

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM
NOVEMBER 13, 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
Mr. Anthony DiCologero, Director of Business, Finance and Operations

Student Reps: Tomas Reimers and Scott Steward

1. **OPENING BUSINESS**

1.1 Call to order

Ms. Graham called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Graham led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 Citizens' Concerns

A citizen asked if a copy of the NEASC Report was available. Dr. Kingston stated that a copy would be posted to the Belmont Public Schools website within 24 hours.

1.4 Adjustments to the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

1.5 Chairman's Report

Ms. Graham announced the following events:

The 12th Annual Spelling Bee was held on November 3 and over 570 students from K-6 participated. The winning team was the Super Spelling Cheetahs 2.0. Ms. Graham congratulated the team members, Jane Mahon, Abby Moore, and Rita Shareef as well as all of the students who participated. The Foundation for Belmont Education netted over \$18,000 in funds which will be used by the FBE to provide resources and support to Belmont schools.

Belmont High School students participated today in the annual Concerto Competition and two winners will be chosen to perform in a composition with the Belmont High School Orchestra at their spring concert.

The American Mathematics Contest 8 was held today where an estimated 400 students from Cheney, grades 5-8 participated.

This past weekend a performance of A Christmas Carol was held at Belmont High School. The performance was very well attended.

Ms. Graham congratulated the Belmont High School Girls' Soccer Team for their 1-0 victory over Wilmington High School yesterday. They won Division 2 North Sectional Championship for the second time in three years.

Ms. Graham congratulated Leah Brams who won the Middlesex League Cross Country Championship on November 1 and to the Belmont Girls Team who placed 2nd. The boys Cross Country Team placed 18th the past Saturday after coming in 10th in the previous race. The Belmont High School Girls Swim Team had a strong showing on November 10 in the Northborough Swimming Diving Championship, coming in 7th

1.6 Superintendent's Report

Dr. Kingston announced that within the next 24 hours the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Report will be available to view on the Belmont Public Schools website and hard copies will be available at the Belmont High School Main Office, the Central Office in the School Administration Building and the Belmont Public Library.

Dr. Kingston announced that he has formed an advisory group made up of PTO/PTA members whose charge is to study class sizes in Belmont. The advisory group will meet over the next 6 to 8 weeks and will bring recommendations regarding class size to Dr. Kingston and the School Committee.

Dr. Kingston noted Exhibit D in the School Committee packets which list the current extra compensatory assignments. He stated that the stipends for extra compensatory assignments are being reviewed and he will have some recommendations for the School Committee.

1.7 Director of Finance, Business and Operations' Report

Mr. DiCologero stated that he has met with the Finance Subcommittee and is working with the Leadership Council to develop the FY14 budget. He stated that David Kale, Town Administrator, has proposed a budget schedule that targets delivery of the schools and town budgets on February 11 as opposed to January 11 last year. June 3 and 5 will be the dates for the Annual Town Meeting budget articles.

2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2.1 There was no unfinished business.

3. **MAJOR BUSINESS**

3.1 Belmont High School NEASC Report – Exhibit A (discussion with Dan Richards)

Belmont High School Principal, Dan Richards, gave an overview of the NEASC Report.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) is the oldest of the six regional accrediting agencies in the United States. Membership in NEASC is voluntary.

Schools are evaluated on the following standards:

- Teaching and Learning Standards
- Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations
- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment of and for Student Learning

- Support of Teaching and Learning Standards
- School Culture and Leadership
- School Resources for Learning
- Community Resources for Learning

Mr. Richards explained that the process of the NEASC evaluation involves a 4 day intensive visit by a team of 6 people who visit classroom and teachers, look at the facility, check student work. He explained each of the standards and how the team came to the conclusions that they did. The NEASC Report will be available on the Belmont Public Schools website. Copies will also be available at the High School main office, the Central Administration Office and the Belmont Public Library.

3.2 Enrollment Update – Exhibit B (Janice Darias)

Ms. Darias explained the class size report. She compared class sizes from last year to this year and most of the class sizes have increased. The Middle School has some of the largest class sizes in the district with up to 27 students in some classes. At Belmont High School there are 359 classes, 64 semester and 296 full year courses, not including learning centers, English and math tutoring, or ELL tutoring. The average class size is 21 students per class. There are 27 more students this year in pre-k – 4 this year compared to last year. At Chenery there are 32 students more this year than last year and at Belmont High School in grades 9, 10, and 11 there are 37 more students this year than last year.

3.3 Report on Massachusetts Educator Delegation to Finland – Exhibit C (Janice Darias)

Ms. Darias was part of an educator delegation that travelled to Finland to study their educational system. The trip took place over 7 days and the group spent time visiting schools in Finland and Sweden. The group included superintendents, assistant superintendents, teachers, the executive director of Primary Source, the executive director of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, and others.

Ms. Darias explained that the first the school they visited was in Helsinki. In the 1600s it was required that people learn to read in write in order to get married.

In the 1970s there was a major shift in education policy. Prior to that time, not everyone had access to education. When the policy shifted, it was determined that all people would have access to the same education based on the belief that all children can learn. It required changing the way teachers were trained. All teachers in Finland are required to have a bachelor's degree and most have a master's degree. The teaching profession is so honored in Finland that many young people aspire to it. It is extremely competitive to get into the teacher education program at a university. Universities all teach the same curriculum which is a five year program.

In 2001 Finnish students outperformed other students in math and science who are part of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development nations. Finnish schools are funded at levels below those in many comparable nations and teacher salaries are not comparatively high. There is high quality day care which is subsidized and people working in day care are licensed and required to have a bachelor's degree. There is specialized support beginning in preschool for students who are not meeting benchmarks and there is a very low student poverty rate.

Sweden has not had a consistent education policy. They recently began allowing open market schools. The open market has allowed both not-profit and for-profit companies to start schools. Some of the for-profit schools have allowed untrained teachers to teach which has caused some problems with students not getting a proper education. The government is now requiring that all teachers be licensed by 2015.

Ms. Darias talked about some schools she visited that are run by a non-profit foundation. The schools are called The Victor Rydberg Foundation Schools and they focus on creativity and student engagement through project based learning across multiple disciplines. These particular schools are very selective of their student population because they are so respected.

4. **REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES/LIAISONS UPDATES (as needed)**

- 4.1 Finance Subcommittee
- 4.2 Policy Subcommittee
- 4.3 Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee
- 4.4 Student Representative
- 4.5 Capital Budget Committee
- 4.6 Warrant Committee
- 4.7 Wellington Building Committee

There were no subcommittee/liasons reports.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

- 5.1 Consent Agenda

- 5.2 Personnel Items
Extra compensatory Positions – Exhibit D
- 5.3 Business Items – None
- 5.4 Approval of Minutes
October 23, 2012
October 26, 2012

The minutes were deferred until a future meeting.

6. **FUTURE BUSINESS**

November 14, 2012
Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee
SAB Conference Room – 9:30 a.m.

November 15, 2012
Policy & Procedure Subcommittee
SAB Conference Room – 9:30 a.m.

November 16, 2012
School Committee Work Session
SAB Conference Room – 9:30 a.m.

November 20, 2012
School Committee Meeting
CMS Large Community Room – 7:30 p.m.

7. **ENCLOSURES**

November 1, 2012 Enrollment
November 1, 2012 Enrollment indicating changes
Youth Risk Behavior Survey - 2012

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

At 10:06 p.m. on a motion offered by Mr. Scharfman and seconded by Ms. Slap, it was

VOTED unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by


Daniel Scharfman, Secretary