

**MINUTES OF MEETING
BLACKSTONE-MILLVILLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
May 15, 2008
FREDERICK W. HARTNETT MIDDLE SCHOOL
MEDIA CENTER
35 FEDERAL STREET
BLACKSTONE, MA 01504**

At 7:05 p.m. Chairperson Harvey called the School Committee Meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America was recited.

The following members were present:

Toni M. Harvey, Chairperson
Ann M. Lesperance, Vice Chairperson
Thomas J. Conlon, Secretary
Diane C. Robin, Member
Charles K. Singleton, Member
Michael J. Buckley, Member

Absent from meeting were: Catherine A. Robinson and Lynn M. Landry.

Also in attendance were Superintendent, Herbert W. Levine, Ph.D, Assistant Superintendent, Kathleen A. Montagano, Ed. D., and Student Representative Lindsay Poirier.

Dr. Levine presented the Consent Agenda.

A motion was made by Mrs. Lesperance, seconded by Mr. Buckley to accept the Consent Agenda which included minutes of the meeting of April 10th, May 1st and May 8th as well as a field trip request from the middle school Team 7A. Also included was a request for a waiver of fees for Girl Scouts of Blackstone with one hour the night before being added to the request for rehearsal.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

The Minutes of April 17th were removed from the Consent Agenda as they have not been reviewed by all members and will be voted on at the next school committee meeting. The Blackstone Millville Youth Soccer Organization request was also removed as it had previously been approved.

At 7:15 p.m. Suzan Cullen, Director of Curriculum and Professional Development, and Anne Cignoli, MES teacher, spoke on the standards based report cards currently being used in the elementary schools. They believe they are user and parent friendly and a great deal of time and effort went into developing the report cards.

At 7:20 p.m. the kindergarten sub committee spoke. Members of this Committee include Suzan Cullen, Chairperson, Anne Cignoli, Lynn Vallee, Janine Davia, Eileen Tetreault, Kathy Spearin, Karen O'Neil, Kerry Olsen, Cecilia Doyle, Cynthia Fric and Everett Campbell.

Each member spoke on different aspects of the full-day kindergarten process. The sub-committee reviewed much research and investigated local issues. They would like to see full-day

kindergarten implemented for the 2009/2010 school year. The committee also worked on and researched what is necessary to acquire the NAEYC Accreditation.

The sub committee feels they would be moving too quickly if they attempted to implement the full-day kindergarten program in 2008/2009.

The kindergarten sub committee has met monthly to discuss all aspects of the full-day kindergarten program. Some teachers went on site visits to Northbridge where they currently have full-day kindergarten. It will be important to keep parents and the community informed about the process of full-day kindergarten implementation.

A parent survey was developed and will be sent home to parents in the fall.

Mrs. Cullen stated that all kindergarten teachers will go to the New England Kindergarten Conference in Nashua, NH this summer which will be funded through a grant.

Classroom configuration in the kindergarten classes is currently being redesigned. They will become more center-based with large tables in the center of the classroom. They will use centers now for the ½ day program and keep them when they move to the full day program.

Mrs. Cullen reported that Department of Education statistics show over 85% of the districts in Massachusetts already have full-day kindergarten.

Some of the benefits of a full-day kindergarten program include the ability for children to have instruction and actually have the time to discuss it afterwards. It will give students the ability to write in journals every day. Teachers can allow students to learn at a slower pace which is important at age 5. Teachers will have more opportunity to encourage social development in the classrooms.

The kindergarten sub committee welcomed the members of the school committee to attend their meetings. The sub committee asked that the school committee consider voting on a proposal for full-day kindergarten in October 2008. The sub committee would like to ensure that once the registration process begins a plan will be in place so they can give the proper information to the parents of those students entering kindergarten in September 2009.

Mrs. Lesperance asked when a parent meeting would be held. Mrs. Cullen stated it would be in the fall.

Mr. Buckley asked questions on class size and space in the buildings to accommodate the additional classrooms. He asked that the kindergarten sub committee be sure to project the growth rate.

Mrs. Cullen explained that next year the district is eligible for a \$104,300 grant or \$14,900 per classroom from the Department of Education.

Dr. Levine stated that kindergarten classes should have an 18:1 ratio. The administrators should strive to get as close to these numbers as possible. He believes full-day kindergarten will certainly have a positive impact on both students and families. He also stated that with grant funding in place the first year, the cost to the District is less than \$50,000. Even if the full-day kindergarten grant is no longer available the Chapter 70 funds will be.

The mission of the governor of MA is to have 100% full-day kindergarten in the Commonwealth.

Mrs. Harvey stated that the districts that have implemented full-day kindergarten are still getting the grant funding.

Mr. Campbell stated that feedback and an informal survey taken from members of the community show that 90% of those responding are positive about full-day kindergarten and 10% are either unsure or do not want their children to be away from home for a full day. Parents need to be kept informed and updated on the plans. Parents can also opt to school choice their child to another school if they do not feel they want them in school for the full day.

Mrs. Harvey asked the sub committee to return in the fall with all of the information of what is entailed to get the NAEYC Accreditation for the program.

Mr. Singleton asked if the grant money will be enough to purchase the items needed for the program. It was stated that the \$105,000 grant they currently received is for researching the full-day kindergarten program. They will be eligible for another grant if they choose to continue with the implementation process. Grant funds can be used to purchase items.

Mrs. Harvey stated that research shows that the sustained gains will follow children throughout their school years and increase their higher level thinking skills. This sub committee has shown her how it is all related. This will hopefully mean less retentions and special education concerns. She also wants the sub committee to be sure to make the community aware and informed of all aspects of the full-day kindergarten program. Mrs. Harvey endorsed continuing to work towards full-day kindergarten. This was unanimously supported by the school committee without the need of a formal vote.

At 8:20 p.m. Arthur Anderson of the Arthur W. Anderson Group of Hull, MA spoke on the Valuation of Postretirement Benefits Plan or the GASB 45, a required valuation by law. Mr. Anderson gave a handout to the Committee and stated that the BMRSD maintains a postretirement benefits plan for eligible retirees which includes medical, dental, and life insurance benefits. It provides that the District and the retiree each pay 50% of the insurance premiums necessary to provide coverage. The Arthur W. Anderson Group was retained by the school district to make an actuarial valuation of the plan and determine the amounts required to be reported by Statement No. 45 of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008 and the projected benefit payments (employer share) for the next ten fiscal years.

In closing, Mr. Anderson stated that the school district should make the necessary arrangements to fund this in the future. This valuation gives the information necessary and allows realization of the full cost of what is promised to the retirees of the District.

Dr. Montagano stated that the district's auditing firm will reflect this in the yearly audit of the district beginning next year. She will check to see how this will be reported.

At 8:45 p.m. Dr. Levine gave the Report of the Superintendent. He stated that the Department of Occupational Therapy will send a representative to the high school to review the asbestos issues. Dr. Levine will be able to provide more information at the meetings of May 22nd and May 29th.

Dr. Levine also stated that the Department of Environmental Protection made nine recommendations when assessing the Millville Elementary School. They have already taken care of eight of those recommendations. The last one to be taken care of is the gutters in the rear of the school. Mrs. Tetreault is currently getting quotes for this work. Dr. Levine stated that the crumbling cement stairs to the loading dock need to be replaced as well. Mrs. Tetreault is seeking estimates for the stairs as well.

At 8:55 p.m. Dr. Montagano gave the Report of the Assistant Superintendent.

A motion was made by Mr. Buckley, seconded by Mr. Singleton to accept the Assistant Treasurer's job description as presented by Dr. Montagano. **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED**

The Committee also received support staff job descriptions from Dr. Montagano.

Dr. Montagano gave a personnel update which includes appointments of Lori Tasick as JFK/MES reading teacher and Amanda Notz as BMRHS life skills teacher. A resignation was received by Rebecca McCourt from JFK as music teacher effective June 30, 2008.

Dr. Montagano spoke to the Committee on a special education matter. There is a current out-of-district student that will need an LPN bus monitor. This child may need to be administered medication at any given time during his bus ride to and from school. This could mean the possibility of a \$30,000 liability to the school district if the person works approximately 20 hours per week at \$27.50 per hour. Mr. Buckley asked for a review at the beginning of the school year.

A motion was made by Mr. Conlon, seconded by Mr. Buckley to approve the LPN bus for 3.5 to 4 hours per day. **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED**

Dr. Levine suggested that the special education director review all costs with the school committee in August.

Dr. Montagano reviewed the budget.

Dr. Montagano stated that the district has joined, along with 15 other school districts, a collaborative to seek out the best possible oil prices. They have currently received a bid price of \$3.72 per gallon which they have rejected. All business managers will meet on June 5th to decide what they will do next. Dr. Montagano stated that the school district has currently budgeted for \$2.72 per gallon which could mean a deficit of \$100,000 for the District if the price remains at \$3.72 per gallon.

At approximately 9:00 p.m. Chairperson Harvey left the meeting and turned the meeting over to vice chair Mrs. Lesperance.

At 9:10 p.m. Mrs. Lesperance gave the Communications Report. She stated that all school activities should be placed on one calendar on the website to avoid double booking and confusion or conflicts on any given day. Dr. Levine will look into this with Mr. Toupin. Mrs. Lesperance is still looking for better press coverage for the ongoing activities at the schools. She will help with getting the items to the newspapers but needs the help of the administrators to get pictures and write ups to her. Dr. Levine will also look into this.

At 9:20 p.m. Student Representative Lindsey Poirier gave her report on school activities that have taken place. She spoke on the Senior Citizens Prom and the National Honor Society induction ceremony to be held on May 16th @ 7:00 p.m. She reported on the sophomore semi formal which was a great success and the band awards night which was held on May 6th. Ms. Poirier proceeded to give a sports update.

Mrs. Lesperance asked Lindsey if there were volunteers to baby sit on the night of the Blackstone Annual Town meeting. Ms. Poirier said they currently have five volunteers. Mrs. Lesperance stated that families could also ask these students to come to their homes to baby sit as well.

Mr. Buckley stated that himself, Mrs. Robin and Dr. Montagano were on the John Eldridge Show on May 14th.

Mrs. Lesperance encouraged all concerned citizens to attend the Blackstone Annual Town meeting on Tuesday, May 27th @ 7:30 p.m. at the high school auditorium.

At 9:30 p.m. a motion was made by Mr. Singleton, seconded by Mr. Conlon to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of May 15, 2008. **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED**

Respectfully submitted,

Monique F. Simard
Recording Secretary

ATTEST: _____
Thomas J. Conlon, District Secretary