

# **PTO Council Meeting**

**December 1, 2015**

**7:15pm - regular meeting**

**Education Center, Room 210**

## **MEETING MINUTES**

### **Attendees:**

#### **Executive Board**

Betsey Blagdon, Co-president

Karen Manning, Co-president

Kim Thurmond, Treasurer

Christina Hardway, Secretary

Jen Abbott, Equity Representative

Marcia Tabenken, ex officio

Caroline Wilson, Website Manager

Frieda Dweck, Political Action/Education

Jo-Louise Allen, Special Education Representative

#### **Other attendees**

Matt Hills, School Committee Chair

David Fleishman, Superintendent

#### **PTO Presidents by School**

Lindsay Pike, Day

Dana Hanson, Day

Deb Allaire, Peirce

Autumn Sarzana, Underwood

Helen Haley, South

Diana Cohen, Ward

Carol Ann Delmonico, Mason-Rice

Shawna Conaghan Murphy, OHMS

Ann Marie Yorke, Bowen

## Next Meeting Dates

Tuesday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>. 2016

## Introductions

Thank you for all being here for the second meeting of the year.

## Approval of October 6 PTOC Meeting Minutes—All

Motion put forward; seconded; and approved.

## Superintendent's Update: David Fleishman

**Enrollment Report** informs the facilities planning (and is a 20 year plan). Elementary school enrollment is leveling off. Over the next several years, the middle schools will be going up in enrollment as will the High Schools. In the last few years, there have been schools that have been up in enrollment as high as 490, but they are going to go back down to 450 or so.

Q: Is there capacity at the middle and high schools to handle the extra kids coming up from the elementary school?

A: Brown has the most flexibility, but they will have to look at it for others. There is some variability in the high schools, and they are designed for exactly the same number of students.

The **PARCC test** results will be coming out soon, and the policy around this has changed. Massachusetts will have MCAS 2.0, which will include some elements of PARCC, but Massachusetts will be the master of its own destiny. They will also have to figure out whether to do paper/pencil or technology. There will be legislative changes and this might bring about more state control (as opposed

to federal control), and that's the first time that has happened in the long time. There is a wave of anti-testing sentiment in some places right now, but the formative testing is considered helpful (because teachers can use that information right away to help children in the classroom).

There is also the book club discussion on "Where You Go is Not Who You'll Be" by Frank Bruni on December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Q: Will PARCC results be coming out soon?

A: Yes, but there isn't anything to compare it to, so it's a baseline

Q: PARCC results were supposed to come out more quickly—right?

A: They have a lot of things they are working out.

Q: MCAS 2.0 is supposed to come out in 2017, right?

A: Yes, that is a quick time frame, but they will take PARCC and some other elements. This will really be a pilot test. The question is how different this test will be.

Q: How much does it tie in to teacher evaluation?

A: The federal government wanted to tie testing to teacher evaluation, but Massachusetts doesn't look like it's going to go in that direction.

Q: Was there a sense whether the paper/pencil worked better than the technology?

A: Hard to say, because it's anecdotal. There was some sense that the technology was a bit problematic. Next year they will still be held harmless, so it may be useful to go ahead and do the technology version if that is going to happen anyway.

**School Start Time** is under discussion across the country. High Schools traditionally start earlier than elementary schools for a variety of historic reasons. It's not an easy transition, and all aspects of the issues will be considered (traffic, other districts, extra-curricular activities, subset of adolescents work).

Q: The amount of sleep is important, but sports are important too. Isn't there a compromise that could be made to make this work? Couldn't we make this work for at least an extra half-hour?

A: Is a half an hour enough? There are two middle schools that start a half an hour a part, and kids in the two different schools seem to be functioning the same, according to internal research.

Different scenarios are being considered by the high school start time working group.

## School Committee Presentation: Matt Hills, School Committee Chair

**School Start Time:** No one is disputing the science suggesting that it is beneficial for students. BUT, there are a lot of issues including sports which are also considered important and are affected by change in time. Simply changing it could have unintended consequences, and the School Committee is working on considering the issues.

Q: Is there any state initiative on making these changes?

A: Cindy Creem (the state Senator) has filed a bill to begin the process of study. Part of what the Working Group is doing is considering this. There are 300 school districts in the state, so it's hard to get consensus. There are also idiosyncrasies associated with Newton around internal peculiarities. One of the issues is that—in this country—we have local control and state oversight could be seen as overreach.

**School Committee Overview:** The School Committee is more like a Board of Directors. It is more like an oversight committee. It is a Committee rather than a Board, and they generally review the policies of the schools (like security, start time, etc.). They work with David Fleishman and his team to come up with solutions, and David and his team are the face of the school system. At the end of the day, David Fleishman has an excellent team that runs the schools. Overall, the school system is clicking on almost every cylinder from a management standpoint. The School Committee debates broad policies, but not how those policies will be implemented. Having a really excellent management team makes it much easier to be Chair of the School Committee.

**Facilities:** There is a 20 year facilities plan, and the three big projects that are underway are going to address several of the issues and the enrollment issues that Newton faces.

**Systemwide Goals** drive the guidelines and guide the agenda, so that it is related to the overall strategy and goals of the system. Sometimes things can change, but it is at the right level of consideration and it holds that system accountable at this broader level (not at too micro-level an analysis).

The School Committee typically starts and end their meetings with public comments.

**Collective Bargaining.** The School Committee is finishing up the negotiations with two of the three groups with whom they need to negotiate. 85% of the budget goes to salary and benefits. The school committee has to make certain that this 85% is growing at a rate which is commensurate with the revenue. There is always going to be tension in the process because the two sides are inherently adversarial during this negotiation process, and coming to the right agreement is important to both sides. Prop 2.5 (<http://www.mass.gov/dor/docs/dls/publ/misc/levylimits.pdf>) is an important part of the issue. We live in a city that is densely populated, so they can make a plan, but there are limited options in terms of finding new revenue. The district has hired many people over the last year, and has an

exceptionally competitive offer rate here. There are many applicants, and many of those applicants who are offered a job take the offer. Under Massachusetts Law, contracts are only 3 years long so this will be re-negotiated again soon in the future.

Q: Is there any contemplation on the full-time Kindergarten option?

A: [DF explained that Newton technically qualifies as "full time" but understood the question raised.]

There are a lot of advantages to the system as it stands now, and there are a range of views on full-time Kindergarten. There are many trade-offs—Wellesley passed a tax override to support their full-time Kindergarten. If Newton did move to a full-time kindergarten, the extra time would be spent on social and emotional activities. From an academic standpoint, kids in a full-time Kindergarten are better after the first year, but those gains dissipate over the years—particularly in higher SES districts like Newton. By 4<sup>th</sup> grade, those are largely gone, particularly if there are no other supports put in to the system. There isn't a widespread achievement gap in the district, but there are pockets of gaps. The district has targeted literacy coaches and other resources to help address those issues and help children build up the necessary skills.

## Equity Overview and Update/Q&A Jen Abbott: PTOC Equity Rep

The Equity Committee is working to tie up some loose ends like definitions, and the equity spreadsheet needs a bit of refining. The Committee is hoping that schools will be able to use this as an ongoing resource. Leo Brehm, NPS Director of Technology) is also providing documentation that will allow schools to understand their inventory and what they can buy under the equity policy. Right now, schools are at the standard set by the NPS Tech Dept., and they hope the inventory will help schools to decide what they can acquire. They are also hoping to get this information to schools in the spring so that PTOs can put budgets together. Schools have voiced interested in sound systems and 3D Printers. In regard to 3D printers, they have back-tracked on allowing PTOs to buy these for their schools in order to give the pilot schools a chance to work through the curriculum more. They aren't ready to allow PTOs to buy printers yet. In regard to the Sound Systems, they reported that 65% of schools have the sound systems, and the NPS is going to disperse these systems across the schools by grade level as the funds are available. If PTOs want to go ahead and update the systems, they could make those purchases. Document cameras are also a good place to spend money on updating.

They are also working on equity at the secondary level. The Equity Committee is asking schools to voluntarily share data, and they are working through a range of questions, including many around technology spending. Jen will compile a list of questions and issues that have come up. The Equity Committee is exploring the idea of a "bring your own device" program, and they are exploring equity issues associated with that. It's very preliminary, but if there was curriculum that requires access, then kids would bring the device to school—rather than trying to have NPS provide a set of devices for every classroom. They are in the initial phases and they are trying to figure out the system, and they want to be conscious of how different families might be affected.

Matt Hills: This is an issue that will be decided in the next five years, and it has to do with the quality of educational materials available in the next five years. That is going to change pretty rapidly with integrated packages available through text books, etc. The good news is that they have the infrastructure to handle the devices as they come online in the system.

Q: The Technology needs: what is allowed is still confusing.

A: Schools can spend different amounts of money depending on where they are starting.

**Gift Policy - [Handouts Provided]:** Teachers can receive gifts now, and the policy is set by the state. There are differences between the gifts given by a group and by individuals. Individual gifts can't have any commercial value. Group gifts can't exceed \$150 per school year and it must be identified as being from the entire class. If the gift is for use in the classroom, it should comply with the equity policy. Briefly, the policy states:

**Gifts from a class to a teacher/staff member:**

- Must be identified as being from the entire class
- Gift(s) may not exceed \$150 per school year
- If the gift is to be used in the classroom, it must comply with the Elementary Equity Policy

**Gifts from an individual or family to a a teacher/staff member**

- Sentimental tokens are allowed
- Gift may not have commercial value (e.g. no gift cards)
- Giving to charitable organizations, such as PTOs or the Newton School Foundation "Honor Thy Teacher" program is encouraged.
- If the gift is to be used in the classroom, it must comply with the Elementary Equity Policy

**Treasurer's Update: Kim Thurmond, PTOC Treasurer**

All forms should be updated at this point, and the dues have mostly been paid. Also a reminder that people should have sent out the 990s. There will be a treasurers meeting coming up soon.