

**IPSWICH SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2019
7:00 PM
MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL ENSEMBLE ROOM**

MINUTES

I. OPEN SESSION

Mr. Hopping called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

Present: Mr. Whitten, Ms. Gilliam, Mr. Nysten, Mr. Stevens and Dr. O’Flynn

Also Present: Dr. Brian Blake, Superintendent of Schools; Ms. Joanne Cuff, Director of Finance and Operations; and George Gallagher, High School Student Representative

READING OF THE DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

Mr. Gallagher read the Mission Statement.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The next School Committee meeting is Thursday, November 7th in the MS/HS Ensemble Room at 7:00pm
- The Communications Subcommittee will meet on Monday, October 23rd in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room at 5:00pm
- The Vision 2030 Working Group will meet on Wednesday, October 30th at 5:30pm in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room
- The Budget Subcommittee will meet with the Administrative Team on Tuesday, November 5th at 5:00pm in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room
- The Policy Subcommittee will meet on Tuesday, November 5th at 7:00pm in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room
- The School Facilities Working Group will meet on Thursday, November 7th at 5:30pm in the MS/HS Guidance Conference Room
- A Triboard Meeting will be held November 12th at 7:30pm in Meeting Room A at Town Hall

CITIZENS’ COMMENTS

None

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. Blake acknowledged Tracy Wagner, Director of Teaching and Learning for the Professional Development Day she organized on Tuesday, October 15th. He also thanked all those who helped to organize the day and to the jazz band for their performance.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Mr. Gallagher reported on events happening throughout the high school that included: fall sports standings, the recent PSAT exam day, the college fair, the GSA regional meeting and the announcement of the winning *Boys in the Boat* t-shirt design.

SUPERINTENDENT ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Dr. Blake reported on his busy schedule over the past three weeks. He was able to meet with high school students in a leadership class to discuss projects they were working on and later, the director of the library in town to discuss the Ipswich Reads Program. He attended a Budget Subcommittee meeting, an Ipswich Education Foundation meeting and a workshop addressing Chapter 70 and net school spending. He spoke with Tracy Wager to review her two presentations this evening and met with Lori Lafrance and a student to discuss the addition of an electric charging station for vehicles. Dr. Blake participated in a conference call with the Chair of each board to discuss the upcoming Triboard meeting and attended Professional Development Day on October 15th. Lastly, Dr. Blake spent time in all district schools.

II. SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS

FIELD TRIP REQUEST: STUDENT RACING CHALLENGE

Mr. Gallant, high school teacher, and members of the high school student racing team presented an overnight field trip request to attend the National STEM League Racing Challenge. This is a national event taking place in the spring in Charlotte, N.C. Students attending this event will leave on April 25, 2020 and return to Ipswich on April 27, 2020. The cost of the trip is \$350 per student.

Dr. O'Flynn moved to support the field trip as presented, seconded by Mr. Nysten. The motion passed unanimously.

LITERACY PRESENTATION

Ms. Wagner, Director of Teaching and Learning was asked to create a presentation on what literacy looks like at different levels throughout the district and how it is measured. She started her presentation stating that Massachusetts English Language Arts (ELA) standards have drastically changed and now literacy is clearly defined as a cross-content area. Reading, writing, speaking and listening have all been aligned within all educational standards.

Ms. Wagner, in her presentation, outlined the guiding principles for English Language Arts and Literacy programs in Massachusetts. She emphasized that literacy is not just in English class. According to the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for ELA, “The grades 6-12 standards are divided into two sections: one for ELA; and the other for history/social studies, science, mathematics and career and technical subjects.”

Through several examples of MCAS questions at all grade levels, Ms. Wagner explained that students are not just getting points for the right answer on the test, but also for the most logical.

She also shared what literacy support and facilitation looks like at the district level and noted that the goal of the 2019-2020 ELA and Literacy Compass Group was to create a shared document that clearly shows progression and allows the group to identify gaps and align standards. Ms. McMahon, principal at the middle school is focusing on writing for humanities, while Mr. Mitchell, principal at the high school, is working with the department heads to inventory curriculum and assess what is being asked in terms of writing on the new MCAS tests.

At the conclusion of her presentation, Ms. Wagner addressed several School Committee questions. She stressed the need for students and families to be mindful about how they are using technology and best practices for introducing reading on devices. She talked about encouraging readers through the power of choice. Ms. Wagner also addressed what professional development looked like for literacy, stating that teachers have attended workshops to develop curriculum and to learn how to read for different subjects/careers.

MCAS RESULTS PRESENTATION

Ms. Wagner, Director of Teaching and Learning, was asked by the School Committee to present the MCAS results from the 2018-2019 school year. She started the presentation by saying that the MCAS test is just one form of assessment in the Ipswich Public Schools by which students show us what they know.

Ms. Wagner then began to review the elementary grade results with side by side comparisons of the two schools for grades 3, 4 and 5. It was noted by a School Committee member that there was an imbalance between the two schools’ results. It was explained that because the group taking the test was small, even one student with a lower score can offset the results. Ms. Wagner ensured the committee that she was watching this trend. She did share and as evident by the grade 5 results, that by this grade level, that trend balances itself out. She feels that the curriculum at both schools is strongly aligned and that the instructional methodology can impact the learning.

Ms. Wagner continued her presentation by sharing the results of the grade 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 testing. With each grade level, Ms. Wagner included a comparison to surrounding districts. It was suggested by a School Committee member to find a similar school district and continue to compare their results with ours overtime. Ms. Wagner did state that teachers do compare SGPs and review/compare scores for their classroom, but do not look heavily into district comparisons. Dr. O'Flynn then added that while teachers don't look too deeply at district comparisons, the community does.

Ms. Wagner talked about the results of the grade 10 ELA and Math tests. It was the first year that these students were taking the Next Generation test, which Ms. Wagner explained was very different than the test of years past. It was evident that students struggled with the new type of writing. Ms. Wagner assured the committee that principals were reviewing these results and reassessing the ELA instruction. Overall, Ms. Wagner said that although there was room to grow, the students did very well.

Ms. Wagner continued her presentation by reviewing the district's accountability rating. This rating includes indicators that provide more information about school performance and student opportunity including: the performance of the lowest 25% of students, high school completion, chronic absenteeism, advanced coursework completion, annual dropout rate, and progress towards attaining English language proficiency. The accountability system, as Ms. Wagner explained, helps to improve school performance and to help the state decide how to allocate resources. This year, the classification for Ipswich is good and has improved with the decrease of chronic absenteeism in the middle and high school.

Ms. Wagner finished by sharing out how to access the MCAS and Accountability data, as well as a broad overview of next steps. Those steps included continued support of all students with a close eye on the lowest-performing students, looking at chronic absenteeism, and encouraging students to take more advanced coursework.

FINANCE UPDATE

Joanne Cuff, Director of Finance and Operations, addressed the year-to-date finance report included in the School Committee packet. She stated that all personnel costs have been encumbered, however there will be some changes as there were no transfers made for contractual increases. She also stated that at this time, there was an available balance of \$5 million which is typical for this time of year.

Ms. Cuff also shared the Outside Fund balances as of September 30, 2019. She stated that funds were behaving typically with good fund balances. She noted a deficit in summer tuition which was the result of a mischarge of a stipend. The business office is doing a journal entry to rectify

that issue. She also stated that the total annual amount of bus pass revenue was \$77,000. This amount was an increase from last year.

Lastly, Ms. Cuff reported that the business office was busy preparing documents for the FY21 budget process.

BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

At the second meeting of each month, the Budget Subcommittee has been asked to report out so that people can better understand the budget process. At this time, Mr. Hopping did announce that Dr. O’Flynn became the new Chair of the subcommittee.

Dr. O’Flynn reported that the subcommittee had met with the administrative team to discuss budgetary needs going forward. At their first meeting together, they had a lengthy discussion on the following topics- co-teaching, the middle school model, and School Choice. Dr. O’Flynn felt that it was a good conversation and they received a lot of feedback from the team.

All administrators felt strongly that the co-teaching model in place improved the performance of both low and high performing students and have strong data to reinforce that idea. Because co-teaching is done differently at each school, Mr. Hopping asked what it would look like going forward. Dr. O’Flynn explained that there won’t be a decline in personnel. The thought is to eliminate CP1 classes at the high school and bring in the co-teaching model for CP2 classes student. Dr. O’Flynn said the administrators were prepared to present achievement data from co-taught classrooms and projections for the number of personnel needed going forward.

Dr. O’Flynn then explained that the current middle school humanities model is in place to adapt to lower class sizes. Middle school administrators are looking to put more emphasis on literacy and both agree that the model is working, but still evolving. The middle school administrators will be assessing the model this year and address it at the end of the year.

Among other topics, the administrators discussed the Choice program and collectively agreed that they were no longer in favor of the program. They discussed at length technology in the districts and the refresh of that technology.

Dr. O’Flynn said that the group has scheduled a second meeting to continue to address a long list of topics. The goal is to have that discussion expressed in the FY21 budget and then plan for the FY22 budget. He said that through this process, he has learned that they will not be bending the curve and the committee will need to generate strong arguments to defend that. Mr. Nylen added that through these discussions, the goal is to address long term planning.

VISION 2030

Mr. Nylen shared a draft document outlining the vision for the “Strategy for Student Success” document the working group is creating. Included in this outline are the following:

- Overall District Mission Statement
- Elementary and Secondary Education Plans
- Strategy for District Improvement
- School Improvement Plans
- Plans for finance, professional development, curriculum, co and extracurricular activities
- Periodic studies

Mr. Nylen explained that each tier of the outline informs the next. Going forward, the working group will assess how the plan fits together. They will first present to the School Committee and then circulate the document through the district to get feedback.

III. SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORTS

VOUCHERS/BILLS- Complete

- 1. ATHLETIC SUBCOMMITTEE-** Have not met
- 2. BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE-** Discussed during presentation portion of meeting
- 3. GRANT SUBCOMMITTEES-** Have not met
- 4. OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE-** The subcommittee met with Dr. Blake and reviewed the standards, identified the elements within the standards to be evaluated, and presented rough draft goals. Dr. Blake will get some clarification on the assessment document. The final goals will be brought forward at a later School Committee meeting.
- 5. POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE-** The subcommittee held a joint meeting with the Feoffee Policy Working Group. The group reviewed the staff survey results taken last spring. They will be starting the process of bringing recommendations to the School Committee for edits to the Feoffee Policy.
- 6. TURF FIELD SUBCOMMITTEE-** Have not met, but plan to regroup after IEF meetings
- 7. COMMUNICATIONS-** The subcommittee’s first newsletter will be released on October 24th.
- 8. WORKING GROUPS**
 - **Feoffee Report-** Have not met
 - **Feoffee Policy-** Held a joint meeting with the Policy Subcommittee
 - **Vision 2030-** Discussed during presentation portion of meeting
 - **School Facilities-** Discussed during presentation portion of meeting
- 9. NEW BUSINESS***

Ms. Gilliam discussed her meeting with Birth to Three and eleven other area preschools. Topics at the meeting included grant programs and the new EEC Commissioner.