

THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

Program Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 6, 2012

Superintendent's Conference Room – District Office

6:00 p.m.

Members Present

Val Gilman, Chairperson
Roger Garberg, Vice Chairman
Kathy Clancy

Administration Present

Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent
Gregg Bach, Assistant Superintendent
Patricia Wegmann, Special Education Director
Ann-Marie Jordan, Student Health Coordinator

I. CALL TO ORDER – Chairperson Gilman called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and stated the mission of the Gloucester Public Schools.

II. REPORTS/DELIBERATIONS/DISCUSSION

A. Anti-Bullying Policy – Chairperson Gilman began the meeting by stating that this policy required the district to review it in December 2012. She welcomed Ann-Marie Jordan to the meeting, noting that Ms. Jordan had developed the policy two years ago. Chairperson Gilman noted that cyber-bullying is included in the policy and that Section 1.2 addresses conflicts that are not necessarily bullying. There is also a section on prohibition of unacceptable behavior. The district also has a Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan which uses the Mass. Department of Education template as a model.

Ms. Jordan reported that incident reports have been developed as part of this process, as well as a variety of professional development for staff, such as Second Step, which is a social/emotional learning curriculum. There is also a middle school version being used in health classes. With respect to assessment of reporting, Ms. Jordan indicated that the Essex County District Attorney has had training sessions. In addition, Ms. Jordan cited two possible experts that may come in the spring to do more training on reporting and investigating. She noted that at the outset, there were more reports of bullying than there are currently and that the principals are taking their legal responsibilities seriously. More formal processes for investigations have been created, emphasizing the importance of sending investigations to the Central Office.

Ms. Jordan reviewed the reports of incidents at each school last year and to date this year. She stated that all incidents should be reported and investigated but that the investigation may determine that the incident was not a case of bullying. Chairperson Gilman stated that she would be interested in finding out how many of the incidents were cyber-bullying, and Kathy Clancy would be interested in finding out if there are more incidents in the fall than later in the year. Dr. Safier would like to get copies of the investigation reports to see how thorough they are and what actions have been taken.

With respect to the higher number of reports at the middle school as compared to the high school and elementary school, Ms. Wegmann noted that students have access to guidance staff to report incidents of bullying, which is not the case in the elementary schools. Ms. Jordan indicated that the highest rates of bullying occur between fifth and eighth grade and that it tapers down in high school. Bullying prevention has been integrated into the middle school health curriculum through empathy training, problem solving, and decision making. Ms. Jordan emphasized that the SAILS program is a whole-school approach to social/emotional learning.

Chairperson Gilman suggested having an annual program for parents/guardians at the middle school regarding bullying prevention. Ms. Jordan recommended working with parents/guardians with respect to social media and technology and the importance of overseeing what children are doing online. She stated that we may be able to get someone from the Attorney General's office to come and speak to parents/guardians. Dr. Safier indicated that the Mass. Aggression Reduction Center may also provide that type of program.

There was a discussion about collection of data on bullying. Ms. Jordan reported that the Second Step program has an online edition which includes summative assessments. She noted that bullying is not something we are going to wipe out. It is an aspect of our culture as well as part of a developmental stage that occurs in children. However, we can start to measure some of the more specific aspects of the interventions that we are using to see what types of impacts those interventions are having. She also recommended looking at general discipline data. Chairperson Gilman suggested posting educational resources on the website for parents/guardians.

Ms. Jordan stated that Responsive Classroom is still being used in the elementary schools. Responsive Classroom is an approach, whereas Second Step is a curriculum that includes lessons that teachers can use to create a pro-social environment.

Ms. Jordan believes that "The Yellow Dress" performance will be taking place at the high school again this year. In addition to the performance, there will also be some classroom discussion. She has talked with the middle school guidance counselors about a similar performance for students there. Chairperson Gilman suggested that Ms. Jordan write a "My View" column every year with a parent handout reminding the community of all the programs we have and to show that it is an ongoing process.

- B. Review of Walker Institute of Behavior Management** – Ms. Wegmann reported on Walker Partnerships and the Walker School and indicated that they developed an agency that provides consultation with school districts on program development and home-based services. She indicated that she started a relationship with them to provide professional development for our paraprofessionals and through that, she found out some of their program evaluation services.

There was a discussion about the use of timeout rooms. Ms. Wegmann noted that there are only six students in the district that have the use of timeout rooms identified as part of their behavior plan. Ms. Wegmann reported that she shared the timeout protocol with SEPAC members.

The Walker Institute recommended the development of a referral system and allowing Steve Douglas and the behavior paras to consult more often in a more formal way. Other recommendations included uniformity of behavior plans and consistent use of social/emotional curriculum in each building.

Ms. Wegmann is not sure if teachers have been informed that it is their responsibility to work with students on the Second Step curriculum. Ms. Jordan recommended that each building have a key contact person (i.e. school psychologist or adjustment counselor) for teachers to talk to if they have questions about Second Step. Dr. Safier noted that teacher training will be completed by the end of the school year.

Ms. Wegmann noted that the district has switched from the Crisis Prevention Institute nonviolent crisis intervention program to Safety Care, which is a similar program on how to restrain students and de-escalate emergency situations. Three people in the district have been trained to train staff in Safety Care and have started their first round of training.

Chairperson Gilman commended Ms. Wegmann for making parents/guardians aware of SEPAC meetings. Mr. Garberg reported that a couple of parents/guardians have questioned why they are getting calls about SEPAC meetings if they do not have a child with special needs. Ms. Wegmann stated that she may include a statement in the all-calls that even though parents/guardians may not have a child with a special need, that SEPAC provides information forums for all parents/guardians.

Ms. Wegmann and Ms. Jordan left the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

- C. Math Content Institute (BSRI) and Math Goals** – Dr. Safier stated that he has been talking with BSRI with regard to some specific actions we need to take. He noted that they have a math coach and that he is looking to fund that with grants. There is also money from donors that could be used to pay for the Math Content Institute. The professional development consists of four consecutive days sometime in August for up to 24 teachers. BSRI pays the teachers \$100/day and the district will make up the difference. There will also be six sessions that will take place over the course of next year. Dr. Safier is hoping that the majority of teachers will participate. He indicated that he is also looking to create an administrative position for a K-8 math/science coordinator next year.

Mr. Bach noted that the standards based report card is now out of alignment with the Common Core Standards and needs to be completely rewritten. He believes the standards based report card was a good return on our time and investment initially. The

math curriculum also needs to be modified and adapted. There was a discussion about grants for MCAS remediation classes and tutoring.

- D. Rationale for Digital Environment** – Dr. Safier indicated that we need to sharpen our rationale for moving forward with enhancing technology in the schools. Mr. Bach reviewed some key points in the Report of the NASBE Study Group on the role of technology in schools entitled “Ensuring Educational Technology Meets the Needs of Students Today – and Tomorrow.” He noted that things have changed rapidly in the way students acquire information and collaborate and communicate with each other. They no longer use encyclopedias or go to the library to do research but use iPhones and iPads to do that research. If we have schools where the natural way of finding information is so disconnected from the way that students gather information now, we are risking lack of engagement.

There was a discussion about information retrieval versus gaining knowledge and whether students gain knowledge when gathering information from electronic devices. Mr. Bach stated that committing key things to memory is still essential, and Dr. Safier indicated that the digital world is about retrieval and use of information. The district will start working with teachers on the use of technology before expanding it to students.

Mr. Bach stated that students need to be taught how to use technology appropriately, how to find reliable information on the Internet, how to work collaboratively, and how to stay focused and not get distracted while using these devices. He stated that the district should not purchase technology for the sake of being current but to use it for achieving student growth goals. Chairperson Gilman requested that we begin to collect data and report on how many students have Internet access. Mr. Bach suggested having the students create a survey to collect that data.

Mr. Garberg pointed out that there are things in the report that are very troubling, such as students sleeping with their iPhones and texting friends in the middle of the night. He stated that the report alludes to issues which are potentially serious and that there is no uniformity and appreciation for use of technology. He does not believe we know the diversity of needs out there when it comes to integrating technology into the curriculum. Mr. Bach questioned whether the students in the report were guided on how to use the technology. He noted that the students are going to have the devices no matter what. The question is whether we allow the devices to be a background distraction and a means of communicating around what they do in school or whether we coach and guide them to use the devices to access important information and work collaboratively.

Mr. Garberg noted that the article also refers to multitasking as a skill, which he believes is in some dispute. Mr. Bach does not applaud multitasking as a gift that students have. However, they do it, and we need to teach them how to focus three devices on the same thing for a certain period of time.

Chairperson Gilman would like to consider including in the O’Maley Performing Arts class a section on the appropriate and respectful use of technology when interacting with

people. Dr. Safier stated that the report recommends that that be a large part of an integrated approach to use and application of technology.

- E. Application for Community Grant – Linking Community/Organizational Efforts (GEF) with School District** – Mr. Bach stated that thanks to Tina Raimo, Executive Director of the Gloucester Education Foundation, the 21st Century Skills grant preparatory phase is alive and well. They are focusing on doing a needs assessment for the high school as a 21st century learning center. They will be meeting next week to talk about what they learned from talking to people at different sites. Mr. Bach noted that the state is prioritizing high school applications because of the lack of applicants.
- F. Logic Model and Goal Setting** – Dr. Safier stated that the logic model is used to figure out how to accomplish the two-year math goal. He recommended that in order for the School Committee’s SMART goals to be firmly established and grounded, that the logic model be applied.
- G. Students Returning from Charter School** – Mr. Garberg reported in discussion that it has been suggested by a number of people in the community with good will towards the district that we make a very strong public effort to let it be known that if the charter school’s charter is revoked, our district is prepared to receive any students that might be coming back from the charter school and that we are looking forward to bringing them back into the district.

Dr. Safier stated that a number of students have come back already and that our approach is always to be as welcoming and compensatory as is necessary to provide an education for any student that comes across our threshold. He indicated that he does not intend to say anything publicly until the charter school’s status is formalized on December 18th. He stated that charter school parents are welcome to call him at any time if they are concerned about the situation. Kathy Clancy noted that this should apply to any new students who come into the district from anywhere else. She recommended that a couple of months after the beginning of school, the principal should call new families to ask how things are going.

III. ACTION – None

IV. ADJOURNMENT – On a motion by Kathy Clancy, seconded by Mr. Garberg, it was unanimously

VOTED: 3 in favor zero opposed, to adjourn the Program Subcommittee Meeting of December 6, 2012 at 8:40 p.m.

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

Maria Puglisi, Recording Secretary