

**Meeting of the
Instructional/SPED Subcommittee**

**Tuesday, November 18, 2014
5:00 PM**

**School Administration Building
417 Rock Street
Fall River, MA 02720**

AGENDA

Discussion:

- Chapter 74/Perkins program implementation update
- Durfee High School MCAS Scores
- Review of Special Education Services at Henry Lord
- MCAS targets for school improvement planning and budget development

MINUTES

At 5:08 PM Chairman Martins read the Open Meeting Law and then called to order the Instructional/SPED Subcommittee Meeting. A roll call showed that Mr. Andrade, Mr. Martins and Mrs. Panchley were present.

Also in attendance was Superintendent Mayo-Brown.

1. Chapter 74/Perkins program implementation update

Mr. Martins asked if there would be representatives from Durfee attending and Superintendent Mayo-Brown said there would not.

Mr. Martins said he was hoping to get an update on this agenda item. Superintendent Mayo-Brown said she could brief the subcommittee.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown noted they have a new CVTE Director, Robert Gadbois, who started a month prior. His first task was to prepare for the Coordinated Program Review (CPR). The review team was there the week prior reviewing files for CVTE, ELL, Special Education and Civil Rights. Durfee is using the results of the CPR to assess what needed to occur within the current programming at Durfee around CVTE and also to make a determination and recommendation around the program(s) that they will propose in terms of filing an application. There has been much discussion around preparing an application for the FRED-TV program and the Durfee staff also wants to consider doing programs around finance and law because they feel they have the course work that could feed into those programs. As soon as the CPR review is over, they will turn their attention to beginning to put together recommendations for the Committee around a minimum of one application and will bring forward any others that they feel are doable as well.

Mr. Martins asked if members had any questions on the update.

Mr. Andrade thought it sounded like they were ahead of where they expected them to be.

Mrs. Panchley said hearing finance as a possibility; she did not realize that fit into that kind of programming.

Mr. Martins explained the sixteen career clusters which include finance and said he could get a copy to Mrs. Panchley.

Mrs. Panchley said it is not what she thinks of when they discuss the programming and she thought it would be a good choice to fill the hole since the business department was done away with. She asked if the Superintendent anticipated another update before the holidays.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown thought they could make a recommendation right before the holidays in terms of the application(s) they would consider filing. She reminded the subcommittee of the application process and noted it is not about specific courses but demonstrating that they meet the standards. As Durfee was doing an initial review, they realized they could meet most of the standards for finance and law. They want to do more of an analysis but it sounded promising. She thought finance would be good area to consider as well.

Mr. Martins said STEM was another career cluster and they have a program currently that may be able to be utilized. It allows more opportunities for students and they can get additional monies from it. He added he had learned about the changes in PLTW funding and explained some examples.

Mr. Martins continued that there is some concern that this will not get acceptance of the full Committee so he requested a motion to refer it to the full Committee to see if they would like to proceed with the effort of establishing CVTE programs.

Mrs. Panchley recommended that they put it on the January agenda after they have met as a subcommittee one more time and agreed in concept of what programs they would be looking at.

Mr. Martins said that was fine

MOTION: Mrs. Panchley – Mr. Andrade: That they have another subcommittee meeting in December and in January go in front of the full Committee as a whole and present to them the programs they have agreed with Durfee that they would be applying for in April.

All in favor

None Opposed

Motion Passed

2. Durfee High School MCAS Scores

Mr. Martins said he is concerned and is sure they share that concern. The Composite Performance Index (CPI) goal is supposed to be met by 2017.

Transcriber's Note: Two parents entered the meeting and Mr. Martins informed them of what the meeting was about and invited them in.

Mr. Martins continued that he was concerned with reaching the goal in which they had only two more years to accomplish. He is disappointed with what he sees when looking at Durfee; that their overall rating is not what they would like it to be. When they look at the budget process for FY16 which couples

with the School Improvement Plan; he is concerned about the interpretation of CPI vs PPI (Pupil Progress Indicator). They are considered to be making progress if they have met 75. Some schools have made progress and some still need to do a lot of work. He noted that the School Committee had not weighed in as to whether the goal is PPI or CPI.

Mrs. Panchley said that she thought when they approved the Superintendent's goals last year; one of her goals was related to PPI. She feels the Committee of the Whole weighed in when they approved that as one of her goals, saying that is one of their priorities. She felt when they identified the Superintendent's goals as a Committee; it was them identifying their goals as a district's goals. She questioned what they were doing if they are not aligning the district's goals with the Superintendent's goals.

Mr. Martins thought they needed to identify what goals they would use.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown clarified that PPI stood for Progress and Performance Index. The progress is the student growth percentile which is 40% of the progress piece. The performance is the CPI which is 60% of PPI. The State acknowledged that reducing the proficiency gap as a State was not looking good in terms of all districts being able to do that so they changed their accountability system two-three years ago to be PPI to acknowledge progress or growth and weight that as part of the formula. Mr. Martins was correct that prior to that the accountability system rested on CPI/how many kids were performing and reaching proficiency. That accountability system was altered to the PPI formula. Superintendent Mayo-Brown said she did not want listeners to think PPI is all about progress – it is progress and performance weighted more heavily on performance.

Mr. Martins responded that when the officials from DESE were at the last meeting, he asked what the goal was to be achieved by 2017 and their response was CPI being 50% from the base of 2011.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said she recalled him asking the question in the context of CPI and what that goal was. She added that that had not changed because districts get credit for whether or not they are reducing that gap which is the performance piece of the formula. It has not changed but they have reduced it to a 60/40 split. They are still held accountable for reducing the gap but it is 60% of the overall formula for accountability purposes.

Mr. Martins did not understand what they would be rated on two years from now.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown responded by explaining that the State was saying if their PPI is 75 they are on track. They need to be looking at the schools that are not at 75 because they will need to accelerate in order to meet the goal he is talking about. The goal is still their goal of what Mr. Martins described in CPI but it is part of a larger goal (60%) within the PPI. She added that it has not gone away and reducing the gaps by 50% is still in the formula but it is not 100% like it was a couple of years ago.

Mr. Martins asked come 2017, what would it look like. Have they gone beyond that 75 or did they achieve the 50% CPI.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown explained if a school is at 75 or higher, it is telling them that they are on the trajectory to hit the target.

Mr. Martins went over Durfee's CPI data and Superintendent Mayo-Brown explained how they are on track to meet their target. Mr. Martins noted that was for ELA and they had work to do in math.

Mr. Martins said he looked through the school improvement plans and some make reference to PPI and others to CPI. Some did not make it and he wants to know what they need to do to help them get to where they need to be for 2017. He also noted that the school improvement plans are discussed during the budget process with the finance subcommittee and the instructional subcommittee has not looked at the plans. He questioned if they accept the finance piece, if that approved the curriculum and vice versa. He thought there were two separate issues that need to be considered.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown asked what he saw the subcommittee on curriculum approving in the plans.

Mr. Martins responded the goals of the curriculum and goals.

Mrs. Panchley said she believed what he was saying is that they go to the finance subcommittee with where they struggled the year prior and ask for position changes and finance makes that decision without vetting it through the curriculum subcommittee when those decisions are based on what kind of instruction is needed. She understood what he was saying but did not know what the answer was. She noted that she had mentioned the benchmark data and asked that it be discussed in December and thought maybe that could be a way of having a preliminary conversation around where schools are. She reiterated that she understood what he was saying but did not know what the answer would be.

Mr. Andrade said it was helpful that Mrs. Panchley was on both subcommittees and thought that they could stagger and discuss some of the issues before it goes to finance. He also thought there should be consistency in the schools referencing CPI or PPI. He did not have a problem with PPI. His impression was that DESE at some point realized using everything on CPI was unrealistic and their way of dealing with that was to come up with a new measure which diminished to some extent the weight of the raw scores. His only impression is that CPI is very unrealistic for a number of communities around the State which prompted them to switch to PPI.

Mr. Martins asked if it was possible to get from DESE what they will be looking for come 2017. He questioned what the 60% and 40% would be that they would look at.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said she would get the technical document that explains it but in essence if they are hitting the 75 consistently then they are going to be hitting their target because of the weight being lowered around CPI.

Mr. Martins said he could accept that but questioned if it meant they achieved.

3. Review of Special Education Services at Henry Lord

Mr. Martins explained to the parents present that this was a subcommittee and that the School Committee of the Whole is the body that does the decision making. He also outlined the established protocol in regards to addressing an issue and the chain of command process.

The two mothers present said they were there to listen to anything that is discussed pertaining to their children's schools. They have severe concerns that they would like to address with the full Committee. They have an appointment to speak with the Superintendent and for the time being would like to sit to listen to what is going on in the education process.

Mrs. Panchley said she used to attend subcommittee meetings occasionally before sitting on the School Committee and would hope they would meet with the Superintendent prior to the next School Committee meeting.

The parents replied they would do that and go through the chain of command.

Mr. Martins said he did not want any tax payer to feel they are excluded from access to the School Committee. They have access to the School Committee; however, there are protocols that have to be taken as he explained. His hope is that when they speak to the Superintendent it would be taken care of.

Mr. Martins said they will continue on with the meeting and asked that they meet with the Superintendent and if they were not satisfied they could be placed on the next School Committee agenda.

Mr. Andrade said they are happy they showed enough interest to come out to watch the proceedings.

Mr. Martins continued with the meeting stating they had discussed the MCAS targets and did not think they needed to go into that. The Superintendent would be getting something from DESE that more clearly specifies what is to be expected in 2017.

Regarding the review of special education services at Henry Lord; he has received complaints in regards to teachers being hired and several leaving. He is sympathetic to it being very traumatic to a special needs/autistic child when a teacher leaves. He questioned what the problem was with keeping these teachers and concerns they are facing.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown explained that some are personal/life changes. There is also a shortage of special education teachers and within that shortage the State is not graduating enough special education teachers to meet the demand. When they take that down to a subset of teachers who have expertise in working with autistic children, the number is even smaller. They have been trying to do some outreach with their current teachers asking if they need more paraprofessionals in the classroom, more autism specialists, etc. They are very interested in what type of supports teachers need in order to feel successful in the classroom and stay rather than getting frustrated and leaving. They cannot control any personal reasons for leaving but can work with teachers to help them feel more supported.

Mr. Martins said this brings him to the issue of hiring. They are competing for qualified teachers in autism spectrum disorder and he would like to discuss with the subcommittee to recommend to the full Committee that contracts be changed to reflect the Superintendent's ability to hire someone at a negotiated step to get a qualified candidate. He noted that there was the case the Superintendent mentioned of a class not having a qualified teacher in the classroom for half the school year and questioned what they can do to be sure this did not continue.

Mrs. Panchley asked if it would be doable and if it is, she felt there had to be some sort of range such as no more than two steps above, to avoid the potential for abuse of bringing people in at higher steps. She completely appreciated what Mr. Martins was saying but felt they would need to come up with wording that would not allow it to get out of control.

Mr. Martins understood and said that he has said to the Superintendent before that it is "trust with verification". They have to have some trust.

Mr. Andrade agreed and also thought they would have to stipulate that it would only be in areas of critical needs such as special education, math and maybe science. He thought it could be sticky because the contract had already been settled and they would need to get a side letter of agreement which may be difficult to do. He asked if they could do something with their current staff in terms of getting some training for individuals that would be interested in taking some of the positions if they became available recognizing it might take some time depending on the training they would need. He added that they could either pay for the training or provide the training in-district.

Mr. Martins asked Superintendent Mayo-Brown if that is something that could be considered.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown responded that a couple of years ago they had piloted BCBA training and paid for a couple of individuals to go through the training and then they left. She thought it was an interesting idea to think about compensation incentives without going crazy about it. Other districts have done signing bonuses but they want educators to commit. Once they attract them with a signing bonus; what potential tools do they have for recruitment? She shared a handout that Ms. Ivone Medeiros, Executive Director of Special Education and Student Services, put together outlining what the resources are at Henry Lord for the ASD program.

Mr. Martins said he appreciated the information but they still have the issue of it being much better if they did not have the potential of vacancy. He thought they should think about having the Superintendent compile a packet with some options. One is trying to get a side letter of agreement to modify the contract so they can hire someone at a higher step. They could train their own and also recruit the paraprofessionals as well. He asked if anyone wished to make a motion regarding this.

Mrs. Panchley asked for a point of clarification – she knew of a vacancy at Silvia and questioned if there was a vacancy at Henry Lord as well.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said she could not answer that without hearing directly from Ms. Medeiros. She did not believe there was but wanted to confirm it first.

MOTION: Mr. Andrade – Mrs. Panchley: To have the Superintendent explore the option of providing an incentive for hiring of special needs teachers; also, the option of training our own teachers in autism.

All in favor

None Opposed

Motion Passed

Mr. Martins said another issue that has come up especially in regards to Henry Lord is reports of bullying that he has received calls on. He is sure the principal is aware.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said she is not sure and is concerned that he raised this issue there because the law is clear that if bullying is reported to any staff of FRPS they have to take action on it immediately. She wants to be sure that the parents that contacted him; that the administration knows who they are so that they can follow up and meet the letter of the law but more importantly address it.

Mr. Martins said every School Committee member received the same thing as he and he believed the Superintendent was copied on it. He briefly explained the situation. He was not sure if it had been corrected.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said it had been resolved.

Mr. Martins said the issue was that it took a while to resolve the issue.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown asked what how long “a while” was.

Mr. Martins responded that if you are the parent of the youngster being bullied several days is a while.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said the situation was resolved pretty quickly while meeting the requirements of the law that an investigation be conducted. They have to go through the process of conducting an investigation and then resolving the matter which is what happened. She noted that Mr. Martins’ comments led her to think there was a lot more going on than that one incident.

Mr. Martins said there are other complaints of kids being picked on and he thought the staff had to be more aware. He said some are directed to the whole School Committee and others are directed to just him. When it is just to him; he explains to them how they should handle the issue and who they should speak to.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said she wanted to impress upon anyone listening that as soon as anybody reports to any of them – School Committee members, administrators, paraprofessionals, teachers, custodians, etc. – as soon as they use the word bullying, it launches an immediate investigation. She asked that if a parent calls him stating they feel their child is being bullied that she be notified immediately so that she can conduct an investigation on it.

Mr. Martins explained how he normally handles the complaints which include giving them the steps to go through and directing the parent to contact the principal.

Mrs. Panchley said she does what he does as well but also notifies the Superintendent of the report/complaint because she cannot directly do anything to stop the problem. She advises them to go to the principal and sends it to the Superintendent to follow-up on her end.

Mr. Martins thought they basically did the same thing but he did not go immediately to the Superintendent. He expects that if the parents follow the steps they will eventually get to the Superintendent if it is not handled properly with the principal.

Mr. Martins said the next issue of complaint was regarding religion curriculum at the Greene school involving Islam. He asked to see the curriculum. He thought Islam as a religion was no more or less important than the others and thought if they are not teaching all, they should not be teaching one.

Mrs. Panchley questioned it being at the Greene school and thought it was in the 7th grade curriculum.

Mr. Andrade asked what the complaint was.

Mr. Martins said that the teacher was teaching Islamic doctrine.

Mrs. Panchley thought it was in the middle school framework.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said it was and was part of ancient civilization and world history. It is not limited to one particular religion and the curriculum walks through early Christianity, and all the major faiths. Religion is not taught, per se, but are topics through history.

Mr. Martins said he would appreciate seeing the information on the curriculum framework on this issue and Superintendent Mayo-Brown agreed.

Mr. Martins said they had already discussed the fourth agenda item and after they get the information from DESE they can go to the full Committee in regards to the understanding of the 2017 goals.

Mr. Martins asked if there were any other comments.

Mrs. Panchley asked if they could discuss the benchmark data at the next meeting.

Mr. Martins asked what benchmark data specifically.

Mrs. Panchley explained that the students take benchmark math and English exams which the Assistant Superintendent reviews as an early indicator of what they are looking at for MCAS scores. Every term students take the exams to gauge where they want to be on the MCAS.

Mr. Martins asked if it could be put together.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said they did not have it for that evening but they can put together for the next meeting.

Mrs. Panchley added that it was something they had incorporated into their subcommittee description which was reviewing the benchmark data quarterly.

Mr. Martins asked if there were any other comments or questions and there were not.

MOTION: Mr. Andrade – Mrs. Panchley: To adjourn.

All in favor

None Opposed

Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:21 PM

Respectfully submitted,



Administrative Assistant for
School Committee Services