses are overcrowded. Ms. Brewster stated the compiled complaints were forwarded for review.

Mr. Tyler thanked the people who came forward.

Committee Reports:

Finance, Facilities and Procurement Sub-Committee

Notification of bills and warrants

5BS023 – 12-14-11 - \$435,343.90

5BS024 – 12-21-11 - \$441,313.87

5BS025 - 12-28-11 - \$560,612.85

5BS026 – 01-04-12 -\$125,965.18

Motion to authorize the removal of pay phones at all schools: Mr. Furtado explained that Verizon sold the rights to these pay phones to a third party who doubled the costs. The cost to the district is \$15,000. Mr. Furtado stated when reviewed only two of the pay phones had shown activity and the use was not during school-related activities.

Mr. Murphy as Mr. Furtado to define not related to school activities.

Mr. Furtado explained the buildings are rented to certain groups such as Youth Basketball.

Ms. Craw stated concerns about children at these practices not having the ability to call for a ride if needed.

Dr. Durkin stated most coaches have cell phones and it is the coach's responsibility to ensure all the children are retrieved.

Ms. Craw did not want this to be a problem for families.

Mr. Furtado stated only two of the 14 phones had any activity.

Mr. Murphy asked that the removal be communicated to these groups so they were aware that the pay phones would no longer be available at these sites.

Mr. Furtado stated any party who rents the buildings completes a Building Usage Request Form. This information will be placed on that Form.

Dr. Durkin stated an adjustment period would be provided.

Motion to authorize the removal of pay phones at all schools: Vote: 9-0

Motion to request City Council approval of a food service contract for one (1) year with a four (4) year renewal; Mr. Furtado provided the background and reasoning for this request. Mr. Furtado explained to the Subcommittee that the food service contract structure is driven by the State. We have control over the quality of food and qualifications of the personnel. Our current food service contract reflects nutrition and the quality of food. It was noted the city council needs to approve the longer contract requirement before the RFP could be finalized for the bid process. Vote: 9-0. Motion passes.

Motion to request City Council approval of a transportation contract for three (3) years with two (2) one (1) year renewal options: Mr. Furtado provided the background and reasoning for this request. Discussion: The Administration explained that the reason they have asked to increase the contract to a five year contract is to get more competition to drive down the costs of transportation. Discussion: None: Vote: 9-0

Discussion of School Calendars 2012-12 and 2013-14: Mr. Tyler asked that this item be tabled. He has spoken with counsel and would like to ensure all the necessary information is provided before this discussion occurs.

The next meeting will be held on 1-11-12 @ 6:30 p.m.

Curriculum and Instruction Sub-Committee: The next meeting will be held on February 7, 2012 @ 6:30 p.m.

Policy Sub-Committee

Policy BDE: Subcommittees of the School Committee: (attached hereto and therefore made a part hereof): Mr. Tyler stated counsel was asked about this policy. Mr. Tyler read the changes that were being presented:

The following changes were discussed:

- a. The following committees, consisting of **three (3)** members each, shall be appointed by the Chairperson **for the duration of the current term and until a new School Committee is sworn into office**:
 - Curriculum and Instruction
 - Finance, Facilities and Procurement
 - Policy
- e. The Chairperson of the School Committee may have all the rights as a regular member (such as making motions, votes) but none of the obligations. **The Chairperson will count towards the quorum.**

Mr. Murphy noted with regard to the Open Meeting Law he believed two members of a three member subcommittee did constitute a quorum. He stated the language "rights not obligations" states there is no obligation on the part of a chairperson. Mr. Murphy explained these specific questions were not posed to Attorney Lenox. He was hesitant to approve the policy with this wording.

Mr. Larson stated concerns with the language. He did not want to violate the Open Meeting Laws. He noted if chairman were considered part of the committee this would be four members and two members would not constitute a quorum.

Mrs. Zito commented with three members, the sub-committee would be left wide open to problems.

Mr. Tyler reiterated this policy was brought forward from the previous committee.

Mr. Murphy stated he understood some of the valid reasons, but was hesitant to embrace this without clarification from counsel.

Ms. Enegren asked if this motion fails what does this mean this policy fails.

Mr. Tyler stated it was his understanding that the committee would revert back to the current policy in place.

Ms. Enegren stated members made good points. She suggested these questions be reviewed.

Mr. Tyler noted the motion remained on the floor. He explained a "yes" vote would approve the new policy. A "no" vote fail and the committee would revert to the current policy.

Mrs. Zito:	No
Mr. Larson:	No
Mr. Parent:	Yes
Ms. Craw:	Yes
Mr. Tyler:	No
Ms. Furtado:	Yes
Mr. Murphy:	No
Ms. Enegren:	Yes
Mr. O'Neil:	No

Vote: 5-4: Motion fails.

The next Policy Sub-Committee Meeting will be held on January 30, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Craw, Secretary

Attachments:

1. Agenda dated 01-09-12
2. School Sponsored Events: 01-09-12
3. Correspondence: Donation – Alan Bean
4. Attleboro School Department – Field Study Proposal: AHS
5. Draft School Committee Minutes dated 01-03-12
6. Power Point: Updated on Honors January 2012
7. School Committee Personnel Report dated 01-09-12
8. Warrant: 5BS023
9. Warrant: 5BS024
10. Warrant: 5BS025
11. Warrant: 5BS026
12. Draft Policy BDE: Subcommittee of the School Committee