

Joint School Committee Meeting
Thursday, October 25, 2018
Eastham Town Hall

Present for the Committees:

Region: Chris Easley and Robert Sinclair
Brewster: David Telman, Jessica Larsen, and Claire Gradone
Eastham: Joanne Irish, Moira Noonan-Kerry, Ann Crozier, Judy Lindahl and Mary Lou Sette
Orleans: Gail Briere, Sasandra Roche and Hank Schumacher
Wellfleet: Jan Plaue, Jill Putnam, Martha Gordon, Mort Inger and Betsy Pontius

Present for the Administration:

Thomas Conrad and Keith Gauley

PRIORITY BUSINESS

Presentation – Keith Gauley reviewed the Accountability Reports from the Next Generation Test

Assistant Superintendent Keith Gauley reviewed a PowerPoint Presentation about the Next Generation Testing that included required accountability indicators for high schools and non-high schools, the weighting of indicators in high schools and non-high schools, criterion-referenced component, normative component, accountability information, and setting targets. He reviewed an example of an accountability report and overall results. He explained the categorization of schools and districts. He also reviewed the targets, points of determination (Declined, no change, improved below target, met target and exceeded target) apply to each subgroup of students as long as the subgroup includes 20 or more students. He explained the category “in need of focused/targeted support.

Ann Crozier inquired about chronic absenteeism. Mr. Gauley indicated that is when any child misses 10% of the school days. Jessica Larsen indicated that there are no accommodations for students with special medical needs; even though the absence is excused it will lessen the school score.

Mr. Gauley reported that Massachusetts is one of the states with the widest achievement gap. Massachusetts is looking at the lowest performers. ESSA requires states to include the following indicators in an accountability system; academic achievement, student growth, graduation rates, progress in achieving English proficiency for English learners and a least one measure of school quality or student success. Mr. Gauley explained the point scale and the score baseline.

Gail Briere asked for clarification if in fact grades were combined 3-8 and if the elementary schools were now combined with the Middle School scores. Mr. Gauley explained that there are no more levels. The state will takes all students and groups together and will run data. He also indicated that Principals have access to data using Edwin Analytical on every student and will be able to see where to focus attention.

Mr. Gauley distributed individual school reports to the committee members. He suggested members email him or the Principal to answer any questions.

Robert Sinclair expressed his concerns about the test and the data results that look at groups of students and not at what an individual student is learning. He stated that the State Department of Education is concerned about compliance, which is different from helping students learn. The score is dependent upon the greatest weakness instead of the strengths, which is a problem. He urged members to look very carefully at this. For students, this is the biggest bully in our schools. He would like to see the committee take a stand against administering this testing and let DESE know this is misguided. He stated they are using the wrong information to determine the quality of our schools.

Gail Briere inquired as to what kind of information is being shared with teachers and principals to support student growth and improvement. Mr. Gauley indicated that principals and teachers have access to a lot of student data. There is a new early warning indicator system flagging a child might be at risk that the Principal can access. He also indicated within Edwin Analytics, individual student achievement level and individual student growth level are accessed. Principals are able to look at subgroups to analyze data and notice trends. Principals can look at areas of need in their buildings. He also informed the committee that parent reports were sent out in mid-October.

Robert Sinclair indicated that parents take their students out of school for vacation purposes because they work in the summer months and cannot take time off during the peak months. The child's absence has nothing to do with the quality of the school. The test has no data to show that it has any effect on teaching and learning. There are certain amounts of students that don't test well. It is up to the schools to say this is not important. Robert Sinclair suggested the protest comes from parents of children who opt out of the test and they have a legal right to do that.

The Superintendent added to the discussion that he attended a program at the Middle School, ANGST, relative to children with anxiety and stress. Students told their stories and suggested what they needed to stay healthy. Testing comes into play here. Ultimately parents look at their sons and daughters and where testing comes into play. He would like to look at our data and the relationship with this test. He stated you cannot make students take the test and they can opt out by law. As far as the attendance piece, the Superintendent suggested things happen in life, illness or accidents. Students could be hospitalized. He indicated that educators cannot lose sight of kids and must know their story. He would like to see more parent forums to talk about this issue.

Teacher Research Projects

The Superintendent indicated that teachers are professional educators and the people to turn for answers in education and promoting educational change. He would like the district to look at this and think about teachers doing research projects. Why? The answer is because we have very talented and bright teachers who can solve problems and find answers to situations that are important to our schools. At times we look to outside organizations to provide much of the leadership in terms of solving our problems. We can create our own academic product with people who work in our system. He will bring this idea to individual school committee meetings and would like future discussion about it. He would like to develop a district wide review panel made up of school committee members, administrators, teachers and community members. When teachers see problems and would like to do a topnotch research project, they would bring in front of the review panel. The board will see the merits of the plan. Teachers will eventually come to the panel to present their work. These teachers may also present to their colleagues in the system. This begins to show the power we have within

ourselves. We are professional educators who are well versed in our trade and can make a difference in our school system.

Members mentioned sabbatical leaves, professional development points for recertification, and opportunities for students to see their teachers participating in the learning process. The Superintendent suggested student interns. Robert Sinclair stated it is an excellent idea for a lot of different reasons including; it will provide real data about what is going on in a school for decision-making about learning, instruction and curriculum. It provides students with a model of inquiry and shows the importance of learning. It encourages school dialog that centers on strengths and weaknesses. It puts educators in a position of leadership roles within the school.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion by David Telman seconded by Jessica Larsen, it was voted to approve the minutes of May 24, 2018.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Jessica Larsen, seconded by Gail Briere, it was voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 p.m.

Submitted by,

Ann M. Tefft