



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts
730 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, MA 02476
Phone: 781-316-3000

webmaster@town.arlington.ma.us

Minutes 04/25/2006

THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 2006

Present: Sue Sheffler, Chair
Susan Lovelace, Vice-Chair (absent)
Paul Schlichtman, Secretary
Sean Garballey
Suzanne Owayda
Jeff Thielman
Martin Thrope

Superintendent: Nate Levenson
Asst. Supt. Kevin Hutchinson
Sp. Ed. Director Barbara Cataldo
Student Rep: EJ Harris

Call to order: 7:30

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

Consent Agenda All items listed with an asterisk (*) are considered to be routine and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a member of the Committee so requests, in which event the item will be considered in its normal sequence.
*Approval of the regular meeting minutes of March 14, 27th & 28th 2006

On a motion by Mr. Thielman seconded by Ms. Owayda it was unanimously Voted to approve the consent agenda as presented. 6-0.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Japanese Trip

Supt. Levenson reported that the Japanese trip was a great success. Nate explained that our sister city has a number of "requests to increase our ties." One being that we annualize sending students to Japan every year; they will provide host families. They would also like to send their 8th & 9th grade students to Arlington for 7-10 days; they are comfortable having to pay for this. There was a request to recruit a teacher to go to Japan for one year to teach English; they would pay airfare and other expenses. There was a lot of interest in the high school exchange program and the cost of \$10,000 – 12,000 was acceptable. The Superintendent stated that more details would follow.

There were also good trips to France, London and Italy he noted.

.. **Superintendent Merit Pay Subcommittee** – Supt. Levenson stated that it makes sense for the subcommittee to meeting and set both a schedule and the data requirements for the balance of the 2005-2006 votes on goal completion. Mr. Thielman noted that the subcommittee would meet on Friday, May 5th at 1:30 pm in the school committee room.

.. **21st Century Forums** - The Superintendent informed the Committee that he would be holding a series of forums and surveys on the "the 21st century skills, knowledge and habits of mind." There will be 8 forums , 3 for teachers, 2 for administrators (principals and department heads) 1 for the high school, 1 for parents and community and 1 for the School Committee. Nate asked the members how they wanted to hold their forum. After discussion the Committee agreed to participate in the forums with the principals and department heads. Mr. Thrope suggested that those meetings be posted since there could be a school committee quorum.

ASCD Conference

Supt. Levenson reported that he along with Asst. Supt. Kevin Hutchinson and a number of principals and department heads attended the ASCD (Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development) Conference in Chicago. Nate reported on two of the presentations.

A Summary of the joint study on improving academic achievement by Robert Marzano, MeIRel research and ASCD found that the factor that most impacted/improved student academic achievement was principal leadership. One of the major findings was that to create significant improvement, significant changes are needed and there are 7 skills/responsibilities that drive fundamental change that had significant impact on student achievement:

1. Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
2. A commitment to optimize the system to maximize success
3. Intellectual stimulation

4. *Principal as change agent*
5. *Constant monitoring and evaluation*
6. *Flexibility of implementation, but firm commitment to the plan*
7. *Strong commitment to ideas and beliefs*

The research showed that the 4 areas typically associated with successful change actually worsened when fundamental academic improvement was successfully implemented. The 4 negative correlations, in order of magnitude are:

1. *School culture declines as measured by teacher surveys (fundamental change disrupts, by design, the existing school culture, norms, and procedures).*
2. *The sense of communication decreases (Staff feel out of the loop and uncertain).*
3. *A sense of order is lost (the school feels out of control, people are not sure what the school is doing, why it is doing, and what will come next).*
4. *A sense of staff input is not valued (a sense that no one is asking staff their opinion or that their opinion is being discounted).*

The Committee discussed how to minimize or avoid completely the above issues; Nate emphasized that we must make extra effort to keep reminding staff why we are making the changes and must let staff know that we are listening to their concerns that we can slow down the process but cannot change the plan. The Committee requested a list of school districts that have implemented the changes cited in the research.

Ms. Sheffler would like the focus of the Community Relations subcommittee this year to be on communicating with staff to ensure that everyone understands the district goals. Supt. Levenson proposed that a part time staff position such as Director of Internal Communications could facilitate communications. Nate thought that the position could possibly be funded through a grant in the amount of \$5000 - \$7500.

Summary #2 covered best practices in reading instruction. The major points of the study show that:

Early identification and action is critical, early intervention does work and is very cost effective over time. Most of the country has standardized around DIBELS assessments and a 3 tier model, detailed analysis and scheduling is critical and monitoring of students must be constant.

Mr. Levenson pointed out that we are making some progress in this area with the hiring of 6.5 reading specialists.

Asst. Supt., Kevin Hutchinson reported on a workshop by Dr. Mel Levine author of All Kings of Minds a book about understanding the differences in learning.

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

.. **Budget** – no meeting scheduled to date

.. **Community Relations** Mr. Schlichtman noted that he is working on the agenda for the next meeting which will include discussion on the concession stand and the possibility of conducting a survey on redistricting.

.. **Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment** Ms. Owayda reported that the next meeting is scheduled for May 3rd. The committee will discuss the physical education requirement and also review on surveys will be done on the district goals.

.. **Supt. Merit Adjustment** – Mr. Thielman stated that the next meeting is scheduled for Friday, May 5th at 1:30 pm in the school committee room.

.. **Policy & Procedures** - Mr. Garballey reported that the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 4th at 7:30 pm.

The Committee will discuss the referral from the full committee on laying ground rules for use of the concession stand at Peirce field.

GOAL REVIEW – SUPT. MERIT ADJUSTMENT

Review measures 1-4 under Goal 5 Mr. Thielman read each goal and the measure used to award points for each.

Goal 5 measure 1

.. On a motion by Mr. Thielman seconded by Ms. Owayda it was

Voted to award Supt. Levenson 5 points on goal 5 measure 1 "Produced a budget with clearly defined line items, detailed lines, and back-up (January 2006)". Unanimous vote

Goal 5 measure 2

.. On a motion by Mr. Thielman seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was

Voted to award Supt. Levenson 5 points on goal 5 measure 2 "Calculate and present program cost summaries in addition to line items and detailed lines (January 2006)". Unanimous vote

Goal 5 measure 3

.. On a motion by Mr. Thielman seconded by Ms. Owayda it was

Voted to award Supt. Levenson 5 points on goal 5 measure 3 "Integrate grant revenue into budget documents so that program summaries, line items and detailed lines include grant funding (January 2006)". Unanimous vote.

Goal 5 measure 4 "Recommend methods to shift resources as needed to support the district goals without decreasing needed services". Ms. Owayda voiced concern that it is too early to vote on this measure. Both Mr. Garballey and Mr. Thrope agreed that more time was needed before a vote could be taken on this measure.

.. On a motion by Ms. Owayda seconded by Mr. Thrope it was

Voted to postpone voting on goal 5 measure 4 until June 2006. Unanimous vote.

Review measure 4 under Goal 1 – Produce reports on meeting timelines and compliance with the Corrective Action Plan

(February 2006, and monthly thereafter).

Supt. Levenson explained that the Committee does not need to vote on this measure at this time, but to only acknowledge receipt of the reports.

On a motion by Ms. Owayda seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was Voted to acknowledge receipt of the Corrective Action Plan Tracking report and the Special Education Monitoring Report from Supt. Levenson. Unanimous vote.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Approval of Warrant # 06141 in the amount of \$754,579.86

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman seconded by Ms. Owayda it was Voted to approve warrant #06141 in the amount of \$754,579.86. Abstention by Mr. Garballey

Correspondence – Mr. Schlichtman noted correspondence from a traffic supervisor who was reprimanded by the Chief of Police for engaging in political activities while in uniform and on duty. There was discussion by the Committee on employees political rights during the workday; and the need to have school counsel Alan Miller attend a meeting to explain employees' rights.

Mr. Thrope made the following motion with a seconded by Mr. Garballey that The School Committee acknowledges the 1st amendment rights of all of its employees and is sensitive to any attempts by any public official to curtail those rights. Motion fails: yes votes by Mr. Thrope and Garballey, no votes by Ms. Sheffler, Mr. Schlichtman and Thielman, abstention by Ms. Owayda.

On a motion by Ms. Owayda seconded by Mr. Thrope it was Voted to refer the letter and accompanying documents to school counsel Alan Miller and to request that Mr. Miller attend a school committee meeting to address what APS employees can and cannot do during work hours in the election season. Motion amended to have Town Counsel John Maher also in attendance. Unanimous vote.

Mr. Thrope requested that Mr. Miller's presentation take place during open session and not in an executive session.

NEW BUSINESS

Information on 2006-2007 School Calendar

Ms. Sheffler noted that the handout on the various religious observances within the school year is informational only and for review by the Committee; it will be discussed at the next meeting. Supt. Levenson noted that one question that needs to be answered is the listing of holidays, what should or should not be listed.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman seconded by Mr. Thielman it was unanimously Voted to direct the Superintendent to create a report outlining the data on school staff attendance on the high holy days for the 2004 and 2005 school years.

Graduation Date

Ms. Sheffler announced that Charlie Skidmore would attend the next school committee meeting to discuss the graduation date.

Vote on School Committee Retreat

Ms. Sheffler requested that the committee change the tentative date of June 29th for the school committee/superintendent retreat to Thursday, June 22nd from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman seconded by Ms. Owayda it was unanimously Voted to hold the School Committee/Superintendent Retreat on Thursday, June 22, 2006 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. 6-0.

On a motion by Ms. Owayda seconded by Mr. Thielman it was Voted to adjourn @ 9:50 pm.

Submitted by
Karen Tassone
Committee Secretary