

EARLY COLLEGE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, June 3, 2015

4:45 PM

School Administration Building

417 Rock Street

Fall River, MA 02720

AGENDA

Discussion: Update on the status of the Early College High School

MINUTES

At 4:48 PM Mr. Mark Costa, Chair of the Subcommittee, called to order the meeting of the Early College Subcommittee for Wednesday, June 3 and asked for a roll call. The roll call showed Mr. Gabriel Andrade, Mr. Joseph Martins and Mr. Mark Costa were all present.

Also present were Superintendent Mayo-Brown, Dr. Fran Roy, Dr. Jack Sbrega, Ms. Sara Morrell, Mr. Greg Sethares, Mr. Anthony Ucci, Mr. JP Nadeau, Mr. Robert Rak, Dr. Michelle Sylvaria, Ms. Maria Pontes, and Mr. Kevin Almeida. School committeeman Paul Hart was also in the audience as well as a member of the press.

Mr. Costa read the Open Meeting Law.

He then welcomed everyone noting they had somewhat of a hiatus from meeting and the high school was going through a transition with their leadership. He asked the Superintendent to reconvene the committee to see where they stood with the Early College proposal and relationship.

He invited those from Bristol Community College (BCC) and the school department sitting in the audience to join them at the table. He thanked Dr. Sbrega for joining them noting that when they have him in attendance it is an honor and thanked him for taking time out of his schedule to be there. He thanked others in attendance as well. He then turned the floor over to Superintendent Mayo-Brown for discussion on progress.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown thanked Mr. Costa and said they are very pleased to be able to continue to work with their partners at BCC to develop a viable option for students to have an Early College High School pathway. There have been a number of meetings that have taken place and she wanted to turn the floor to Sara from BCC to update the Committee on those meetings and where they are to date.

Ms. Morrell said she would actually like to hand it over to the President or Chief Academic Officer to see if they would like to give an overview before she got into any details.

President Sbrega thanked Mr. Costa for his kind remarks and said it was their honor to be there to work with them on this fantastic project as a way for students to get another pathway for success which is a common concern and priority for all of them.

Mr. Sethares said he has been involved in the planning meetings and is very excited. He believes in this partnership particularly given their proximity, they have real opportunity to do something that most other community college and high school partners are not necessarily able to do. They have had amazing cooperation with their meetings and have had faculty and counselors involved on both sides. He thought they were off to a great start to what he hopes would be a model across the state. He has followed these at other community college and he thinks the opportunity they have is a little bit different and could be a model.

Ms. Morrell introduced their Associate Vice-President Anthony Ucci and two fine faculty members who have been parts of the initiative, JP Nadeau and Robert Rak who can speak to all aspects of the program as well.

Ms. Morrell said that Kim Napolitano has been a very key participant in all of their meetings this winter and spring. She asked if they would like a description of the model.

Mr. Costa said yes and said she could explain the framework. He knows there were some barriers they had discussed the last time they met and he wondered if they had been worked through or if they need additional work. He wondered what they have been able to come to consensus with on what is able to happen and what they are still trying to work out.

Ms. Morrell explained they have decided to start small and ensure success by growing slowly. Their first cohort would potentially begin applying for the program next year and be introduced to the program potentially during their discovery class as freshmen at Durfee. That would be one of the options they are exposed to throughout the year and could elect to pursue it as a possibility from sophomore through senior year through an application process at the end of their freshman year. That application would be screened by a committee who would look at multiple elements of an application and not just the transcript. There will be a set of recommendations and other data, test scores, etc. to be sure they are ready and have a subjective evaluation by a guidance counselor, teacher or both who would speak to their readiness for college level work – on an emotional level as well as academic. After they have been screened and selected by a committee of both school and college personnel they would then select courses for the subsequent year. They have a series of suggestions, semester by semester courses that they could elect to take or could modify to some extent from sophomore through junior through senior year. The most accelerated approach to that series of courses could result in their earning enough credits to become closer to the associates degree by the time students are done but they are actually advocating a slightly slower pace so that students are more mature and have had a better foundation with high school courses by the time they reach the core of their college course work in junior and senior year.

Mr. Nadeau recalled the last time they met they discussed the different constituencies that might benefit from such a program and what they have discussed is targeting those students who are academically fairly successful (around a 3.0 GPA) who may not be thinking about college. They thought it was a key foundational principle for the program that students who participate in the program they would have to do

everything they could to ensure that they will have a positive experience with college. He did not feel there was any sense in introducing students to the college experience and having it be a disaster. They need to know who is coming and make sure they are prepared in multiple ways.

Ms. Morrell agreed and explained that one of the first courses that they will take is a College Success Seminar that they offer at the college as an introductory course to get them exposed to all the resources available, habits of mind and other practices that will help them to be successful. That will be paired with a three credit content course and then their second semester they will take two other three credit content courses.

Mr. Nadeau said another thing they discussed was the school day and they thought those students probably do not want to forgo their high school experience so they discussed taking their college classes at one half of the school day and then taking their core curriculum at Durfee during the other half of the day.

Ms. Morrell thought they discussed them being at Durfee in the mornings and after lunch they would go over to BCC for the afternoon and take their courses then. She thought it seemed like a good model given their proximity. She added that they have had a number of meetings about science, mathematics and English and which courses should be identified and necessary or optional components and variations on the typical path but it looks like they would have at least two 3 credit courses each semester until they graduate from high school. She noted that all of the courses would need to be taken within the MassTransfer Block with the exception of the College Success Seminar so that they can ensure that those courses and credits will transfer to other institutions.

Mr. Martins said he was a little confused because the last time they had met someone from the school district was to meet with BCC's finance director to determine if this was financially feasible. From what he understood it to be at that point in time was that while there would be some juniors taking a course or two and seniors taking a couple of courses and then the grade 13 would be totally BCC but they would not be considered a high school graduate and the Chapter 70 monies would come to Fall River and then Fall River would pay the college. Students would not receive their high school diploma until completion of the BCC program where they would get both the high school diploma and the Associate's Degree provided they earned it.

Mr. Martins also recalled that someone from Fall River was to meet with Mr. Nadeau for subject material.

Ms. Morrell said she believed that was their Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Kenyon, who was not able to be present at this meeting but he had met with Mr. Saunders and they agreed on a price per credit. The Chapter 70 arrangement will work hypothetically the way he described although they may need to work out some more details. The 13th grade aspect has not gone forward in this particular model. It was a part of the previous proposals that were not successful. They are not holding the students "hostage" for that extra year while they earn more credits in the current model.

Mr. Martins asked what the difference was between what they are referring to versus dual enrollment.

Ms. Morrell responded that it was very similar but more structured and intentional. There are more recommended sequences involved but it is an enhanced dual enrollment model.

Mr. Sethares explained that the foundational principle of dual enrollment is something that they recognize that is a success. Like Mr. Nadeau said earlier, from day one they wanted to come up with a program that gives students a success – students that may not necessarily be heading off to college had they continued on their standard high school track. The basic idea is to start in their freshman year – not doing anything at BCC

– but learning about the program in the Discovery experience. If interested by the end of their freshman year, that would be the first opportunity that they could make an application to the program. In the fall of their sophomore year, they would have the opportunity to take a one credit College Success Seminar (CSS) paired with a three credit content course that was selected to be appropriate for the students. They would take that course with other BCC students at the Elsbree Street campus. The CSS101 would be specially designed for this cohort of students and would be done in a cohort model without college students in the course. What they learn in that course would then be applied to the college level courses. In the spring they would follow up with one more course in the afternoon and then after the sophomore year they could pick up the pace if they are appropriate. Some students may not be ready to do two courses. It is also possible at the possible of junior year a student could get into the program. That student would not get as many college credits. They have added up the credits and if the student is really driven and takes a summer course or two, they can get to 60 credits. He felt it would be a great opportunity for some students to graduate from Durfee on one day and BCC another. Either way the students will know when they graduate from high school they will know they are going to be successful in college.

Mr. Ucci felt it was very important that they bring parents into the process early on so they are aware of what is going on as well.

Mr. Costa asked if the high school saw that as a component of the freshman discovery.

Ms. Morrell said they discussed having an advisory board for the early college high school that would be composed of administrators, college personnel and parents.

Mr. Nadeau said to answer the question about the difference between this and dual enrollment is a good one and they have asked themselves the same at times and it is completely strategic. The students who are in traditional dual enrollment, their parents are involved and pushing; they will be targeting students whose parents might not be talking to them about college and students who aren't thinking of it as an option. As an educator, he wants students to know it is an option and that they can do it. The credits are above and beyond what he is looking for. He is just looking for them to say they can do this.

Transcriber's Note: A member of the press joined the meeting at this time.

Mr. Andrade said he was happy to hear them talk about starting the program small. He remembered a big sticking point in the past being money and how it would be funded but it sounds like they are talking about having a proportionate share of the Chapter 70 money.

Mr. Sethares said that the CFOs have been handling that and they also have a business faculty member who is working with that group as well but he does not believe they are talking about a percentage of the Chapter 70 money and more a per course amount.

Mr. Andrade asked if it was allowable to use the money in that way.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said yes because in essence from DESEs perspective they are buying a course for students.

Mr. Martins asked if the Department of Education was approving that.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said the School Committee could use the funding in any way they decide they just need to make sure they have an articulation agreement between the two parties.

Ms. Morrell added that they also hope to have a resource person who can accompany students from the high school to the college and oversee their experience and be sure they are successful and have their needs met.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown explained to Mr. Martins that they do that now through Gateway to College; using School Committee budget to support; in theory, it is the same model around the finances.

Mr. Martins said in his opinion it is different from what they had initially discussed.

Mr. Andrade said in talking about the 13th year, in a sense he is glad they are not going in that direction because he thought this was “cleaner” and he thought the concept may have been a deterrent for a number of students who would be disappointed to not graduate when they expected.

Ms. Morrell thought they could still earn a significant number – if not all – of the credits that they would have under the other model.

Mr. Nadeau said it is more of an opportunity instead of a consequence.

Mr. Costa asked the size of the initial cohort.

Ms. Morrell said they discussed having two cohorts of 22 each and that was driven by the maximum capacity of the CSS class.

Mr. Sethares said the two cohorts of 22 would be the maximum they would do and explained that they could have one cohort of 22 or if they had 36 students, they could do two cohorts of 18. The maximum would be 44 students.

Mr. Costa asked that they could allot for 44 students coming into Durfee freshman discovery with the idea that they would go down this early college pathway.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said they could have more in that discovery and through the process identify students.

Mr. Costa agreed that not all will be prepared sophomore year to pass the requirements in order to start.

Ms. Morrell said they are hoping that a lot of students will be exposed to the opportunity and learn about this and other BCC programs through the discovery unit as they cycle through that and then up to 44 can be selected.

Mr. Costa thought it was good that they have taken the finance piece and shelved it so it doesn't detract from the planning piece and let the CFOs work through that. As long as those talks are going on while the program is being laid out, they can bring them in to finalize how it will look financially. It is a huge piece and they want it to be worthwhile for all parties. They know there are a number of students attending BCC classes that have been very successful and they want to continue that. He agreed that there was a change from the 13th year but looking at the big picture, holding a student back from being able to graduate for an extra year for the chance to accumulate enough credits to graduate from BCC; he thought at that point they would be driven to either finish at BCC or take those credits earned and go off to a school that accepts their credits. He can support the model as it has been described at this point.

Mr. Martins understood but did not totally agree and noted that the course they would take freshman year would have no credits attached.

Mr. Sethares said it would be taken sophomore year. The freshman year they would do the discovery that they already take. In the fall there would be a one credit CSS plus a standard three credit college course. In the spring of their sophomore year they would take another three credit course and end the year two full, three credit transferable courses and the one credit CSS.

Mr. Costa asked if in the spring they were motivated and competent enough to take more than one three credit course in the spring.

Mr. Sethares said they could.

Mr. Costa reiterated that the first semester of their sophomore year would just be the one credit CSS and the three credit course to get them started and then in the spring they could ramp it up if they chose.

Mr. Sethares said the same would go for junior and senior year; it would depend on the individual student who could work with their guidance counselor or resource person to determine what they are capable up. They want to make sure it is a successful experience which is their number one goal.

Ms. Morrell said they want to build in as much flexibility as they can so they can continue to be successful as they go along.

Mr. Martins asked how that student would get to 60 credits.

Mr. Sethares said it is possible; as they were discussing the idea in the junior and senior year if they are driven, doing well, they could take more than two courses per semester. It was conceivable if in their sophomore year, even if they only took two full courses, they could go up to two courses per semester or even three or four courses. For the completely driven student who is doing well and experiencing success, they could take classes at BCC in their junior and senior year both in the morning and in the afternoon. Is it conceivable that a student could take three courses in the afternoon; maybe?

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said to that point the Committee will need to consider if they are taking an English course at BCC, that in essence satisfies their Program of Studies graduation requirements for that student by taking that course.

Mr. Martins said he supported that but his concern is that they have this group of students who are bright and can do this and are going through from 10 through 12 and if they are go getters they would take multiple courses over various semesters and as was stated earlier this evening, the cost is based on the tuition of course which he understands but is concerned how they pay for it even though they are using Chapter 70 funds without somebody saying they are providing a college education to students a, b & c but not for d, e and f. He thought that needed to be understood by him at least how it will work. He can understand what was happening taking one or two courses in those years and then the grade 13 because he knew where the money was coming from and where it was going to be applied. He thinks it's a good program as far as getting students who may not be interested in going to college at that point in time and by doing this would be able to get a spark that they could do this but what about the others and that is his concern.

Mr. Costa said he thinks it is a concern but likens it to when students come into high school, there are a number of opportunities and based on the students abilities, opens up the door to participate. The argument that they are offering a college education to some and not all; the answer for him would be maybe not all students are able to go down that path for one reason or another. The same as a student who comes in who doesn't have the ability to handle and AP class. You provide the opportunity and what they

are saying is that all students will be given an opportunity to explore this; however, given their abilities, some may not fit.

Ms. Morrell said it is similar to the traditional dual enrollment opportunities where some are eligible and some are not.

Mr. Costa said that was his thinking of it but wondered how they would answer Mr. Martins question and explain to someone that they have taken educational monies and provided for a student a college opportunity where that is not happening with other students.

Ms. Morrell asked them to think of it as that particular students per pupil expenditure and a part of that that follows them to the college. It is not taking anything away from those other students who are fully at the high school.

Mr. Costa agreed.

Mr. Martins said the night prior was the graduation for Gateway to College and said that those students were either dropouts or almost dropouts; those students were added onto the districts total number of students as far as Chapter 70 funding is concerned so he can see that the school department paid for those students to go there. Had that program not been available those students would not be in school most likely and as a result they would not receive the Chapter 70 funds. Those students are in school and adding to their enrollment and they are getting Chapter 70 funds for it and pay BCC – good for all parties. He questions that operation with students who are....

Mr. Costa said that he raised something that should probably be further discussed but maybe they will or will not come to consensus on it but he thought as long as they don't exceed what that per pupil allocation would be for one student then he thought the argument of it being unfair has no basis. As long as they are not drawing away resources from other students but it is something they can continue to talk about.

Mr. Nadeau said they discussed the issue of fairness as well and it was really important to them that students were given the opportunity at multiple entry points into the program. There is a limit to the size of the program so some students would not be able to get in even though they were ready and wanted to do it. If a student didn't quite make it due to attendance issues, etc. and wanted to work on it and reapply, they wanted to make sure they were able to do that and it was built in as well but it will still be limited in terms of size.

Dr. Sbraga said the earlier models discussed never intended it to be for every Durfee High School student. They wanted it to be a smaller controlled group so the idea of opportunity is very important but Mr. Nadeau hit on it with multiple entry and exit points. If they take those d, e and f students who were not in the program, they could possibly enter the program if the light comes on for them. They allow flexibility for late bloomers. Likewise, some who are in as sophomores may not measure up and will not continue for some reason. The multiple entry/exit points are very important to the success of the program.

Mr. Martins understood and said the issue that is troubling to him is that there was a mechanism for funding with the grade 13 concept that without it they were not going to get that money anyway. Whereas they have a finite amount of Chapter 70 funds that is predicated upon x number of students that they have and that would seem to him that the program certainly would be somewhat discriminatory for some students that are not going to drop-out which would be like the GTC kids. They would not have gotten that money if the student had not entered the program. He felt this was different.

Mr. Ucci said he is not 100% on how the district uses their Chapter 70 funds but he had to believe that there are numerous, different competitive things done at the school whether it is a basketball team or any other program where only a selected number of students are allowed to take advantage of it. The fact that anytime they have a selective program it is discriminatory. The fact is some cannot make the basketball team but is it unfair that money is spent on that because not everyone was able to do it. This is another type of program like that. He understood Mr. Martins perspective and it would be nice to be able to create a mechanism where this brings in extra money but when these students come out; that 13th year that he discussed would have brought in more money but it also would have used up a year of that students life and the student was committed to that. This model does not do that and opens up opportunities for the students to take the credits beyond that and the fact is the vast majority of their students are eligible for financial aid. Many if they were able to go on to a four year institution or stay at BCC a lot of the cost would be an addition influx of funds to them in the form of financial aid and not an out of pocket expense.

Ms. Morrell said with regard to the GTC program more students now are at risk but not yet dropped out then are drop outs being served by Gateway so they are actually using Chapter 70 money in the same exact money as proposed there.

Mr. Martins said that was true but without that program chances are they would drop out of which case they would lose that money. With the program they have the means in which to get the money to pay for it and that's what he feels is lacking – getting the means to pay for it without affecting the other students. Certainly sports is an integral part of any school and the point was well taken that not everyone can participate but nevertheless that is a traditional thing that is part of the program. As far as the extra year, they know they are going to get their high school diploma eventually plus an associate's degree or credits towards it. He said he like the discussion but it was just a little bit different than what he had thought.

Mr. Andrade felt that they should get away from the thought that they should have a 13th year just as a funding mechanism because even with the 13th year, students would have been enrolled in sophomore, junior and senior years and the funding issue would have been the same as they are discussing now. He thought they would do just as well in this model.

Mr. Martins understood but envisioned more students wanting to participate in this program as described than in the 13th year program and the monies involved is relatively small through the years with the major expense being that 13th year and then the money is available to pay for that. Without the 13th year now there could be a good number of students that are interested and it could be a sizeable expense and he doesn't know if they are going to be in a position to be able to support that.

Mr. Costa noted that Dr. Sbrega explained that it was not intended to involve all students and the flip side is that they see they have a number of students who are interested and capable and are being shut down through this process then it might be a conversation worth revisiting to see if there is an ability to expand the program and if it would be manageable. He thought there was some flexibility there based on the success or lack thereof that they see as this evolves and they can tweak it in order to make it a success. He is optimistic and like the concept of starting it small to see how their students do. He did not think it would catch or was intended to catch all students.

Mr. Hart agreed with Mr. Costa that 44 is a good number to start with it and he thought this proposal sounded more like it was on the right track.

Mr. Costa asked the high school for their thoughts.

Dr. Sylvaria said they are excited to add another pathway to college and to address what Mr. Hart was suggesting; at one point they were saying first generation college students could have a 2.5 GPA.

Ms. Morrell said they discussed some flexibility around the criteria but have not settled on it.

Dr. Sylvaria said that may be something in terms of the students who they see stepping forward.

Mr. Costa said he would not want to water down the criteria to capture a certain subgroup because he thought the argument could be made that it keep being changed for different subgroups and then they would get away from the integrity of the tradition and pride that BCC delivers and no one would want to see it watered down. He thought in Durfee discovery they could do some work around encouraging those students or providing support to help them ramp up their GPA to get them better placed to roll into it as opposed to just dropping the requirement. That is something they can have further discussion on and come to an agreement on.

Ms. Morrell suspected that there were plenty of first generation students with 3.0 as well.

Mr. Nadeau said the first generation student is geared to them. The most exciting thing to him about the program is an idea that they had to have students who had been in the program and taken a college class to come back and do a service learning component where they share their experience with other students in the discovery. The student who is first generation knows college through TV and movies and don't really know what it is like and to hear it from those students really early on in the high school experience can help mitigate some of the needing to address that particular population. He knows he is being idealistic but it is a step in the right direction he thought.

Mr. Costa said he is a first generation college grad and did one full semester/started at BCC before going into the military and then transferred to Bridgewater when he returned. He knows what he is saying and he wants that opportunity for most because he would not be sitting there today or in a lot of seats in his life if it had not been for his start at BCC and getting a taste of what college is like which drove him to take other avenues to support himself to go onto college. He agreed that he wanted to capture some of those students and is looking more to support and push them to achieve what they want them to achieve rather than dropping the expectations.

Mr. Rak said if this were to become unbelievably successful he thought there would be grant money that they could obtain.

Mr. Costa agreed and thought they could collectively come up with something that would work if they all saw that they were excluding students who really could be successful in the program simply because of finances. He asked if Principal Pontes had anything to discuss.

Ms. Pontes said there was not anything new to add and thought that anytime they could offer an opportunity for their students to further their education it is a win-win. She is a first generation college student as well and she did think they needed to do a little more work with their families as well because as was said, they probably did not have exposure and they need to educate their families that it is attainable and how they can make it attainable and instill the value of higher education. It needs to work in conjunction with their students experiencing college through high school also.

Mr. Costa asked when they envisioned this to begin. He knew there were some projected start dates and they are in June now. He wondered if they were anticipating this upcoming fall to start with the freshman discovery stage.

Ms. Morell said yes, in 2015-2016.

Mr. Costa hoped that was the answer and asked how it would impact what they already offer in terms of dual enrollment as this rolls out. He wondered if they would still be able to take the dual enrollment classes as they know it now and they will just be setting a different pathway.

Ms. Morrell said yes and that it would enhance the options available to all students. It would not diminish dual enrollment as it is currently.

Mr. Costa thought the next steps should be some formal solidified proposal in writing about what it is that this will look like essentially capturing what was discussed along with bringing in the CFOs about the financial piece because they would need an articulation agreement to go before the Committee for discussion and approval. He thought it made sense to do that in July or no later than August to be able to prepare their incoming freshman for September. The Committee will need to look at it and may need to revise a few things. The sooner they can put it together they may be able to roll it out to parents and explain what is going on come September. He asked if everyone thought that was obtainable and everyone agreed.

Mr. Martins said it was fine as long as everyone understands what is happening and the direction that it is going in. He said dual enrollment was mentioned again and asked if it was on a space available basis.

Ms. Morrell said yes and they now have a cap to the free courses that are available.

Mr. Martins said they were free to the students but there were a certain number of those free positions.

Ms. Morrell said yes as well as eligibility criteria.

Mr. Martins agreed and thought the biggest difference between this proposal and dual enrollment is the free aspect. Both required the ability to be successful but one required some form of a payment and the other was free up to a certain number of students and that number is distributed to every high school in the area.

Ms. Morrell said it is now also only one free course a year even if you are financially qualified. It is more limited.

Mr. Costa asked if there was ability for families who have the ability to pay to do that.

Ms. Morrell said yes.

Mr. Costa asked if there were any closing comments.

Mr. Martins said that one of the issues of class time was who teaches and he took from the proposal that if there is any cost/some of the Durfee teachers also teach at BCC.

Ms. Morrell said yes some are approved adjunct faculty.

Mr. Martins asked if it is a college credit course then it will be taught by a BCC person so they are not getting into union conflicts

Ms. Morrell said that was correct.

Mr. Costa said there was some questioning in the beginning but it will be courses taught at BCC by BCC faculty and credits will be awarded through BCC.

Ms. Morrell said yes, it would be much cleaner that way.

Mr. Costa asked if there were any final comments and there were none. He thanked everyone again for their time and effort on the proposal and thought it was an exciting time for their students to have a pathway like this. He said they would be in touch regarding a follow-up meeting to put together a more formalized plan where the Committee can consider it and hopefully they can get it off the ground and running in September.

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

All were in favor

None were opposed

Meeting adjourned at 5:55 PM

Respectfully submitted,



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.