

SCHOOL POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, November 30, 2011

A meeting of the School Policy Subcommittee was held on Wednesday, November 30, 2011 at 3:30 pm in the Special Education Conference Room at Quincy High School. Present were Mrs. Elaine Dwyer, Ms. Barbara Isola, Mrs. Emily Lebo, Mrs. Anne Mahoney, and Mrs. Jo-Ann Bragg, Chair. Also attending were Superintendent DeCristofaro, Mrs. Colleen Roberts, Mr. Keith Segalla, Ms. Mary Frederickson, NQHS Principal Earl Metzler, NQHS Assistant Principal Rob Shaw, QHS Principal Frank Santoro, QHS Assistant Principal Ellen Murray, and Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk.

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 pm by Mrs. Bragg.

Principal Earl Metzler presented the North Quincy High School Improvement Plan, along with Assistant Principal Rob Shaw. Mr. Metzler began with a review of the school's 2010-2011 goals. The first two related to MCAS and were both met; the third goal related to decreasing tardiness, but was not met. This will continue as a goal for the 2011-2012 school year; it was noted that absences are not an issue, nor are the students excessively late. Mr. Metzler also discussed the NEASC accreditation process, which NQHS has begun preparing for; the NEASC visit will be in October 2013 (deferred a year at NEASC's request). As part of this process, the school is revising their Mission Statement with input from staff. The AP program is also performing well with 78% of students taking the tests scoring a 3, 4, or 5.

North Quincy High School's goals for 2011-2012 are: (1) Increase the number of Students with Disabilities in the Proficient and Advanced categories (score greater than 240) of the Math MCAS on the first attempt (regular grade 10 administration) to at least 50%. (2) Increase the average score of students enrolled in standard English courses on the open-response items on the ELA MCAS to 70%. (3) Revise and update all course syllabi to reflect current courses, instructors, and frameworks. (4) Reduce the number of students with ten or more days tardy to school in 2011-2012 by half. In addition, each department created goals and action steps for areas of growth.

During the subsequent discussion, the subcommittee inquired about the specifics of the facilities issues listed (Maintenance is aware of the issues), class size (5 are at 31 or above; all are Advanced and Honors Social Studies classes), and the difference between passing score on MCAS (220 points) and competency level (240 points) and how the passing students achieve competency levels (through EPP). At the conclusion of the discussion, Ms. Isola moved to

approve the North Quincy High School Improvement Plan. Mrs. Dwyer seconded the motion and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.

Mrs. Bragg then moved to take the third item on the agenda, Community Service Graduation Requirements, out of order. QHS Principal Frank Santoro joined the meeting for this discussion, along with QHS Assistant Principal Ellen Murray.

Mrs. Bragg presented a motion to add a phased-in graduation requirement for community service; the class of 2013 would complete ten hours, the class of 2014 would complete 20 hours, and the class of 2015 and beyond would complete 30 hours during their high school career. She cited a number of other eastern Massachusetts cities and towns that have adopted similar policies and stipulated that a list of approved organizations would need to be developed to ensure student safety.

Both high school Principals stated they would like a community service high school graduation requirement and both stated they can make it work. Citywide Parents' Council also stated it in their last year goals.

In the discussion that followed, subcommittee members expressed support for the concept, but concern about the administration of the policy. Specific concerns included it being an additional administrative burden, would credit be added to student's official transcripts, how to accommodate the student mobility rate at Quincy High School (11%) and other extenuating student issues (for example, transferring students, SPED, homelessness, Evening High School students), involving the union in the policy development, and the development of the list of approved organizations. The discussion concluded with an agreement to work towards developing a pilot community service program; Dr. DeCristofaro will work with the high school Principals and Assistant Principals on developing the pilot. Attached is the draft motion Mrs. Bragg presented.

The next item on the agenda was the presentation of the Quincy High School Improvement Plan. In opening his presentation, Principal Santoro introduced the new Quincy High School Mission Statement, developed by the staff and members of the Superintendent's Leadership Team in conjunction with preparing for the NEASC visit in March, 2012. He then reflected on the school's 2010-2011 goals, introducing Assistant Principal Ellen Murray, who spoke about the MCAS results. Last year's goal of increased student scores, proficiency rates, and student participation were all met and the school moved from Level 3 to Level 2. Quincy High School teams have also done an impressive number of projects over the last three years; they will be presented at the January 25, 2012 School Committee Meeting. The entire QHS staff is involved

in these teams, with the exception of Guidance staff and several Chapter 74 teachers who teach 6 classes.

Quincy High School's goals for 2011-2012 are: (1) During the 2011-2012 school year, Quincy High School will foster growth in vocabulary knowledge that will help enhance both writing and comprehension skills so that we continue to close the gap within 8 points of the state's average in the ELA testing related to Vocabulary. (2) To accomplish all the tasks necessary to ensure a successful visit of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) on March 4, 2012. With the imminent visit from NEASC, all Professional Development time is focused on the self-study reports; the goal's action steps are the timeline for completion.

In the discussion that followed, the subcommittee asked about how extra-curricular money is budgeted (split evenly between both high schools, not based on population), use of QPS email (staff are required to use when communicating with parents or QPS personnel outside QHS; gmail accounts are used for QHS team work as the account is needed to access Google docs), and AP testing (77% of QHS students taking AP tests scored 3, 4, or 5). Mr. Santoro expressed a concern about the AP test fees; over 50% of student population eligible for free/reduced lunch. Mrs. Roberts will follow up with NQHS about how options they may be utilizing to assist with AP test fees. The final point of discussion was class size; 6 classes have 31 or more students, but Mr. Santoro confirmed that all are electives: 5 Social Studies and 1 AP English class.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Mrs. Dwyer motioned to accept the Quincy High School Improvement Plan. Mrs. Mahoney seconded the motion and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.

The last item on the agenda was a review of School Committee Policy 2.5.8, School Committee-Staff Communications Policy. Mrs. Isola had brought the policy forward for review. Mrs. Bragg research the Massachusetts Association of School Committees website for information and found that their position is as follows:

Why is it necessary to contact the superintendent and/or principal when a committee member wants to visit a particular school? No matter how well-intended, unannounced visits may be perceived by the staff as an attempt to meddle in school business. Once elected, school committee members are viewed as elected officials who may be visiting for official reasons. Alerting administrators in advance sends a clear message that the purpose for the visit is to demonstrate support and interest. Advance notification also prevents visits from taking place when activities that cannot be interrupted, such as student testing, are taking place.

After a discussion of specific and hypothetical situations, all subcommittee members agreed that the existing policy should not be amended or changed.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 pm.