

Highlights from the School Committee Meeting – attended by Anne Irza-Leggat
Concord, MA 01742
February 9, 2010

Recognitions

Recognitions were presented for several teachers. At Willard to Rachael Morris for organizing Half-Way Day and collecting student donations for Half-Way Day and donations to the Open Table; and to Kristin Saunders for Valentine-making effort, an annual community service project for Emerson Hospital and Minute Man Arc for Human Services. At Alcott to Laura Driscoll for her leadership with the implementation of RTI (Response To Intervention). Ms. Driscoll shared articles with the faculty and helped with scheduling for next year. At Thoreau to Secretaries Maria Schofield and Donna Macone who handle their demanding jobs with a smile on their faces and in a polite and cooperative manner. At the Middle School, Ms. Austin, Social Studies Teacher and Ms. Newhall, Social Studies Teacher, for “Hats for Haiti” campaign which raised \$1,718 that was donated to UNICE; to Mr. Shattuck, Applied Technology Teacher, for the Future City Competition in which CMS Students placed fifth in the competition; and to Ms. Anderson, Strings Instructor, and Mr. Seeley, Music Teacher, for work their continued hard work with band and orchestra demonstrated in the spectacular January concerts.

Alcott 4th & 5th Grade science

Diane Kablik, K-5 Science Coordinator gave a presentation on the Fourth and Fifth grade science program at Alcott. The Science program takes the students from the River to the Sea. Fourth graders participate in a local citizen’s science program called “Head Starting Blandings and other Turtle Species.” Local expert, Dr. Bryan Windmiller, is involved with the process of teaching kids about the turtles and the objective of “head starting” them is to raise them in a safe environment (such as the classroom) with LOTS of food before they are returned to the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge with tracking devices to see how they fare. It has been a success both for students and turtles! The Fifth Grade students learn about environmental science and learn about different types of water habitats, eco systems and the critical role water plays in the environment. The culminating field trip is to Newburyport where they sail on a lobster boat, use a trawling net, test water quality, and search the shore. The 5th grade program will be used in all three elementary schools next year.

Alcott Outdoor Classroom

A brief presentation on the design was given by Dave Fischer and Ms. Joanna Boynton (representing her husband, John Boynton) on this project. The “Alcott Dads” group has worked closely with teachers to design an Outdoor Classroom at Alcott that the PTG will fund and the “Alcott Dads” will largely build. They have shown the plans to John Minty and will not require a permit. The purpose of this classroom is to provide a place for teachers to take their students for outdoor learning and the idea came from a wish list generated by teachers. The structure will be built in the spring of 2010.

Budget

John Flaherty, Deputy Superintendent of Finance & Operations, gave a FY11 Budget Presentation that he had prepared for the next day’s League of Women Voters. Due to the impending snowstorm (HA!) the LOWV Presentation was cancelled but it will also be presented

on February 24 at the Budget Hearings. The focus was largely on the fact that money will be spent this year to Support 21st Century Learning including student learning, technology, and facilities. This will be the 4th year without a request for a town override of Prop. 2 and the budget is proposed for a 0% increase which was achieved through steps taken in the last 5 years. Our SPED costs have gone down due improvements we have made and good luck. It was recognized that the cost savings will not be able to keep us at 0% increase indefinitely.

Donations

Two donations were accepted. The first from Lueders Environmental, Inc. and the second from an anonymous donor who asked that it be specific to Field Trips to assure there would be no charge to families. Diana Rigby pointed out that currently curriculum field trips do not have a fee attached but some thought that was not the case so she is going to check in to that to be sure the policy of no fees is being followed.

Employee Satisfaction Survey 2009-2010

All employee groups (faculty, staff, transportation) are being asked to review and make recommendations by March 1, 2010. The survey will be distributed by March 15, 2010 on Survey Monkey. The basic question is "Would you recommend this as a place to work?" and possibly it will be done every two years.

Thoreau Principal Search

Ms. Rigby thanked many for the help on this search. Out of the six candidates there are two semi finalists one from Acton and one from Lowell (the principal from Carlisle who was being considered has decided to stay in Carlisle). Ms. Rigby will be conducting a site visit to Acton to observe Christine Price and a site visit to Lowell to observe Kelly Clough on February 11, 2010.

Wellness Committee

The Wellness Committee was developed after the Nutrition Coalition gave a presentation at a PTG Meeting. At the Wellness Committee meeting on February 9, 2010 there were representatives from every school site, a representative from the Nutrition Coalition was invited along with a high school student who was unable to attend. The services of a school lunch consultant, Amy Coulter were engaged. Ms. Coulter had done a prior assessment of the school lunch program and suggested that we eliminate trans fats, preservatives, MSG, and pesticides. On the positive side we have one of the highest participation rates for school lunch in the area; we provide more produce than most school lunch programs and we have a good variety. It was recognized that the changes proposed will have to consider the factor of cost. The Wellness Committee will meet once a month from now until June.

School Committee Procedures

Fabian Fondriest, Chair, brought up the question as to why more people do not run for School Committee? He said the answers he had heard were that it took too much time. To encourage more people to get involved he had a few suggestions on how to change their process including possibly starting earlier and combining the two meetings (CPS followed by CCSC) which would free up a night during the month. Also, he suggested trying to more rigidly keep presentations to ten minutes (as they are supposed to be). Jerry Wedge stated that sometimes people need more than ten minutes to do a presentation. Pam Gannon stated that getting to the meetings earlier

could be a challenge especially if there is executive session meeting going on before the regular session which could double the time. Peter Fischelis said he would rather keep the meetings shorter rather than having them go until 11:00 PM.

Mr. Fondriest asked people to think about it and get back to him with thoughts on the subject.