

MINUTES OF MEETING
COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION
BLACKSTONE-MILLVILLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
October 30, 2008
FREDERICK W. HARTNETT MIDDLE SCHOOL
MEDIA CENTER
35 FEDERAL STREET
BLACKSTONE, MA 01504

At 7:00 p.m. the Community Resources for Education Meeting was called to order.

Members of the School Committee were present as follows:

Toni M. Harvey, Chairperson
Ann M. Lesperance, Vice Chairperson
Michael J. Buckley, District Secretary
Lynn M. Landry, District Treasurer
Steven J. Tringali, Member
Diane C. Robin, Member
Charles K. Singleton, Member

Absent from the meeting was Catherine A. Robinson, Asst. District Treasurer.

Also in attendance were Superintendent, Christine D. Tyrie, Ed. D. and Assistant Superintendent, Kimberly B. Shaver-Hood.

Mrs. Harvey welcomed those present for the CoRE meeting and explained that the school committee members and administrators would like to make this an informal meeting, but as informative as possible.

Mrs. Harvey introduced Dr. Christine Tyrie. Dr. Tyrie spoke on the areas that she is committed to. She stated the six characteristics of excellent schools are as follows:

- Highly motivated, highly skilled teachers
- Strong, effective, supportive, collaborative leadership
- Evidence of student achievement/growth
- Strong school/community partnerships
- Maximum opportunities for individual student success
- Safe, respectful school environment

Dr. Tyrie is also committed to maximizing effective literacy instruction for all students. This does not mean striving for high MCAS scores, but rather developing students who are fluent readers, effective writers, critical thinkers, attentive listeners, articulate speakers, innovators, creators, and skilled managers of information. She is also committed to increasing student and staff use of technology as well as improving and maintaining strong schools while promoting strong community partnerships.

By maximizing effective literacy, Dr. Tyrie wants to improve this area through the new reading program, adding full day kindergarten and promoting project based learning that emphasizes higher level thinking skills.

By using SRI, parent portals, on-line report cards and student projects such as pod casts and web design, the school district will effectively increase the use of technology.

Dr. Tyrie would like to promote Global Citizenship by doing Sister Cities Projects, Global Pen Pals and bringing a Chinese teacher to BMR.

Next, Mrs. Harvey introduced Ms. Shaver-Hood. Ms. Shaver-Hood is committed to showcasing our students and programs, informing stakeholders about our schools, and seeking a productive dialogue with community to optimize all Blackstone-Millville Regional student successes.

Mrs. Harvey spoke on the very important ballot "Question #1". She stated that voting yes on Question #1 could mean a 1/3 cut in state aide to BMR over a two year period. The impact will negatively affect the funding to our school district. She is asking for the public to share this information with the community and would like all citizens to become educated in this area so they can make an informed decision when voting on November 4th.

Mrs. Harvey stated that both Blackstone and Millville came close to supporting the tax cut in 2002. She also stated that Senator Moore takes this vote very seriously and believes that if the members of the towns are looking at the best interest of the schools they will vote no on Question #1.

Mr. Buckley urged all citizens to vote no on Question #1. Voting yes on this question could have a severe impact on our bond rating.

Dr. Tyrie spoke on the addition of the first grade classroom at the John F. Kennedy Elementary School. She stated that the class sizes for this grade were too high and not in the best interest of the students. It is proven that bringing class sizes down from 27-28 to 20-22 can make a big difference. Dr. Tyrie stated that the recommendation was brought to the school committee and members voted in favor. She stated that it is working out very well. The additional classroom opened on October 10th.

Mrs. Harvey agreed with Dr. Tyrie on this matter and believes that it was the most responsible thing to do.

Mrs. Harvey spoke on full day kindergarten. She stated that there is a committee that has been researching full day kindergarten. The recommendation of the committee was to move forward with this program. Mrs. Harvey stated that she believes it is in the best interest of the students and that 85% of schools in Massachusetts have full day kindergarten.

Mrs. Harvey stated that the district qualified for the state grant of \$100,000 for full day kindergarten. Funding will be built into the budget but could be at risk if revenues from the State and local towns are not there.

Mrs. Harvey gave an update on the subcommittees. Ms. Shaver-Hood, Mrs. Lesperance, Mr. Singleton, building principals and head custodians meet as a committee to discuss how to maintain and update our facilities and make the best possible choices as to when to purchase new items for the buildings.

Ms. Shaver-Hood stated that they are trying to maintain the high school and save the existing structure but also move it ahead for the students.

Mr. Singleton is learning which repairs are needed immediately and when these items are presented to the school committee he feels he can then make an educated decision.

Mr. Buckley believes it is important to have knowledge of each facility and determine the plans of action to be established. He stated that the capital items cannot be ignored.

Mrs. Harvey stated the district was approved to use some of the extra funds from the middle school account to hire a company to look at and determine how to best utilize the athletic fields at the middle and high schools. The company is now putting together the designs and sometime in November or December they will make a presentation to the school committee.

Dr. Tyrie reported on the district budget. She would like an open, honest, transparent presentation of all budget information that would tie the budget to goals and student outcomes. Dr. Tyrie plans to present materials in an easy to read format, place budget books in libraries, have information on the website and proactively present the budget in public forums.

At this time Dr. Tyrie anticipates that Federal, State and local revenues will be flat. They will build a level service budget that maintains programs and services at the FY09 level; however, it will contain increases in fixed costs for salaries, health insurance, and utilities.

Dr. Tyrie will identify program priorities above level service budget and provide a list of critical educational priorities by school as well as a list of supplemental educational priorities.

The timeline for the budget process will be to present the budget to the school committee in January, scheduled community budget presentations beginning in March and public hearing and adoption in April.

The administration will continue to review and consider expenses while looking for cost cutting measures that do not impact programs, staffing, and services. They will also continue to seek out other sources of revenue such as grants.

Dr. Tyrie stated that at this time the BMR School District enrollment is up from last year.

Mrs. Harvey stated that BMR wants to capture back the students who are leaving for the wrong reasons. The district wants them to know about all of the opportunities that are available to them here at the high school.

Mr. Buckley stated that BVT has high expectations for their students. BVT is the first vocational school to have all students pass MCAS.

Dr. Tyrie stated that we need more hands-on classes at the high school. She believes it is best to individualize things as much as possible when it comes to students.

Mr. Singleton stated that a concern is that students feel they are leaving the new middle school to enter the old high school. However, once his son shadowed at the high school for a day he had a completely different outlook on it and opted to attend the high school instead Of BVT.

Mr. Buckley recognized the eight students in the senior class at the high school that are A.P. scholars.

The issue about publicizing the good things that students do was discussed. Mrs. Lesperance stated that two items per month per building are supposed to be placed in the Valley Breeze by the principals of the buildings.

Ms. Shaver-Hood gave an overview of data with a PowerPoint presentation. She gave historical enrollment data and indicated that enrollment for this year is 2,146 students as of October 1st. The following is a five year reflection of the budget:

FY05 - \$18,335,947.00
FY06 - \$19,310,650.00 – increase of 5.23% over FY05
FY07 - \$19,233,792.00 – decrease of .40% over FY06
FY08 - \$20,220,969.00 – increase of 5.13% over FY07
FY09 - \$20,995,423.00 – increase of 3.83% over FY08

Ms. Shaver Hood stated that rising fixed costs such as utilities, transportation and healthcare are areas that the school district cannot control. She also stated that there are some areas they can control; therefore, they need to spend this money as wisely as possible.

Ms. Shaver-Hood asked members if there is any information they would like to have to please contact the school committee and administration.

In closing, Mrs. Harvey stated how important it is to make these meetings known to the public. She stated the dates for the upcoming CoRE meetings will be decided on and placed on the website.

Mrs. Harvey also stated that she would like to clean up the website. If there is an individual interested in helping please contact Mrs. Harvey.

The CoRE meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Monique F. Simard
Recording Secretary

ATTEST: _____
Michael J. Buckley, District Secretary