

EVALUATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

December 12, 2016

5:00 p.m.

**Kuss Middle School
52 Globe Mills Avenue
Fall River, MA 02724**

A roll call at 5:02 p.m. showed:

Mr. Andrade: Present Mr. Martins: Present
Mr. Costa: Present

Also present was Superintendent Malone.

After roll call, there was a salute to the flag then Mr. Andrade read the Open Meeting Law.

1. **Discussion and Vote to Refer:** School Committee Survey

MOTION: Mr. Martins-Mr. Costa: To refer the School Committee survey results to the full School Committee with the recommendation of acceptance and that the Superintendent review those items that need improvement.

Discussion:

Mr. Andrade began by stating that there were 347 responses to the survey. This number was lower than the responses to the survey that UMass Dartmouth conducted. That survey had about 500 responses. The “No Strong Opinion” response was a high percentage of the responses, probably around 40%. His impression on the reason for this is that 1) There has been a lot of turnover in the district. About 11 comments at the end of the survey reflected this and the respondents even indicated that they were in the system for a very short time and didn’t know how to answer the questions and 2) The lack of responses may also be because new staff did not know how to answer the questions so they didn’t respond at all.

The responses on this survey were markedly different from the last survey. Mr. Andrade said that he specifically used questions from the UMass Dartmouth survey and took the weakest responses from that survey to see if there was a change and there was a radical change for the better. There were also the policies and programs that may have impacted faculty and staff perceptions on the School Committee. The responses were night and day from what was on the UMass survey. He also included the School Committee’s stand on state-wide issues, the moratorium on testing, and the report that was done concerning state school funding. The responses were very positive. The last items that he included were a few general questions and, interestingly enough, he thought that the responses were not as positive as they were for the specific questions but they were still positive. His impression is that they are on the right track. There was a lot of positive movement from the UMass survey.

Brian Mikolazyk included some comments at the end of the survey which Mr. Andrade did not ask for but was glad were included because it gave them some issues that they could deal with in the future. There were 11 responses that reflected the “No Strong Opinion” response. There was a comment about being short staffed at the high school, especially in SPED. They also indicated that there were a number of uncertified teachers teaching specific classes. There was a question about staffing at Henry Lord. One person indicated that there was insufficient communication from the School Committee. Another person indicated that the budget process as it progressed last spring, particularly with the budget cuts, was unsatisfactory and they were not happy with the cuts and they felt there was no input from teachers in terms of the budget process. There were a couple of responses concerning turnover of staff and that is a concern of the School Committee, as well. There were around 100 positions in July that the new Superintendent needed to fill. Mr. Andrade continued with the comments and mentioned that a para expressed that they were treated like they were a lower-class employee. There was another person who felt there was insufficient school visits from School Committee members. These are things the School Committee may look at in future meetings and see if there are things they can do to improve them.

Mr. Martins reviewed the School Committee survey several times but there was a question that threw him for a loop: “The School Committee can be trusted to do what they are supposed to do.” Mr. Martins asked what are they “supposed” to do. Mr. Andrade thinks that is subjective. Mr. Martins agreed. He stated, if you go by the strict interpretation of the law on what the School Committee is supposed to do, they would have very little to do. Mr. Andrade said that this was one of the questions that came from the UMass survey. His impression is that most people don’t know for sure what the state requires the School Committee to do or not do so a lot of that is subjective.

Mr. Martins stated that he appreciated the comments that the respondents provided but was disappointed that paras felt the way that they did. He feels that paras are very important in the educational system and should be treated as such. If they are unsatisfied, they should discuss this with their union. Mr. Andrade thinks that money might be an issue amongst paraprofessionals. If they feel as though they are not paid well, that may fuel their negative feelings.

Mr. Costa agreed that this was a concern. He said that it’s unclear if just one individual felt that way or if a number of them felt that way but it’s something they should keep an eye on. If that becomes an issue among all paras, they should consider consulting with their principal or go directly to the Superintendent. He agreed that a lot of the “No Strong Opinion” responses were due to the fact that the majority of the staff were fairly new. He also thinks that more people are apt to take a survey when they’re dissatisfied than when they are satisfied. Some of the comments indicated that people were appreciative that the School Committee was interested in touching base with them. Mr. Costa said that maybe this is something that they should do on a quarterly or annual basis in order to hear from people.

Mr. Andrade asked if they think that this should go on the school’s website so that people have access to it. Mr. Martin said that this was public record so the public will have access to this. Mr. Andrade agreed but said that people would need to request the information.

All were in favor	None were opposed	Motion passed
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2. **Discussion:** Mutual Understanding of Teacher and Administrator Evaluation Standards

Mr. Martins wanted to make sure there was a mutual understanding between teachers and administrators on the standard that were set in the evaluation process. Mr. Martins appreciated that Superintendent Malone provided a handout of the evaluation procedure handbook.

Superintendent Malone clarified that those were the changes that were made to the evaluation procedure this year. He said that they needed to streamline the process so they convened a group of administrators and teachers and the School Committee approved some changes in procedure from what had been previously collectively bargained. What he handed out was the MOUs that talk about the specific changes in the process because the process itself was very cumbersome.

Mr. Martins stated that what he was looking for was, if you're a teacher in one school and you're being evaluated using a certain set of standards in the subject that you're teaching, but in another school, the same subject is being taught with the same standards, he wanted to know if the standard was being applied equally from school to school.

Superintendent Malone stated that the goals are set between the evaluator and teacher being evaluated and that's why there would be a difference. They would take into consideration the teacher's years in the profession and areas for growth. In terms of the administrators ability to evaluate and to give feedback, that would be standardized and that's been the work of the district over the last four years when the state rolled out its new system. There's a rubric of standards and there's four categories within that rubric. People are at different stages of readiness in terms of how they're performing. He said that they had a very high percentage of folks in the "Needs Improvement" category and stressed that it was much higher than most other communities in Massachusetts (200-300% higher). He said that they were rectifying that and they have a joint committee working on this. He also included in his handouts a letter that stated what was being changed and what they are working on to get more answers as they move forward. He thinks this will be a part of bargaining in the coming cycle. At some point at an upcoming School Committee meeting, they should have a 20-minute presentation with leadership, HR, and the union together to talk to the Committee about Ed Eval. It's definitely something they're getting better at.

Mr. Martins said that he has asked for this material about two years ago to find out if people are satisfied with the evaluation process and this is the first time that he has seen these documents. Superintendent Malone said that they are working very hard to share information with the School Committee to create a level of full transparency and they are working closely with all the labor unions, as well. He recommended at the end of the year, when they conduct another School Committee survey, to include their own questions so that they can be very specific about the Ed Eval and ask questions about Ed Eval. When asking if the School Committee is doing their job, they should include the set responsibilities of the School Committee and then ask the question. They're going to do a good job at being thoughtful in how they improve the Ed Eval system.

Mr. Costa said that the evaluation process should be a tool to help people become better at what they do and to give specific feedback in areas where they need to improve and offer support and professional development necessary for them to be successful. The turnover rate and retention rate is directly related

to this. For a long time, people felt nervous and intimidated by the process and people sought refuge in any way that they could and sometimes this meant leaving the district. Another piece is making sure that evaluators are consistent to make sure everyone was on the same page. Superintendent Malone agreed. Mr. Costa pondered whether or not evaluators were trained on how to utilize the rubric effectively so that they are identifying areas that needed improvement or if they had the capacity to identify that what was in the rubric was what they were observing. In the past, they've had people doing evaluations that did not have the background necessary to evaluate someone who was certified to do that work. The joint committee is a good first step. Hopefully, going forward, staff will use this tool as a means to grow professionally as opposed to feeling it is being used in a punitive way. Superintendent Malone agreed.

MOTION: Mr. Martins-Mr. Costa: To adjourn.

No discussion

All were in favor

None were opposed

Motion passed (5:29 p.m.)

Respectfully submitted,



Administrative Assistant

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