

Minutes of Meeting  
**COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR EDUCATION**  
BLACKSTONE-MILLVILLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
NOVEMBER 1, 2007  
FREDERICK HARTNETT MIDDLE SCHOOL  
35 FEDERAL STREET  
BLACKSTONE, MA

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  
Mark J. Almquist, District Treasurer  
Thomas J. Conlon, Asst. District Treasurer (arrived at 7:20 p.m.)  
Joann R. Forbes, District Secretary  
Lynn M. Landry, Member  
Catherine A. Robinson, Member

Absent from meeting was member Robert J. Kluchevitz.

Also present at the meeting were Superintendent Herbert H. Levine, Ph. D, and Assistant Superintendent, Kathleen A. Montagano, Ed. D.

Mrs. Harvey named the scheduled dates for the Core meetings for the remainder of the school year as follows: January 1, 2008, March 6, 2008 and May 8, 2008. Each meeting will be held at a different school in order to allow those in attendance to have a tour of each school. The January 1<sup>st</sup> meeting will be held at the BMR High School.

Mrs. Harvey opened by welcoming all who were in attendance and thanking all members of the community for their support of the budget.

At 7:10 p.m. Mrs. Harvey introduced the new Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Herbert Levine. She stated how the School Committee is so pleased to have him in the Blackstone-Millville Regional School District.

Dr. Levine stated that the students are terrific and we should be very proud of them. After taking the first four months here to assess everything he feels that due to limited resources they must prioritize their needs. He feels BMR has a great team of educators and a School Committee well motivated with their hearts in the right place.

Dr. Levine feels that a priority should be to have the school libraries open every day and have them well stocked with reading materials.

At 7:15 p.m., Dr. Montagano spoke on the current budget. She stated that the School District spent the bulk of the budget increase (5.13%) on utility and salary increases. The District did reorganize busing in order to cut buses, cut one school principal position, took a 0%

increase for health insurance as well as cutting back on trash pickups. The District reorganized staff and was able to cut a physical education teacher at the middle school, took maintenance department cuts and cut the proposed football and volleyball programs.

Dr. Montagano stated that an ESL teacher was added and working out very well as well as a .2 chorus teacher added at the middle school, a .4 art teacher at the middle school and an additional school-wide nurse.

Dr. Montagano stated that they are already busy working on the FY09 budget.

Dr. Levine stated that the middle school needs additional Special Education staff and class sizes are a bit too large. He stated that they need to take a look at textbooks. For this and other reasons they are developing a five year plan to replace textbooks and other items at all schools. They are currently going through the process of rating each textbook used. Some older books are still working well, while other newer versions are not.

Dr. Levine stated that Brad Monroe current technology director and vice principal of the JFK/AFM Complex is working very hard in these two positions.

Dr. Levine also stated that Sue Cullen, the new Curriculum Director who replaced Pauline Allaire-Adams this year is having a positive impact on the schools. Dr. Levine stated that the MCAS scores are flat and slipping and we have not made AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) at the Millville Elementary School and a few other schools. We have no choice but to do something about this.

Dr. Levine stated that they are currently working on the sewer/generator project at the BMR High School. The sewer system at the high school is in the process of being redone. We will be connecting to Early Village and will need to go out to bid for this connection more than likely in the Spring of 08. It has taken a long time to have all the proper signatures on this and Attorney Harold Gould has worked hard on this project. We will need a larger capacity generator. We will need to take care of the two projects at the same time.

Dr. Levine also stated that the athletic fields at the high school are in need of repair. He stated that a certain environmental group has quite a bit of grant money available. Ken Bianchi, Town Administrator for Blackstone called Dr. Levine and asked if we would put a water recapturing system on the high school roof. If the District does this they would be able to get grant money to help with the repair of the athletic fields. Gale Associates, an engineering firm who has worked extensively with the School District, will be here to talk about the possibilities for improving the athletic fields.

Dr. Montagano spoke on the CPR (Coordinated Program Review). The first report received was very lengthy. Special Education is one of the main targeted areas. The School District is in need of alternative reading programs. Dr. Montagano stated that 14 students currently need language intervention. She stated that all school lunch issues have been addressed and that the CPR is ongoing. It happens every 6 years with a review every 3 years.

Citizen Maureen Vasquez stated that we should fix the problem before it happens. Dr. Levine stated that by getting a full day Kindergarten program in the works we should see fewer special education referrals.

Dr. Levine stated that the School Committee has authorized him to look into a grant for full day kindergarten. This grant would give the District \$15,000 per classroom for the planning stages. Dr. Levine is convinced that the District would be able to continue getting the grant year after year. He has noticed that Governor Patrick is very committed to this.

Dr. Levine stated that the school reading program is adequate but we do need to do a better job with balancing whole language with phonics.

He stated that kids are excited with the new reading materials and that they are well worth the investment. We need the best materials available and try to start adopting them for K-3 or K-5 grades.

Dr. Levine mentioned the composite performance index. He stated that standardized tests do not measure everything but it does give the government the opportunity to come in and tell the Districts how to fix things. It gives the strengths and weaknesses of the District and tries to give them some standard to look at.

Dr. Levine stated that the District is lacking in after school activities. There are certain basic activities such as a debate team which should be offered.

Maureen Vasquez asked Dr. Levine if the budget cuts and MCAS scores show a relationship. Dr. Levine stated that the correlations are mixed.

Caroline Coleman stated that reading needs to be a priority in the schools.

Denise Daignault stated that when the middle school was opened all reading teachers were cut. This has impacted the school.

Mr. Conlon stated that English Language Learners is a very important topic right now. The school administrators will bring information to the School Committee to see if they need to change the current ELL classes. This may force the District to bring all of the ELL students to one school.

Mrs. Lesperance stated that contract negotiations will be starting very soon. The three year teacher and support staff contracts will be up in July 08.

Mr. Almquist spoke next on capital improvements. He stated that the Millville Elementary School is currently fixing their water problem and the JFK/AFM Complex currently has safety issues that need to be addressed. He stated that Fred Hartnett is currently working with the head custodians in all schools to come up with the 5 year needs for each school. He also stated that the middle school has \$350,000 left over from the Middle School Project to be utilized in all of the different schools in order to make needed capital improvements.

Caroline Coleman stated that the bathroom at the BMR High School closest to the cafeteria needs to have proper hand blowers or have these replaced with hand paper towels. Dr. Montagano will look into this health concern.

Dr. Levine stated that the BMR High School is not ADA compliant for wheelchairs. He feels that the District needs to pay attention to these issues. The high school is in great shape for

a 40 year old building but it still needs work and will not last forever. Eventually it will be in need of a new inside infrastructure or a new building altogether.

Mrs. Harvey stated that we need to improve on the hiring process. How do we get the best person for the job? It is important to get good staff to come to the District and to keep them here.

The District is now looking into a senior transition course which would teach seniors about life skills they will need once they leave the school. They would like to utilize experts in these fields to teach a course to the seniors.

Dr. Montagano stated that the copy allotment seems to be working. All staff must remember to utilize the service of Mr. Laydon at the high school whenever possible.

Mrs. Daignault talked about the fact that there is currently no 6<sup>th</sup> grade math book and the teachers of this class need to make more copies than usual.

Dr. Levine mentioned that he would like to see a District video done from the viewpoint of the students in the schools which he would like to have Jack Carroll complete by January or February 08. He would like to see it out there on the local cable channel and run on a regular basis.

Dr. Levine also mentioned that all of the life skill students and parents at the middle school are currently happy with the program they will be offering these students when they reach the high school next year. The District will in turn save another 3.5 million dollars that would be spent to send these students to residential schools outside of the District if they did not offer such a program at the high school.

Dr. Levine stated that part of the five year plan is to adopt a reading program, adopt a full day kindergarten, lower class sizes, get additional special education help at the middle school, and give the students more opportunities to have fun.

Maureen Vasquez asked the School Committee to give the community and the town finance committee a budget that easily explains all of the changes and why we need more money for the District. We need to keep them on board.

Dr. Levine stated that he will do this.

At 9:00 p.m. Mrs. Harvey stated that the CoRE meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Monique F. Simard  
Recording Secretary

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Joanne R. Forbes, District Secretary