

GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

High School Library
Business Meeting Minutes
April 15, 2009
(Approved 5/6/09)

PRESENT:

Mr. Peter Carson
Ms Berta Erickson
Mr. Jim Frey
Dr. Paul Funch, Chair
Mr. Chuck McKinney, Vice-Chair
Mr. Frank O'Connell
Mr. Jon Sjoberg, Secretary

ADMINISTRATION:

Dr. Alan Genovese, Superintendent

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:

Rafael Glod and Erin Christman

STAFF, PRESS, OTHERS: C. Beckert-Long, Groton Herald; P. Comtois, Groton Landmark;
P. Myerson, R. Goguen, J. Sheffield, R. Hoyt, members of the Curriculum Teams, D. Sierra, C. Smith,
C. O'Neil, N. Rockwell

CALL TO ORDER:

The GDRSC Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by the chair, P. Funch

The student representatives read prepared announcements and a copy is attached to these minutes.

Dr. Genovese announced the district newsletter will be sent home prior to April vacation.

GDEF - Grant Announcement

Thanks to the generous support they received from the communities for their March 14th Reach for the Stars Auction and their annual giving campaign, J. Sheffield announced GDEF(Groton Dunstable Education Foundation) voted to award 15 enrichment grants totaling \$32,513 in their twelfth grant cycle. They received an unprecedented amount of grant requests (\$91,000). Because of the level of support they received, they voted to award 30% more than the \$25,000 budgeted and they believe these grant programs will make a difference and help inspire students through innovative teaching methods and exciting new technologies. The funded grants were announced.

C. MCKINNEY MOVED TO SUSPEND THE RULES AND ADVANCE FOR IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION THE ACTION ITEM OF ACCEPTING THE GRANTS. SECONDED BY J. SJOBERG
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

C. MCKINNEY MOVED THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACCEPT GRANTS TOTALING \$32,513.03, AS LISTED IN THEIR PACKETS, WITH MANY THANKS TO GDEF AND ALL THEIR SUPPORTERS.
SECONDED BY P. CARSON

B. Erickson said she, and the committee, is very appreciative of the enrichment GDEF brings to the district.

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION
ECC SIP

R. Hoyt reviewed the progress on their goals.

- 1. Revise class offerings for 2008-2009 school year.** The Council revised the class offerings based on surveys and focus groups and this goal is complete. Eighty-two families are currently enrolled.
- 2. Create an on-site Extended Day Program in conjunction with the PTYC.** This goal is complete with the establishment of a four day morning only Extended Day Program. They are looking to expand the program to include afternoon sessions next year.
- 3. Identify and address safety issues at Boutwell (specifically the drop-off and pick-up procedures and the playground)** Lines were painted in the parking lot and families were given name placards to make identification easier at pick-up times. A Playground Improvement Team was created to focus on ways to improve the playground such as installing a fence. They expect to have an overall cost estimate for the fence by the end of the school year and they have received a couple of specific donations and the PIT is doing some fundraising activities. The Boutwell-Florence Roche PTA has expressed interest in helping.
- 4. Improve systems of communication at Boutwell.** A calendar was placed in the newsletter and online and a weekly note is sent home to inform parents of events and curriculum being worked on.
- 5. Implement a new Social Skills Curriculum.** Thirty lessons from the AI's Pals social skills program that were reviewed by the Council are being used as part of the weekly curriculum.
- 6. Review and make recommendations for the 2008-2009 ECC budget.** Past budgets were reviewed, current needs were discussed and the Council supported the submitted budget.

J. Frey asked what their goals will be for next year. R. Hoyt said pre-literacy is a big piece and they want to find something that aligns with what will happen at the elementary, middle and high schools. They will continue to identify and thoroughly address any safety issues. Dr. Genovese noted Boutwell was the first school to have the buzzer system.

With respect to tuitions, Dr. Funch asked if these will remain the same. R. Hoyt said they typically increase 2% to 5% every year but given the current economy, they will remain the same next year.

Elementary SIPs/Curriculum Leadership Teams

Florence Roche - Members had received a comprehensive packet on their SIP. They have eight goals and the presentation will focus on three of them. Principal Goguen said their goals align with what the building based team has been working on. Their simple goal is to provide the best education for their students in a multi-sensory way and prepare them for their future journey in their educational years. They have been doing a lot around their reading goal. A grant from GDEF has allowed them to put Lively Letters into practice which is a multi-sensory approach to teaching sound symbol connections and phonemic awareness. All the kindergarten teachers are currently using the program. They have also implemented Lexia which is designed to help students acquire and improve their basic reading skills.

They have taken a school wide approach with the collaboration of teachers and specialists focusing on the necessary reading skills. Having reading specialists involved in the kindergarten classrooms targeted the needs and the growth they made is amazing.

A combination of DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills) and DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) data was used to see where kids were falling down and they found they were "hitting the wall" coming into third grade, particularly in the area of comprehension. With intervention being the key to success, they have made looking at kindergarten and grade 1 reading a major focus.

The focus areas for reading were highlighted and include aligning teachers in kindergarten, professional development and collaborative planning time. They are looking to purchase more normed assessments like the GRADE for reading comprehension.

Integration of technology is the second goal they have focused on and they have been implementing the use of

two SMART boards and these have made a difference in the classrooms that have used them. The PTA funded three digital cameras and a color printer for photo printing and the photos can be used with the SMART boards. The PTA also donated some used laptops and they are helping to purchase 5 printers, one for each team.

With respect to their science and social studies goal, science Curriculum Coordinator Ellen Potter said they will use their curriculum half days to update their scope and sequencing plans and develop common assessments. In collaboration, she and Ms Dinneen had the Museum of Science out to the district as they have a curriculum designed to supplement content units and include the technology and engineering state standards. K-4 social studies Curriculum Coordinator Lucas Smith said they developed common assessments, distributed, trained and reviewed the fourth grade textbook program and integrated with the ELA content. Maps and globes have been purchased and additional needed resources have been identified.

R. Goguen said a new goal is to find alternative funding sources and to do that, they have started to think outside of the box. To date, they have written seven grants and received many of those thanks to GDEF. They also have one out to Verizon. She noted the team meets weekly and discussion is always about the kids.

Dr. Funch asked what is being done to address the dips in the math and reading MCAS scores. R. Goguen said students dipped in reading state-wide. They found some kids were "hitting the wall" in third grade in the area of comprehension. The use of DIBELS broke up what specific area kids were struggling with and they put different interventions into practice. She wants her teachers to have a variety of tools to insure every child can get to the next step.

Swallow Union - Principal Myerson said they have been successful by having three or four focused goals the last few years.

1. To improve student achievement in mathematics - This is an ongoing goal and the list of highlights was reviewed. It was noted they received a very high performance rating in the 2008 AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) in math. They will continue to provide professional development, utilize common assessments and strengthen their model to meet the needs of struggling math students.

2. To improve student achievement in social studies - This is the first year for this goal and they will, among other things, use *Social Studies Weekly* to supplement the curriculum for grades 1 and 2, establish common assessments in grades 3 and 4 that include open response questions and purchase maps to supplement curriculum.

3. To improve student achievement in science - This is also a new goal. Strategies include training teachers and implementing Museum of Science units at each grade level, identifying common assessments for at least two science units at each grade level and exposing students to scientists from the Museum of Science, NE Aquarium, Lincoln Labs and the Discovery Museum.

E. Herzog said their primary focus in math has been to monitor student progress and one of her roles has been to work with teachers to process data and respond to students' needs in a timely manner. She supports teachers in implementing curriculum and directly works with students inside and outside the classroom. Future goals include refining the workshop model (teaching in the same method that is used in English/Language Arts) and practice scoring using holistic methods.

ELA Coordinator C. Scafidi said she has the opportunity to work with the teachers, students and principal to improve achievement in all content areas. She has analyzed the MCAS and other assessment data to document the strengths and weaknesses of the students and then works with the teachers to develop lessons and provide intervention for students in need. She highlighted her many accomplishments during the year.

As the Curriculum Coordinator for social studies, Nancy Murphy said she and Ms Dinneen developed a survey and interviewed each grade level to help identify what is going well and where more resources might be needed. Accomplishments for this year include identifying resources that needed to be purchased and

coordinating a map skills presentation for grades 1 and 2. Among other things next year, she wants to establish common assessments for grades 3 and 4 and establish a scope and sequence for grades 1 and 2.

Thanks to a grant from GDEF, Science Coordinator J. Dinneen said they began this year with a completely functioning science lab and they have a fourth grade Science Club. Parent volunteers monitor the science labs so teachers can have open science time. Technology and engineering was one of the weakest strands so they went to the Museum of Science to talk with the trainer about how to best fit these units into the curriculum. She and Ms Scafidi are working on using the model of the writing mini-lesson to support students answering open response questions. They are also making sure the students understand how to read non-fiction and how to use all the information on a page to improve understanding.

F. O'Connell asked how they work with Florence Roche to make sure they are all progressing at the same rate. P. Myerson said they are in communication and use common assessments. They want to work together more on curriculum days. Principal Goguen said both schools have worked together in the areas of math and science and they are following the state frameworks and similar curriculum.

Grande Finale - After Prom Overnight Event

Dyan Sierra, founder and chair of the Grande Finale After Dark Committee, explained this is a fun event for all GDRHS juniors and seniors to discourage parties where substances are illegally consumed, presenting danger to the youth and homeowners. Originally, they intended to propose this become a school district sanctioned event but the decision has been made to hold it at the Orchard Hills Athletic Club in Lancaster. It is one exit from the Sheraton Four Points in Leominster where the prom is being held. Enough funds have been raised to host the event on their own and area school event planners have offered to loan various equipment and personnel services. Members were invited to stop by after 11:00 p.m. on May 15th.

D. Sierra said it has been formidable trying to communicate with the parents and few volunteers have stepped up and she asked for the committee's help in generating volunteers and getting a junior and senior class list. She requested permission to speak to the students at the meeting held on the morning of the prom as well as to the Student Council. Getting students to attend is their biggest obstacle

D. Keeney is diligently doing CORI checks of all volunteers. The police will be called if anyone tries to bring a substance or alcohol into the event and bags will be searched at the entrance. Students will be required to show an ID.

Dr. Funch volunteered for a shift and encouraged the district to support the event. Further information is available at www.gdafterprom.com .

Retirement of Tarbell

Postponed to the May 6th meeting.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

C. O'Neil read a prepared letter, signed by 45 staff members, supporting their colleague Francis Dower and questioning why he was dismissed due to his failure to renew his teaching license. They wonder why Dr. Genovese did not take steps to allow him to complete the school year and become enrolled in the Teacher Preparation Class that was required. According to the DOE, Mr. Dower's license is pending with the completion of this program although this was not a stated requirement until March of 2009. They are also upset that he was just given a dismissal letter giving him two weeks notice and the opportunity of an appeal and that Dr. Genovese did not meet with him. A copy of the letter was submitted.

Although advised by legal counsel not to comment, Dr. Genovese explained it is not uncommon to find a teacher does not have the appropriate license and needs to do certain things to become certified. It is not uncommon for a superintendent to apply for, and obtain, a waiver so people can be put on the pathway to becoming certified. There is a five year period to fulfill the requirements to get an initial license and another five year period to get a professional license. He said some of the information in the letter is inaccurate but

acknowledged the professional was doing things to improve his teaching but was not satisfying the requirements to be certified. He thanked Ms O'Neil and the others for their overwhelming support of their colleague.

B. Erickson wonders if there may be a glitch in the DOE system and feels the timing of this may not have been appropriate. J. Sjoberg asked if the letter was given to Dr. Genovese prior to tonight. The contract manager for the middle school Unit A contract said no and there are things that cannot be said at this meeting. She said according to the DOE website, there are currently over 500 unlicensed math and science teachers teaching in MA at this time. They believe Mr. Dower worked diligently to get his license and was misinformed by a former principal and the DOE website. She stated they deeply mourn his loss for the school.

Ms. Rockwell said you have to currently be teaching in order to be in a Teacher Preparation Program and this puts Mr. Dower in a bad dilemma. Should he be able to come back to the district through a process, she said he has lost his seniority since he was fired and these are two major impacts on his career.

B. Erickson requested jargon and acronyms be avoided in presentations as many people do not know what is meant.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Policy - Dr. Genovese reported P. Carson facilitated last evening's public forum on the proposed advertising policy. P. Carson reported they have a meeting on April 28th to deal with the handbook alignment issue and a meeting on May 5th to work on the advertising policy. Both will be at 7:00 p.m. at Prescott.

Budget & Finance - Dr. Genovese reported Mr. Sheehan received an email communication today from MARS (Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools) stating regional transportation has been cut state-wide to 50% of the amount allocated for 2009. This means a cut of \$349,386 more than the \$94,846 cut that has all ready been built into the FY10 budget. The FY10 budget was based on the January cherry sheet figures of \$853,617. Dr. Genovese said he will not be recommending the budget be cut another \$230,000 to bring Dunstable and Groton into concert so they have a balanced budget. Groton's town meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 27th and the towns have been assessed based on the best projections and methodologies but they may take a vote with the district still not knowing what other revenue projections were made that may impact the final budget.

Budget and Finance will meet at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, April 17th at Prescott.

Communications Committee - J. Frey reported they are making progress on the district website and the school committee member page is up. They are planning their first cable access program to report on the strategic planning process. They have discussed whether they need to recommend changes to the Policy Committee on policies in Section K that deal with public communications and public relations.

Think Tank Committee - B. Erickson reported they met to share their progress on their individual pursuits and would like to request a meeting with the committee in May or June to report their findings. She will ask Mr. Sheehan to track the savings they have seen from suggestions all ready implemented. Their next meeting is at 7:00 p.m. on May 7th in the MSN library.

Report of Director of Business & Finance - See information provided under Budget and Finance. Members received a report dated April 9th from Mr. Sheehan in their packets.

Report of the Chair - Dr. Funch reminded members Chris Jones is looking for their input or corrections on the focus group input by next Tuesday.

He, J. Frey and J. Sjoberg, along with Dr. Genovese and J. Mitchell, attended a meeting with union representatives to have an open-ended discussion to brainstorm ideas for saving money and positions. In addition to things all ready done, they discussed possible regionalization of curriculum, maintenance, food

service and administration positions.

As the liaison for the May 6th SpedPAC presentation and the PPS (Pupil Personnel Services) report, Dr. Funch requested questions be sent to him.

He reminded members the MASC (Massachusetts Association of School Committees) Day on the Hill is May 7th and registration is required. Members should have received a subcommittee appointment request if they want to participate in the MASC at a state level.

Dr. Funch reported they have a request for impact bargaining from the secretarial union and J. Sjoberg has been appointed as the school committee representative.

With respect to Dr. Genovese's evaluation, the committee will meet on Wednesday, April 29th at 7:00 p.m. at Prescott in the first floor conference room to review the summative evaluation. He requested members use the electronic forms and have them submitted to him by Friday April 24th. Individual forms will be attached to the meeting minutes and made available to the public per guidance from Attorney Greenspan. Dr. Funch said he is scheduled to meet with Dr. Genovese on May 4th to review the summative evaluation. The evaluation will be presented at the May 6th school committee meeting.

Dr. Funch reported they have begun negotiations with the van drivers. Their contract is up in June

Report of the Superintendent

2009-2010 Calendar - Members received the final draft of the 2009-2010 calendar. In order to meet the high school's time on learning of 990 hours, it reflects the removal of two curriculum half days. January 28th and May 5th will be a half days for Pre-K through grade 8 only. The other modification reflects Quarters 1, 2 and 3 with 44 days and Quarter 4 with 49 days to make up for some of the lost instruction during MCAS testing.

Request to Approve Job Descriptions - Members received a copy of the job description for Coordinator of Curriculum/Library Services/ITS and Professional Development. Dr. Genovese explained the responsibilities of the position. The position will cost between \$70,000 to \$85,000 depending on the person's areas of expertise.

Request to Negotiate Evaluation Process - Based on information brought to the committee at the last meeting, and to protect the integrity of the process, Dr. Genovese asked what the best course might be for the committee to pursue. He suggested Mike Gilbert from MASC (Mass Association of School Committees) facilitate the workshop but said he will abide by the committee's wishes.

J. Frey feels the process in place is adequate and the workshop process they will participate in gives everyone the opportunity to make sure their inputs are adequately represented. He believes Dr. Funch's role is more administrative than influential.

C. McKinney asked if the April 29th meeting will be open to public comments and noted Mr. Gilbert facilitated the workshop in the past. If the meeting is to put together their comments, he agrees with Mr. Frey; if comments will be taken from the public, he feels they should consider having Mr. Gilbert there. Dr. Funch views it as another school committee business meeting with one topic and does not see the public participating. Dr. Genovese clarified that it is a workshop. P. Carson is not opposed to people making comments and having them be part of the minutes. B. Erickson feels the process will take care of itself and all the input will be made public.

Dr. Genovese advised a minor change was made to the wording of one of his goals last year and distributed a copy with the change: Goal 3: Develop regulations regarding advertising, solicitations, donations. The instruction sheet was also changed to 1-9 from 1-3.

Retirement Announcement - Dr. Genovese announced he will be retiring at the end of his contract on June 30, 2010 and a press release will go out tomorrow that talks about the district's successes and the challenges that need to be addressed in the coming year. Establishing the leadership model for curriculum and implementing the first year of the strategic plan will be important to him.

Superintendent Self-Assessment - Dr. Genovese distributed a document for the member's to review prior to their evaluation and he will email them information on his professional development.

MISCELLANEOUS

Dr. Funch will be presenting the budget with Dr. Genovese at Groton's Town Meeting and J. Frey will be presenting at Dunstable's Town Meeting.

Since the May 20th meeting will be the first with new members and is an organizational meeting, J. Frey asked if it is acceptable to postpone the meeting to May 27th since he will not be available on the 20th. Members agreed to this change.

P. Carson asked if they will receive a copy of the cost savings chart T. Sheehan has put together.

Dr. Genovese announced the Men's Wearhouse has donated 60 new tuxedo jackets and 50 new pairs of pants and shoes to the music department for the band and chorus groups. The donation is worth about \$17,000 and comes just in time for the spring concert on May 22nd at the PAC.

ACTION ITEMS

Non-Consent Action Items Discussion

None

VOTE: Consent Action Items

J. FREY MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 1, 2009 AND TO ACCEPT THE MUSIC DEPARTMENT DONATION. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

In Favor: B. Erickson, P., Carson, J. Sjoberg, P. Funch, F. O'Connell, J. Frey

Abstention: C. McKinney

(See earlier vote to accept GDEF grants)

VOTE: To Approve 2009-10 Calendar

J. FREY MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2009-2010 SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR AS DATED REVISION 4/19/09. SECONDED BY P. CARSON

SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

VOTE: To Approve Job Description

J. FREY MOVED TO ACCEPT THE JOB DESCRIPTION FOR COORDINATOR OF CURRICULUM/LIBRARY SERVICES/ITS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON

In light of the events they heard tonight, Dr. Funch does not feel they should create a new position and feels Dr. Genovese is the perfect candidate as he has all the necessary skills and credentials. He feels this would be a good goal. Dr. Genovese disagreed, stating there are items in the job description that he simply would not have the time to do and B. Erickson agreed. C. McKinney sees this position as a migration of existing responsibilities and actually saves the district money.

In Favor: B. Erickson, J. Sjoberg, C. McKinney, F. O'Connell, J. Frey

Opposed: P. Carson, P. Funch

VOTE: To Approve the After Prom Overnight Event

No vote required

VOTE: To Retire Tarbell Facility (if appropriate)

Postponed

ADJOURNMENT

F. O'CONNELL MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 10:35 P.M. SECONDED BY B. ERICKSON
SO VOTED IN FAVOR UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Susan H. Smith
Recording Secretary

Transcribed from video tape

With attachment