

Budget Subcommittee

February 16, 2011

A Budget Subcommittee meeting was held on Wednesday, February 16, 2011 at 4:00 p.m. in the 2ⁿ. Floor Conference Room, NAGE Building. Present were: Ms. Isola, Mr. McCarthy, Mrs. Bragg, Mrs. Lebo and Mrs. Mahoney, Chair. Also present were: Dr. DeCristofaro, Mr. Mullaney, Ms. Colleen Roberts, Ms. Judith Todd, Mrs. Kerri Connolly, Mrs. Erin Perkins, Mrs. Edith Hughes, and Mrs. Tefta Burrelli, Clerk.

Mrs. Mahoney called the meeting to order. This meeting was called to review our Pre-K and Kindergarten programs. Mr. Mullaney was present to discuss how these programs relate to our budget. Since we need to let parents know what we are going to offer with regard to full day Kindergarten so that they can make plans, presented tonight is the Pre-K PIP as well as the Transition to Kindergarten program. The PIP overview will show early childhood education and how they are related. The staff will then answer any questions.

This year, 155 students entered Kindergarten from the Pre-K. Pre K students are taught the ability to engage in mindful, intentional and thoughtful behaviors and are a predictor of future academic success. The optimal period of development for self regulations occurs during the ages of 3, 4 and 5 years old.

The instruction is designed to raise achievement in all areas. Curricula and instruction are provided to get children “ready” for education. Pre-K curricula includes Tools of the Mind, Literacy Express, Trophies, Social Studies and Science Themed Unit. Kindergarten includes Trophies, Houghton Mifflin Math, Writer’s workshop, and Social Studies and Science Themed Units.

Assessment provides teachers with information regarding the needs of individual students, is used to assess progress over short and long term periods, and to determine further need for interventions, individually administered and developmentally appropriate. Intervention programs are designed to address student development in areas of need. Various interventions are used to develop the whole child and can vary in intensity . Both Academic and Therapeutic interventions are used. We use Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language and guidance interventions. We have whole group and small group interventions.

Ready Schools and Communities provide an inviting atmosphere, values and respect all children and families, and is a place where children succeed. We are committed to high quality in all domains of learning and have deep connections with parents and its community.

These programs are accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). We have professional development. We collaborate with other community providers, outreach to community resources, citywide screening and ongoing referrals.

Ninety-nine percent of our 155 Pre-K students, age appropriate for Kindergarten, enroll in our QPS Kindergarten program. We hold orientation, open house, report card conference, coffee hours, community library hours at Thomas Crane, "Transition to School" literature, Count up to Kindergarten Program. We have a family handbook program brochures, school and classroom newsletters, program parent evaluation survey.

Mr. Jim Mullaney spoke to the Pre-K Program which has 11 Special Ed. teachers, 3.8 PT/OT, 1.8 Speech, 2 Guidance, 2 nurses, 12 aides, 2.8 COTA, 3 Clerical for a total of 38.40 positions. For this program, the Quincy Public Schools paid \$935,607, Title I pays \$393,473, IEA \$142,595, other grants \$197,965, Tuition Income \$81,504 for a total of \$1,751,144 for the Pre-K Program. The Full Day Kindergarten program has 34 teachers and 21 aides. Quincy Public Schools pays \$2,336,958; we get a Full Day Kindergarten Grant for \$261,000 for a total cost of \$2,597,958.

Mr. Mullaney said with regard to fees, we can charge students for full day Kindergarten; however, we will lose the Full Day Kindergarten grant. If we were to charge tuitions and give discounts based on the State's sliding scale for the grant, we would still be eligible to receive grant funding.

Ms. Isola said she was under the impression that we were not able to charge for anyone who is on free and reduced lunch. Mr. Mullaney stated that a tuition charge could be applied to those families that receive free and reduced lunch but grant funding would not be available. She asked for clarification. Mr. Mullaney stated that the School Committee can set any tuition policy they wanted ranging from all students paying to all students free.

Mr. Mullaney said that we would have the right to require income verification and require that parents submit their tax returns for verification. Those parents whose students already receive free and reduced lunch could be exempt from the verification policies depending upon the tuition guidelines adopted by the School Committee.

Ms. Isola asked for a breakdown -- the numbers of who would not be paying under the state's sliding scale.

Mr. Mullaney said we only have information on the number of free and reduced students currently in QPS. There is no source to gather the information to determine the income levels of parents whose children will be attending kindergarten. It was his opinion that if students who receive free and reduced lunch are not charged for tuitions 42% to 48% of kindergarten students will not be paying tuition. Mr. Mullaney cautioned that we have to determine the number of classes and teachers needed for kindergarten by end of May per teacher contract, as the contract requires teachers to be notified by mid-May of lay-offs. If the level of participation and tuition was too low for tuition it would be too late (after mid-May) to lay-off teachers. By using a system of limiting enrollment, such as one full-day kindergarten per school, you can budget and plan for staffing. If there are no limitations, we won't know how many classes of full-day kindergarten there will be until late in the summer or early fall when parents actually pay for tuitions.

Ms. Isola asked about hiring teachers later in the year to address any shortfalls if we plan for a limited amount of classes and we have greater participation. Teachers have been hired in the summer and early fall to address class size in the past, but this has been a limited number. Mr. Mullaney said we are going to run into a problem if we don't get the revenues.

Mrs. Mahoney referenced an article stating that in Melrose they are using a more lenient tuition sliding scale policy so more people will qualify. Mr. Mullaney said that works for Melrose because they get more Chapter 70 foundation money than Quincy does. Randolph gets more Chapter 70 money so they can offer full day K for free.

Mrs. Lebo said she understands the state's sliding scale and that we can put in our own. If we put in our own, do we have to give free and reduced students a break? Mr. Mullaney said that students on free and reduced lunch could be charged tuitions. Mrs. Lebo said that is foreign to her.

Mr. Mullaney said that we are not required by the state to provide full-day kindergarten. We provide free half-day kindergarten, so we can charge for full-day kindergarten since it is not a mandated service.

Mrs. Mahoney asked if we go to half day Kindergarten, how much would we lose on foundation money. Mr. Mullaney estimated that we could lose up to \$551,000 in FY 2013 based on our current enrollment and the proposed Chapter 70 funding.

Mrs. Bragg went over the facts. In the past, before QPS instituted Full Day Kindergarten, our K students only counted as ½ students. It is now counted as a full student due to FDK.

Mr. Mullaney said you can charge the full amount for free and reduced lunch students. However, you would lose the funding for the aides. If we charge the Kindergarten and we use our own sliding scale, we would lose the \$261,000 grant. If we use the state's sliding scale we won't lose the grant, but we would collect far less for tuition because of the number of students who would qualify for tuition discounts. Mrs. Bragg asked for a chart that the state puts out.

Mrs. Bragg asked Mrs. Burrelli for a copy of a School Committee motion referred to on Page 10 of the Pre-K PIP.

Mrs. Lebo asked if we have any tools that can show schools significance that full day K has had. Can we look at what kind of student's assessment we did have? Can we see the difference through data that the full day K has made for first grade? Mrs. Hughes answered that we did some in-house data. We looked at the data that the DIBELS presented and we found FDK did make a difference in the kids.

Ms. Isola asked if we instituted our own sliding scale, could we require financial documentation from every parent who applied. Mr. Mullaney answered yes. If we used the state sliding scale, could we require from each parent who requested assistance. Mr. Mullaney answered that we could require the information from everyone with the exception of those on those on free and

reduced lunch. If someone was not on free and reduced lunch we could require 100% compliance with documentation.

Ms. Isola asked what the impact of that \$880,000 is across the district. She knows what the educational benefits of full day K is. She believes in educational benefits--reading in middle school, art, music. Now the ARRA money is not going to be there. We have a number of literacy teachers who that funding is going to go for them. She wants to have all the information before she makes a decision. No matter what scale we use, do you see any way for us to receive revenue of \$880,000?

Ms. Isola asked about the projections for classes and tuition revenue. Mr. Mullaney said that making projections was difficult due to the many variables involved. If we had one full day K per building and used the assumption that only students who receive free and reduced lunch would pay no tuition, it is estimated that the following tuitions could be collected: \$4,000 in tuition, we would net \$642,000, at \$3,000 we would get \$481,000, at \$2,715 we anticipated \$436,000, and on \$2,000 we anticipated \$321,000.

Mr. Mullaney added that of the number of students in full day K who would be paying, 275 students, 42% would not be paying, 58% would be paying, 160 paying parents out of 275 with one full day K per building.

Mrs. Mahoney said that the \$880,000 is the cost difference between full day and half day. That includes the grant. Mr. Mullaney said that we had \$2.3 million and if we reduced the number of teachers to 17. We looked at what it would mean to special ed. If we did one ½ day and 1 full day in each school. We would need four special education teachers, four aides. Once you got to the 17 teachers, the savings going to half day would be \$854,000.

The committee asked about other programs in the Quincy Public Schools that are not mandated. Dr. DeCristofaro mentioned some of them including literacy, foreign language, health Ed, ROTC, Art, and Athletics.

The Superintendent said that the free full-day kindergarten program is at a disadvantage compared to other programs due to timing. A discussion regarding full-day kindergarten must be made soon due to kindergarten registration on March 29 and prior to our final budget figures.

The Committee should send key questions to Mr. Mullaney or the staff. We are talking about staffing and parents, we're ready to assist in any way.

Mr. McCarthy said that even though we don't know all the ins and outs of who's going to come to full day K, he would like to see the scenarios that we might think might happen if we use our own sliding scale or the state sliding scale so we could kick around the possible financial numbers.

He asked Mr. Mullaney to come up with some scenarios the Committee could look at and try to pick one that fits Quincy.

Mr. Mullaney said he would be happy to answer any questions and look at any scenario.

Mrs. Mahoney passed out a draft for upcoming Budget Subcommittee meetings. She might add February 28 or March 7 or 8 because this is an issue we need to work on. Mr. Mullaney would come up with sliding scales, income verification for free and reduced lunch and how that could be important.

On a motion by Mrs. Mahoney, seconded by Mrs. Lebo, the Budget Subcommittee adjourned for the evening at 5:31 p.m. The ayes have it