

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Norton, Massachusetts

NORTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING

Date of School Committee Meeting: Monday, May 21, 2012

Location: Norton Middle School Library

Attending: Committee Members: Chairman Andrew Mackie, Vice-Chairman Deniz Savas, Mr. Phillip Lynch, Mrs. Elizabeth McManus, and Mrs. Marge Werner. Superintendent Patricia Ansay and student representatives Bryce McCarthy and Tyler McNeill were also present.

Call to Order: Chairman Mackie called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Vote to Approve Minutes of Prior Meetings:

Mr. Savas made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 14, 2012 Open Meeting. Mrs. Werner seconded the motion, and the vote was 5-0 in favor, motion carried.

Transfers: None

N.E.E.D. Organization Awarding of Grants:

Mrs. Gretchen Stalters, a member of Norton Embracing Educational Development (N.E.E.D.) was present to award \$12,330 in grants for this school year. The group has provided funding since 2008, and awarded approximately \$40,000 to date. They typically hold two to three fundraising activities each year, such as Artwork for Education, in which student projects are turned into merchandise for sale. The annual Thank A Teacher project raises funds from \$5 donations in honor of an educator. The N.E.E.D. organization members also include Angel Doyle, Donna Ross, Rachael O'Neil, Beth Blakeley, and Sheila Mackie. Awards this year include:

- Speakers for a high school English lab - \$60
- Books that promote special needs awareness at JCS - \$493
- iPods, headphones, and downloadable audio books to promote a balanced literary program at JCS using new technology - \$1,625
- Two Smart Boards for 6th grade classrooms at NMS - \$8,052
- Responsive classroom training for teachers at JCS - \$2,100

Several staff members gave brief information on their projects.

Class of 2012 Valedictorian and Salutatorian:

Elizabeth LaVerghetta and Kady Ferguson have been chosen as valedictorian and salutatorian respectively for the Class of 2012. Mrs. McManus read their impressive biographies and asked

them about their future plans. Elizabeth will attend Bates College and Kady will attend Worcester Polytechnic Institute in the fall.

Approval of High School American History and Middle School Social Studies Textbooks:

Paul Duff, Social Studies Academic Supervisor, and middle school social studies teachers discussed the merits of the history book they had chosen. The current text is no longer sufficient and the proposed text has an on-line component with supplementary resources. The request is for 230 copies at a cost of \$15,540. After discussion, Mrs. Werner made a motion to approve the purchase of textbooks, seconded by Mr. Savas. The motion carried by a 5-0 vote.

The second request was for a textbook, *Rockin' in Time*, to accompany the new high school course, *American History Through Music*, approve by the Committee in January. Eric Paulus, high school history teacher, gave a brief explanation of his reasons for recommending the text, which also has an on-line component. The cost is \$45.99 for 35 books, a total of \$1,610. Mr. Mackie questioned if they might find the book for less money from other sources. Mr. Lynch stated that he had concerns with some explicit language in the text. He felt some parents may find it offensive and inappropriate. Mr. Duff and Mr. Paulus discussed why they chose this particular book, and that several surrounding schools have used it. The course would only be offered as an elective to seniors, and a letter would be sent to parents with the course description and a consent form. Mrs. McManus made a motion to approve the purchase of the textbook, seconded by Mrs. Werner. The vote was 4 in favor, with Mr. Lynch voting no. The motion carried.

Recognition of Two NHS Student School Committee Representatives:

On behalf of the Committee, Dr. Ansay made a presentation to Kady Ferguson and Sarah Pishdadian in recognition for their two years of service as student representatives. Chairman Mackie commended them for their dedication and contributions and wished them much future success.

School Improvement Plans – Principals:

NHS Principal Ray Dewar and Assistant Principal Megan Lafayette reviewed MCAS preparation, advanced placement courses/testing, honors courses, Massachusetts Math & Science Initiative grants, and other accomplishment during the year. An all-time high of 387 advanced placement tests were administered this year. Students participated in Virtual High School, taking courses not offered in Norton. Dual enrollment with Wheaton and Bridgewater State University has been successful. Senior projects and internships have also been beneficial. Administration and guidance personnel have instituted a program for at-risk students in 9th grade to insure that they feel like they belong.

NMS Principal Michael O'Rourke and Assistant Principal Ronnie Goldstein gave an overview of main goals including increased ELA/Math MCAS performance, more effectively identifying the at-risk population, maintaining a safe environment, and implementing best practices. The middle school implemented quite a few new initiatives such as double ELA for grade 6 and double math for grade 7. A reading specialist services all three grades during the ICE period. A Career Exploratory course for grade 8 allows the students to explore different college and career choices

This year is the first year for full inclusion of special education students, and the inclusion of an autism class. Co-teaching has been successful.

H. A. Yelle Principal Lisa Farrell reported on Professional Learning Communities which meet regularly to discuss academics. She also mentioned the system used to encourage students to turn in homework, math incentives, Homework Heroes, family movie night, and Special Olympics.

JCS Principal Ritta Bolton reported on the Blue Ribbon Study and implementation plan, PLCs, SMART goals, grade 3 student council, and progress on the National Association for the Education of Young Children (N.A.E.Y.C.) accreditation process.

LGN Principal Catherine Luke reported on the performance and program goals such as increasing academic achievement in the area of ELA and math, creating a collaborative environment to maximize student achievement, VISIONS program, grade level PLCs, participation in the N.A.E.Y.C. re-accreditation process, and continuation of recommendation made during the Blue Ribbon Assessment process that occurred during the 2009-2010 school year.

District Improvement Plan/Strategic Plan Update – Mrs. O’Neill:

Mrs. O’Neil stated that 2011-2012 was the first year of the three-year plan. Some components of the plan are excellence in teaching and learning, school culture, new curriculum in math and ELA, new intervention materials, PLCs in all buildings, professional development, co-teaching, and the new teacher evaluation system being developed. A new Kindergarten screening tool will be utilized in June. Other accomplishments include bullying prevention and intervention, Race To The Top, technology updates in several schools, and work to lower class size at NHS. It was anticipated that free full-day Kindergarten would be possible by 2014, but that is yet to be accomplished since grant money has been steadily decreasing.

The Committee thanked all five principals and Mrs. O’Neill for the informative summaries.

Mrs. Werner made a motion to accept the improvement plans of all five schools, seconded by Mr. Lynch. The vote was 5-0 in favor of the motion.

Mrs. McManus made a motion to accept the District Improvement/Strategic Plan update, seconded by Mrs. Werner. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote.

Approval of Revisions to Norton High School and Norton Middle School Handbooks:

Mrs. Lafayette explained that most changes were just updates and additions. Also, changes regarding cell phone use and securing valuables in gym lockers were added. On a motion by Mr. Savas, seconded by Mrs. McManus, the high school handbook revisions were approved by 5-0 vote.

Mr. Goldstein stated that no major changes to the middle school handbook need to be made at this time.

Update on Norton High School Building Project:

Dr. Ansay reported that cement footings have been poured and the structural steel is being delivered. Topping off will take place on June 7th or 8th. The project should move swiftly from here on.

Review of Interim Superintendent Applicant Packages/Vote on Those to be Interviewed:

The Committee discussed some recent applicant packets and felt some of them were actually looking for a full-time position. The Committee did not want to be in a position to have to train a replacement. Mrs. Werner made a motion to direct the Superintendent's office to forward any and all applicant packets of those who have experience as Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent. The motion was seconded by Mrs. McManus and the vote was 5-0 in favor. After a brief review of packets, the Committee also voted on a motion by Mr. Savas, seconded by Mrs. Werner, to interview one additional candidate at this time. The motion carried by a 5-0 vote. Three qualified candidates have been interviewed to date. Applications will be accepted for another week and a half.

Personnel:

Resignations:

Rachael Strandberg, NMS Grade 8 Science Teacher, at the end of the current school year.

Barbara Sherman, LGN School Psychologist

Vote to Appoint School Committee Student Representatives:

Mr. Savas made a motion to appoint Bryce McCarthy and Tyler McNeill as student representatives to the School Committee for the 2012-2013 school year, seconded by Mrs. McManus. The motion carried by a 5-0 vote.

Dr. Ansay has received the final report of the Coordinated Program Review and the findings were rated excellent. There were no issues with the civil rights portion and only a few clarifications needed in the special education portion. This report will serve for six years.

Mr. Savas made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mrs. McManus. The meeting adjourned at 9:17 P.M.

NEXT MEETING DATE: Monday, June 11, 2012 at Norton Middle School Library.

Respectfully Submitted,
Patricia H. Ansay, Ed.D.
Secretary pro tem

