

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
MEETING APPROVED MINUTES

Administration Building Auditorium
15 Charter Road, Acton

October 21, 2021
7:00 p.m.

To view the meeting (no participation): <https://www.youtube.com/actontv1>

Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Ben Bloomenthal, Kyra Cook, Ginny Kremer, Amy Krishnamurthy, Adam Klein, Tessa McKinley, John Petersen, Andrew Schwartz, Nora Shine, Yebin Wang
Members Absent: none
Others: Marie Altieri, Deb Bookis, Dawn Bentley, Peter Light, Beth Petr

CALL TO ORDER

The ABRSC was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chairperson Adam Klein.

- a. Chairperson's Welcome - *Adam Klein*
The first community coffee of the year with the Superintendent and School Committee Chair was yesterday with approximately 30 families participating. A parent wanted to recognize how much teachers are helping the kids this year. Adam thanked all of the staff - bus drivers, custodians, groundskeepers, cafeteria and support staff, as well as the teachers for their hard work.
- b. Public Participation - *none*
- c. Superintendent's Update - *Peter Light*
The Update included information on: Job opportunities (An incentive package with increased salary, and referral and retention bonuses is now offered for bus drivers and cafeteria staff because these critical positions are very hard to fill.), the Mascot Screening Subcommittee, COVID Public Health and testing program, and Equity in Special Education.

In response to a question about the DESE finding regarding AB's identification of African American and Black students with communication disabilities, Mr. Light said that the finding was anticipated last spring and it was one reason why implementing a Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS) was important. The system being used to provide support pre referral was not sufficient. More details will be coming from DESE and it will be shared with the Committee during the year.

GUESTS AND PRESENTATIONS

- d. Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) - *SEPAC Co-Chairs: Amanda Bailey, Abraham Gutierrez, Kara Lafferty*
The Co-chairs shared their 2021-2022 priorities. The discussion included:

- Relationship building including their upcoming Listening Sessions for parents/guardians
- Addressing and removing barriers to SEPAC participation and leadership
- Inclusion for students placed in substantially separate programs (least restrictive environment)
- Dyslexia advocacy
- Monitoring families' experiences, including return to school feedback

There was a discussion about meaningful inclusion – do the teachers have special education training in the mainstream classes? What are the major barriers to the least restrictive environments for students? How do we address the needs of each child and not try to mold them to what services we have to offer? Significant professional development was done with staff prior to the pandemic but when schools had to shut down for a year and a half, that momentum was lost. The challenge is that as you learn the skills, you need to practice them especially in a co-teaching environment. Another round of professional learning will be started.

A question was asked if materials for parents are written in a way that most of them can understand and use them. Amanda said that they are not always, but the Federation for Children with Special Needs, and other resources on slide 16 are very helpful.

e. *Assessment Update - Dr. Deborah Bookis*

Deborah Bookis shared an overview of the District's Assessment Plan and discussed preliminary MCAS and iReady assessment data. This information relates to Goal #4: Equitable Opportunities (3.2) and is according to policy IL, "Evaluation of Instructional Programs" with an emphasis on a full picture of each child.

Comments from the Committee included:

- There is a big difference between what happens at the lower grades and the Jr High/High School.
- It's important to look at the disaggregated data and the students who are not passing MCAS. What is being done to help them, especially those with disabilities? How are we addressing these issues? We have offered tutoring and mcas practice. Although the district thinks this was an anomaly, they will be paying attention to it.
- Mr. Light emphasized that this is why the District must keep up with MTSS because it will address our needs. Good assessments are required so teachers can use them to work together to address their students' needs and the disparities we are seeing.
- When MTSS is fully implemented, how will it look? Unlike MCAS, the MTSS data will be actionable. It will provide answers to "what else can we do?" It is what we do with the data that matters. Robust MTSS assessments will reduce the disparities eventually.
- There's an intersection of MTSS, Responsive Classroom, expanding our workforce of color, and the anti-bias training that we are doing that together will work to address these issues. A single strategy will not work.

- A member suggested that more data, such as breaking down the big groups on the iReady slide 10, could be helpful. The current software may not allow this option. It is a valuable screening tool.
- A member stated that the iReady data for grades 1- 8 reflects exactly what is happening in grade 10. It is very concerning that 70% of students with disabilities in reading are one grade level below, as well as the data regarding students of color. Dr. Bookis responded that the SEED training is also very important in this regard. It is not enough to just take a class, it is ongoing work in which the SEED leaders play an essential role.

ONGOING BUSINESS

f. District Goals (Second Read) - **VOTE** - *Peter Light*

Feedback received since the last meeting has been incorporated into the revision. Because students returned having had a variety of experiences, relationships are a very important part of this year's work. The importance of listening to families was also heard and that has been included. The Administration had asked the School Committee to prioritize the goals to help them focus but because there was not a clear consensus, all six goals remain and the Superintendent and his team will do their best. If six goals become too much, an adjustment may be needed or not all will be accomplished.

Ben Bloomenthal moved to approve the District Goals as presented. Amy Krishnamurthy seconded the motion.

John Petersen offered an amendment to add the words "and request that the goals for FY23 be presented to the School Committee no later than the 31st of Aug 2022."

Mr. Light's only hesitancy was that he wanted to talk to the principals about changing the timeline. Adam Klein added that if the next item of business is approved (moving to a 2 year cycle), it would be a big change, in addition to keeping all six of the goals.

John Petersen suggested that the current timing is problematic because we are already half way between the first day of school and the winter holidays. The goals have already been acted upon so the leverage that the School Committee has at this point is small. By presenting the goals earlier, choices can be made. Another member added that the budget decisions made last spring influence the goals.

Kyra Cook seconded John's amendment.

The Superintendent was asked how feasible proposing next year's goals by the end of August would be. Mr. Light wants to look at the entire goal setting process

carefully. While we have always had district goals, they had nothing to do with what was going on in the schools. Goals came out in October, the School Improvement Plans were done in April and May, and they were finalized in June. We probably want to adjust the goal setting cycle. Although he agrees with the intent, he would like to work with the leadership team and do a thorough review. Everything would need to be aligned. It was suggested that this could be a half step toward that process.

Amy Krishnamurthy was hesitant to put a hard stop on August because these are the goals for this year. Ben Bloomenthal agreed so the friendly amendment was not accepted.

The School Committee unanimously,

VOTED: to accept the amendment to the motion, to add the words “and request that the goals for FY23 be presented to the School Committee no later than the 31st of Aug 2022.”

The School Committee unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the District Goals as presented, and request that the goals for FY23 be presented to the School Committee no later than the 31st of August 2022.

g. Annual Superintendent’s Evaluation Process - *Adam Klein*

- i. Proposed 2-year Evaluation Timeline - *Peter Light*
- ii. Possible **VOTE** of Evaluation Cycle

Amy Krishnamurthy moved to set the evaluation cycle for Superintendent Peter Light to two years with the option to return to a one year cycle by a vote of this committee”. Ginny Kremer seconded the motion.

John Petersen offered an amendment but it was rejected.

The School Committee unanimously,

VOTED: to set the evaluation cycle for Superintendent Peter Light to two years with the option to return to a one year cycle by a vote of this committee.

iii. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding Update – *Peter Light*

The Acton Selectboard voted and the ABRSD was given a \$2M pool to use, over 3 years. Members were thanked for their support.

h. Subcommittee and Member Reports

i. Building Committee - *Adam Klein*

1. Recommendation to Approve Change to Membership - **VOTE**

Tessa McKinley moved, John Petersen seconded, and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to approve the retirement of Maria Neyland from the ABRSD School Building Committee with gratitude.

ii. Policy Committee (10/20/21) - *Nora Shine*

Nora reported that the new Service/Therapy Animals policies will be ready for a First Read at the next School Committee meeting.

iii. Mascot Screening Committee - *Peter Light*

Fourteen responses have been received with a deadline on Sunday (10/24/21) for volunteers. This is a student driven process so the High School and Junior High students are already organizing their group. The purpose this School Committee subcommittee is to ensure that the students are doing a thorough process and communication with the community is being done appropriately.

A member of the public spoke asking for a delay so it can be confirmed that the retirement has been a legal process. She stated that many students feel they were not included in the retirement process.

iv. Community Engagement Committee - *Andrew Schwartz*

The group will meet tomorrow for the first time.

v. Legislative Update - *Ginny Kremer*

Representatives Dan Sena and Tammy Gouveia and some of their staff did a zoom with Ginny Kremer, Peter Light and Dave Verdolino regarding All Day Kindergarten. Both state reps have said they will try to find a way to provide state assistance for universal kindergarten.

vi. EDCO Update - *Peter Light*

An important board meeting was held this morning to present members with estimated closing costs. EDCO closed to students at the end of last year but must continue to finish closing details and payment of all debt. At that point, the DESE will allow them to dissolve.

Key points: 1. Retirees from EDCO must be given health insurance. An RFP will be put out to take this task over. 2. A 10 year lease was signed and that must be ended. Negotiations have started. The range of closing costs for AB is expected to be \$75,000 - \$2M. Dave Verdolino added that the District expects to receive \$200,000 in additional medicare funding is helpful. Peter was thanked for his ongoing leadership in EDCO.

i. Consent Agenda - **VOTE** - *Adam Klein*

Because there was an amendment to the minutes, the items were voted separately.

i. Annual Reauthorization of Official JH and HS Organized Activities
Tessa McKinley moved, Kyra Cook seconded and it was unanimously,
VOTED: to reauthorize the official JH and HS organized activities.

ii. Approval of ABRSC Meeting Minutes of 10/7/21

A sentence in the bullets on page 2 was deleted.

Kyra Cook moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously **VOTED**: to approve the amended minutes. Yebin Wang abstained.

- j. Statement of Warrants/Recommendation to Approve – **VOTE**– *Adam Klein*
Tessa McKinley moved, John Petersen seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to approve the warrants. See memo.

FYI - none

The next meeting will be on TUESDAY, November 2 at 7:00 in the auditorium.

ADJOURN

Kyra Cook moved, Ben Bloomenthal seconded and it was unanimously,

VOTED: to adjourn the ABRSC at 9:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents used: see agenda