

DISTRICTWIDE SCHOOL RECONFIGURATION TASK FORCE MINUTES

November 27, 2007

A meeting of the Districtwide School Reconfiguration Task Force was held on Tuesday, November 27, 2007, at 6:30 p.m. in Room 152 of the Crosby Administration Building, 43 Crescent Street, Brockton, MA. A list of members present is attached to this report.

Co-Chair Daley called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. He mentioned an article that recently appeared in The Enterprise regarding the Task Force. The article erroneously stated that the members were appointed by the Superintendent. He mentioned speaking to a newspaper correspondent to keep the public informed on different aspects of the reconfiguration, e.g., possible closing of two schools. He stated that information doesn't always come out the way it was said.

The following items were distributed to members by Co-Chair Buckley:

1. Minutes from the last meeting of November 19, 2007
2. Update on e-mail and telephone addresses
3. Schedule of future meeting dates
4. Attendance sheet to check off names of those present this evening

Mr. Daley would like to receive the minutes before the meeting via e-mail. He asked everyone to take time to read the minutes. There being no corrections, Ms. Milligan moved to accept the **minutes of the November 19 meeting** as presented. The vote was unanimous.

Ms. Buckley asked everyone to look over the proposed **Schedule of Meeting Dates** to see if there were any changes that needed to be made. She asked about combining the December 25 and December 31 meetings. **This schedule will be discussed at the next meeting on December 3, 2007.**

Ms. Buckley stated that they talked last week about providing information on the SPED, Bilingual and Transportation Departments at this meeting. She indicated that Mr. Judge was not available this evening so she substituted enrollment projections from Mr. Suziedelis for the transportation portion.

Mrs. Kay Seale, Director of Special Education, distributed a Draft Report on the SPED Department. This is subject to the approval of the Superintendent and meeting with appropriate administrative personnel and PAC members. It is a working document. She stated that SPED is governed by state and federal regulations and guidelines. The SPED Program has gone through several Compliance Reviews and Mid-Cycle Reviews last year. The DOE has visited the district and had the opportunity to interview principals, parents and staff to make sure that they are providing optimal services to all students. Brockton has done exceptionally well as a district.

Mrs. Kay Seale and Mr. Robert O'Meara, Assistant Director of Special Education, highlisted a Powerpoint Presentation on the SPED Department. Enrollment figures were based on the November 1 enrollment. The following items were discussed:

1. Special Education cannot have programs that are isolated or housed separately. The programs/students must be dispersed throughout the schools not only as far as skill, but the students must also be able to interact with their peers.
2. There are 2,387 special needs students currently attending schools in the district or students who are out of district, and the enrollment is increasing slightly. The state average as a whole is 16.9%. Brockton's average is 14.7%. Most of the schools in the district that fall above the district average have inclusion classes.

3. District inclusion programs provide a cadre of services at various levels. It is through the IEP process that students are assigned based on their individual needs. Elementary and middle school students assigned to inclusion classrooms are capped at 20 students which includes (10) students with identified disabilities and (10) typically developing non-disabled students. The staffing ratios in an inclusion class consist of special needs teacher, monitor teacher assistant and paraprofessional. At the elementary level there are dually-certified special needs teachers at the Angelo, Plouffe and Downey. At the Raymond the inclusion services include co-teaching with a regular and a special education teacher at each grade level (1-6). Given the level of services provided to students with disabilities in inclusive classes, if these services were not available, some of these students would be placed in a more restrictive setting.
4. There is a drastic increase in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Currently there are 109 students with autism as a primary diagnosis and others who have it as a secondary diagnosis
5. A breakdown of data on out-of-district placements and other placement options, City Resource Rooms, Life Skills Programs, Multi-handicapped were discussed.
6. Adjustment programs deal with challenging students, emotionally fragile, behavioral disorders, those who demonstrate self-injurious behaviors, post-traumatic stress disorders, etc.
7. Lincoln Therapeutic Day School services 58 students with emotional disabilities who cannot be serviced in the adjustment programs. If this program were not available, students would have to be sent to a day school outside the district at a cost of \$40,000-\$60,000 per student.
8. Last year there were 140 students in out-of-district placements. In 2006-2007 we spent \$3,221,870 in Private Day and \$1,221,182 in Residential placements. Currently there are 110 students with IEP's for out-of-district placements. We are also billed for students who are placed in schools out-of-district whose parents live in Brockton. The state changed the process of reimbursement of out-of-district students. It is called the Circuit Breaker Law – The first \$33,000 of any placement is the responsibility of the district. Anything over that amount, Brockton is reimbursed at a rate of 72%.

When you look at reconfiguration, consider the following:

- Percentage of special needs students enrolled in schools
- Importance of strands and providing access to students with disabilities
- Assignment of students to their neighborhood schools whenever possible which is very cost effective
- Transportation cost of moving students out of zone
- NJHS- currently has a learning disability program and moderate special needs services; it is the only junior/middle school that does not have any inclusion services. The proposal would be to add (2) Inclusion teachers and (2) MTA's to align NJHS with other programs available for students at the middle school level.
- SJHS- Add a sixth grade inclusion teacher and MTA to provide a continuum of services given the current model of inclusion for students in grade seventh and eighth.
- Providing a continuum of services for students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders given the current strands as well as the need to have transitional planning in place for these students from level to level.
- In review of the disability chart the students with specific learning disabilities are the largest population of students within the district of (34.8%) over 800 students. IEP services for these students can be provided by special needs teachers trained in specialized reading instruction as well as moderate special needs and inclusion teachers given the level of services recommended by the IEP Team
- Proposal for the North Quincy Street School – consideration should be given to provide a continuum of inclusion services for students (K-8). Also, reallocate a Kindergarten position from the Brookfield and move the adjustment inclusion class from WJHS.
- Proposal for the Colonel Bell Drive School – (K-5) Inclusion , reallocate a position and the addition of a Primary City Resource classroom (Grades: 1-3)

- Moderate special needs services should also be provided at both of the new schools to provide co-teaching and/or pullout services
- Technology and UDL design given appropriate technology and accessibility (ramps, elevators, sound field system, wheel chair accessible bathrooms, timeout area etc.

Mr. Suziedelis stated that the SPED Programs undergo a periodic review by the DOE, a Compliance Review every 6 years and a Mid-Cycle Review every 3 years. Brockton passed those reviews with flying colors in most areas. The single biggest problem or issue has been location.

Mrs. Seale stated the advantage of inclusion is the rigor of academic curriculum. It gives the students access and opportunity to be with their peers who are non-disabled. The culture of the school in terms of students mentoring other students is a plus.

Mr. O’Meara stated that **December 3-7, 2008, is National Inclusive School Week.**

Transportation - Mr. Suziedelis stated the following:

1. It costs \$370 per regular education student to take the bus, and we transport 10,000 students.
2. There are two levels of SPED transportation: In-district and Out-of-district
 - a. In-district, 900+ students are transported out of 2300, and it costs between \$3-\$4,000 per student (ten times the cost of regular ed student) It must be written into the student’s IEP.
 - b. Out-of-district runs \$8,000 per student. We transport approximately 100 students.
3. Out of the \$6-\$8M transportation budget – ½ is SPED and the other ½ is regular education. The state promised to reimburse us for 100% of the cost of transportation over 1.5 miles. We don’t get a dime for regular education or SPED transportation even though we are required to provide it.
4. The city is providing approximately \$8M more to the schools to transport youngsters than the School Committee actually has at its disposal.
5. If there are significant cuts or changes in the transportation budget, we may have some students, because of safety reasons, mobility, etc., who are now taking the regular school bus, who may not be able to take it. They may now need specialized transportation. That could be critical, because we don’t get reimbursed.
6. The law provides for transportation reimbursement, but there is a clause that says “subject to appropriation” which means if the state legislature does not fund it, there is no obligation for them to give us the money. It is an extra tax on the city that belongs to the state.

Recess Co-Chair Daley called for a brief recess at 7:55 p.m.

Reconvened Co-Chair Daley reconvened the meeting at 8 p.m.

Mr. Jose M. Pinheiro, Director of Bilingual/ESL Services, and **Ms. Kellie M. Jones**, Department Head of Bilingual/ESL Services, K-8, highlighted a powerpoint presentation on the **Bilingual Program**. They distributed a handout on the services provided by the program. The following points were discussed:

1. There are a total of 2,624 ELL (English Language Learners) students in the program in the Brockton Public Schools. The breakdown is as follows:

Kindergarten	357
Elementary (grades 1-6)	1,247
JHS (grades 7-8)	222
High School (grades 9-12)	540
FLEP – all levels	258 (Formerly Limited English Proficient)

2. Distribution of ELLs by language:
 - 1,253 Cape Verdean students (city wide – largest ethnic group)
 - 510 Haitian students
 - 140 Portuguese
 - 510 Spanish
 - 209 Low-incidence languages (Chinese, Vietnamese, etc.)
3. Two-Way Language Program
4. Instructional Programs for ELLS
5. Structured English Immersion (SEI) (teachers need to be trained in four specific areas prescribed by the DOE in order to be able to teach in that setting)
6. Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)
7. Location of Self-contained Programs by zones
8. Pros and Cons of Current Distribution of SEI in Self-contained Classes
9. Location of SEI/TBE Programs for LEP (Limited English Proficient) Students
10. Pros and Cons for having LEP students in one junior high school

Students spend an average of 2.7 years in the Bilingual Program. There are self-contained and integrated classes. When students acquire enough English skills, they are placed in integrated classes which are regular education classes with teachers trained in the four areas. Some students in the mainstream may be classified as limited English Proficient Students. Each student has to pass the MCAS and has to score at the “transitioning” level of proficiency on a test given by the state called MEPA in order to be reclassified. After students are reclassified, they are monitored for two years.

When you look at **reconfiguration**, consider the following:

1. Opportunity for LEP students to receive support services in guidance and counseling in native language
2. Providing facilities, materials and services comparable to the overall student population
3. Providing SPED services to LEP students in their native language if needed
4. Providing parents of LEP students with translation services and an opportunity to participate in decision making on their children’s education
5. Reducing the number of moves of LEP students
6. Allowing full strand of SEI classes in one school, rather than small groups in multiple schools
7. Transportation

Ms. Buckley stated that the enrollment projections will be discussed at next week’s meeting.

The meeting **adjourned at 8:30 p.m.**

jh

The following members of the Task Force were present at the **Tuesday, November 27, 2007, meeting:**

James M. Daley	Co-Chair	Mary Milligan	(Ward 5)
Prudence G. Buckley	Co-Chair	Patricia O'Connor	(SPED)
Filomena Cardoso	(Ward 6)	Maribel Soto	(Ward 2)
Michaelle Dimanche-Silva	(Ward 7)	David Brewster	(Middle Teacher)
Andrea Donaruma	(Ward 1)	Christine Crossman	(Elementary Teacher)
Jean Holmes-Kireilis	(TAG)	Terry Starr-Klein	(Middle Principal)
Janet Landerholm	(Ward 4)	Catherine Brine	(Executive Team)
Barbara Lora	(SPED)	John Jerome	(Executive Team)
BEA Representative Susan Anderson		Eligijus Suziedelis	(Executive Team)

Also Present:

Kay Seale, Director of Special Education
Robert O'Meara, Assistant Director of Special Education
Jose Pinheiro, Director of Bilingual/ESL Services
Kellie Jones, Bilingual Department Head (K-8)
Jocelyn Meek, Communications Officer

Absent: Patricia Joyce, School Committee; Barbara Janelli, Angelo School Principal;
Doreen Francio, Ward 3 Rep