

## REGULAR MEETING OF THE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Tuesday, April 14, 2015

Library, Amherst Regional High School

### IN ATTENDANCE:

Trevor Baptiste, Chair  
Kathleen Traphagen, Vice-Chair  
Dan Robb  
Katherine Appy  
Vira Douangmany Cage  
Phoebe Hazzard  
Sarah Dolvin  
Rick Hood  
Stephen Sullivan  
Miles Olmstead, Student Representative

Maria Geryk, Superintendent  
Mike Morris, Assistant Superintendent  
Sean Mangano, Finance Director  
Faye Brady, Student Services Director  
Mark Jackson, ARHS Principal  
Marisa Mendonsa, ARMS Principal  
Kathryn Mazur, Human Resources Director  
Nick Yaffe, Wildwood Principal  
Lisa Desjarlais, Pelham Principal  
Miki Lee Gromacki, ARHS Assistant Principal  
Bobbie Finnochio, FR Principal  
Marta Guevara, Director of Achievement and Accountability  
Monica Hall, Director of Diversity and Equity  
JoAnn Smith, Student Services Administrator  
Doug Slaughter, Data Analyst  
Derek Shea, Crocker Farm Principal  
Carol Ross, Media and Climate Communications Specialist  
Rhonda Morrison, WW Guidance Counselor  
Naishin Kuo, WW Guidance Counselor

### 1. Welcome 6:04 p.m.

#### a. Call to Order and Agenda Review

Mr. Baptiste called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. and reviewed the agenda. He welcomed Ms. Hazzard and Ms. Douangmany Cage to their first meeting as new members of the School Committee.

#### b. Approve Minutes

Ms. Dolven moved to approve the minutes of March 24, 2015. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was approved with Ms. Traphagen and Mr. Robb abstaining.

### 2. Announcements and Public Comments 6:08 p.m.

#### *DOCUMENT: A Resolution to Keep Holyoke Public Schools in Community Hands*

Malulani Sherlock, parent, asked about the status of the Restorative Justice program in the Amherst schools and ways in which the schools are addressing issues of race, class, gender and homophobia. Ms. Appy announced that Max Page, MTA member of the Legislative Action Committee, has provided a resolution about the situation in Holyoke, which she distributed. The resolution calls on DESE not to place the Holyoke Public Schools in receivership. There will be a meeting on April 27 where parents, teachers and others may provide feedback to DESE. Caridad Martinez requested that the Regional School Committee support the resolution about the Holyoke Schools as a show of support for local control of the public schools in Holyoke. Ms. Traphagen noted that the committee cannot vote on the resolution tonight; however, Ms. Appy noted that Mr. Page said a vote is not required in order to show support.

### 3. New Business 6:18 p.m.

#### a. Regional Transportation

##### *DOCUMENT: Memo to Maria Geryk, Superintendent, from Sean Mangano, Finance Director, regarding Transportation Revolving Fund*

Mr. Mangano briefly explained the benefits of establishing a Regional Transportation Fund, which has been made possible by the state. Mr. Hood moved to establish a Regional Transportation Reimbursement Fund. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

#### b. OPEB Trust Document

##### *DOCUMENTS: Setting up an OPEB Liability Trust Fund by Brian Fox, MHTL; Amherst-Pelham Regional School District Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund Declaration of Trust dated 4-29-13*

Mr. Mangano noted that he distributed a potential OPEB Trust Document for the School Committee's consideration at the March 24<sup>th</sup> meeting. The committee is being asked to approve the document tonight so a Trust Committee can be established at a future meeting. Mr. Geryk explained that the attorney who is working with the district on this matter was not asked to SKYPE into the meeting as originally planned due to time constraints on the agenda, noting

that at least 40 minutes is needed in order to have a sufficient discussion to set up the Trust Committee. Mr. Mangano then answered clarifying questions from the committee regarding the Trust Document. Ms. Appy moved to approve the OPEB Trust Document as presented. Ms. Dolven seconded and discussion followed. Mr. Robb expressed his preference to wait until the attorney can SKYPE into the meeting before taking the vote in case there are additional questions about the document that need to be answered. Ms. Douangmany Cage agreed, noting that if there is no issue with waiting it would make sense to if that is the preference of a member and to allow time for public input. Mr. Baptiste called the vote and the motion was approved by a vote of 6-3 with Mr. Robb and Ms. Douangmany Cage opposed and Mr. Baptiste abstaining.

c. **Discipline Report**

*DOCUMENTS: School Equity Task Force Recommendations Approved February 2015; Discipline Update dated April 14, 2015*

**SETF Recommendation**

Members of the Discipline Disparities and Development (DDD) Subcommittee of the School Equity Task Force provided a Powerpoint presentation outlining their report and recommendations regarding discipline in the Districts. Michael Burkhart presented the historical discipline data from ARHS going back to the 1995-1996 school year, outlining the disparities between the incidents of discipline by race. Jim Helling summarized the subcommittee's research into reasons for the disparities, noting that they believe that unconscious, implicit bias is to blame. He noted that such implicit bias is structured in our social systems and present in our actions culturally. Caridad Martinez outlined the recommendations of the DDD Subcommittee which are to:

- Administer disciplinary and other related actions taken by ARPS staff at all levels in a manner that systematically accounts for the fact of implicit bias;
- Show comparability of disciplinary actions and demographic proportionality of action in order to show equity in disciplinary action;
- Inform and involve families in instances of conduct concerns or when a pattern of conduct calling for disciplinary action emerges; and
- Provide access to a grievance process to address perceived unfair treatment of a student by other student(s), faculty, staff or administrators.

Mr. Hood said that he believes the recommendations are great. He noted that his concerns are how to affect change to implicit bias and how to measure improvement in implicit bias. Ms. Martinez noted that Educators Handbook, which is used by the District, would be an effective tool in collecting and measuring implicit bias. Mr. Burkhart said that PBIS is also a good tool for this work. He spoke about using PBIS to identify white teachers who are effective with students of color and have them share their methods with colleagues. Ms. Douangmany Cage reported that the Culture, Climate and Community (CCC) Subcommittee is also working on recommendations for bringing the community into the process to share experiences in the schools. Ms. Martinez noted that schools need to intentionally recruit and develop systems to retain teachers of color. Mr. Robb said that there does seem to be overlap between the recommendations of the DDD Subcommittee and the work of the CCC Subcommittee. Mr. Baptiste noted that one of the best ways of staving off implicit bias is through interaction and relationships, using the example of the Tuskegee Airmen. He said that tighter community links will be important to decreasing implicit bias. Ms. Douangmany Cage said that it would be good to have Rachel Bowen, Chair of the DESE Racial Imbalance Committee, come to speak to the School Committee. Ms. Geryk agreed. Mr. Robb agreed that dialogues and opportunities to meet together are important to decreasing implicit bias. Ms. Martinez noted that Participatory Data Research provides great detail about what implicit bias looks like in the lives of participants. Ms. Traphagen thanked the DDD members for their work and the excellent presentation. Ms. Geryk asked if the DDD can provide a copy of the Powerpoint presentation and if they will participate in a follow-up meeting with district administrators, both of which they agreed to do.

**District Update**

Ms. Geryk noted that the district has been focusing on climate within classrooms and the whole school, a tiered-instructional model and use of data to monitor actions. She said that she wants to state to the community that we are committed to the ongoing improvement of our schools. She provided an introduction to the discipline update Powerpoint that would be presented and recognized experts who have supported the work of the district, including Michael Burkhart, Chris Overtree, Sara Fefer, Sarah Whitcomb, Rossi Ray-Taylor, Pat Romney, Paul Wiley, Marianna Cruz and Barry Brooks. Dr. Faye Brady outlined the infrastructure design that utilizes a data-driven framework to promote systems to support positive school climate. Dr. Chris Overtree, UMass consultant, noted that the report of the DDD Subcommittee is very much in line with what is already in use in the district. He agreed that Educators Handbook is a powerful tool that can be used to do deep analysis of discipline disparity on a

regular basis. Dr. Overtree provided an overview of the ways in which discipline data is being analyzed on a weekly and monthly basis. Monica Hall provided an overview of what an after action review is and the ways in which it is used to look at discipline disparities. Ms. Geryk introduced Nick Yaffe, Naishin Kuo and Rhonda Morrison from Wildwood who provided information about PBIS at Wildwood. Ms. Kuo and Ms. Morrison gave an overview of the Tier 1 Universal Interventions and Tier 2 Secondary Interventions, including Check In/Check Out (CICO), which is a research-based intervention where students are coached daily by an adult mentor. Ms. Douangmany Cage asked how many students are referred to CICO. Ms. Kuo noted that there are currently eight students at Wildwood. Ms. Douangmany Cage expressed concern that the level of surveillance and tracking of students in the CICO program may lead to greater recording of incidents since the student is being watched more closely, as well as concern about any stigma attached to being pulled out for this system, comparing it to checking in with a probation officer. Ms. Morrison noted that students must want and choose to participate in CICO, noting that she finds many students want to do it because they enjoy working with the mentors. CICO is meant to be short-term and participants tend to be out of class less than they were due to behavior issues. Ms. Kuo noted that the check-in time is 2 minutes at the beginning of the day and 2 minutes at the end of the day. She said the morning check in is a chance for the mentor to take the temperature of the student's mindset, and mentors contact her right away if the student may need support through the day. Ms. Kuo said that the monitoring of the data is to help the staff problem solve in order to help the students learn the skills necessary to be successful in school. Mr. Baptiste asked how students graduate from CICO. Ms. Kuo explained how the monitoring gradually decreases as student behavior improves, noting that students often choose to continue to meet with their mentors once they graduate. Ms. Traphagen stated that the district work does intertwine well with the recommendations of the DDD Subcommittee and expressed optimism that we have the tools, the intent and are ready to move forward with improving the discipline data on the charts. She noted that she would like to see follow-up as we move forward on how defiance is defined, who defines it and how it is addressed. Mr. Yaffe noted that the word "defiant" in the category does not really adequately describe the behavior or the complexity and depth of the response. Mr. Robb noted that he hopes parents will be included in this work. Ms. Kuo said that parent input, involvement and communication is key throughout this process. Ms. Geryk noted that it would be beneficial to have a discussion of the social-emotional component of Tier 1 and Tier 2 at a future meeting in order to give a broader context. Sarah Whitcomb, UMass, noted that at Tier 1 and Tier 2 the key component is for adults to find ways to develop more positive contact with children, including analyzing our own interactions to determine the impact. Dr. Brady provided an update on Restorative Practices in the district in answer to Ms. Sherlock's question during public comment. She noted that Restorative Practices can be used to provide an opportunity to restore relationships to enable students to feel safe, as well as to help people move forward working together. Dr. Brady explained that, after exploration, the district will be working with the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP). IIRP will be providing a two-day training for a group of personnel this spring, followed up with a three-day "train the trainers" workshop which will end with an implementation plan to start in the next school year. Marylou Ferro, parent, asked how many of the students in the CICO program at Wildwood are white. Mr. Baptiste noted that a group of eight is so small that that level of detail cannot be shared. Ms. Douangmany Cage noted the importance of words and encouraged us to be cognizant of the terminology used in the Codes of Conduct which is sometimes reflective of prison terminology.

#### **d. MSAN Student Presentation**

Dr. Guevara introduced the MSAN Scholars in attendance which included Julianna Bowen, Claudia Marinero, Isiaiah Meade, and Noreen Swan. Ms. Swan presented a Powerpoint presentation of their trip to the MSAN Student Conference in Michigan, noting that other MSAN students not in attendance tonight are Yasin Cruz, Diego Dominguez, Olivier Ndikumana, and Shekenah Rocke. Ms. Marinero provided an outline of the action plan the students developed at the conference which includes Dialogue Days. Mr. Hood asked if any of the dialogues have happened yet in advisory. Ms. Swan reported that the snow days have impacted the planned schedule so they have not happened yet. Mr. Robb noted that the Policy Subcommittee will be looking at policy language from the CCC Subcommittee, and he would love to have student voices at the meeting as the policy proposal is discussed. Ms. Traphagen asked how the School Committee can help the students achieve their action plan. Ms. Swan explained that they have worked with Mr. Jackson to find time for a dialogue day and dialogues in advisories. A dialogue day is now scheduled. Ms. Douangmany Cage asked if any of the MSAN students have given consideration to working with various groups such as the SETF and the School Committee. Ms. Geryk noted that there is a Student Advisory Committee which meets with School Committee members each month. Ms. Custard stated that there is a very strong leadership body at ARHS; however, it is very difficult for them to add any more meetings because they are always multi-tasking. She said the primary goal is for them to be high-achieving students. Mr. Hood said that the Student Advisory Committee has been very beneficial this year, and he hopes to keep it going. Ms. Dolven noted that the School Committee is offering an open door to the

students share their thoughts at any time. Ms. Appy thanked the students and their advisors, Mary Custard and Shari Abbott.

There was a two-minute recess and the meeting was called back to order at 8:31 p.m.

**e. Presentation of Memo for Consideration**

**DOCUMENT: Memo to the Regional School Committee from Maria Geryk; Memo to Maria Geryk from Kathryn Mazur re: HS/MS Possible Merge**

Ms. Geryk noted that this memo is the beginning of a conversation about the possibility of exploring building capacity due to gaps in the budget and declining enrollments. She explained that the request is for the School Committee to formally endorse creation of task forces to explore the possibility of having grades 7-12 in one building and possible expansion of programming in our district. Ms. Geryk reported that she has met with the President of Greenfield Community College who is very interested in partnering with the Amherst District to offer dual enrollment classes on site in Amherst. Ms. Douangmany Cage noted that she is excited to explore and asked if South East Campus can be part of the exploration. Ms. Geryk said it absolutely can and should be. Ms. Dolven noted that she supports exploring expansion of programming because of the recent conversations about the amount of money going from the district to vocational schools and the reality that the four-year liberal arts college paradigm is not accessible for everyone. Ms. Geryk agreed, stating that this is a time of innovation in public education, and there are some very exciting opportunities for our students. Ms. Appy said the GCC possibility is exciting, noting that providing students with that kind of access to college courses in the building would be incredible. Ms. Hazzard asked if language immersion possibilities would be part of the conversation. Ms. Geryk noted that this would be an opportunity for community discussion of what we envision for our schools so it could be. Mr. Morris noted that the possibility of one-to-one computers for all students would also be part of the exploration. Ms. Douangmany Cage said that the Participatory Research Model would be beneficial in the beginning stages of this exploration. Mr. Hood moved to endorse the concepts expressed in the memo. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

**f. Mid-Cycle Update**

**DOCUMENTS: Memo to the School Committee Members from Maria Geryk RE: Mid-Cycle Progress Update; 2014-2015 Self-Assessment, Goals, Action Steps Mid-Cycle Progress Report; The Massachusetts Model System for Educator Evaluation: Part III Guide to Rubrics and Model Rubrics and Part VI Implementation Guide for Superintendent Evaluation; Process for Superintendent Evaluation dated September 24, 2013; District Improvement Plan dated September 2014; District Department Goals 2014-2015**

Mr. Baptiste noted that the discussion should center on feedback on the mid-cycle information presented by the Superintendent and any requests for areas of focus and/or additional artifacts. Mr. Hood suggested that more specific measures and links to artifacts be included in the District Improvement Plan as the main evaluation document. Ms. Appy agreed that the DIP could be the guiding document with supporting documents as links. Mr. Baptiste noted that the DIP has very clear indicators of progress, and he has a greater ability to evaluate based on narratives on how Ms. Geryk uses the artifacts for outcomes, rather than on the artifacts themselves. Mr. Robb noted that goal area three is important to him, and he would like to meet with Ms. Geryk to talk more about it. Ms. Geryk noted that she welcomes any of the members to meet individually with her. She also offered to meet with the Student Advisory Group to hear their thoughts around her evaluation as well.

**g. Accept Gifts**

**DOCUMENT: Memo to the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee from Mary Wallace, Amherst-Pelham Regional District Treasurer dated April 10, 2015**

Ms. Appy moved to accept \$121.46 from Target Take Charge of Education for the MS Principal's Discretion; \$500 from the Amherst Lion's Club for a scholarship donation; \$300 from the Trustees of Amherst College for Amherst Together. Ms. Dolven seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

**4. Student Advisory Update**

**9:03 p.m.**

Mr. Olmstead reported that the Student Advisory Group has ruffled some feathers over the past few weeks, noting that the situation shows that the group does not fully understand their role. Without sharing details, he said his goal is to be sure that the role is clarified and understood by the group next year as he graduates. Members of the School Committee encouraged Mr. Olmstead to always feel free to contact any of them with questions and to continue the good work of the Student Advisory Group. Ms. Geryk assured Mr. Olmstead that there is no need for concern about the situation.

**5. Superintendent's Update**

**9:12 p.m.**

Ms. Geryk introduced Carol Ross, Media and Climate Communications Specialist for Amherst Together, Julie Federman, Town of Amherst Health Director, and Carlene Basler, School Equity Task Force, who recently attended the Ready by 21 National Conference in New Orleans. Ms. Ross noted that the conference attendees also included Marta Guevara, ARPS Director of Achievement and Accountability, Monica Hall, ARPS Director of Diversity and Equity, Crystal Cartwright, ARHS Vocation Coordinator, Stacy Leceivre, LSSE, Marla Solomon, 5 Colleges Inc., Garret Pinder, Jones Library, Jim Regan, ARPS Out-of-School Time Coordinator, and Jana McClure, Amherst Education Foundation. These attendees make up the Amherst Together Steering Committee. Ms. Ross gave an overview of the highlights of the conference. Ms. Basler reported that the attendees brought back a wealth of strategies and initiatives that can be implemented in our community and gave an overview of some of them. She noted that there are a number of things being done in our district that are very different from other districts across the nation, including having a Director of Diversity and Equity, exploring Restorative Practices and being in constant conversation. Ms. Ross reminded the committee that One Drop of Love is tomorrow night at the ARMS auditorium and it is free. She encouraged them to attend what is sure to be a wonderful event.

**6. School Committee Planning**

**9:25 p.m.**

Ms. Geryk distributed and reviewed an updated calendar of School Committee meetings. In addition to agenda items listed, a vote will be taken on the resolution about the Holyoke Schools. Mr. Baptiste suggested adding a discussion of a possible resolution regarding standardized testing. After discussion, it was agreed that a Regional meeting will be added on April 28 at 6:30 after the 6:00 p.m. Amherst School Committee meeting to discuss finance as related to Regionalization. A tentative meeting will also be posted for April 30.

**7. Adjourn**

**9:34 p.m.**

Mr. Hood moved to adjourn at 9:34 p.m. Ms. Appy seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Debbie Westmoreland