

**Danvers School Committee
Special Meeting Minutes
January 7, 2016, 7:00 p.m.
Danvers High School Superintendent's Conference Room**

In attendance: Eric Crane, Chair
Jeff Kay
Connie Pawlak
Arthur Skarmeas
David Thomson, Secretary
Michael Gilbert, MASC
Superintendent Lisa Dana
Asst. Superintendent, Susan Ambrozavitch
Business Manager, Keith Taverna
Clerk, Eileen Davarich

- Mr. Crane called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.
- Mr. Crane began the meeting by stating its purpose – to identify student success measures. He noted that the committee members had varied opinions.
- The group viewed the DPS “Making the Grade” video produced by DCAT.
- Mr. Gilbert presented “The Data Made Me Do It” PowerPoint presentation to the group.
 - Issue is the way data is presented
 - “How do we use data for continuous improvement in schools?”
 - Center for Public Education identifies four of the eight traits of effective school boards as dealing with data
 - Data informs actions aimed at improving performance
 - “When you examine the data, ask guiding questions”
 - Mr. Gilbert spoke about the importance of using colors, distribution models and pictures in data presentations
 - Guiding questions – How are we doing compared to local, state and national; trends over time; proficiency, progress, productivity?
 - Beware of averages
 - Disaggregate the data for easy comparison across groups
 - Data-Decision making cycle regarding data provides an opportunity to learn and include
 - Getting a baseline
 - Resource alignment
 - Examining programs and practices
 - Assessing student outcomes
 - Student outcome measures include
 - State assessments; AYP status
 - Standardized tests of achievement
 - College readiness – SAT, ACT, etc.
 - Final exam grades
 - Course completion; drop out rate; graduation rate
 - Post secondary attendance rates

- Post secondary retention rates
 - Post secondary remediation
- Mr. Thomson asked if data on student grades from colleges and universities was available for DHS graduates.
- Mr. Gilbert noted that yes, aggregate data is available. Some data available would include on-time graduation, remediation necessary?
- Is surveying graduates a possibility?
- Mr. Gilbert warned about being careful when measuring where students actually go to college as some may not be able to attend their “reach” schools due to economic difficulties.
- Vocational schools track students for 5 years after graduation for careers, post-secondary education or military service
- Qualitative vs. quantitative data – Some communities put much more weight on qualitative data
- Mr. Kay expressed that there is a big disconnect between individual grades and standardized testing grades. “Analyze data with causality.” “What are the root causes of why a student is not maximizing his/her potential?”
- Mr. Gilbert stated that testing data is a “snapshot” in time. Data trends over time provide more information on student potential.
- Can we compare students with a consistent DPS education vs. new students coming into the district?
- Mr. Gilbert stressed not looking at the district as a whole – identify those students (demographic group) that would benefit from changes in programs, times, curriculum, etc.
- Mrs. Pawlak asked “what can we do to be better”? She wants to see more growth in student success.
- Mr. Skarmeeas said that “teaching to the test” improves scores, and that is the problem with standardized tests – “counterproductive”.
- Mrs. Pawlak argued that test data provides important information
- Mr. Gilbert stated that “teachers are not teaching to the test – they are teaching a set of standards and that outcomes are blown out of proportion by the media, public, etc. School committees should use consistent sets of data to measure student progress.”
- Mr. Crane emphasized the environmental factors DO matter as evident in town-to-town comparisons, economic advantages, college-educated parents, etc.
- Mrs. Ambrozavitch suggested “working backwards”. Start with seniors and investigate what made them successful or not...their MCAS scores, what elementary school they attended, etc. to find out what was missing? Where do we allocate resources going forward?
- Dr. Dana said that the district always goes back to the vision statement when presenting student information to the community. The vision shows in the DPS “making the grade” video. Qualitative data would include the values that have been instilled in DPS graduates.
- Mr. Gilbert recapped the discussion –
 - “Where are we and where do we want to go?”
 - “What growth over what period of time?”
 - Smart goals are more easily measured and shown

- Work backwards to build progress from Kindergarten up
- Mr. Crane said that parents want data to measure
- Mr. Gilbert suggested ways of presenting data more effectively
 - What does the community want to see?
 - How do we control the presentations?
 - What communities do we compare ourselves to?
 - “If you don’t give the community a baseline, they will make their own comparisons.”
- Mr. Skarmeeas said he liked the Brookline “Strategic Plan Report Card” provided by Mr. Gilbert, as a self-assessment tool for the district.
- Mr. Thomson noted the favorable feedback on the district that comes out of the Perspectives surveys and that he hears very few concerns from parents regarding MCAS scores.
- What do we tell the community about the data we use to measure success?
 - Quantitative – MCAS, report cards, DIBELS, etc.
 - Qualitative – Scholarships, colleges and universities attended, etc.
- Mr. Crane also stated that he hears very few concerns from parents/community.
- Mr. Skarmeeas and Mr. Thomson both said that they would be very interested in seeing post secondary data.
- Dr. Dana reiterated that we should refer back to the vision statement to measure success. Mr. Skarmeeas asked how that would be presented.
- Mr. Crane expressed his satisfaction with the leadership team and the direction the district is going.
- Mr. Skarmeeas said that he felt that the district was doing much better “presenting the positives” to the community over the past few years.
- Mr. Gilbert warned not to just “cheerlead” – must also present areas needing improvement to the community
- Mr. Kay inquired about what we measure, how do we communicate the data to the community and what is the plan for presenting MCAS and PARCC results
- Mr. Gilbert advised that “defining success flows from the strategic plan and the vision statement. Success should be a validation of the vision.” He also advised not to “hyper focus” on test scores – look at growth data instead; explain data to the community; focus on improvement, not comparisons to other districts
- Dr. Dana asked the committee what information they would like to see? What data do they feel is important? Leadership team needs to know from the community what their expectations are. What is the district not doing in their eyes?
- Mr. Crane suggested another MASC workshop in a couple of months to continue the conversation.
- Mr. Thomson requested a list of assessments being used from administrators
- The committee agreed to another workshop. Date to be determined
- Mr. Kay moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m. Mr. Thomson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.