

Salem School Committee
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes
Monday, April 22, 2019

A Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting of the Salem School Committee was held on Monday, April 22, 2019 at 5:39 p.m. in the IMC Classroom at Collins Middle School, 29 Highland Avenue, Salem, MA.

Members Present: Ms. Mary Manning, Mr. James Fleming, Ms. Kristine Wilson, Ms. Ana Nuncio, Mr. Manny Cruz, Ms. Amanda Campbell, and Mayor Kimberley Driscoll

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Kate Carbone, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Jill Conrad, Chief of Systems Strategy, Kristin Shaver, Business Manager, and Kelley Rice, Chief of Communications

Call to Order

Mayor Driscoll called the School Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting to order at 5:39 p.m. Ms. Driscoll explained that the purpose of this meeting is to review and discuss the process that was used to transfer former Nathaniel Bowditch School students and families to new schools and to gain an understanding of the progress that students are making thus far.

Review and discuss results of interviews with former Nathaniel Bowditch School (NBS) students and families

Dr. Conrad, Chief of Systems Strategy, provided the School Committee with an update on the information. Dr. Conrad expressed that the report this evening is an update on the progress they made in terms of gathering initial qualitative information to provide some indication as to how students and their families have experienced the transition and welcoming process in the first few months of school. Dr. Conrad continued that they would be providing the School Committee with an overview of additional indicators they will be looking at when the data is available. Dr. Conrad explained that the first part of the presentation report consists of the information they gathered and the second part of the presentation report outlines indicators for the future. Dr. Conrad introduced Ellen Wingard, Supervisor of City Connect, who oversees the Family Engagement Facilitators, and helped coordinate the interview process in support of school staff who did the interviews. Dr. Conrad walked members through the presentation.

Dr. Conrad explained the methodology that was used to identify a stratified random sample from the population of former NBS students, which was done in an effort to ensure a level of representativeness for those who were interviewed. A summary of the limitations of the data was also provided. A total of 99 people were interviewed (56 students and 43 family members). Dr. Conrad then walked members through the report and presentation. Based on the qualitative data collected from both student and parent interviews, while the former NBS families were initially worried about the transition, many shared that they like and feel welcome in their new schools. Additional details from the findings were also shared.

Discussions

In response to Ms. Manning and Mayor Driscoll's questions, Dr. Conrad provided the number of students reassigned and enrolled in February, when the sample was performed, interviews with students were one-on-one and family interviews were done by telephone with some being in person. Staff members were bilingual and provided translation, where needed. Dr. Conrad explained that questions provided prompts, from which to choose from, and some students elaborated. Ms. Wingard echoed Dr. Conrad and added that the option for further comments was provided at the end. Ms. Nuncio read some of the feedback received by some parents who expressed need for further interaction and involvement. Members engaged in discussion on the topic of using formative assessments as indicators of student progress, School Committee members expressed an interest in seeing these results. Dr. Conrad explained that while school and district staff members use those results regularly, using them in a public report is not an appropriate use of that data – as they are teacher-driven and their primary purpose is to inform instruction in the classroom. Dr. Conrad continued that publicizing the results allows them to become “high stake” assessments and would violate the district's commitment to ensuring that teachers have reliable formative data they can use to

improve student learning. Members continued to express interest in identifying some form of data that would give them a sense of progress earlier than the MCAS data release in the fall.

Members agreed they would like to be informed of the areas in which they need to be supporting their students, as they want to be as proactive as possible without compromising the integrity of the formative assessment process. Ms. Campbell mentioned that there might be some way to use the standards based report cards that are already in Aspen. Ms. Carbone agreed and added it might help to review the standards-based report cards that show students' progress meeting standards. Ms. Campbell said she wanted to ensure that the ACCESS English Proficiency assessment indicator was focused on showing progress and not on overall gain, in terms of making year-to-year comparisons.

Mr. Fleming motioned to suspend the rules to allow members of the audience share their questions and comments. Members seconded and agreed. The motion carried.

Discussion with members of the audience

Fawaz Abusharkh, 4 Harrison Road, asked Dr. Conrad about the data measurement.

Yoleny Ynoa, Salem Parent, was concerned about parents who were not called for the NBS feedback surveys, said that he had not been contacted, and asked if the families who were surveyed were randomly selected. Dr. Conrad responded that they did a stratified random sample of the total population and explained limitations of the data. Mr. Ynoa expressed the percentage of former NBS student and families that are Latino and asked how many of those percentages were surveyed. Dr. Conrad said that a letter was mailed to all parents alerting them to the study and that they might be called.

Alexa Ogno, 180A Federal Street, asked if the report is available in Spanish and if the information would be broken out, at any point, by school. Dr. Conrad responded that the sample sizes, within specific schools, were small. Thus, the findings are not generalizable at the school level. Ms. Ogno expressed the importance of having the results available in a format and language that all NBS parents can access and for other parents who would like to answer the NBS survey questions on their own for accuracy. Ms. Ogno asked if teachers were also surveyed. Mayor Driscoll responded there have been many discussions on how to build cultures within schools to welcome new students. Ms. Ogno talked of attendance and behavior reports at the end of marking periods could serve as performance indicators to how students are doing academically. Members engaged in brief discussion.

Members agreed to work to ensure they are being as inclusive as possible with respect to getting the survey results information out and to the extent that it can get translated. Parents would be informed of the results of their responses. A transition ceremony for former NBS was announced for Thursday, April 25, 2019 from 6-7:20pm.

ALICE Training Update, Answers to Parents' Questions – No discussion on this topic.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee of the Whole (COW) School Committee this evening, Mr. Fleming motioned to rise and report. Mr. Cruz seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by:

Angelica Alayon, Secretary
Salem School Committee

Meeting Materials

Committee of the Whole (COW) School Committee Meeting Agenda
Former NBS Student Report Draft 4/22/19