

# QUINCY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## JOINT TEACHING AND LEARNING/POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, January 24, 2013

A joint meeting of the Teaching and Learning and Policy Subcommittees was held on Thursday, January 24, 2013 at 5:00 pm in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room at the NAGE Building. Present were Ms. Barbara Isola, Mrs. Kathryn Hubley, Mr. Dave McCarthy, Mr. Paul Bregoli, Policy Subcommittee Chair, and Mrs. Emily Lebo, Teaching and Learning Subcommittee Chair. Also attending were Superintendent Richard DeCristofaro, Assistant Superintendent Colleen Roberts, Mrs. Mary Fredrickson, Ms. Beth Hallett, Mrs. Paula McGeady, Mrs. Maura Papile, Ms. Madeline Roy, Mr. Frank Santoro, Mr. Keith Segalla, Mr. Robert Show, Mrs. Helena Skinner, and Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk.

Mrs. Lebo called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm

The first item on the agenda was the presentation of the **Annual System Profile and Progress Report** by Mrs. Fredrickson and Mrs. Papile. The booklet has been organized into three sections: Enrollment, Assessments, and Indicators. For the Enrollment section, Mrs. Fredrickson reviewed the October 1 enrollment data, including new charts that detail ELL and SPED populations within schools; district enrollment by grade level; and SPED and ELL populations detailed by grade level. This information is now easily accessible to support grant writing. Across the school system, free and reduced lunch percentages are approaching 50%; trends over three years by school are also detailed. For alternative programs, these are October 1 figures, but there will be changes as students move into these programs over the course of the school year. Quincy Public Schools also separately tracks students whose first language not English, whether they receive ELL services or not.

For the Achievement section, the first pages present District Data for MCAS, followed by information from the state's DART tool that compares Quincy vs. state levels for proficiency. The city's averages show that the non-high-needs group is not achieving to the potential level and can be challenged through individualized instruction.

Mrs. Fredrickson reviewed the Indicators section next, highlighting QPS's very low dropout rate (1.8%) and very high graduation rate (89.7%). For high risk referrals (incidents/interventions that involve safety), over half were high school students. For homeless students, the population of unaccompanied youth seems to be growing. Enrollment stability is improving and teacher turnover is very low at 6%.

Mrs. Fredrickson then presented an addendum to the Annual System Profile and Progress Report to show comparisons to Urban and High Incidence ELL Districts, specifically the Gateway Cities that we are compared to when competing for funding and grants. Quincy is near the top in most categories, with the exception of students with disabilities. Grade 10 is at often at the top. For graduation rates, Quincy is second only to Leominster in the state. Mrs. Lebo asked about what kind of a goal would be written around this data, maybe something focused on students with disabilities? Mrs. Fredrickson noted the goals for middle school math and foundational skills at the lower grade levels that are part of the Special Education Program Improvement Plan.

Mrs. Roberts said that the Conditions of Effective Schools are part of the district's goals, along with the implementation of the Common Core. Mrs. Lebo would like to see the district's goals based on data, collected from school and program improvement plans. Mrs. Lebo asked about including SAT scores and AP scores; the data is not yet available. Mrs. Lebo also asked about the district PPI that was part of the fall presentation; this will be added to the Annual System Profile and Progress Report. Ms. Isola noted that this report is a good reference tool to have when reviewing the School Improvement Plans. Mrs. Fredrickson explained that some of this data is not yet public, so it is highly confidential material.

Dr. DeCristofaro asked Mrs. Lebo for clarification on how many goals should be stated for the district. These goals need to be specific, perhaps citing the four areas of the Conditions for School Effectiveness that QPS is concentrating on. Mrs. Lebo said that it is a matter of quantifying what we are already doing. Dr. DeCristofaro and Mrs. Lebo thanked Mrs. Fredrickson and Mrs. Papile for their work, this is an impressive document.

The next item on the agenda was **Graduation Requirements**, specifically considering adding a fourth year of Math. Most of the neighboring cities and towns require four years of English, but other requirements vary, including Math, Science, and Social Studies ranging from two years to four years. Mass Core, the new state recommendations, suggest four years of Math. State colleges and universities are going to expect this beginning with the class of 2016. Quincy Public Schools currently requires four years of English and Social Studies; three years of Math and Science, and two years of Foreign Language. Currently, 95.6% of Quincy High School students take four years of Math, as do 96.2% at North Quincy High School. Mr. Santoro said that the course offerings do not reflect the range of student interests. An advanced senior student only can take Calculus, for example. At the High School POS meetings, decisions are being made about course offerings for coming years and the Math courses will be Algebra, Geometry, Algebra II for Grades 9, 10, 11, respectively. Mrs. Skinner said that there is a low incidence of seniors failing Math, if we make it a requirement, it may affect the graduation rate. Ms. Isola

asked if students who take Algebra in Grade 8 could be credited, since they begin Geometry in Grade 9. Mrs. Lebo said that MassCore states that four courses will be required, including during their senior year of high school and this could eventually move from being a recommendation to being a state law.

Mrs. Roberts said that Common Core will also impact these classes, especially the AP classes at Central where they are compacting the Grade 7 and 8 standards in Grade 7 in order to get to Algebra I for Grade 8. This is going to be a process, as students currently entering elementary school will be taught under the Common Core standards and will be prepared for the rigorous courses in high school. Mr. Bregoli lamented the added requirements that detract from students' opportunities to take electives in their areas of interests. Mrs. Lebo said we have to be thoughtful to be sure that students have enough credits to meet the requirements of the state higher education system. Ms. Isola said that the guidance departments do an admirable job preparing students for the requirements that colleges and universities have; one of QPS's strengths is guiding students to take the courses they need to attend the college of their choice.

Mr. McCarthy spoke of absorbing the changes required by the Common Core and MassCore and looking at the course offerings. He acknowledged that the guidance department does a phenomenal job guiding; our students are competing with private school students who are not held to the same curriculum and performance standards. Mr. McCarthy suggested that the HS POS team continue to work together to assess the course offerings. Mr. Bregoli said that since we want to have the best course offerings to keep the best students in QPS. Mrs. Skinner asked if there is a way to give students credit for Algebra I in Grade 8 on their high school transcripts. Mrs. Roberts is not sure that many students will be able to take the new Algebra I at Grade 8 anymore, but the evaluation of this issue is ongoing.

Dr. DeCristofaro said he is leaning towards requiring the fourth year of mathematics, but adding courses so there are different options for students. He doesn't want to detract from the electives already offered and that is the challenge. Mr. Shaw agrees that a fourth year of math is a good idea, with additional course choices. If there is a four-year requirement, there is going to have to be more depth at the middle school levels to prepare students for the higher level Math required by the Common Core. Mr. Bregoli asked if this change would cause us to lose positions at the high school levels if there were fewer electives. Mr. Santoro said there would be a tradeoff in positions, more certified Math teachers would be required. Being a Math teacher, Mr. Santoro is in favor of the idea.

Mrs. Lebo said that there is a discrepancy between MassCore and the state college system requirements; the college requirements are less rigid than MassCore. Both Mrs. Skinner and

Mrs. McGeady don't think adding a fourth year of Math would be an issue. Mr. Shaw said the bigger issue is failure to pass Algebra I in Grade 9, the student is immediately behind. Mr. Santoro agreed, there are students who fail Math in Grade 8 and struggle in Grade 9.

Dr. DeCristofaro suggested that we continue the discussion and Mrs. Lebo agreed. QPS offers the courses that allow our students to get into any college or university, it is a matter of guidance. The more rigid our requirements become, the less holistic our students are. Ms. Isola asked for clarification on the Math figures presented and the current course specifics; how many students take four years of pure Math. Mrs. Skinner noted that students take some of the less rigorous math courses because there are no other options. Seniors sometimes have to take an additional core subject since the elective offerings are narrow.

All agreed the topic, including the Physical Education Requirement, would be tabled until a later meeting. Mrs. Lebo requested the Math POS Pathways Information be shared with the School Committee.

The last item on the agenda was a **School Improvement Plan Update**. Mrs. Roberts presented the revised goals for the Lincoln Hancock Community School for 2012-2013.

- (1) By the Spring of 2013, the percent of students who score in the Advanced category on the 2013 English Language Arts MCAS Test will increase by 2% from the 2012 MCAS Test.
- (2) By the Spring of 2013, the percent of students who score in the Advanced category of the 2013 MCAS Mathematics test will increase by 5%.

Ms. Isola made a motion to approve the Lincoln Hancock Community School Improvement Plan. Mrs. Hubley seconded the motion and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.

Ms. Isola made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 pm. Mrs. Hubley seconded the motion and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.