

EARLY COLLEGE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, March 13, 2014

6:15 PM

School Administration Building

417 Rock Street

Fall River, MA 02720

AGENDA

Discussion: Implementation of an Early College concept at B.M.C. Durfee High School

MINUTES

At 6:17 PM Mr. Costa called to order the meeting of the Early College Subcommittee. A roll call for attendance showed Mr. Andrade, Mr. Costa, and Mr. Martins were present.

Also present were Dr. Fran Roy, Superintendent Mayo-Brown, Dr. Jack Sbrega, Principal Marshall, Mr. Ross Thibault, Mrs. Melissa Panchley, Mr. Paul Hart, and members of the press.

Mr. Costa read the open meeting law.

Mr. Costa thanked everyone for being there to have the discussion. He explained that he is not sure if it will remain a subcommittee or eventually morph into a working group. However, for the purposes of this meeting, the Mayor had asked that a subcommittee convene with Mr. Costa as chair and Mr. Martins and Mr. Andrade being a part of the committee. He noted for the record that Mrs. Panchley and Mr. Hart from the School Committee were also present.

He continued that the purpose of tonight's meeting was to have a discussion regarding an early college concept at Durfee High School. People are familiar with the process because last year the Committee deliberated about an Innovation Academy for the then closed Henry Lord Middle School. It did not gain enough approval to move forward, however, he believes that the concept of an early college high school was a valuable one and something that they thought provided opportunity for the students of the district. He still feels strongly about that. He noted that the concept of an early college high school is going to require some work by all parties involved. He asked Dr. Sbrega to be there because Bristol Community College (BCC) would be a key element going forward.

Mr. Costa said he would like to open it up for any comments. His intent is to have a discussion to see if there is a consensus that having an early college in the district is valuable and then moving forward how they will get to that end. He hopes to address some of those issues at this meeting and then if there is agreement, he would ask to have the Superintendent come up with individuals who could work together on this.

Mr. Andrade said it is not a new concept and noted the dual enrollment concept that is been in place for many years. It is probably not as developed as they would like see. Some individual students may

take one or two courses and some may take a full year of courses at BCC. There is an interest among students and families and they are looking to take off from there and develop it a little more fully.

Mr. Martins said he appreciated Dr. Sbrega being there because without Bristol Community College, they would not be able to have an early college program. He does not envision this to be an innovation school like the innovation schools that have come online. He looks at this as an extension of the dual enrollment program with a more formal structure to it. He noted that there would be pre-requisites. He felt the biggest problem would be the scheduling and noted that he would love to see a shuttle bus running back-and-forth between Durfee and BCC.

Mr. Martins continued that there is always a concern how they will pay for the program. He felt it would be the same as when the innovation school was proposed last July where the funding would be for a grade 13. Students do not receive a high school diploma until they have completed the entire program through grade 13 which means that they are high school students. Under Chapter 70, funding for those students can be utilized to pay BCC for the courses. He said it may be an oversimplification right now but that they will need to meet to discuss the finances involved, scheduling, and other concerns. He added that it can be done if people want to make it happen.

Mr. Costa recognized Madame Superintendent.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown thanked the School Committee for their willingness to revisit this concept. She thinks the notion of an early college high school provides the students with another educational pathway to post-secondary education. "I cannot say enough in terms of working with Bristol Community College. They have always been willing to support us in any way that is feasible whether it's the Gateway to College program, dual-enrollment, or a variety of programs over at BCC that support our current high school students. So, in my very preliminary conversation with Dr. Sbrega, he had indicated that he would like to talk more about it and see what can be worked out." She added that she thinks it is a terrific idea worth pursuing.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown continued that the details will need to get worked out through a working group/committees that involve the staff that would actually be charged with implementing it. She encouraged the Committee to think about how they should structure it because one of the challenges she thought about with including a 13th year for graduation was that it would reduce Durfee's four year graduation rate. "It is those kinds of impacts that we need to think about strategically. How do we handle it? I think there are ways to think about that creatively. I think as we go down this path with Durfee, these kinds of things will pop up and I just think we need to think about that and how we best approach it." She thanked the Committee again for the opportunity to reconsider the concept.

Mr. Costa recognized Dr. Sbrega.

Dr. Sbrega thanked everyone for including BCC in the conversation and said he looked forward to the partnership. He said there has been a lot of talk about dual-enrollment and it is a terrific program and doesn't know why it is not contagious. He explained that there are criteria for dual-enrollment and students must be certified by the principal, guidance counselors, and BCC's own dual-enrollment administration. He said they would have to worry about anyone who makes it to the 13th grade and if they would be automatically entered into the college course. He thinks it is a great concept that will promote levels of education attainment and levels of literacy in the region. "So there are criteria; nothing that can't be worked out because we know ahead of time going into the ninth grade what you need to do for these. Incidentally, we have even more stringent criteria for a program in dual-enrollment for underage students - not just juniors and seniors - and they have to pass through certain

gates for us to certify them and other people.” Dr. Sbrega added that all dual-enrollment students have a higher GPA every semester than their "regular" BCC students and the underaged students have the highest GPA of all of them. “They are hand selected. They are excellent and they are put in into places where they will succeed.”

Dr. Sbrega said that he felt this is going to work and be a terrific program. He said the financial arrangements were brought up and must be addressed but that is something that a work group can work out along with the other issues. He would like to have faculty involved and some dual-enrollment administrators involved. He noted that the graduation rate is ill-defined and flawed but he thinks with some streamlining with DESE, it can be worked out.

Mr. Costa asked if Dr. Sbrega would be able to offer individuals from BCC for the working group.

Dr. Sbrega agreed.

Mr. Costa said the more opportunity they have to reach across all contingencies to come to the table the better off they will be.

Mr. Costa recognized Mr. Marshall.

Mr. Marshall said his position has been clear from the very beginning. One of the things that attracted him to coming to Fall River was the proximity from Durfee to BCC and he has not been disappointed. He has been welcomed with open arms in relation to the students and it has been a tremendous opportunity to have students attend school before college. It has been a huge push that they have made because a lot of their students were not going to college. They felt it was a great opportunity to be able to prove to the students and parents that kids are college ready and it is affordable and something they can do. He continued that they have been attacking it from the AP end as well and getting those kids to achieve at the highest level and also get them onto campus as soon as possible. “More opportunities for our kids is what it is all about. If this can garner that, I am all for it. I was real clear last year coming out for this program because it was another opportunity for our students to be able to be moving into post-secondary education. I just finished writing a small grant in relation to building communities and we are still having a hard time moving away from manufacturing. Manufacturing has not been a viable option for a lot of our families for years but we are still stuck in that. We can’t get the businesses to come down here because we don’t have the human capital; so we need to build human capital for them to come. It has to happen in parallel universes. So getting our kids on to college campuses as quickly as possible is a goal of ours and I think it also breaks down those barriers for the kids to be understanding that it is possible.”

Mr. Marshall noted that BCC is one of those hidden gems to educational attainment. He talked about the high cost of “designer schools” crippling families with loans and also the personal attention you receive at BCC as opposed to the larger schools. Their partnership with BCC has been tremendous and he hopes to expand that partnership. He agreed that all angles, including compliance, will need to be worked out but he is 100% for it. Mr. Marshall noted that they also have the Gateway to College program whose contract is coming up in a year and will need to be evaluated.

Mr. Martin's said it seems they are all on the same page. He said this is an excellent program because it is a program. Some early college concepts in other districts are almost like a school within a school with a separate administration. He is not looking for that. It will be a program within Durfee. If it can combine dual-enrollment, that is fine. “I view this as an avenue in which gifted and talented students, if they are interested, can proceed on...We don't want any water down classes; BCC will not allow

watered-down classes. The students have to demonstrate that they can indeed do the work involved in the class that they are taking and upon successful completion they are awarded the credits for it. I think it will help the students. I also think it will be a motivator for other students.”

Mr. Andrade asked Dr. Sbrega who their liaison is at BCC for dual-enrollment.

Dr. Sbrega said it was Margaret O'Brien.

Mr. Andrade said to Mr. Marshall's comment of the circular dilemma regarding the lack of education and businesses coming in; that has been a reality for his entire life and before that, so hopefully they can make a dent in that in the near future.

Mr. Martin's said that several Mayors have indicated that in order to promote industry you need education and this would be an excellent start. “We have talked about it; now let's do something about it.”

Mr. Costa asked Mrs. Panchley and Mr. Hart if they had anything to add and they did not.

Mr. Costa said he they have established conversation to see if there is a consensus to begin the process and there does seem like there is a consensus for it. He said he would like to see over the next couple of weeks a framework set and a working group formed. He asked Dr. Sbrega and the Superintendent to recommend names for the group. He also asked that the Superintendent have Mr. Saunders start to look at the cost factor. He is looking to reconvene in early April.

Mr. Marshall asked what size group Mr. Costa envisioned.

Mr. Costa said he does not want to make it so big that they would not be able to capture what they intend on doing but would like to see a couple of administrators from the high school, some FREA members, BCC representation (3), and any individuals the Superintendent recommends. He added that he would like to extend the offer to members of the community and maybe a high school parent if they are available to meet as well as representation from the business community. He is thinking roughly 12 to 15 individuals.

Mr. Martin's said he can understand Mr. Costa's point of view but thinks a larger committee would create too much dialogue and that maybe 9 to 12 people may be better.

Mr. Costa restated who he thought should be involved and thought they would be at 12-13 individuals.

Mr. Andrade suggested a student.

Mr. Costa asked Mr. Marshall if he could identify a student.

Mr. Marshall said he already had a student in mind.

Dr. Sbrega said he could envision the work group dividing into different topics and having only certain members of the work group attend sessions depending on the relevancy of the topic.

Mr. Costa agreed.

Mr. Hart agreed with Dr. Sbrega's idea as well.

Mr. Costa asked if there were any closing comments from anybody. There were not.

Mr. Costa said again that the intent was to revisit this and build consensus that it is important for the community to move forward with this topic and they have done that. He asked the Superintendent to stay in touch over the next couple of weeks.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown agreed.

Mr. Martin's asked that the Superintendent and Dr. Sbrega's staff identify certain topics to establish an agenda.

Mr. Costa said that was the framework he suggested to discuss what it is going to look like. He asked that that be done before the next meeting and his hope is to reconvene everyone back in early April.

MOTION: Mr. Andrade – Mr. Martins: To adjourn.

All were in favor

None Opposed

Meeting adjourned at 6:50PM

Respectfully submitted,



Interim Administrative Assistant for
School Committee Services

Please note: A videotape/DVD of this meeting is on file in the School Committee Office and is available for review by contacting the Interim Administrative Assistant for School Committee Services.