

**THE GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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

## **Program Sub-Committee Meeting Minutes**

Friday, October 1, 2010  
Superintendent's Conference Room  
9:00 a.m.

### **Members**

Roger Garberg, Chairman  
Val Gilman  
Michelle Sweet

### **Administration Present**

Ann-Marie Jordan

---

## **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Garberg called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m.

## **II. REPORTS AND DELIBERATIONS**

### **A. Strategic Planning Focus Group Scheduling and Facilitator Guide Review**

Member Val Gilman provided draft copies of the Focus Group Facilitator's Guide and the Focus Group Facilitator's Guide for Teacher/Faculty Sessions for approval by the subcommittee. A discussion was held on both documents and the agreed upon changes are as follows.

#### **1. Focus Group Facilitator's Guide**

Mrs. Gilman stated that she prefers the term "strategic plan." However, since Mr. Garberg prefers the word "vision," she agreed to call it "Facilitating Strategic Plan/Visioning Focus Groups." That change is acceptable to the subcommittee.

Focus Group Description – Mrs. Gilman read this paragraph, and it was approved by the subcommittee.

Meeting Structure – Mrs. Gilman read the first paragraph of this section, and the subcommittee approved it with the following correction: **Typo change, "facilator" to "facilitator."**

Mrs. Gilman read the second paragraph and suggested that we use a similar process to the one used to notify our non-profit stakeholders to attend the superintendent search meetings. She explained that she sent an email to the heads of each of the community partner who in turn disseminated the invitation to their membership. Ms. Jordan noted that we should add Pathways for Children and Wellspring House as community partners and members agreed with this recommendation.

Mr. Garberg expressed concern about the number of parents that could show up at each session. Mrs. Gilman suggested asking people to sign up and then accepting the first 20 participants. If there was a huge overflow, there would be option for a second meeting.

Mrs. Gilman read the third paragraph, and the subcommittee approved it with the following change:

**Add: “The principals will ask for RSVPs with the idea of targeting 10 to 20 people per session. The principals will use their judgment if there are more than 20 people that RSVP.”**

Mrs. Gilman read the last paragraph of this section, and the subcommittee agreed to strike it since it as it only pertains to faculty and staff.

Mrs. Gilman and Mrs. Sweet stated their desire that this not be an insurmountable task for the principals. Mrs. Gilman stated that each principal would be asked to facilitate three sessions – one for the parents of students at their respective schools, one for a stakeholder group, and one for their staff. She suggested letting the principals assign other people to help them facilitate.

#### Focus Group Materials

Current Strategic Plan Goals – Mrs. Gilman stated that she wanted to include this document as evidence that there was an initial plan and that we now want to get more specific. She stated that Superintendent Farmer started a strategic plan five years ago, and we should acknowledge what has been in place.

Ms. Jordan stated that there is a risk of people discussing the document and having the focus on that instead of the fact that we are starting a new process. The subcommittee agreed to delete the Current Strategic Plan Goals from the focus group materials.

FY 2011 Superintendent’s Goals – After discussion, the subcommittee agreed to include this document in the focus group materials.

Handout on Participant Roles in Focus Group – After discussion, it was agreed that this handout would become Flipchart #1.

Book by Robert Ewy – After discussion, the subcommittee agreed to strike the book from the focus group materials.

Exercise Materials/Overview – After discussion, the subcommittee agreed to change this heading to “Meeting Preparation.”

Introductions – Mrs. Gilman read the introductions and stated that this is not a script but that the facilitator should put it into their own words. The subcommittee agreed to make the following changes:

In the second paragraph, the phrase “update our strategic plan” will be replaced with the phrase “move forward with a new strategic plan” to avoid the issue of questioning the current strategic plan. The word “for” will be inserted after the word “guide.” The last sentence of the paragraph will be deleted.

Handout – Replace with “Distribute FY2011 Superintendent’s Goals.” Mr. Garberg stated that the principal should say something about what the goals are. The subcommittee agreed to add the following:

**Principal/Administrator SAY Strategic planning involves a combination of short-term and long-term goals. Here is an example of the short-term goals that the School Committee has set for the Superintendent.**

The subcommittee agreed to delete the handout “Strategic Planning 2010 Overview of Goals Participants Roles in Focus Groups.”

ASK The subcommittee agreed to delete the word “documents” and replace it with “2011 goals.”

Purpose and Meeting Objective – After discussion, the subcommittee agreed to delete this section.

Survey Completion of Multiple Choice – Change III. to II. After discussion, the subcommittee changed the title of this section to “Gloucester Public Schools Stakeholder Survey.”

Mr. Garberg stated that the survey should not be brought to the focus group sessions. This will force people to fill it out online and save time in the focus group. After discussion, the subcommittee agreed to delete the last sentence of the first paragraph and replace it with the following: **“This year, we encourage you to fill out this survey by logging on to [www.gloucesterschools.com](http://www.gloucesterschools.com) and scrolling down to Gloucester Public Schools Parent Surveys.”**

Mrs. Sweet expressed concern that the document is entitled “parent survey” but would also be completed by external stakeholders. Mr. Garberg stated that the online program would allow respondents who do not have children in the schools to skip the non-pertinent questions. For example, if the respondent indicates s/he has no children in GPS, the survey would automatically skip to question #19.

Mrs. Gilman suggested adding the question, “What is your affiliation with the Gloucester Public Schools?” and suggested authorizing Mr. Garberg to come up with a checklist of affiliations to add to the survey.

#### Survey Completion of Narrative Questions – Change IV. to III.

Mrs. Sweet suggested having one sheet for the questions and adding it to the focus group materials as a handout. The subcommittee agreed to strike questions 2 and 3 from the focus group handout since they are included in the online survey.

#### Group Discussion – Change V. to IV.

Mrs. Gilman stated that she believes the best way to look at trends and priorities is to use a nominal group technique as an element of the focus group discussion process. This will avoid dominating parents steering the conversation. The principal will then batch the individual answers into clusters and steer the conversation to talk about the top priority. The School Committee person can see how many people are concerned with each issue which will help determine top priorities.

REFER TO FLIPCHART     Change to “Flipchart #2, Question 1.”

Mr. Garberg stated that the top priority for each question should be summarized. Mrs. Gilman suggested allowing 10 minutes for question 1 and 10 minutes for question 2. After discussion, the subcommittee agreed to add the following: **“Let’s spend the next 15 minutes hearing from you on the top priority item.”** The second question will remain as is to save time.

#### Summary Remarks – Change VI. to V.

The subcommittee agreed to delete the second sentence and replace it with the following:

**“The School Committee will be compiling and summarizing our data for the superintendent and administration.”**

#### 2. Focus Group Facilitator’s Guide for Teacher/Faculty Sessions

Meeting Structure – After discussion, the subcommittee agreed to strike the first three paragraphs in this section and to change the word “GHS” to “GPS” in the last paragraph.

#### Focus Group Materials

Current Strategic Plan Goals – The subcommittee agreed to delete this document from the focus group materials.

Handout on Participant Roles in Focus Group – This handout will become Flipchart #1.

Book by Robert Ewy – The subcommittee agreed to strike the book from the focus group materials.

Survey for Parents/Stakeholders – The subcommittee agreed to strike this survey from the focus group materials.

Introductions – After discussion, the subcommittee agreed to delete the second and third paragraphs of this section and to add: **“We encourage district staff to participate in the stakeholder survey by logging on to [www.gloucesterschools.com](http://www.gloucesterschools.com) and scrolling down to Gloucester Public Schools Parent Surveys.”**

Mrs. Gilman suggested that the category “teacher” should be one of the affiliations on the stakeholder survey.

After discussion, the subcommittee agreed to delete the words “looks different and” from the first paragraph on page 3, to replace “Shayne” with “Assistant Superintendent Trubisz,” and to replace “Joe” with “Superintendent Connelly.”

Handout – Replace with “Distribute FY2011 Superintendent’s Goals.”

Survey Completion of Questions – There will be six questions to fill out, which will be a handout.

#### Group Discussion

SAY                    The subcommittee agreed to change this paragraph to read:  
**“I’d now like to get group priorities on your answers to question 5. Using the yellow Post-its in front of you, summarize your answer in one or two words. We can discuss your answers together and post the priorities for participants.”**

REFER TO FLIPCHART – Change to “Flipchart #2, Question 5.”

SAY                    The subcommittee agreed to delete the reference to a co-facilitator since there will not be a School Committee member present.

The subcommittee agreed to strike the next three paragraphs referring to question 7.

#### Summary Remarks

Mrs. Gilman stated that in order to be sensitive to education reform, the principals should be able to review the responses with the superintendent before the School Committee gets the summary of all of their focus groups to give administration an opportunity to debrief.

After discussion, the subcommittee agreed to delete the second sentence of this paragraph and replace it with the following:

**“We will be reviewing the data from this focus group with the superintendent and meeting with him to discuss it in greater detail. The superintendent will then present the data to the Program Subcommittee. As with all meetings, you are invited to attend.”**

Ms. Jordan is concerned that the teachers will think that leadership is going to discuss everything they talked about.

Mr. Garberg would like to see verbatim comments and raw ratings on the survey from faculty because if the data is summarized, it will be someone’s interpretation of what they think it means.

### **III. DISCUSSION**

Mrs. Gilman would like Maria Puglisi to send drafts of the minutes, facilitator’s guides and handouts to all three subcommittee members for review.

Upon a motion by Mrs. Gilman, seconded by Mrs. Sweet, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** To recommend to the full School Committee the amended changes of the focus group facilitation guide for both teacher and faculty sessions and stakeholder sessions for our strategic planning/visioning focus groups.

Mr. Garberg stated that the next subcommittee meeting will be on October 22, 2010, and that there will be a full agenda for that meeting.

Mrs. Gilman will work on the focus group scheduling with Stephanie Delisi.  
Mr. Garberg will work on fixing the online survey.

### **IV. ADJOURNMENT**

Upon a motion by Mrs. Gilman, seconded by Mrs. Sweet, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** To adjourn the Program Sub-Committee Meeting of October 1, 2010 at 10:40 a.m.

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

*Maria Puglisi  
Recording Secretary*