

FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, March 27, 2014

4:30 PM

School Administration Building

417 Rock Street

Fall River, MA 02720

AGENDA

Finance Subcommittee Workshop

- Middle Schools

MINUTES

At 4:30 PM Mrs. Panchley, Chair of the subcommittee, read the open meeting law.

Mrs. Panchley then called to order the meeting of the Finance Subcommittee for Thursday, March 27, 2014. A roll call for attendance showed Mrs. Panchley and Mr. Costa were present. Mr. Hart was absent.

Also present were Superintendent Mayo-Brown, Mr. Michael Saunders, Dr. Fran Roy, Ms. Ivone Medeiros, Mr. John Nunes, Mr. Kevin Almeida, Ms. Maureen Cote, Ms. Jocelyn LeMaire, Principal Paulo, Principal Rabbitt, Interim Principal Francisco, Principal Procaccini, Principal Shaw, and members of the press.

Mrs. Panchley explained that they would be hearing from middle school principals regarding their budgets as well as strengths and weaknesses at their schools and why they may be asking for particular things.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown noted that they would be hearing from Talbot Innovation School that afternoon. She explained that the School Committee awarded Talbot their innovation status and authority in 2012 which gives them some autonomy with their budget. She further explained that they need to live within the bottom line appropriation that the School Committee provides but in terms of doing conversions of positions and describing staffing needs for the school, that is done through faculty vote and consensus.

At 4:35 PM Morton Middle School Principal, Sheryl Rabbitt presented:

Budget:

- They are not asking for any new staff but she does anticipate a conversion at a later time.

About the school:

- All academic data since September is on an upward trend and shows continuous, steady growth in those three content areas.

- Focus on 6th grade: redesign, extended time in English and math, focus on blended learning/technology; three times a week in every 6th grade ELA and math class, blended learning lessons are being implemented. The unanticipated depth of small group guided instruction has been a big win for them.
- Another unanticipated impact of their technology initiative was the spillover into the other content areas and into the upper grades.
- PLTW in 8th grade; small pilot; no new staff needed but rethinking of the staff that they have and movement around the assignments.
- 7th grade they have made a commitment to their computer lab and the support to writing using word processors regularly.
- One of her goals (#4) is to continue to refine the school schedule around these design elements with no staffing change/just rethinking what she has.

Principal Rabbitt said that she is hopeful that the 2014 MCAS results will demonstrate what has been predicted so far in the benchmarks. She is also expecting a bump in the student growth percentile and the overall PPI.

She thanked everyone for their support in getting a second vice-principal in place as well as the consultant who has been supporting the two vice-principals' work. After a rocky start, their referral, suspension, and absenteeism data are down. They are now trying to focus in on social/emotional interventions and supports.

Mr. Costa said he is happy to hear that the climate at Morton has shifted and the focus is back on education now that the middle school resiliency program is up and running. He asked about the special education paraprofessionals all being on the local budget and questioned if any of the special education grants can fund them. He said they are important positions but it may be a good idea to see what positions can come from other funding sources if the need arises. He thinks Principal Rabbitt is being reasonable asking for the same amount of staffing from the previous year.

Principal Rabbitt said one thing she didn't report out on was the ELT proposal where part of it was utilizing the teachers as "first partners" with a staggered schedule. She is going to look at that again and have an improved staggered schedule. She noted that she can make that happen with her staffing and that the three year continuation of the 21st Century CCLC grant will supplement the openings with partners.

Mr. Costa asked if any consideration had been given to recognizing the work that is being done by her staff and students which he thinks is an important follow-up to a tumultuous start.

Principal Rabbitt thought it was a great idea and said they have done informal announcements and postings but not an organized assembly. She noted that they had done the Axis Awards through a program with the local baseball bat company during the Morton M ceremony which they will continue. She also mentioned that the PTO is up and running.

Mrs. Panchley said Principal Rabbitt had covered a lot of the things she was going to ask. She appreciated that she was keeping the staffing at the same level and that they are making improvements in content areas and behaviors. She added that she hoped the ELT students would have more of a say in their course selections when she looks at that piece again.

Principal Rabbitt said that at the mid-year schedule change they did course selections and have noticed a big difference in having students select. She feels it made a huge impact and looks forward to that process improving for September.

Mrs. Panchley asked about the new Morton Student Conduct Handbook, who was working on it, and if there were parents involved.

Principal Rabbitt said it is a combination. It is the primary item on the School Council's agenda and they make suggestions that go back to the social/emotional Wellness Team who work on the "nuts and bolts" and then is brought back to the School Council.

At 4:50 PM Stone Therapeutic Day Middle School Principal, Mary Ellen Shaw presented:

About the school:

- Started the year working on the bigger initiatives such as increasing attendance; attendance contracts with students; worked very closely with parents.
- Worked on making their school more trauma sensitive and educating staff as to what that means.
- With the exception of 8th grade math, all of their benchmarks are going up this year. Their gains are often small but they are consistently making gains in both multiple choice and open response. They are also working with the 8th grade students to turn that around.
- They have increased their intervention time to twice a week.
- Included the ACESE staff in their PD because they see the need for there to be a very clear line for their students going from 5th to 6th grade. They keep in contact with ACESE and support each other.
- Started working on college readiness and have taken them on a college visit and have another planned.
- Starting a peer mentoring program which they received training in on their visit to Bridgewater State University.
- Started a student leadership team at the end of last year and have continued that this year and have seen a lot of big gains with their students in how they speak to one another and respect each other.
- Strength is that they have a lot of support in terms of counseling due to the district's support; behavior therapist for every grade; a FT psychologist; social skills groups.

Mrs. Panchley clarified that the population that attends the Stone would have been placed out-of-district if they did not have the school and Principal Shaw agreed.

Mr. Costa asked about the number of students attending.

Principal Shaw said they have 36 and are cleared for 40.

Mr. Costa asked if they had 4 other students identified.

Principal Shaw said that they have 2 coming to meet with them and that they are pretty steady.

Mr. Costa asked if there was an established cap.

Principal Shaw responded that was the cap that was put on the school when she first started. It was a cap of 25 and then she moved it up to 40. They wanted to grow slowly.

Mr. Costa said that was understood and that they are in their fourth year now. The intent was to build capacity without disrupting the integrity of the program. He thought that once the program was stable, they would try to increase the capacity so that they could work on what it was intended for which was bringing their students being sent out-of-district back to the district. He said he looked forward to knowing more on how they could expand as well as knowing more about the possibility of opening up to other districts who are looking to send their students out-of-district.

Mrs. Panchley asked about the summer program and if they were trying to expand it this year.

Principal Shaw explained that they have had that for the past two summers and they were not looking to expand it.

Ms. Medeiros added that it is part of their IEP and for kids at Stone, they offer it at that school.

At 5:05 PM Talbot Innovation Middle School Interim Principal, Jacqueline Francisco presented:

About the school:

- As an innovation school they have MAGS (Measurable Annual Goals) that they strive to achieve.
- STEM initiative
- PLTW implemented this year in 7th & 8th grade
- They did not show growth in their MCAS scores last year and are working on that through curriculum development and implementation through their new department head and coach.
- 2 VPs – one owns the curriculum work and one owns the social/emotional
- Curriculum VP meets weekly with the coach and department head in driving the work during common planning time with teachers.
- Blended learning
- Adopting RTI slowly into what they do
- Interdisciplinary planning
- Literacy across all content areas
- Social/emotional focus – implemented an advisory every day
- Strong Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) at the school
- Redesigned merit/demerit system at start of the year
- STRIPES Program: every letter stands for something that students can get a signature from a teacher for. (i.e. S = strong acts of leadership; T = tenacity); at the end of each term there is a breakfast and pinning ceremony. They have also done the (baseball) bat initiative.
- Attendance (on of their MAGS) has improved this year; initiatives to help improve include a raffle on release days.
- Saturday School was put in place this year; two hours are school work and the third hour is reflection.
- Leaders' lunch: Principal meets every Thursday during lunch with student government students to get feedback, etc.
- Developed a mission for the school year during ILT
- Attendance Task Force
- Summer Programs: 21st Century
- Tiger Talk – ELL students; grant funded

- MCAS Math Camp starting next week; 2 days a week, after school program

Budget:

- Not requesting any new staff
- They have one SAC and are looking to hire another bilingual SAC. They have 130 ELL students and need to build in that area.
- There is a shift in the department head number. Principal Francisco explained that was because one of them was listed as a math coach. Her hope is that instead of having one math coach and one ELA department head, she would like to have two department heads (ELA and math). She added that the math person also owns science and the ELA owns social studies as well. The VP of teaching and learning oversees that work.
- ESL changed from a 2 to a 3 because one was listed as temporary. They will have three.
- VPs are staying the same.
- Redesign Coach: She explained that it looks like there was not one last year but there was so it was added back in.
- Conversion: Media specialist to a technology facilitator. She explained that they needed to have someone with a technology focus in the school to help with the blended learning as well trouble shoot, possibly teach a course (i.e. coding), etc.

Mr. Costa said he thought the technology facilitator would be a good fit for the school but was not familiar with it being a current position within the district.

Principal Francisco said there is one at Morton.

Principal Rabbitt said the Committee approved it last year and it has been a big asset.

Mr. Costa asked if he could get the job description.

Principal Rabbitt said she would get that to Mr. Costa.

Mr. Costa asked how much contact their attendance officer has with families.

Principal Francisco said daily and when he is not in the building (because he is shared), he is making contact from other schools.

Mr. Costa said that was a missing piece when she talked about her staff coming up with creative ways to improve attendance. He added that attendance officers are critical in that piece and a valuable resource.

Mr. Costa added that he looked at the data and it speaks for itself. He didn't hear what focuses are going to be used to address the need for increases in the percentages.

Principal Francisco responded that she thought their growth was best with their ELL students and that they are working this year to identify the gaps at each grade level. They have more of a full staff this year to work to address those gaps. She added that last year they had a lot of substitute teachers in the classrooms which made it difficult. They worked hard over the summer to get a good staff.

Mr. Costa said looking at the data and seeing the data go up and down, he is looking to see what initiatives are being put in place to address it because in some cases the gaps between the targets and

the actuals are considerable given the past data and how much progress had been made. He added that looking at it realistically to get to their targets is a huge jump. He did not see any measurable goals and asked if she had given any thought to what percentages she would like to see in each of the subcategories.

Principal Francisco said they are aiming at getting as many kids as possible out of warning and needs improvement as they possibly can. They are doing that by identifying where their gaps are. She is hoping to achieve as close to those targets as they possibly can.

Mr. Costa questioned if it might be more realistic to (for example) have a two-year plan instead of trying to make the whole increase in one year which can be overwhelming. He asked if the intervention that she set up identified those students who are struggling.

Principal Francisco she said they have been identified. She also noted that they have 20 new staff members this year and there will be a learning curve. She is not creating an unrealistic expectation where she feels like they are going to hit every target but she feels like they have a chance to come close this year because of the strength of the staff. They have also worked hard at identifying what students need in ELA & math and have done some placements at the mid-year mark. There was a small population of students who were not growing as much as they could and they placed them in a ramp-up program as well as a couple of other programs to help build up their skills. They have seen some gains in their benchmark data and are hoping for some good gains with them.

Mr. Costa said that being an innovation school, they have some autonomy with how they structure their staff but questioned the move of a math coach to a department head when looking at the math scores. He asked if she could explain what that person's focus will be.

Principal Francisco said her expectation for the person taking that position is to use the data from grades 6-8 to identify what they need to get done with that specific population of students and also be driving the work in CPT in their PLC time (math/science) and really plan for deeper lessons. She explained that they do workshop model at their school and are finding that as their coach is working with teachers to have them bring to the table what they have for their student data and identify where their kids are, what some common misconceptions are, and how they are addressing that, he is finding that kids are having a hard time with getting the mathematical reasoning behind a problem with multiple steps that involve fractions and decimals. They talked about how he could drive the work in CPT with his teachers to get those students to have time to really understand that and work through it.

Mr. Costa asked if the math coach has been there for a while.

Principal Francisco said he started this year.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown explained that last year there were no department heads or coaches.

Mr. Costa said if there are needs, they need to try to be supportive of those needs sooner rather than later before there is an issue that they cannot get a handle on. He added that they are a district that always seems to respond well to difficulty and he is hoping to get to a point where they can manage what is going on and maintain themselves. If they are in need of additional resources, he asked that she please share that with them. He is not sure if they will have them but they can look throughout the district to see if there is something they can do to assist.

Mrs. Panchley questioned the 2 Principals and 1 Redesign Coach that were listed for the past year and asked if it was really only 2.

Mr. Saunders said it was listed incorrectly and it is only 2 (1 Principal and 1 Redesign Coach).

Mrs. Panchley added that she thought they need to continue to look at the Saturday School model and the cost surrounding it because she does think it is an important piece.

Superintendent Mayo-Brown said that all three middle schools have it and noted that it is progressive discipline. If they miss Saturday School, then they will be suspended.

At 5:40 PM Kuss Middle School Principal, Michael Procaccini presented:

He noted that there was a mistake on his first page explaining that the first bullet point should be ELA and the second, math. He said the numbers are correct but the labels are reversed.

About the school:

- This year they started using Saturday School for academic and social/emotional students as well. They average about 12-15 students at Saturday School and 3-4 of those students are usually there for academic reasons.
- Cougar Pride initiative: college/career readiness; split the school up vertically into three colleges and have competitions and events scheduled for some of their half days to try to get the students in. Awards and prizes are given and the team that wins gets a visit at the end of the year to the college they represent.
- Some events are run through their ILT
- Looking to do their schedule over; Mass 20/20 (supervises their ELT) is putting some pressure on them to formulate a schedule that they can use at the other middle schools. They have been working on a schedule that they feel is pretty close to what they need but did not want to implement it and have too much change at the school with the additional students/teachers coming in (due to the closing of Henry Lord). To get it ready for next year, it will require some work around the technology with how students select classes and how those classes are tracked. They will need to put a system in similar to Durfee. They hope to have it ready by the end of the year.
- Data is good but flat. They want to have teachers take the benchmark data and pull students into interventions based on the data, as it comes out in real time. They had a pilot program this year in which four teachers did this and the data from that showed a 30-40% increase over ½ a term. They are hoping to utilize their ELT time to implement this model.

Mr. Costa thought it makes sense and works and asked if there was something they could do administratively to help.

Principal Procaccini said it looks good on paper but if you have 750 students who are supposed to be in a certain place and the teachers are pulling them out, they have to keep track of where they are. This is why they did a pilot with four teachers to identify parameters as to what students are going to be moved into the intervention and now it is the administrative piece to see if they can keep track of where these students are during the intervention block.

Mr. Costa said they need to assist him and his team in making sure it functions well and asked how that can happen.

Principal Procaccini said they are working with the technology department and faculty to determine things like how they will grade the enrichment courses if students are being pulled out during them for intervention (i.e. Pass/Fail). He also noted PLTW and that they will probably put entrance criteria on that for students who don't require that much intervention because they don't want to pull students out of a class like that. They are trying to set it all up but a lot of it has to do with X2 and tracking software. He said by working at the high school, he knows that the system can do it but it is a matter of implementing it in the middle school.

Mrs. Panchley asked how often they are looking to change it if they are looking at benchmark data.

Principal Procaccini he said they would like to keep the students in there for a term so that they don't have a lot of kids moving around and then as they get the system running better they can program each benchmark. He added that it gives the students incentive as well to not get pulled out of a course they enjoy for intervention.

Mr. Costa said it sounds like they have the capability because they do it at the high school but questioned how they can make it fit at the middle school level.

Principal Procaccini said they started from scratch and are trying to make it work on the template.

Budget:

- Not requesting any new staff
- 2 coaches retiring that they would like to convert to interventionists to coach intervention strategies with their teachers. He noted that when looking at Kuss's teacher data, there are two faculties: a very young faculty and an old, high achieving faculty. They want to be able to move some of the high achieving into positions where they can influence the younger faculty (coaching, department heads, etc.) which he thinks is a healthy thing for the school but wants to make sure they have systems in place to replace those teachers with replacements who are up to speed. He thinks the schedule might help with some of that as well.
- Social/Emotionally he feels the school is in a good place especially with the advent of the Resiliency Middle School.

Mrs. Panchley asked if the middle schools were still on target for launching the parent portal.

Principal Procaccini said they are on target for the end of April. He added that his teachers were doing PD in Gradebook with X2 which is mandatory. Some of his experienced teachers had addressed higher levels of parental engagement as their goal toward Standard 3 of their evaluation and the portal will be an asset in helping them to achieve that standard.

Mrs. Panchley said that something that came up at a previous meeting was the sharing of benchmark data with parents and thinks it is a missed opportunity to not share it.

Mr. Costa said if it is good information for the schools, why not share with the parents who could work on literacy or math at home. He also added that the parent portal is only a good asset if it is being used consistently and if teachers don't update the information, parents may stop going to it for information, etc. He said the expectation needs to be that teachers have to use it.

Principal Procaccini said he is a big supporter of the parent portal.

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

2 were in favor

1 was absent (Mr. Hart)

Meeting adjourned at 5:55PM

Respectfully submitted,



Interim 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.