



Date Approved/Released: 11/3/22

Date Approved/Hold: _____

School Committee Chair: _____

School Committee Meeting

October 6, 2022 - 6:00 pm

Town Hall, 2nd Floor Auditorium

Attendance:

Ryan Forsythe, Chair; Larry Murphy; Karen Kast-McBride; Alicia Jordan; Thad King, Superintendent; Angelina Dellasanta, Student Representative

1. Call to order

2. Pledge of Allegiance

R. Forsythe reads audio visual disclosure.

3. Public Comment: None

4. Consent Agenda:

L. Murphy moves to approve the minutes as presented. Seconded by K. Kast-McBride. Vote is unanimous.

R. Forsythe introduces Angelina Dellasanta as new student representative for the Winchendon School Committee. She will bring information back from her school to the school committee as other students have done, and she will be a participating member of the school committee. The position does not afford her the option to vote according to existing bylaws but does afford her the opportunity to bring the perspective of students and her peers to the committee. A. Dellasanta replies that she is very excited to be able to be on the school committee and believes it is important to have student representation.

5. Superintendent's Report:

T. King introduces Dr. Jonathan Landman, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, as well as the school principals, who will present MCAS data from the Spring of 2022. Dr. Landman provides an overview of the data for the district as a whole. He discusses the disruptions in public education that have had a profound impact on students' academic progress. The 2022 MCAS showed mixed results compared to 2021, which showed dramatic drops in student performance over how they had done in 2019. Math scores improved statewide but still remained below the levels they were at in 2019. Language Arts scores declined further. Student writing scores declined statewide, and younger

students had concerning low literacy scores. Chronic absenteeism also increased state wide. R. Forsythe asks for clarification that the data presented is state wide, not Winchendon specific. Dr. Landman confirms that the given data is statewide.

K. Kast-McBride asks for details about the given writing prompts for students during the MCAS and whether they are more significant for students in higher grades. Dr. Landman states that the prompts become progressively more complex as students get older, but they are challenging at every grade level, and they are age appropriate. K. Kast-McBride asks for clarification on how the state is factoring in the change in what students in lower grades experienced with regard to early literacy due to the restrictions from COVID. Dr. Landman explains that this is a large part of why there were big gaps for students in their learning, and that while the 2022 MCAS was very similar to the 2019 MCAS, the experience the students had while taking the tests was very different.

Dr. Landman reviews the data from the chronic absenteeism that the state reported. He follows with the data from Winchendon students, which appears to follow the same trends as the statewide data. R. Forsythe asks whether the calculation is affected by changes in the size of the student population. Dr. Landman states that it is a measure of how we did overall versus what was possible. L. Murphy asks if Dr. Landman would consider the drops significant. Dr. Landman replies that the data is a huge source of concern for people in education, but that the committee will see how the district is improving later in the presentation.

K. Kast-McBride asks whether the reported absences are excused or unexcused. T. King explains that the state does not differentiate, that an absence is missed time from learning regardless of whether or not it is excused. K. Kast-McBride questions whether the district is able to look at the reasons for absences. T. King replies that the district does not always receive that information from families, so creating data as she has requested would be very difficult because the district has to rely on families to provide reasons for absences.

Anne Diaz, Principal of Toy Town Elementary, approaches as presents MCAS data. She explains that there is no data in 2018-2019 for low income, and that is because DESE no longer reports data for the economically disadvantaged students but instead they report for a newly defined low income subgroup. The new subgroup accounts for a broader range of disadvantaged students who are identified through one of the three different sources. This change also impacts the number of high needs students. T. King states that the data matches the state data, which showed a continued decline in ELA, but it was not seen in math. This follows the state component which looked at the number of students meeting and exceeding targets, so Toy Town is following that trend overall. A. Diaz states that there is no student growth percentage because they didn't take the MCAS the year before in third grade. Dr. Landman states that the student growth percentile improved over what it was in the past. A. Diaz states that Toy Town has put in place a lot of intervention support for students in small group instruction to make up for the losses students have had with academic abilities.

L. Murphy summarizes that overall it looks like the district has made progress. A. Diaz agrees and states that it is critical to focus on the individual students and celebrate individual student growth. T. King asks the committee to focus on the student growth

percentage throughout the presentation to see how it has improved.

Mary Jane Rickson, Principal of Murdock High School, approaches to present MCAS data. Despite the huge increase from 2018 to 19 to 21, they have remained steady between 23-25%. The high school did not lose a lot of ground as far as accountability. R. Forsythe asks why there is no data for disabilities. T. King explains that the minimum number of students to meet the threshold is 20, and the high school did not have 20 students to represent a subgroup. M.J. Rickson goes on to describe the improvements in Language Arts scores at the high school. T. King explains that there is no science data because the last time the students took the science MCAS, it was an old test, and this past year was the first time they had taken the new test. The state encouraged the district not to compare the two.

R. Forsythe states that the new math curriculum is exciting and is glad that a new ELA curriculum is coming soon. He thanks M.J. Rickson for discussing the scores with staff, as it is important to show teachers where the gaps are. M.J. Rickson states that the district has star testing as well, so that is another piece of data that is usable to see where the deficiencies are.

Jessica Vezina, Principal of Murdock Middle School, approaches to present MCAS data. She begins by thanking her staff for staying the course with the shift in instructional practices that has taken place over the past years. She also thanks Mr. Murphy for sticking with them and trusting the ability of their staff and their professionalism. She also thanks Superintendent King for the support. The middle school was previously in the lowest 10th percentile in the state, and with the 2022 MCAS, moved up to the 23rd percentile. T. King explains that Winchendon is a turnaround district, and it is that number that makes the difference until you get to 20 year turnaround school. He states that to make a 16 point jump in percentile is amazing, and this means the middle school is no longer a turnaround school. J. Vezina outlines the middle school's subgroups and how they have been able to move up a few points in each of the areas even through a pandemic. Her goal is to reduce the number of students in the "not meeting" category and keep moving them up. Math was a big focus at the middle school, and now they are seeing the addition of technology, engineering and science standards. Intervention made a big difference for the students in math as well as for students with disabilities, which is an area that still needs to close the gaps.

K. Kast-McBride, R. Forsythe and L. Murphy give congratulations to J. Vezina and the middle school staff for all their hard work and dedication. L. Murphy asks for clarification on the turnaround plan. T. King states that once a school passes the 20% mark and leaves turnaround status, they traditionally lose the government financial support. However, this year, because of COVID, the state decided to continue to support the middle school financially. It is suggested that the MCAS presentation be put on the district website. J. Landman agrees to do so.

Discussion is had regarding the use of special education data when there are not enough students to form a cohort or a subgroup. K. Kast-McBride expresses concern about moving special needs students forward. M.J. Rickson states that all students matter. J. Vezina states that the committee is welcome to come and view the way the district breaks

down the data, all the way down to the individual student.

T. King reminds the committee that they are celebrating tonight, as two out of three schools are no longer in turnaround. He thanks the principals and Dr. Landman for presenting and is proud of the district's accomplishments. R. Forsythe echoes the sentiments and again congratulates the principals on their accomplishments.

6. New Business:

a. Technology Recycling:

T. King states that the district has equipment to dispose of and asks for the committee's approval for proper disposal. L. Murphy moves to approve the recycling of the outdated and damaged electronics as presented. Seconded by K. Kast-McBride. Vote is unanimous.

b. Student School Committee Member Discussion:

A. Dellasanta gives update on events and information within the district, including the return of Blue Devil Weekly. Seniors will be taking the LSAT and PSAT on Wednesday, October 12. Seniors will be visiting WSU for a campus tour on October 14. Butter braids will be available for purchase October 17-27. Homecoming week is October 17-22. Saturday, October 22 is the homecoming semiformal. Haunted hallways will take place October 27 at MHS. The elementary PTO is sponsoring a Monster Ball on October 28 at Toy Town Elementary. Varsity cross country competes on October 8, and varsity cheer competes on October 16.

7. Old Business

a. Subcommittee Definitions/Charges:

Subcommittee definitions have been created for Policy, Collective Bargaining, Communications, Finance, Curriculum, Calendar Subcommittees and the Monty Tech Representative. Several committee members did not have time to view the new definitions. The Wellness, Capital Planning, Sick Bank, Town Audit Subcommittees and CAPS/Keystone Representative have not been completed. L. Murphy moves to accept the subcommittee definitions as discussed and shared on the Google doc, minus the ones that haven't been completed yet. Seconded by A. Jordan. Roll Call vote: A. Jordan - Y; K. Kast-McBride - N; L. Murphy - Y; Chair - Y. Vote passes with 3-1 vote. A. Jordan asks whether the chair still wants her to contribute to certain committees. R. Forsythe states the assignments were really because some were more knowledgeable on those subcommittees, and if she feels she has knowledge to contribute, go right ahead.

8. Future Agenda Items:

Future Agenda items are as follows:

- a. Star Renaissance Update
- b. Questions/Comments regarding MASS/MASC Conference

9. Executive Session:

L. Murphy moves to enter Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining and return to Open Session. Seconded by K. Kast-McBride.

10. AFSCME Council 93, AFL-CIO Agreement:

Committee returns to Open Session. K. Kast-McBride moves to approve the Agreement between the Winchendon School Committee and the AFSCME Council 93, Local 1717 AFL-CIO Custodial Workers Union as presented. Seconded by L. Murphy. Vote is unanimous.

11. Closing Comments:

L. Murphy congratulates the schools, especially the middle school on their progress. He thanks Greg Vine and the negotiating team for the custodial staff on working together to come to a productive agreement.

K. Kast-McBride echoes L. Murphy's comments.

A. Jordan recognizes the growth that all the schools have shown through the MCAS.

R. Forsythe welcomes A. Dellasanta and congratulates the superintendent, principals, teachers, students and families on the improvements they've made and on bringing a school completely out of turnaround status. He thanks Larry and Greg for wrapping up a long contract negotiation process. He also reminds members of the Master Plan Implementation Process.

12. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn by A. Jordan. Seconded by K. Kast-McBride. Vote is unanimous. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted: *Liz Latoria*
Liz Latoria, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

Documents Attached: None