

School Improvement Council
Minutes
November 19, 2008

Attendees:

Linda Weene, Principal
Terry Stewart, Assistant Principal
Dawn Neborsky, PreK Parent
Jen Golden, K parent
Mary Killelea, Grade 1 Parent
Betsy Usherwood, Grade 2 Teacher
Heather Dalton, Guidance Counselor
Ellen Ahern, Librarian
David Gatchell, School Resource Officer, Community Representative

1. The meeting was called to order at 3:45PM. Maureen Gonsalves was absent. Mary Killelea arrived at 3:55PM.
2. Linda informed the Council that the ballots for the election of the open parent representative position would be sent home in backpacks on the following day, Thursday. The election closes on December 2nd.
3. Linda shared the details of the celebration of Placentino's 10th birthday with the Council with special thanks to the honored guests who came: MaryAnn Placentino, Mr. & Mrs. James O'Connell, Superintendent Brad Jackson, Assistant Superintendent Tim Cornely, and the members of the School Committee. These individuals, the Middle School Honors Band, the slide presentation, the Placentino "cheer," and singing "Happy Birthday" in two languages made for a great celebration of our school!!
4. At the November 6th School Committee meeting, Linda and Dave Keim (Miller School Principal) presented a joint review of the MCAS results from last spring. The 3rd graders who took the MCAS last spring are now students at the Miller School, but the work of the Placentino staff impacts the Miller 3rd grade results. Some of the points that Linda presented to the Council were:
 - a. The scores are lower this year than in 2007
 - b. It is important to take the MCAS results and review the results to determine the curriculum areas that may need to be addressed.
 - c. The Open Response questions in English Language Arts and Mathematics are a focus area

Dawn asked how the Open Response questions are reported back to the District. Linda explained that There is a 4 point rubric in English Language Arts and a 2 point rubric in Mathematics that are used to score the Open Response questions. The report back to the District only gives us the final score that each child earned for each question. Dawn also asked if the Stanfords were given throughout Massachusetts. Linda responded that Holliston chooses to give the Stanfords. They are not a statewide test. There was a further clarification that originally Holliston administered the Stanfords in the spring, but the results were returned too late in the year for teachers to fully utilize the information. Several years ago, the District changed the testing timetable to administering the

Stanfords in the fall which enables teachers to have the information about their students by the beginning of December.

5. Linda reviewed the Superintendent's "State of the Schools" presentation from the November 13, 2008 School Committee meeting. This was the first time that this type of presentation was done by the Superintendent. Mr. Jackson focused on our current strengths and the needs that the school system faces to maintain those strengths. One of Mr. Jackson's points was that 85% of Holliston voters turned out for the recent National election; however, only 23% of Holliston voters turned out last spring for the local vote that included the override question for school funding. Mr. Jackson asked, "Which election more directly affects Holliston families?"
6. The minutes of the October 15, 2008 were reviewed and unanimously accepted. Ellen Ahern abstained.
7. Linda advised the Council that the dates for donations to the Food Pantry were included on the monthly school lunch menu. The monthly letter to families advised parents about this change and indicated that the monthly Food Pantry letter would be discontinued. The Council agreed that this was a good decision but asked that the donation level be monitored to ensure that there is not drop-off in the donations without the monthly letter reminder.

Betsy Usherwood shared that she felt we could promote the Food Pantry Day more effectively if we looked at ways to involve the children more directly - competitions month to month on the number of donations in the school, posters, reminding children during the Monday Morning Announcements, etc. All agreed that these were excellent ideas to help assist in increasing the donations to this important support program in town.
8. Copies of the 2008-2009 School Improvement Plan with updates were included in the members folders. A review of the updates followed:
 - a. The November 4, 2008 Professional Day focused on teachers working with the Mathematics and English Language Arts Power Standards. Betsy shared that this day was very helpful as it allowed teachers to work at their grade level and across grade levels. Linda added that the librarians and technology staff worked together on the Technology and Media Standards.
 - b. A review of the Stanford results will include focusing on the area of Spelling given that we are in the second year of implementing the Zaner Blozer Spelling program.
 - c. The enVision Mathematics Program is in it's second year in some Grade 2 classrooms and is being implemented across grades K and 1 this year. We will be able to compare our MCAS results before and after implementing this program beginning this year.
9. Dave Gatchell attended a meeting on the "Safe Routes to School" program." Dave indicated that this program is really tied directly into Physical Education programs. The program focuses on the "5 E's: Education, Enforcement, Encouragement, Engineering, Evaluation." One of the suggestions is for a "walking bus day." On this day, children would be dropped off at a designated distance and wearing clearly designated T-shirts, having adult monitors, and possible a police escort they would walk to school as a group. Other suggestions were to walk during recess and having contest on which class/individual could walk the furthest in a week. Dave indicated that some of the statistics shared at this meeting were:
 - a. In 1969 42% of children walked a mile to school; in 2001, 16% walked a mile to school.
 - b. Due to lack of fitness, children have a shorter life expectancy today than their parents had when they were children.

After one year of participation in the "Safe Routes to School" program, the participating schools/towns will benefit from the program sending their staff to survey the town/schools and provide infrastructure improvements at no cost to the town/schools. Dave will send a packet of information to Linda. He has sent an application to the Superintendent.

10. The review of the updates continued:

- Teachers are reviewing the menus for our "Feasts." Most grades are limiting the menu to fruit and popcorn.
- Heather shared the "Open Circle" format was successfully utilized for discussing the difficult information that we have had to address in classrooms this year. Using the format that children were comfortable with helped many children through difficult conversations.
- Winnie Carey has created a new Placentino website which is much more "user friendly." Linda encouraged all the Council members to visit the website.
- "Going Green" was discussed. Linda shared that all the memos that go into backpacks on Thursday are scanned into the "Backpack Express" that can be found in the Parent section of the District website and can be accessed through the Placentino website. The school is starting to look at options that minimize the amount of paper going home. One suggestion was the "news flash" email that is used in other buildings. Linda explained that we are beginning to gather email addresses from parents to use this method of contact for Placentino also. Ellen shared the difficulties she had last year when she tried to use email for overdue book notices. Often the email addresses are difficult to read and therefore incorrect and are "bounced back" as "undeliverable." Betsy recommended surveying parents at the beginning of the year and having them authorize using email for all notices.

11. Dawn stated that Placentino Reading Night was a wonderful family experience. This was her family's first experience with this activity. She recommended that the notice that goes home include bringing a book for the family to share.

12. Linda explained that the next School Council meeting will be a joint meeting with the Miller School Improvement Council. The goal is to discuss common goals that will strengthen the School Improvement Plans for both schools. Dave suggested that we discuss the "Safe Routes to School" program with the Miller Council.

13. Next steps for the Council will be to develop the 2009-2010 School Improvement Plan. Linda asked the members to think about ideas to include in the new plan. She reminded the Council that the new plan builds on the present plan.

14. The meeting adjourned at 4:50PM. The next meeting is on December 17, 2008 at 3:45PM.