

**THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*Our mission is for all students to be successful, engaged, lifelong learners.*

## **Amended Program Subcommittee Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, October 3, 2012

Superintendent's Conference Room – District Office

4:30 p.m.

### **Members Present**

Val Gilman, Chairperson  
Roger Garberg, Vice Chairman  
Melissa Teixeira, First Alternate

### **Administration Present**

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent  
Gregg Bach, Assistant Superintendent  
Erik Anderson, GHS Principal  
Ellen Sibley, Beeman Memorial Principal

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## **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Gilman called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m. and stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.

## **II. REPORTS/DELIBERATIONS/DISCUSSION**

**At this time, the agenda was taken out of order.**

- C. Beeman Memorial Elementary School Data Meeting Visit** – Mrs. Sibley stated that it was nice to have Mr. Garberg as a guest at their data meeting. She indicated that these meetings take place in the beginning of September, in January, and at the end of the year. There is also a “sense of urgency meeting” in April to discuss progress.

Mr. Garberg stated that he had a chance to see the second grade teaching staff discuss the DIBELS and grade data and that Mrs. Sibley acted as facilitator. He was struck by the intensity of the discussion about logistics and ways of getting interventions established based on need.

Dr. Safier stated that goal-setting is also part of the data meeting and that there will be a benchmark assessment in January to review progress. Mrs. Sibley indicated that all of the data is posted in the Special Ed room and shows students' progress.

Mrs. Sibley stated that this type of detailed discussion is missing with respect to math and that they are trying to develop ways of having those kinds of meetings around math. Dr. Safier indicated that they are looking to bring in an outside consultant to help find a way to make that happen and that the goal is to create the same kind of investigative data-based understanding of progress or lack thereof in mathematics.

Dr. Safier stated that data meetings are standard practice that is being adopted in each building and was done last year, to some degree. Mrs. Sibley indicated that they have had data discussions for a number of years but that this a very specific format that the teachers will begin to own after a period of time.

Mrs. Sibley reported on how the students are grouped and indicated that paras and other staff are trained in some of the interventions.

Mr. Garberg observed that there was no summary at the end of the meeting during which the teachers talked about their performance at the meeting. He asked Mrs. Sibley if she would consider asking teachers at the end of the meetings about how things went during the meeting.

Chairperson Gilman asked Mrs. Sibley how she plans to get feedback from her fourth grade in terms of understanding the dip in MCAS scores in that grade. Mrs. Sibley indicated they have met a couple of times already and talked about goal-setting. She stated that the teachers want more training and more help getting reciprocal teaching up and running. Mrs. Sibley also indicated that the fourth grade teachers will plan with the fifth grade teachers, who were very successful with reciprocal teaching last year.

*Mrs. Sibley left the meeting at 4:45 p.m.*

- A. GHS Attendance Policy – First Reading** – Mr. Anderson distributed a spreadsheet of GHS, district and state attendance profiles from 2007-08 to 2011-12. He indicated that attendance has been generally improving over the last five years but that the average number of days absent at GHS is 16.8, which is dragging down the district's attendance rate (which is below the state average). He reported that 10 percent of the students account for 50-60 percent of the absences. Mr. Bach reported that last year at GHS, 136 students out of 1,000 had 21 or more tardies and that those 136 students accounted for 5,300 tardies and 4,300 absences. Dr. Safier noted that a new discipline law will be in effect on July 1, 2014 which requires the School Department to provide educational services to students who are suspended.

Mr. Anderson reviewed the revised policy, and the subcommittee discussed the following matters:

- Definition of truancy as an absence with no documentation from parent/guardian of the reason for the absence within 3 days
- Ms. Teixeira expressed concern that an Attendance Failure (AF) on an A-student's record will have negative consequences when he/she is applying to colleges. Dr. Safier indicated that colleges only see semester and final grades when reviewing transcripts and that the broader issue has to do with attendance, punctuality and expectation. Mr. Anderson noted that the state

has given cities and towns the leeway to be stringent of terms of adhering to state law regarding attendance.

- Ms. Teixeira suggested adding a reference to the CHINS statute, M.G.L. Chapter 119, Section 39E, at the end of the first paragraph of “Administrative Attendance Failure.”
- Ms. Teixeira suggested creating an attendance review appeal form to be filled out by students appealing to the Attendance Review Team, stating the nature of the appeal and including supporting documentation. Dr. Safier will draft such a form.
- Ms. Teixeira reported, as a court employee, that the court does not write notes to document student absences. She noted that this provision puts a duty on an outside agency which they may not be able to perform and suggested requiring the student to provide a document and/or approved school form date-stamped by the court.
- Ms. Teixeira questioned why a parent/guardian note is sufficient documentation of an absence for observance of a religious holiday but not for a court appointment.
- Documentation of an absence must be received by the Dean of Students upon the student’s return to school but no later than 3 school days after the student’s return to school.
- Definition of tardy to school as late to first period
- Considering a student who is more than 7 minutes late to class as being absent from class. Ms. Teixeira expressed concern that this would discourage the student from going to class at all if he/she is going to be more than 7 minutes late. Dr. Safier requested that Mr. Anderson look at what other districts are doing in this regard. Mr. Anderson noted that this would not apply to students who arrive late to school after a doctor’s appointment, etc.
- Students off campus during lunch

After discussion, on a motion by Mr. Garberg, seconded by Ms. Teixeira, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** 3 in favor zero opposed, to recommend to the full School Committee that we conduct a first reading of the GHS Attendance Standards & Procedures, as amended.

Ms. Teixeira reiterated her concern about the effects of an Attendance Failure and requested that more research be done and reported back to the committee.

Mr. Anderson explained that the student’s grade would be changed from a 79 to a 64, for example, in I-Pass rather than being shown as an “AF.” He will ask Mike Muniz to prepare a dummy transcript for the committee’s review.

Mr. Anderson stated that students will end up with 7 absences per quarter (28 days during the school year) and not have the attendance policy implemented. Without it, many of those students would have been absent considerably more often.

Mr. Anderson has not yet met with the Student Council to share the draft policy and get feedback on it. Chairperson Gilman requested that he do that before the first reading on Wednesday and possibly have the Student Council report to the School Committee on what they discussed. Dr. Safier stated that he has no problem with Mr. Anderson getting the students' feedback between the first and second reading and that he does not necessarily believe the Student Council should present to the School Committee on this matter. Chairperson Gilman noted that the Student Council can attend and deliberate on everything except executive session. She revised her request to let the Student Council know that the committee will be discussing the policy and that they are welcome to participate in the discussion.

Finally, Chairperson Gilman noted that the GHS handbook that is posted on the website has the first draft of the attendance policy in it. However, the handbook that was approved by the School Committee did not include the attendance policy. She requested that the handbook on the website be replaced with the handbook that was approved by the committee and that the draft policy be posted as a separate document.

*Mr. Anderson left the meeting at 6:34 p.m.*

*At this time, a 5-minute break was taken.*

- B. Update on School Committee's GPS Website Enhancements/MSBA Best Practice Examples** – Chairperson Gilman reviewed the minutes of the September 10th Ad Hoc Communications Committee meeting, which reflect the committee's recommendation that "the MSBA West Parish Building Project link be placed on the right side of the home page, possibly replacing the 'Your Voice' section." The program subcommittee agreed with that recommendation.

Chairperson Gilman reported that the ad hoc committee also discussed placing a photo of the current West Parish School on the building project website, as well as Mayor Kirk's July 25th press release, minutes of the building committee meetings, and a schedule of upcoming meetings. She also noted that the ad hoc committee asked if they could get Dr. Safier's opinion on the role of the West Parish principal at their meetings. Dr. Safier indicated that he is not prepared to answer that question and noted that the OPM will help to promote the project and communicate the message to parents.

Chairperson Gilman stated that the FAQs have been updated and that they will be presented to the full committee for approval on Wednesday. She shared Estabrook School's and Bresnahan School's building project websites for ideas on how to develop our own website. Dr. Safier recommended that this be done in consultation with the

OPM once they are on board, which should be by November 9th. Ms. Teixeira suggested working with the city to ensure that the city and school websites contain the same information regarding this project. She also suggested looking at the North Shore Tech's website as an example.

- D. K-12 Survey Results** – Chairperson Gilman requested that Mr. Garberg's report on the survey results be posted on the GPS home page. Mr. Garberg reported that the links in the document are not working on the district website. He will follow up with Grant Harris on this matter.

**III. ACTION** – See Item II.A.

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Ms. Teixeira, seconded by Mr. Garberg, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** 3 in favor zero opposed, to adjourn the Program Subcommittee Meeting of October 3, 2012 at 7:03 p.m.

*All reference documents and reports are filed in the Superintendent's office.*

*Maria Puglisi  
Recording Secretary*