

TANTASQUA REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Meeting of Monday, April 7, 2014
Junior High School Library

Mr. Valanzola called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. with members rising to salute the flag.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Brimfield

Dan Valcour

Sturbridge

Michelle Fitzgerald

William Haggerty

Holland

Howard Fife

Brookfield

James Cooke

William Gillmeister

Megan Panek

Beth Tichy

Wales

Edward Boyce

Michael Valanzola

NOT PRESENT

Thaddeus France, Sheila Noyes-Miller (Bm); , Sharron Austin (Bk); Elias Gillen, Larry Mandell (H); James Ehrhard, Gary Galonek, Dr. Susan Waters (S)

ALSO PRESENT

Dr. Erin Nosek, Superintendent; Jeffrey Zanghi, Assistant Superintendent for Learning and Teaching; Deborah Boyd, Associate Superintendent of Finance & Business; Michael Lucas, High School Principal; Mark Wood, Technical Division Director; and audience.

1. Massachusetts DESE - PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) Update

Mr. Valanzola indicated that based on the Committee vote at the last meeting to direct the administration to develop a protocol to allow parents an opt out option from PARCC testing, the following materials and discussions occurred.

- Dr. Nosek received a copy of the letter sent from DESE to the MA Association of Superintendents. The letter stated that the law includes no opt out option provision for parents and therefore participation in the PARCC field test is mandatory and not subject to opting out.
- Dr. Nosek indicated that Attorney Toomey's opinion was in line with the DESE letter.
- Mr. Valanzola indicated he had spoken with the Hamden/Wilbraham district which is allowing parents to not participate in the PARCC field testing with no academic consequence.
- The Worcester schools also have an opt out option.

Motion 14-55:

Mr. Haggerty moved, seconded by Mr. Gillmeister, to direct the Superintendent to send a letter home to parents indicating the following:

- The vote taken by the School Committee (see Motion 14-52)
- The stance of DESE
- There will be no negative consequence for any student whose parents elect the opt out option.

Discussion: There was extensive discussion.

Motion 14-56:

Mr. Cooke moved, seconded Mr. Gillmeister, to amend the original motion by adding a

sentence to the letter going to parents: To learn more about the pros and cons about the Common Core assessment testing, you can view the 30 minute on-line tutorial video regarding these tests (to include the website link).

Discussion:

Some members felt they could not endorse a video which they haven't seen.

There was additional discussion allowed.

VOTE: Voice vote - failed, as declared by the Chair

Discussion continued on the original motion.

Dr. Nosek agreed that the PARCC assessment has not yet been adopted to replace MCAS testing, but she felt that the field testing would provide an opportunity to have input in the overall tests and process. She felt having input was of value.

Mr. Gillmeister indicated that MCAS wasn't broken, and because it is not determined that PARCC will be the assessment test going forward, that field testing places an additional burden on administrators, teachers and students.

Mr. Valanzola provided an opportunity for all members to speak to the matter.

VOTE: All in Favor

2. School Choice

Each year the Committee has taken a vote on School Choice and determined how many students per grade the school would accept. Dr. Nosek indicated that the number has been 22 students per grade level for a number of years. The policy has been to accept the district town's elementary school choice students into 7th grade. The policy also has a provision to accept the siblings of existing school choice students.

Dr. Nosek indicated that looking at the 6th grade school choice students, that the number will exceed the 22 students currently allowed. At this time, Dr. Nosek recommended the School Committee vote to increase the school choice number to 28 for the students entering the 7th grade in school year 2014-15. Dr. Nosek indicated she will conduct a survey of upcoming school choice students from the elementary schools.

Motion 14-57:

Mr. Cooke moved, seconded by Mr. Boyce, to increase the number of school choice students accepted into the 7th grade for school year 2014-15 to twenty-eight (28) students, keeping the number at twenty-two (22) for the other grades.

Discussion:

Current policy provides that the school will accept siblings if there is space.

There are an additional 27 on a waiting list.

VOTE: In Favor (8) Opposed (2)

There was discussion on the DESE requirement to accept the elementary school choice students into the Tantasqua system.

Motion 14 -58:

Mr. Gillmeister moved that the Committee charge the administration to contact legal counsel to pursue challenging DESE's determination that any school choice student attending a member town elementary school district be guaranteed school choice status in Tantasqua School District, a separate, grade 7 to 12 regional school district.

(No 2nd required)

Mr. Valanzola provided an opportunity for all members to speak to the matter.

VOTE: In Favor (9) Abstained (1) - Boyce

3. ADJOURN

Motion 14-59:

Mr. Boyce moved, seconded by Mr. Haggerty, to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m.

VOTE: All in Favor

Respectfully submitted,
Sharron Austin, Secretary

TSRD:pag