

UNION 54 School Committee  
Eastham Town Hall  
Thursday, October 25, 2018

Present for the Committees:

Brewster: Dave Telman, Jessica Larson, Claire Gradone  
Eastham: Joanne Irish, Moira Noonan-Kerry, Ann Crozier, Mary Lou Sette  
Orleans: Gail Briere, Hank Schumacher, Sasandra Roche  
Wellfleet: Jan Plaue, Jill Putnam, Mort Inger, Betsy Pontius, Martha Gordon

Call to Order

Chair Briere called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Citizen Speak

None

Priority Business

Gail Briere facilitated a conversation regarding Universal Preschool. She referred to the article that she sent with the agenda, "*Universal Pre-K: What does it mean and who provides it?*" She indicated it was not her intention to take it on as a Union 54 initiative and if members wish to pursue universal preschool, it must be done through their own committee at the local level.

Jill Putnam shared the mechanics of the voucher system that was established in 2015 by the Town of Wellfleet. The town decided to fund this at town meeting and offer vouchers up to \$7,000 per student for parents of four year old preschoolers that may be used at the preschool of their choice. Presently 19 students are being served in some capacity through the voucher program. The Wellfleet School Committee members all agree on the importance of preschool and have been discussing this topic at their meetings. Jill Putnam voiced the many stumbling blocks they have encountered that include parents wanting a choice of where they send their preschool child, preschool for 3 and 4 year olds, and the concern of hurting area businesses, as well as the start-up cost of \$200,000-\$250,000. (Subsequent years would cost less.) She also indicated that the town has been very generous in supporting the school budget and the committee was not sure the town would support this.

Jill Putnam indicated that she is an early childhood specialist working for the National Association for the Education of Young Children, a highly creditable, gold standard accreditation of early childhood learning programs. She visits many preschools both publicly and privately funded. Universal preschool came about because many regions did not have preschool programs or programs of good quality, especially in the underserved communities. The intent was to have equity for all children, even those who could not afford preschool.

It was also indicated that the Wellfleet School Committee surveyed parents and the biggest need was for after school care and not preschool. The Wellfleet Elementary School is providing an after school program, at no cost to parents, beginning this year.

Ann Crozier stated that the state of Florida has a voucher program for preschool students that can be used for one year only.

Jan Plaue indicated that the Montessori Preschool is housed at Wellfleet Elementary School at no cost. She would love to see a public preschool at Wellfleet Elementary School that uses the Tools of the Mind Curriculum. It would be five days a week and some would even go to an after school program. The school would provide transportation. The vouchers would then be used for three year old children.

It was noted that Kindergarten is not mandated so preschool would not be at this point in time either.

Claire Gradone indicated that next year Truro is going to have preschool for all four year olds and possibly include three year olds for their community, as well as for people who work in their town. Mort Inger indicated that Provincetown has done the same thing.

Moira Noonan-Kerry asked if anyone has connected with the kindergarten teachers to see if the program in Wellfleet is working and if students are coming in prepared or is there any other anecdotal indicator that would be of interest?

Gail Briere reported that Monomoy worked with Joe Gilbert, Cape Cod Collaborative several years ago when the state was thinking of funding universal preschool. They created a survey but the funding never came through.

David Telman inquired about the cut off age for using the voucher and if it coincides with Nauset Policy for entrance into Kindergarten. It was indicated that the voucher is used one full year before the child enters Kindergarten.

Hank Schumacher inquired as to how the town of Wellfleet decided on the \$7,000 figure. He also would like some data on how many students in Nauset have not been to preschool for a year. Gail Briere indicated that if a school committee decided to pursue this, that is a question that would be asked. How many students are not being served? Are there children on waiting lists? Do parents keep children at home and don't wish to send students to school until they are of Kindergarten age?

Betsy Pontius indicated that Wellfleet School Committee is in a different position as they surveyed parents around 2007. They found out how many children were in preschool. There were only 3-4 children who were not attending a preschool. The school committee has been discussing public preschool but it has been met with resistance. Parents like to choose the preschool their children attend. It could be in or out of town. The school committee is also concerned about transitions for young children. The committee is thinking about all the ramifications now and will be holding a community forum to discuss these issues with their Wellfleet community.

Gail Briere suggested that Truro and Provincetown are making an effort to keep families in town. Jan Plaue stated that Wellfleet could have preschool at no cost and young families could have money for housing. It is an effort to help young families and help young people stay in town.

Gail Briere posed the question, is universal preschool something children need or is it what parents need?

Jessica Larsen indicated it is very hard to find licensed people for preschool and that would be a problem in Brewster.

Mort Inger stated that this is the conversation people had when they wanted to mandate Kindergarten. He felt eventually, preschool will be mandated.

Mark Mathison, Selectmen from the Town of Orleans, mentioned that Orleans is looking at affordable housing and the workforce. He indicated that so many of our students graduate and can't stay on Cape because of the housing. He stated there are fewer kids enrolling in our schools and it becomes harder to maintain the programs. We have fewer students and higher per pupil costs. He mentioned class sizes, 18 students in a class or could it be 25. A lot of people voice their opinions on this. He suggested looking at the co-mingling of housing which will expand the number of kids in our schools. Perhaps our schools have space. You can find licensed people for a preschool program and supplement with gym, music, etc. This gives you stronger enrollment numbers with in your school.

The Nauset Integrated Preschool was explained to some board members. It is a special needs preschool program with community friends chosen by a lottery that runs about 2 ½ hours per day, four days per week. They move students around to different schools if there is a better program for them at another school within the district. He also indicated there is a sliding scale for people who cannot afford the tuition that is \$160 per month. Some families are free and some pay the full tuition of \$160. There is one child on the waitlist in Eastham and 3 on the waitlist in Brewster. Wellfleet and Orleans did not have any students on a waitlist. The Superintendent indicated Dr. Caretti could answer any questions about the Integrated Preschool.

Jan Plaue indicated that the program is limited being only 2.5 hours a day, four days a week.

Ann Crozier reported that the Eastham affordable housing project is starting next month.

Gail Briere indicated that Dr. Caretti is a good resource for doing data collection relative to preschool.

#### Adjournment

On a motion by Ann Crozier, seconded by Mort Inger, it was voted unanimously to adjourn at 6:44 p.m.

Members were reminded that the next meeting is December 6<sup>th</sup> and the committee will share information from the MASCC Conference workshops.

Submitted by  
Ann M. Tefft