

Joint School Committee Meeting  
Thursday, July 30, 2015  
Eastham Town Hall

Present for the Committees:

Region: John O'Reilly, Sue Skidmore, Sarah Blackwell, Ed Brookshire, Chris Easley, Deborah Beal

Brewster: David Telman, Marie Enochy, Jessica Larsen

Eastham: Ann Crozier, Joanne Irish, Mary Lou Sette, Amy Handel, and Judy Lindahl

Orleans: Gail Briere and Hank Schumacher

Wellfleet: Jan Plaue

Present for the Administration:

Thomas Conrad, Keith Gauley, Giovanna Venditti, Maxine Minkoff, Joanna Hughes, William Crosby, Mary Beth Rodman and Denise Fronius

Call to Order

Chair Plaue called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and thanked everyone for coming to the presentation. She reviewed the agenda format with members.

Citizens Speak - None

**PRIORITY BUSINESS**

Substance Abuse

Keith Gauley, Assistant Superintendent, introduced speakers Patti Mitrokostas from Gosnold, Cheryl Bartlett, Executive Director of the Cape Cod Regional Substance Abuse Initiative and Detective Andy McLaughlin from the Orleans Police Department.

Patti Mitrokostas reviewed her background and explained the many programs at Gosnold. She indicated that they are looking at what happens prior to substance abuse treatment and are looking for interventions. Presently Gosnold has twelve clinicians in schools across the Cape to help students in crisis. They are also focusing on prevention education in the community and are looking to expand family education in the schools.

Cheryl Bartlett, Executive Director of the Cape Cod Regional Substance Abuse Initiative, indicated that this is a public health emergency as we are losing an entire generation to drugs and alcohol from 13 to 29 years old. She reported that there is a significant problem and a plan has to be created across the region to help people. They are trying to get a program into the schools beginning in Grade 6 with evidence based curriculums. She mentioned screening tools that are being piloted in some schools. She mentioned the Calmer Choice Program that helps reduce anxiety and stress as well as risk behavior surveys. Cape Cod Healthcare is working with several Superintendents who will begin a comprehensive approach through education with mentoring programs, after school programs, keeping kids busy and will introduce substance abuse education and community service. Ms. Mitrokostas reported that "Guiding Good Choices" is beginning in the fall which is a 5-6 week course for parents of Middle School aged children.

She would like to network with Nauset leaders and help them with the funding for the program from the Davenport Kelly Foundation.

Detective Andy McLaughlin reviewed a PowerPoint Presentation on Heroin, Opiates and Law Enforcement. He reported on heroin use, police administering Narcon, and how the police departments get involved because of violent crimes, property crimes, identity theft and robbery. He suggested that everyone must work together on this victimless crime. Some of the statistics he reported included: this past year the Orleans Police have administered Narcon 17 times; Eastham administers it about twice a month. He reported there were 34 deaths from drug overdoses in Barnstable County.

Chair Plaue thanked the guest speakers for their thoughtful and informative presentations.

A question and answer period took place. Ms. Beal asked what teachers look for in the classroom. Ms. Bartlett indicated that staff members look for behavior changes, truancy, anxiety, and depression. She also stressed the importance of the role of the school nurse. She would like to see the schools provide an evidence based program like "*Botvin Life skills Training*" that gives kids decision making skills for Grades 6, 7 and 8 to get the most impact. Mr. O'Reilly asked if it was better to use Gosnold counselors or keep it in the District. Ms. Bartlett indicated that schools have been pleased with the results of having a counselor full time at the school but one model is not better than another. Ms. Briere inquired about the professional development component for screening, especially for our nurses. It was indicated that protocols are in place and that each school handles this a little differently. The Department of Public Health has training. Mr. O'Reilly asked when the parents become involved. Ms. Mitrokostas indicated that parents are connected by the guidance counselor as they need a letter of consent to screen the student. A packet is sent home for the parent. There is nothing done without parental consent. Superintendent Conrad stated that statistically 1 in 5 students who are at risk receive services. Models indicate getting the help in the schools is the best way.

Ms. Enochty indicated that prevention is what is needed and coping skills begin in Kindergarten. Anxiety and mental health issues are seen way before Middle School and High School. Ms. Bartlett indicated that the Calmer Choice Program is one program that helps manage stress and identifies mental health issues. Chair Plaue expressed appreciation for the presentation and indicated that the Mr. Conrad or Mr. Gauley will follow up. She stated that everyone is interest in helping our kids.

Stephanie VanWinkle, Tony Cedeno and Shelby Williams presented the school perspective on the problem. Ms. VanWinkle indicated counselors find resources to help the parents and develop relationships with teachers and students. She stated that the anxiety level at the High School is very high. Her goal is to help students deal with their anxiety to prevent self-medicating. She and Sarah Stewart, counselor, developed a program called the Breakfast Club to help students with anxiety by teaching breathing techniques and mindfulness. She indicated that students are struggling. She develops relationships with parents without being judgmental. She also stated that there is a safety plan in place for students who return to school after an incident. She stated that the mental health and drug use go hand-in-hand.

Tony Cedeno and Shelby Williams are counselors at the Middle School and reviewed the health program at the school that addresses substance abuse issues. They also indicated that the Adjustment Counselor, Barbara

Domenic, is a wonderful resource at the Middle School but also spends time at the elementary schools when a student is in crisis. At the Middle School, students are looped with the same counselor for three years. This allows Counselors to develop a good relationship and notice changes in students. Mr. Cedeno noted that the guidance counselors are also licensed clinicians. They have the same skill set to identify at risk students. The Health Curriculum reviews ways to refuse to have alcohol and drugs and gives preventative information. Grade 7 curriculum includes alcohol and marijuana. Grade 8 curriculum includes designer drugs. The Sheriff's Department gives a presentation annually at every grade level regarding substance abuse.

Ms. Williams indicated that students who are dealing with substance abuse in their families are distracted, take on a parental role and become the family caregiver, crave the academic environment bonding with teachers and staff, feel extreme weight on their shoulders to keep the family secret, are socially isolated, have trouble with homework, and attendance is an issue. The counselors connect with the students and connect students with outside supports for counseling. She mentioned that Alateen was offered in school at one time but students don't want to miss class and need the structure of class time. They found holding programs during the school day was not beneficial. They work with the teachers and other school personnel in a very confidential nature and also talk with the school nurse. They provide education around developing a healthy sense of self. They offer Bullying Prevention classes that are very helpful. She shared that if a student was doing something risky, other students alert her and that is what makes Nauset wonderful.

Ms. Larsen asked if they teach about addiction from a hereditary standpoint. Mr. Cedeno stated that developmentally students don't get it. He also indicated that Nauset has a great system.

Ms. Beal remarked that Nauset has a very committed staff and perhaps the staff could create policies and procedures to develop a proper K-12 program within our own system.

Chair Plaue stated that Nauset is very fortunate to have such great counselors. She asked if they have the funding resources that they need. Chair Plaue asked that they think of ways we can improve and work toward that. Ms. Enochty stated that the Cape and Islands does not have enough support for kids and school committees have to pay attention to this for our kids. Ms. Williams indicated counselors feel very well supported and when a student needs more than they can give, they get outside counselors.

Scott McGrath, Health teacher at Nauset High School addressed the committee and indicated he is focusing on getting students the decision making skills they need. He stated that students have a good relationship with Michelle Aretto, addiction nurse, who comes to speak in the health classes. She talks about how the brain works, heredity and how you are at risk. In the future his top priority is how to prevent addiction.

Cindy Fox, Nauset Integrated Preschool Teacher, shared concerns of babies who are born addicted. She indicated that she has families in recovery programs now. She also indicated that a tremendous amount of developing takes place from birth to age 3. These children have already been exposed to alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. NAS babies are hospitalized for weeks after birth in withdrawal and then released to vulnerable parents. Presently 1/3 of the caregivers of her students are grandparents and, as infants, these babies are hard to care for. She indicated that these children live in an environment of ongoing trauma and crisis. At age 3 and 4 these students have a short attention span, struggle, have poor impulse control, are on the edge, anxious and have

communicating difficulties. The parents miss team meetings, parent conferences, and misplace library books. Parents involved with abuse and recovery are overwhelmed; they don't have enough money and sometimes have no place to live. The schools support these children by supporting the parent and the child. They partner with community resources like Gosnold, Angel House, Cape Cod Children's Place and Early Intervention. She stated that teachers are skilled but are not crisis counselors or addiction counselors. She felt it would be helpful if there were small classes for parents in recovery. She stated that parents need to have a trusted contact person and need a very experienced adult specialist. Her recommendation was to establish a task force to identify needs, resources, and models between schools and community agencies in the preschool and elementary years.

Ms. Enochty stated that with declining enrollment in our schools perhaps we could provide comprehensive services under the same roof where the kids go to school and start from birth through Kindergarten.

Ms. Bartlett indicated that they are developing a couple of model programs in Falmouth and Hyannis. It could be a model that they bring to the Lower Cape. Ms. Beal commented that we have very committed staff at Nauset. She thinks that with their help we could develop a comprehensive program that everyone agrees upon. Mr. Brookshire was amazed at the role of the counselor and how times have changed. Ms. Briere stated, from an elementary point of view, perhaps an adjustment counselor is needed at the elementary level, especially after hearing statistics that kids are exposed to drugs and alcohol at such early ages. She questioned if we had enough services between the preschool, elementary and middle school. She noted that we have one person doing a phenomenal job between the elementary schools and the Middle School. She felt the preschool director and principals could be surveyed to see if there is a benefit to adding this type of service.

Chair Plaue asked that information be exchanged so that we can keep working together.

Approval of Minutes –

On a motion by Sue Skidmore, seconded by Sarah Blackwell, it was voted unanimously to approve the minutes of May 28, 2015.

Adjournment –

On a motion by Sarah Blackwell, seconded by Marie Enochty, it was voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann M. Tefft

Included in the packet: Minutes of May 28, 2015