

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORK SESSION MINUTES
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION BUILDING CONFERENCE ROOM
JUNE 1, 2012**

Present: Ms. Laurie Graham, Chair
Mr. Daniel Scharfman, Secretary
Ms. Laurie Slap
Mr. Kevin Cunningham
Ms. Anne Lougée
Ms. Pascha Griffiths
Dr. Thomas Kingston, Interim Superintendent
Ms. Janice Darias, Assistant Superintendent

1. OPENING BUSINESS

1.1 Call to order

Ms. Graham called the meeting to order at 1:15 p.m.

2. MAJOR BUSINESS

2.1 Curriculum Subcommittee

Ms. Graham introduced the question of how to charge a Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee. She provided a sample from another town's School Committee.

Ms. Darias noted that we had seen increased curriculum debate and discussion at the School Committee table in recent months, and that the new subcommittee would provide a welcome forum and additional points of view on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. She also believes the subcommittee could consider questions of how all students access the curriculum.

Ms. Graham averred that the Belmont Special Education Advisory Council might have a particularly valuable role in engaging with the sub-committee.

Ms. Darias suggested that re-introducing the 7-year curricular review cycle would also become more feasible with the formation of a sub-committee.

Mr. Scharfman fretted aloud that this sub-committee could become a forum for complaints about access to curriculum, rather than a body formed to prepare materials and decisions for the full School Committee.

Ms. Griffiths wondered whether this might become a research arm of the Belmont Public Schools; Dir. Kingston replied that the task of research should properly fall to the administration and its professionals. He added that the instructional model in Belmont is quite traditional and that leadership would be needed to engage successful innovative models.

Ms. Lougee relayed a specific question (that of a middle level of instruction at the high school) as an exemplar of the type of question that needs to be asked. Dr. Kingston believes that this sub-committee would be the appropriate and effective venue for such inquiry. The School Committee does connect the district to the community. The discussion proceeded to cover topics of how sub-committee members would provide input and ideas to the administration.

Ms. Graham asked Committee members to suggest ideas from the PLT Conference that might provide input to the sub-committee. Stress at the high school level in staff and students, IEP-based differentiation, homework, social-emotional learning, and other topics.

Mr. Cunningham shared a vision that the Curriculum and Instruction Sub-committee might be a visible champion of the notion of innovation, of teacher satisfaction as an important goal. He added that this might be a forum for discussion of important ideas and work that might be encouraged, a body that could provide input on areas to emphasize or de-emphasize; if we don't bring attention and encouragement, it will not happen. This can be our stand and leadership for excellence and vision. Dr. Kingston augmented these comments, noting that they are consonant with other ideas expressed during the meeting.

Ms. Slap queried the Committee: how we might share and communicate our progress and vision with the community? Ms. Graham offered the model of the Finance Sub-committee's preparatory work in meeting with stakeholders. Mr. Cunningham recalled the depth into which the sub-committees have been able to delve, learning and sharing their learning with the community.

Dr. Kingston observed that the Policy subcommittee has a unique role in so far as it actually develops policy. The finance, curriculum, and human resources sub-committees would find their proper role in oversight of School Department activity. Mr. Cunningham suggested that this new subcommittee be formed quickly to allow time to brainstorm and develop ideas for the domain and activity of the sub-committee.

Dr. Kingston offered to develop a brief description of the likely charge and activities of the sub-committee that could then be reviewed by the School Committee. The sense of the Committee was that this would be an appropriate place to start.

2.1 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

Ms. Graham asked that Ms. Slap, as the second-most senior member of the School Committee hand out half of the diplomas. A prior School Committee member asked and was granted permission to hand out her child's diploma. Other recent School Committee members do not have graduating seniors this year. The Committee will gather in the nurse's office at Belmont High School.

3. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion offered by Ms. Slap and seconded by Ms. Lougee, it was

VOTED 5-0-0 to adjourn the meeting at 2:25 p.m., Ms. Griffiths having left the meeting at an earlier time.

Respectfully submitted by


Daniel Scharfman, Secretary