

**BELMONT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
CENTRAL BOSTON ELDER SERVICES
2315 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON, MA
OCTOBER 23, 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

Also in attendance: Ms. Diane Wiltshire, Director of METCO
Mr. Dan Richard, Belmont High School Principal

1. **OPENING BUSINESS**

1.1 Call to order

Ms. Graham called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and thanked the many parents in attendance for coming to the meeting. 34 families had one or more parents present.

1.2 Introductions

Ms. Graham asked attendees including members of the School Committee to introduce themselves.

1.3 Presentation by Belmont Against Racism

a. Ms. Graham invited June Roberts to the table to make a presentation on behalf of BAR (Belmont Against Racism).

b. Ms. Roberts presented a check in the amount of \$10,000 from BAR to Dr. Kingston and Ms. Graham. She described the general purpose of the gift as funding after school transportation and related services that make it easier for students who live in Boston to participate in the full range of Belmont's school programs.

c. Ms. Roberts further explained that BAR raises much of its money at the annual Martin Luther King Day breakfast. This year's breakfast will feature both Jean Maguire and Belmont graduates who will describe the impact that METCO had on their education and preparation for college and career.

d. Ms. Graham thanked BAR for its funding and many other efforts on behalf of the METCO program. Many parents of Boston students joined her in expressing their gratitude.

1.4 Superintendent's Report

a. Dr. Kingston explained the School Department's shared belief that Belmont benefits from METCO and the students it brings to Belmont as much as those students benefit from learning in Belmont. Specifically he cited the enriched cultural connections between Belmont and its regional community as an important part of education. He noted his concern – as described in recent news reports – that students of color in many districts, including Belmont, do well but not as well as their in-district peers. Having said that, he also noted that Belmont has many students of color who do not live in Boston, and that we look at the performance of all students as individuals, and are also required to look at subgroups of students as required by the State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

b. Ms. Darias explained recent student performance data in more detail. Overall, Belmont students perform well on MCAS, but some subgroups have not made as much progress as mandated – this is not an assessment of absolute performance, but an aggregate assessment of how much individual progress students within some subgroups have made at the Chenery Middle School. She explained that some of these same issues appear in earlier grades, but the total number of students in subgroups at each elementary school is too small to trigger state reporting mechanisms. Since the entire district is ranked at the level of its lowest-ranked subgroup, Belmont is considered a level 2 district in the 5-level state system. She explained that the school system is devoting additional resources to give students targeted assistance that will insure more robust student growth. Title I and other funds pay for this programming. Ms. Darias also stated that 117 students are coming to Belmont from Boston through the METCO program this year.

c. Ms. Wiltshire spoke of other measures of student success. 71% of Chenery students in the METCO program currently show a B- or better average, while 72% of Belmont High School students in the METCO program have a weighted 3.75 or better grade point average. 35 students took advantage of a recent visit to Boston College where they learned more about college application and preparation. Participation in extracurricular programs is high. She also invited parents to attend the METCO Directors conference.

d. Mr. Richards described some recent work done to insure student safety and healthy social-emotional development. This included a recent lockdown drill and the presence of 60 clubs and activities with increasing numbers of students and faculty participating. He also explained some of his efforts to improve communication through his blog and Twitter accounts.

1.6 Chairman's Report

a. Ms. Graham reported that on December 5th Dr. Elizabeth Englander will present on bullying and harassment at 6:30 p.m. at the Chenery Middle School.

b. She gave a brief description of the new educator evaluation system and noted that the School Committee had recently completed the Superintendent's evaluation.

c. She closed by remarking that the School Committee will decide soon on its approach to hiring a superintendent, since Dr. Kingston is currently serving in an interim capacity.

d. She then invited attendees to make observations and ask questions. These included requests for additional explanation of student performance data, what specific interventions are in place for struggling students, and whether the large travel time burden that students bear can be reduced or mitigated.

2. **CLOSING REMARKS AND ADJOURNMENT**

a. Ms. Graham thanked parents for coming to the meeting, for giving Belmont the opportunity to educate their children, and for their many other efforts supporting the METCO program.

b. At 8:30 p.m. on a motion offered by Ms. Slap and seconded by Mr. Cunningham, it was

VOTED unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by



Daniel Scharfman, Secretary