

2007-03-13 School Committee Meeting

(Notes taken by Josh Lobel to the best of my ability. I apologize for errors or omissions)

All members present

(room is filled to capacity with members of the public, and a large majority of the Ottoson middle school faculty)

Call to order

Public Participation

Sue Sheffler: Welcome to the meeting. We have rules for public participation. Please keep comments to 3 minutes (with one exception). We need to limit the total time for public participation. Some of you may not get a chance to speak tonight, we welcome you to come back in two weeks.

Marty: In my 14 years on the committee, I've never seen out a turnout like this. If people who want to speak, I think it would be a mistake not to hear them. I for one would like to hear anyone who has something to say.

Sue: Everyone here, and everyone not here has a right to speak. However, we must adhere to our rules. If you would like to speak, we can hear you at 11pm.

Marty: Move to extend the rules from 20 minutes

Paul: Point of order. I'd like to point out that the public is invited to speak, but public outbursts are not appropriate, and if there are interruptions, I will move to adjourn.

Discussion, Motion was defeated. Thrope, Garballey, Thielman yes, others no, defeated 4-3.

Bobby Waters, AHS Junior

Wants to address the committee on the new ranking system – changing from actual discrete rank to decile rank – e.g. from 1,2,3 to top 10%, 20%. We have been working since 8th grade to achieve our goals, it is not fair to change rules in the middle of the game. I think this will water down the new ranking system, and make it more difficult for us to be accepted into the schools we desire. I have done some research on this, and although many teachers have told me that the discrete ranking is not important for admissions, I have found that many people believe that very competitive schools look at finer rankings than the decile rank provides. Ms. Hernandez wrote a book (missed name), with this kind of info. When I use an online calculator which scores students for

admissions, the discrete ranking system gave students a boost in their score. When you are applying to the most competitive colleges, any boost makes a difference.

Larry Greco, 8th grade math teacher

(ed note – Mr. Greco delivered a long written statement. I have tried to capture his comments but certainly things were left out.)

Here representing the faculty of Ottoson Middle School – one of the best middle school faculties in the state.

I am here tonight to express our concern that there has been a steady deterioration in the philosophy of the middle school. We strive to create an environment that nurtures the intellectual, academic, emotional and social needs of students. It provides opportunities for self awareness, exposure to different ideas of interest and community developments. In recognizing the needs of the total child, we best serve our students. Our philosophy is being challenged externally and sadly also internally. We created our philosophy when the school moved from a junior high to a middle school. We modified our philosophy at that time to the particular needs of this age group. At the core of that system is the cluster system – small groups of 100-115 students. In this light, we can create a more secure environment for students to develop their academic skills and interests.

I still run into students who graduated years ago who tell me their middle school years were among the best in their education. We have embraced a 6-8th grade curriculum when the school was created, and again when the school was renovated in the 90's.

With the advent of No Child Left Behind and MCAS, this philosophy has been challenged. Rather than keeping the needs of the students in mind, we have sadly devoted too much attention to MCAS scores. Where once we relied on the experience of teachers and psychologists, we now see the shift to processing data.

We teach a great variety of students. The sad truth is that No Child Left Behind has had exactly the opposite effect. The stresses on the students and faculty have reinforced failure.

We have devoted our attention to mastering the MCAS at the sacrifice of actually teaching curriculum and devoting our attention to our students.

First, this fall there was a serious proposal to take students out of special ed followup and instead put them in support classes to pass the MCAS. The special ed services are critical to the success of these children. I say this as a teacher and a parent of two children who both benefited from these services.

That such an idea was contemplated shows the glaring error of our ways. This path was not taken, but it is revealing.

At one time, the School Committee took the stand that we should not be driven by MCAS, we have lost that perspective.

When the middle school was created, we designed a 6th grade transitional year with only 3 teachers per cluster. The clusters are also smaller. This allows the teachers to know the students and provide a supportive transition year.

I am also concerned that senior teachers feel that when they express their wisdom, they are seen as troublemakers. Rather than address the true needs of our children, we are only focusing on the MCAS success.

Maybe that rather than say we can do more with less we need to confront that our school system is in fact delivering less than it did.

We also support our leadership team. Stavroula Bouris, Eric Saum, and John Gonsalves are passionate leaders for our students.

We can either accept what is happening to our schools, or we can take a stand. We can put our children's needs first.

In addition to preparing a transparent budget, we must work hard to make sure that our teachers and students are not invisible.

This presentation was written before the Administrations decision not to rehire our principal. This afternoon, our faculty voted unanimously a vote of confidence of our principal.

Much applause.

And a unanimous vote of no confidence for Supt Levenson.

It is truly ironic that in a system that values diversity, that our principal be subjected to such an immoral and intolerant act.

Through the last week I connected the dots about the Supt's actions in his tenure here, and I am dismayed with the resulting picture.

Crossing guards reduced while the supt received an 11% raise
Reduction in administration last year
Teachers who were offered jobs and then had the offers retracted
A teacher at Dallin was dismissed
(*ed note – several more examples were included*)

There is a climate of fears of retribution and a need for silence.

These are the dots that I have connected. Who knows what is best for the students, parents or the supt? Ottoson staff who have 100's of years of experience or the supt has none. If only one should continue to lead us, who should it be – one who has faithfully lead us, or one who has alienated 30% of the staff.

I know you hope we will go away, but we will not, and the truth will never die.

Sue Sheffler said that the school committee policy was to limit public participation to 20 minutes. We are now at 30 minutes, so I must move the agenda along. Anyone who is willing to stay past 11pm is welcome to speak, or to come back two weeks from now.

Marty asked that Diane Mahon be allowed to speak and that the public participation period be extended.

Diane was asked to confine her remarks to 3 minutes, to which she agreed.

Diane: We have received many calls and emails. I address my comments to the school committee. We are in a community, we are not in a business. The community are the ones that have put us in the seats we are in to be their voice. I know you all take that very seriously for no pay. I know under ed reform, that the school committee hires the supt, but does not have authority over principals. Myself and Jack have had children at the Ottoson. My daughter is in a very special classroom which I hope will be continued.

I know that the committee does have the power to ask the supt to reconsider his decision. While you cannot direct him to hire or fire someone, you can ask him to reconsider. Out of respect for the community, respect of the staff, and respect of the process, you ask him to reconsider, give him up to a year, and provide the additional information you would need to understand his decision.

You can ask him to reconsider, and he can choose to ignore your request. If he does ignore it, I hope that you would take that into consideration when you look at his contract.

We have all worked very hard on the override. We are the community. Please, I implore you, slow down until we get all of the facts on the table.

Sue: Thank you Ms Mahon, and my apologies to all those who wished to speak tonight – we look forward to hearing from you at another time.

Consent agenda

Passed unanimously

Presentation by Glenn Koucher, President of Mass Association of School Committees

Glenn Koucher: I am often asked by school committees to come and make a brief presentation about the role and responsibilities of the school committee in the type of situation that we are facing tonight. The role of the school committee is very limited in terms of hiring and firing any employees in the school system, with few exceptions. It is not appropriate to substitute their judgement for the supt's. In addition, there are very important issues of personal confidentiality. People do not give up their rights to privacy. I need to caution you that any comments that you might choose to make in a matter such as this could be a gross violation to the personnel policy and employee records. These comments can track an individual for many years to come. I highly caution you to be careful in what you say.

I have personally attended over 2200 school committee meetings and over 150 meetings like the one we are having tonight.

Any comments you may make may affect someone's career for life.

Jeff: what is your opinion of the suggestion that was just made?

Mr. Koucher: You need to use your best judgement. It is the public's right to express any opinions they have to you, and you should listen to them carefully. I am speaking very generally – I have no knowledge of this situation, and I encourage you to only express yourselves generally, and not to substitute your judgement for the supt's. I think that the public will accept the situation eventually.

Supt's presentation

There are a lot of details that I cannot discuss, and I would ask that you respect that.

I know you are angry. I know I have hurt you and I have hurt Stav. No good comes from the pain. I also knew that this would cause this kind of pain – I'm not naive or out of touch. This is not the kind of decision that is made lightly or out of the blue.

Another point, I'm not sure you'll believe it, is that I have no problem with the middle school model. I feel that the things I've tried to bring into the system, like standards based education, have no conflict with the current philosophy. I recognize that if we only educate the kids in math that we haven't done our job. I think we really do agree on most things, but I don't think you know that.

The role of a principal is a complicated job. My role as the supt is also difficult. I must keep one thing in focus – the needs of our 4100 students in the system.

I've been asked questions, and unfortunately I cannot go into answers to many of these questions. I have been asked if this decision is final, and I say that this is a decision that has been made over an extended time, and it is final.

We are not very far apart about how a school should be run. MCAS is not the driver. We have a lot to talk about. I admit that we have not communicated well, and I don't expect you to believe that tonight, but it is the truth.

Marty: Mr. Levenson, I'd like to share with you some timely thoughts and observations. I was not in the top of my graduating class like you, and I didn't do as well at Harvard as you. However, I have been around the block on several things that perhaps has surpassed you. I have been a part of this community for many years. I may not be the smartest person in the world, but I think I have wisdom.

I have been here enough to see your many failings, your boorish behavior, your self aggrandizing. Statements.

Whether or not the committee renews your contract or not, you are finished in this town. A system where the staff is broken is not likely to put forward your agenda. As the community has come to express themselves, many of whom have never been involved before, shows something. If the issue is fit, that maybe you should be looking in the mirror.

We extended you the opportunity of a lifetime, and you have blown it. It is not fair to our community or kids.

You are finished in this community.

Although it is not within our purview to direct the supt, I make a motion of no confidence in the supt.

Sean seconded for purposes of discussion.

Role call vote on motion:

Thrope – yes

Garballey – yes

Fennelly – no

Theilman – no

Schichtman – no

Lovelace – no

Sheffler – no

Failed 5-2

(ed note – at this point many of the staff and community left the room)

Nursing Update

Lucille Nicholson

Also presenting:

Susan Lovelace – school comm

Pat Hassett, Nurse at Ottoson

Cindy Starks – parent

Sue Mazarella, CFO

Here to present some findings.

There was a recent article in the NYTimes about school nursing. School nurses uniformly said that their jobs were changing. Students routinely come into the office with a health care plan in place. It is the nurse's responsibility to implement that plan with the students and parents.

There are no uniform national standards for the number of nurses/student. There is a national number of 1 nurse per 700 students. Massachusetts had a recommendation of 1 nurse per 250/students.

How does Arlington fair:

Arlington: 8 FTE nurses

National Std 5.96

State Std 11.10

We are in the middle.

The supt made a recommendation for changes, which we are implementing.

Presented a chart on number of FTE nursers per school. Several elementary schools have 1 fte, while dallin has .5, hardy .7, peirce .75. This is based on student health issues in each school. We don't know what we will recommend for next year until we see the student needs. There is 1.3 at ottoson, and 1.7 at the high school.

A nurse is present in every building for at least 3 hours/day, and there is always a nurse on call.

We record everything, we document everything.

Asthma	243	students
Food Allergies	145	
ADHD/ADD	129	
Depression	19	

Seisure Disorder	20
Latex Allergies	7
Bee Sting Allergies	11
Diabetes	10

Since January, there have been 8 incidents where the school nurses have had to administer an epi-pen treatment. We do train our staff on how to use an epi-pen, but they can only use the epi-pen on students who have been diagnosed. I would like you to think about these recent cases – over ½ of the students did NOT have a diagnosed issue that would have authorized the use of the epi-pen.

Here are the results of our work on the several motions by the school committee.

Motion 1: Review the health needs and size of each school to determine staffing assignments

Presented a page on how much the school nurses have done:

Parent communications	5,000
Staff comm. re: student hlth	2,500
Communication drs's	400
Phone calls re IEP's	500
Student Nurse Visits	36,452
% returned to classroom	34.237
Nurse vists by staff last year	533

One of the goals of the nurse is to keep the children in the school. We do have criteria about when a child should go home.

Presented several charts documenting what they do.

Student procedures:

Peak Flow meter	31
Auscultate Lungs	72
Blood Glucose	189
Insulin Calculation	112
...	

In sept 2006

Scheduled prescriptions	50
Scheduled doses	280
Prn prescriptions	248

Motion 2 was to train key building staff in emergency procedures

It is the recommendation from Mass dept of public health that at least 5 adults be trained, or 1 for every 50 students.

5 have the ability to train in CPR

19 staff trained at Bishop

All phys ed teachers are cpr certified

2 preschool teachers are cpr certified

Plan has been developed based on need

Motion 3: Provide for expanded counseling and support through partnership with AYCC

Provide support through partnership with AYCC (Arlington Youth Counseling Commission)

There are interns in place in all elementary schools, and they are supervised by the staff of AYCC.

Motion 4: Review and revise any policies and protocols related to the administration of medication & emergency health services

There was a time when I thought that there was a feeling that only school nurses can administer medication. That is not true. However, there has to be proper training.

The nurse:student ratio in the Arlington public schools has been noted as problematic in recent years with regards to requests to train unlicensed personnel to administer prescription medications. The department recognizes the effort made by Arlington to improve this situation, however, nursing staff did not increase. There was a concern that using other staff for this sort of thing was being used as a justification for reducing school nurses, and they do not support that.

The dept of Health **has** granted permission for arlington to train unlicensed personnel to administer prescription medications on field trips and short term special school events and the request to train unlicensed school personnel to administer epinephrine in a life threatening situation. We make it very clear about which students are eligible.

Motion 5: Educate all staff regarding Massachusetts Laws that protect and encourage emergency assistance to children in need

All staff trained on first day of school regarding
Life threatening allergies
Usage of epi-pens
Universal precautions and emergency protocol
Children with health issues

On Feb 14th, 2006, the school committee voted to collect data and conduct necessary research to answer the question “Can we increase student health in a cost-effective manner”

\$9 cost per nurse visit

94

% of children return to the classroom

Nursing fte below state standard

One of the most fiscally conservative and cost effective departments

Had a school wide flu clinic at the high school

Are responsible for the great body shop program – we visit every classroom to teach this

There is currently another initiative on beverage and student health

Pat quoted Susan Lovelace -- that they were one of the most cost effective depts..

Task force goal #1

Meet the mass minimum nursing requirements for all schools

Increase lead nurse position for management

Recommendation

Gradually increase the full time nursing staff to the 11 nurses needed. Taking into account the fact that Arlington is in the middle of a 5 year financial plan

1st Step: Permanent Part-Time Sub

What happens now, is that if the Brackett nurse is scheduled to go in and do the great body shop, then then bishop nurse goes to Brackett to cover. We could use a perm part time in all kinds of ways

Task force goal #2: Train at least 5 personnel per school on first aid and CPR

Recommendation: continue to offer training and encourage more teachers to be trained

Task force goal #3 – every school should have an Automatic External Defibrillator

Recommendation: buy and deploy one a year for each school. Train sufficient staff in AED use and practice. Bishop school currently has one. Perhaps funding for this could come from pto's or community

Task force goal #4: Move forward in creating electronic student records and using current systems for State and Federal reporting

Move forward in creating electronic student records and using current systems for state and federal reporting – everything is currently done manually.

Recommendation: research software packages that may be adequate to support the needs of the nursing department. Data is now compiled and recorded on paper. We have been working with Josephine and Steve (technology dept) about ways to tackle this, and we are making progress.

You can not educate an unhealthy child, and you cannot keep an uneducated child healthy. Our role is very important.

They presented a booklet that had valuable information about their services.

Susan Lovelace: I wanted to thank you for your presentation. I am on the committee, but you did all of the work. I also want to thank Cindy for her hard work in bringing this issue to our attention. It has been a very positive experience, both from a community member coming forward and for the hard work that you have done.

Sean: I also thank you for all of your hard work. When you presented the statistic of 8 administrations of epi-pens, it is quite alarming. Is there anything we can do to include doctors in our community about training?

Lucille: We do have relationships with Winchester Hospital

A focus for me has been reach out. Because of the situation with life-threatening illnesses, we are meeting with the fire chief and other emergency responders to determine what changes can help us.

Sean: I know Arlington Boys and Girls Club right down the street provide a great service for our kids. Many of the staff do provide additional courses for CPR – perhaps we could tap into some of those courses as well.

Marty: This is an impressive body of work and moving in the right direction. This is another example of how it seems that increasingly we are putting more responsibility on the schools that used to be handled elsewhere.

I do have one concern about Motion #3 – the use of interns as social workers. Although they are certainly caring individuals, they don't have the professional experience that a professional would have. We don't know what we could be missing – this could turn out badly.

Lucille: To be honest with you, that doesn't have anything to do with my dept. It was one of the motions made relating to health, but it is not through the nursing program.

Nate: All of the interns are being supervised by the full-time AYCC staff. We know that this is not the same as fully staffing with professionals, but we do dedicate full time AYCC staff to identified issues. This is better than 0 that it was.

Marty: Some people say bad breath is better than no breath, but I'm not sure this is the case here.

Jeff: Thank you for your hard work. You are advocating that we go from 8 FTE's to 11.

Lucille: Over time.

Jeff: In your professional opinion, how stretched are we – how close are we to a dangerous situation?

Lucille: We are cutting it pretty tight. There are some substitute nurses, but there is serious pressure on our nurses. None of them take any sick time lightly – we cover for each other. I have personally covered for many of my colleagues – this has left my school, Peirce, uncovered. There is nothing extra – we are right down to the bone.

Jeff: How much do the defibrillators cost?

Lucille: about \$2,000 -- \$18,000 for all of the schools

Sean: question for supt. I'm sure you've read these goals, there is a long time period to move from 8 FTE's to 11 FTE's? How much would it cost to implement these changes.

Nate: ~\$150,000/year to institute these services, assuming we continue with the AYCC involvement. There would also be a 1-time cost of \$50,000. I want to add my thanks to you for all of your work on this task force. I would say that we will very likely be able to provide the resources to integrate your information into PowerSchool (our student information system). I appreciate you coming to the School committee and bringing these issues to light.

Paul: I endorse the idea of getting this info into Power School, and I hope that happens.

Math, ELA Intervention

Presentation by Hutch, Kathy Bodie (Math dept head), Elise Frangos, English Dept Head)

We are going to frame the discussion about what we are trying to do, and then we will have a presentation by Elise and Kathy.

We've been talking about effective learning communities. Brief review

- What is it we want our students to know and be able to do
- How will we know when they have learned
- What will we do when they aren't learning
 - Time and support are the variables, learning is the constant

One of the contrasts we have made with the traditional system compared to a standards based system, learning was the variable, and time and support were the constants.

How do we manage interventions? How do we know when to intervene, and how do we know when the intervention is working.

I need to return to the pyramid of intervention – we move the intervention up the pyramid and apply more time and support until we are effective.

Elise Frangos: All great things start with a concept. We have many people here who work with. (*ed note, apologize specifically for any I left off this list*)

Lindsey Hubbard, Literacy lab great 8

Kevin Richardson, grade 9

Leah Davies Richardson – grade 10

Corey Brown

Stavroula Bouris

Christophe Cooke, grade 7

Melissa Brody, grade 7/8

(missed one or two here)

Meaning-making literacy – interventions in ELA

The concept we have thought about at Ottoson middle school and AHS, how do we address the needs of struggling students.

You know from your experience that reading and writing are recursive exercises. We created a literacy lab at the high school so that the processes of reading and writing could take place there in small group instruction.

Tier II

Double Literacy block grade 9

This allows students to take grade 9 english for two consecutive sessions. Students identified to take part in this by mcas results, or series of grades. The curriculum is identical to other 9th grade program, but texts are geared to these students.

Students acquire a repertoire over the course of the year. Students gain academic access skills through weekly literature circles using choice text. Taught by Paul McKnight to 17 students, and has been very successful.

At Ottoson, there is a similar program – a literacy lab. The approach is to present more time and support. Students still have a traditional block of English language arts, with this extra supplemental time. Staffed by Lindsey Hubbard.

In Ottoson, we have 6 teachers of grade 7 and 8 who provide extra support. 240 minutes per week to 45 students.

At High school, we have 7 knowledgeable ELA teachers who are shifted from Directed studies to Literacy lab 2-3 periods per 7 day cycle. There is extra time for support. There are 39 students in this program. 7 are metco, 11 are ED (economically disadvantaged).

Students were identified by Charlie Skidmore and Elise Frangos at AHS, and by Stavroula Bouris at middle school.

There use self-assessment surveys to work with students to look at how they use the resources, the organizers, etc.

Goal is for students to become independent readers and writers. We do this in a supportive environment.

Positive outcomes.

10% of students “self-admit”. Other students inquire as to how they can get the services. It’s very powerful to have an ally in the middle school or high school.

Often times, the extra time is invaluable. There are cases where preparing some before a class helps students participate better in their classrooms with more confidence.

We are seeing better grades in English and History – both text based classes.

Students who have failed MCAS experience a great retake (ed note – missed this point)

Charlie: we’re down to about 6 students who are still struggling with MCAS, down from about 20 from last year. We are helping the students to make that leap to success.

We are engaging in a lot of prof development over the summer to new strategies for dealing with reading and I’m pleased that the staff has extended themselves enthusiastically to create life long readers who have a love of reading.

For special ed students, this has been a great support as well. We do have requests from special ed and ELL staff about getting support from the literacy lab.

Challenges:

Space at Ottoson is very limited. We need technology, storage cabinets that can be locked for privacy. We have large numbers of students that we would like to serve 6-8 grades, but can't because of scheduling issues – conflicts of world languages. 6th grade students are not served in literacy lab.

In AHS, we are pulling teachers from directed studies – scheduling is constrained by that factor. There are students in grades 11-12 who need help too, although the literacy lab is currently focusing on grades 9-10. It would be great to have a fully staffed literacy lab for all grades.

Ideally we will identify students who are eligible for literacy lab in August, and then the rest of their schedule can be crafted around literacy lab, rather than retrofitting their schedule in sept.

Sean: Thank you – I think the literacy lab is a great place – it has transformed a cluttered newspaper office to a warm receptive area. Especially as we have more students going on to college, it is necessary to have this support to have students succeed.

You say that 10% enter voluntarily. The question I have for the 90% who are enrolled – is there an issue with motivation? What can we do to further motivate the students who don't want to be there so they can be as successful as the ones that do want to be there.

Elise: As in so many things, relationships are the key. Having staff that know these students who can supply positive coaching and support is critical. In a perfect world we might have all students come for after school help, but with the reality of other pressures, providing a safe place where you can express yourself provides a vital service.

Kevin Richardson: Sean, it is a good question. It does sometimes take time to develop the relationship. Often times what is successful is developing a system which can lead to success. Once the kids see that, they often get on board with that.

Elise: We post our results on blogspot – we record week at a peak, and make note of how the students are doing. This is very re-inforcing.

Chris Cooke. The first few weeks, there was a motivational issue – I don't need this extra help. After some time passes, we let them admit that maybe they don't understand things as well as they would like, and that perhaps they do need some extra help. I have seen progress with a lot of these kids getting invested in the process.

Susan Lovelace: Not sure who this question is to. We have instituted the K-5 reading program, what happens when they get to grade 6. If they have support at tier ii level in 5th grade, what happens when they lose that at grade 6?

Hutch: we know there is a void there. That is a good question.

Marty: one thing that got my attention is “no stigma”. I remember how when I was in school that the kids that went off for remedial work labeled them the dummies. To remove that part of it, providing a supportive environment where there is not a stigma attached is wonderful.

Jeff: What is the difference between previous years and this year? Is there a difference?

Elise: If you are going to have an intervention for people, it needs to be planned and strategic. In the past, we had wonderful teachers with lots of passion and expertise, now we are marshalling that in a more strategic fashion. How do we provide services that are supportive and catch them before they fall.

Nate: This would not have been possible if we hadn't moved from the 4 classes to 5 class teaching load for the English teachers. This has been a great program, and I appreciate the help from the teachres.

Kathy Bodie – presentation on math. Introduced teachers
Casey Harris, ottoson
John Reneau,, ottoson
John BOkkson at the High School

Paul wished all happy pi day.

Kathy said that yes, tomorrow is pi day, and the math office will be celebrating. It's great because the ottoson 8th grade students are visiting.

One of the nice things at the high school is that it's great to have opportunities to have staff get together and visit – the high school is so big that it's great for depts. To provide these opportunities and tomorrow's the math dept's turn.

At elementary school, we do not currently have any planned interventions. We do have some assessments, but there is not a formal intervention program. Our hope is that as we move into the future that will be rectified.

At ottoson, we have two teachers who meet with students who are struggling. They have a load of ~125 students. There is some fluctuation – 30 at 6th grade, 35 at 7th grade and 60 at 8th grade.

How do we know a student is not learning
Scored less than 230 on the most recent mcas

Teacher referral

What is the intervention that we have at the middle school?

3 parts:

1. Success/maker – math tutorial program purchased 8-9 years ago with title I. This is a good program that is well tied to curriculum. This is a computer based program
2. Pre-teaching skills and concepts (supported by time to communicate between intervention teacher and math teacher) this builds confidence and skills
3. Mcas review focused on open response questions

How do we know that the intervention is appropriate, and how do we know that we have succeeded?

With successmaker, we have constant feedback and individual assessments

Feedback from teachers – observation and assessment

Long term, we will have additional info – next fall we will have MCAS scores too.

Presented a histogram on success levels. The mean growth is almost one grade-level growth – just between sept and march.

There is also a presentation of how much time in the program. There is a strong correlation between involvement in the program and grade growth. In addition to the 20 minutes scheduled in, students can come before or after school. We've had some very impressive results.

We knew that we needed 20 minutes 3/times a week to get these kinds of results with the successmaker. In the past, we have not been able to schedule this.

Celebrations

- Increased competence being reported
- Increased confidence being reported
- Involvement of both special ed and regular ed students

Challenges

Initial negative labeling perception

Some large section numbers – due to scheduling constraints

Mixed clusters – students aren't in same place in their regular classrooms

Amount of preparation and communication

Amount of time (for teachers and students)

Need to examine structure of the CMP classes

Time available for 6th grade – right now only students who can be scheduled are those who have IEP's

Early identification for 6th grade

Space and personnel for expansion – Ottoson is bursting at the seams. If we want to open this up to more students – more teachers, more space

The High School Program

Hope at the high school was to have all students who were taking our C2 level math class to add 2 extra blocks of math per cycle. It seemed like a possibility, but turned out not to be as easy to accomplish as hoped.

Staffing: 0.2 FTE

Time for support: 2 periods per week per student

Students served: 17 students at beginning of year

The schedules for these students had to be hand done. We could not accommodate as many students as we would like to.

How do we know a student is not learning?

Failed 98th grade and/or

Enrolled in CP2 Algebra 1 or Academic support

What is the intervention?

MCAS review

Teacher designed combination focused on organization, attitude, skills

How do we know the intervention is appropriate?

Teacher observation and assessment

How do we assess improvement

Mcas performance

Celebrations

Personal investment in student success

Challenges

Available time due to IEP restrictions

Number of teachers

Scheduling conflicts

Negative labeling perception

John: It's a wonderful thing to do for kids, but in general the kids do not appreciate it. It's like a punishment to be put into a second math class. I try to describe the class as a strategy class. They get points for successful behavior – showing up, having their notebook, and being prepared. There are points for 15 minutes of homework. There are great challenges to habits of mind. They get a final 3 points for classroom behavior. We are not a second math class. They are in C2 math class which is doing mcas support. Many of them have done these topics 5 times, they don't need a sixth time. We try new activities, playing with dice, folding paper, creating tessellations, playing chess. We had

a good day today. We often have one kid with a head down covered with a hood. I try to tell them that no wonder their teachers don't feel like they're learning. This is not a math class. You are here because your teacher said that you are not living up to your potential. You are in charge of your own success. We try different things to motivate them. I cannot say that I feel wildly successful. These kids are tripping over themselves time and time again. I can't tell you that they can't all pass the mcas, I can tell you that they all have the ability to pass the mcas. These are kids who don't believe in themselves and who are their own worst enemies.

Susan L: I thank you – I'm not mathematically gifted. My kids in the elementary school have seen great benefit from the reading interventions that we have done. You are up against a lot if we wait until high school. What can we do differently? What can we do to make this better?

Nate: It's largely a question of capacity. We can't do it all. Earlier is always better. WE have a lot of kids with IEP's that were written long ago. There are many scheduling challenges – special ed, these enrichment activities, etc. I think that we have made some important strides when we look at the question that Hutch is asking “what do you do when a child is not learning?”

With 7th and 8th graders, there was a lot of resistance at first. They did feel labeled. As time went on, the smaller classes, the different approaches, multi sensory teaching approaches have been very successful. The kids did gain more confidence and appreciate the success. The different approaches break it up – it does not seem like a 2nd math class. It has been very positive.

Marty: I am always in awe of the depth of talent and expertise who are on the line day in and day out.

Sean: John, you are very articulate. I remember back to my high school days when there were kids as you describe. There are kids like that perhaps more than we want to admit. We want a school where kids have a desire to be there. The challenge is inspiring all of these students. I don't think there is any such thing as a dumb kid – it is the atmosphere that we want to create to empower and support these kids.

John: I am so pleased with the support of everyone I work with to make this better.

Sean: Are there any steps in the culture and atmosphere of the school that we could improve?

John: Some of these kids don't believe that any one believes in them. One day I came in and said that I had cried over the weekend because I had to give out so many F's in the recent grading. One kid said, “Why would you cry – you don't care about us?” Another student said, “Why would you think that ? – he does care about us.” That made my day.

Jeff: What is going on to address these challenges?

Kathy: we try to stress organizational skills, but in math, the content knowledge is also very important. You have to understand the different ways that students can see these things. We have been talking with special ed dept about how we can be more successful.

MCAS scores don't help us identify the kids who need the help early enough – if we could identify them earlier, then we could do a better job scheduling. When we do identify them, a parent letter goes out, but we may not be able to address it quickly enough.

Nate: this is a good segue to our next topic.

Implications for middle school , world language and 9th grade math

Hutch: we have had discussions about impact of world language choice and extra scheduling for additional help in mat and English language arts.

Stavroula – in many cases, we identified these students in 5th grade after their choices were already made for world language. They were excited about what they would be doing at the Ottoson, and we didn't want to change those things midstream. We did have communications from the 5th grade teachers that they were best prepared to talk to the parents about this, because they know them.

One issue is that with world language, if they miss the start of it, we don't have opportunities for them to join midstream.

Nate: We've talked a lot about setting priorities. There is not question that we have kids who are struggling significantly in math or English or both. One question is that if they take a world language, they will continue to struggle in English in math. Should this be encouraged or discouraged. Should this type of intervention be optional, or not.

Marty: I have a question about stigma. Does not having an opportunity to take a foreign language add to the stigma. Maybe that's not the answer to your question, but perhaps that's part of the issue.

Kathy: How do other systems handle these things? I remember years and years ago when the high school changed their scheduling to make it more flexible. Are there options we could have?

Nate: there are many, many ways to schedule, but at the end of the day, it comes down to the question, should these services be optional? We can't make the day nothing but academics. If you want to see the hood pulled even tighter, that's a sure way to do it.

One thing that has been accepted is that some kids will need vastly more time to master some subjects. Sometimes it's 2-3 times the amount of time at the secondary level. Districts who feel that the 4 core skills will haunt you for the rest of your life if you don't

have them. Some schools who only require 3 years of science typically have kids take science in 9-11 grade. If the priority is on these other skills, you may not offer science in 9th grade to students who need some extra help in those areas.

One big issue which I keep bringing up is, is it voluntary? Many parents don't want kids in these intervention programs because of the stigma. Many kids opt out of world languages anyway, but often we know that there is extra help that is needed and do we offer the choice. Is it the schools responsibility or the parent's choice. Who decides?

Is a double block of math optional or required in 9th grade?

Sue: Probably this is not a good night to continue this discussion.

I thank everyone who attended tonight and stayed so late.

Community Relations Sub committee report on Peirce antenna

There was a meeting on this subject.

Meeting broke down into 3 discussions

One group felt it isn't safe, and is unwise

One group would consider it if it was properly structured with appropriate safeguards

One group felt that it might be ok, but were concerned about how money might be spent

I tried to take good notes, getting people's names, etc. I don't think we have time to discuss this further tonight, but want you to have these questions in mind.

Jeff: Is there a deadline?

Nate: No deadline, but they may be looking for alternatives. One deadline would be whether this might be built into this years budget. I think that would be unlikely at this point.

We don't have answers to these questions yet. I think the next step would be to refer it back to community relations or budget or policy and procedures to research further. Question is whether committee has enough interest to explore this any further.

Sean: I felt that a lot of parents had valid questions at this forum. I think it is important that we refer this to a subcommittee to research it further and get answers to the questions. Another issue that you didn't raise was the abutters issue – how have the abutters been informed or involved? It is my understanding that they were not notified of the meeting. I think they must be informed too.

Paul: I don't think we should go forth with a meeting with the abutters yet – I think we should get some answers to these questions first. A lot of these questions have to do with

fiscal policy – the Peirce community is going to want to know what budget impact this will have on them. I'd like to send it off to the budget subcommittee first to get an idea of a realistic proposal. When we walked into room on the 28th, we had not seen the proposal before.

I move to refer this to the budget subcommittee

Jeff: what is the timeframe for the response back?

Paul: hopefully end of april

Marty: can I speak to the issue in general? I want to re-iterate the potential health concerns. I think it's a concern that people have – their concern should be taken very carefully. The fact that they have a concern should be taken very seriously. No one knows one way or another about the long term affects of this radiation. These are not the concerns of wacko's – it's something that we have to address as real concerns.

Sean: I agree with Marty. If you want to send it to the budget subcommittee, that's well and good, but I would not vote in favor of this in the future unless it involves the abutters.

Motion passed unanimously.

Kathy: I think that all of us who use cell phones are at risk, and we should avoid using cell phones.

Audience question: I know we're in a fast moving budget time – I want to be sure that there is not a fast decision on this.

Paul: No, this is not a fast process – we will make sure that you are notified of when the meeting is held.

Budget Subcommittee – Survey results

The survey was up for about 10 days – thanks to Steve Mazzola for his help in making it available.

We understand that this is not scientific, I trust my colleagues to use this as one piece of information that they will use to make their decisions.

Sean moved the 11 o'clock rule to 11:15.

Paul moved the 11 o'clock rule to accommodate anyone who would like to participate in public participation.

Marty: I'll vote for it, but it's gratuitous

Passed unanimously

Susan: We did have 622 people participate. The demographics were a good cross section. Most grades and areas in town were represented. 76% of respondents have kids in system now. 9% have kids in preschool 15% have no kids in the system. Each grade was represented by 5-15% of respondents

2 to 1 are in favor of charging for the arts
1 to 1 split on charging for clubs

ACE

2-1 in favor of 50 fee vs staff reduction
2-1 in favor of staff reduction vs 100% fee

Instrumental music

Strong support for no staff reduction
3.5 to 1 in favor of \$100 fee
3.6 2.5 to 1 in favor of staff reduction over \$200 fee
Twice as many respondents with no kids were interested in staff reductions,

Question 6: Arlington High School Athletics

2 to 1 in favor of \$100 fee increase over staff reduction
1 to 2 in favor of staff reduction over \$200 increase
Strong support against \$500 fee increase
Split evenly on per student costs with no cap
4 to 1 in favor of tiered costs
Other than the “no kids” group, these HS sports responses were the same for all subgroups

Tabled most of other issues that were on agenda until next meeting.

Sean Garballey gave a report on Policies and Procedures

One issue was international exchange programs – how the ASA program might work alongside the Japanese exchange program that we are creating. We did feel that it was extremely vital to our approach that we encourage international exchange. We did propose a policy change:

Admission of Nonresident Students

The Arlington school committee may grant permission to any student to attend Arlington public schools if a student moves out of Arlington after the end of spring vacation, or a high school senior whose family moves out of Arlington after January 1st. In each case,

the student would only be able to stay in the Arlington public schools until the end of the school year.

(added😊)

Students attending the Arlington Public Schools on a J-1 visa shall not be charged tuition by the Arlington Public Schools.

Marty: I put together some of the numbers in your packet – don't know if they are 100%, but I think they're close. I don't see where there's a real increased cost for an additional student, and I would support not charging for these students.

Jeff: I suggest we wait to debate this until second reading.

Marty: just wanted to explain my thoughts.

Paul: I think that it is not right that one student is paying us \$10,000 and another is paying an agency other than our school system – since we have the responsibility of actually providing the education.

Sean: (ed note – I missed Sean's comments here, but I believe it was in the context of parental notification that was raised by a member of the community).

Sean: The next subcommittee meeting is march 21st at 2pm.

Paul: Jeff was very good about getting the court decision in the Lexington case. I think that can provide us some guidance. AT the high school level I think the kids and parents should be able to deal with these things.

Secretaries report

Susan Richardson asked for info about the antenna decision at Peirce
We received numerous messages regarding the Ottoson situation

Public Participation reopened

Ethel Doyle: Parent member of 9th grade parent. Former member of school council. I am confused by the supt's decision at the ottoson. During my son's time at ottoson, my son made tremendous progress at ottoson. I want to share some of my observations about ms bouris. She is available. Her weekly emails keep us informed. She comforts our children. I have been at school comm. meetings when she has talked about changes she is making at the school. Students and staff respect her. My question is, since you say that you want a principal who represents important social, emotional, academic, behavioral

Mark Tomlinson: I have to say that I am astounded by what I saw earlier this evening. A motion to stop the meeting. Imotent threats to clear the room, a MASC rep who will be perceived as a sad attempt to abdicate responsibility. These are the actions of men and women blind – perhaps willfully blind to the enormity of this crisis. If you wish to present yourself as indifferent to what is happening. If you are trying to foster an attitude of indifference that throws fuel on this fire if your goal is a stubborn defense to unprecedented public outcry. Some of you are doing a remarkable job.

Elizabeth Durant: parent of a 6th grader and two elementary school children. I was not planning to speak, but was heartened that there could have been an option to this decision. It took a lot of courage for the teachers to come here tonight and show their support of ms. Bouris. I would like you to show the same courage. Ultimately, you are responsible to us, and I don't think that you are representing us fairly.

Motion to adjourn

Passed unanimously