Newburyport School Committee

Policy Subcommittee Meeting

Date: 25Jan2008

Time: 2pm

Location: Superintendent's Conference Room

Attendees Gordon Bechtel
Nick DeKanter
Kevin Lyons
(Bruce Menin was absent due to personal reasons.)

Please bring: •

Topics

Num	Topic	Responsible
1.	Election of new Chair	All
2.	Set standard meeting times	All
3.	Review the "to-do" list and establish an action plan	All
4.	Update on athletic programming	Dr. Lyons
5.	Work on Benchmark	All

Election of New Chair

The group decided to wait on this item until next meeting, when all members are available and can vote.

Standard Meeting Times/Dates

The group tentatively decided to set our standard meeting time as 1pm, Friday, after second SC meeting of each month. Dr. Lyons noted that he has a conflict in February. The group decided to tentatively move the February meeting to Monday, February 25th, 1pm.

<bechtel> Check with Bruce about these times.

Review To-Do List and Establish Action Plan

Gordon Bechtel prepared a list of all action items for the School Committee, including all those for the Policy subcommittee. The group went through the list, discussed each item assigned to Policy, and set a plan for handling the item. The following table shows the items and the results.

Item	*Approach*
Elect Chair	To be done during February 2008 meeting.
Set schedule for remainder of year	Tentatively set for 1pm on the Friday after the second SC meeting of each month, in the Supt. Conference Room. To finalize in late January.
Clean up SC rules manual	To be done during February 2008 meeting.
Revise Policies to make strategic planning something the SC does every year.	To be taken up during February or March, and bring recommendation to SC for vote in March or April.
Investigate mechanisms for funding curricular leadership in the District.	Dr. Lyons reported that he is investigating several approaches as part of both the FY09 budget and the District's Strategic Planning. He's already outlined his plans to the SC for math and literacy "specialists" at elementary and middle levels in his FY09 budget recommendations. Other ideas he's investigating include expanding the role of each department head at NHS to include curricular coordination, with a balancing reduction in their teaching duties. This and other mechanisms will be addressed as part of the District's Strategic Planning process.
Establish a Benchmark for the NPSD	The group recognized that this was its biggest job, and plans to work on this during each meeting, with a goal of completing a Benchmark by year's end.
Establish and utilize a consistent Superintendent review process	The group noted that the process used last year was fairly complete is very suitable for use again this year. Dr. Lyons noted that he would like a summary section added to the written Evaluation which provides the School Committee's overall assessment and future expectations. Nick and Gordon agreed to add this adjustment to the evaluation process. Gordon noted that the biggest problem with last year's evaluation was that it was very late. He stated that the group needs to work hard to deliver this year's evaluation in June 2008. <bechtel> Place the task of drafting the FY08 Superintendent evaluation on the Policy subcommittee agenda for March 2008.
Establish and conduct an annual SC evaluation.	The group enthusiastically endorsed the idea of having an evaluation of the School Committee, both internally and externally. The group agreed that a survey was a good way to solicit input from the Community. We'll work with the Communication subcommittee to "get the word out" when the survey becomes available, to insure that we garner input from a wide cross section of Newburyport. <DeKanter> Draft a plan and schedule for executing the SC evaluation. both internal and external. <DeKanter> Draft a survey for external evaluation of the SC.

In addition to the specific tasks listed above, the group agreed to continue handling day-to-day business as it may occur. This includes review and comment on new and changing administrative policies.

Update an Athletic Program Evaluation

Dr. Lyons reported that both he and Athletic Director John Delaines have had discussions with the MIAA legal and operational personnel. Their conclusion is that Newburyport is probably not in violation of Title 9, but we could definitely do better in dealing equally between women's and men's athletics.

One area that requires improvement is the separation of fund raising from the allocation of funds. For instance, having a team raise funds for a position specific to that team is not a model which allows control over funding and, so, makes it difficult to maintain gender equity. A better model – and one which many districts use – is to have a separate booster club which raises funds for athletics generically, gifts the money to the District, and allows the District to allocate the funds as it sees best.

The group discussed several issues that it felt are important parts of a good athletic policy. These include equity, separation of fund raising from fund allocation, and participation at all grades and levels. The group noted that implementation of such a program would need to be accomplished collaboratively with the coaches and staff currently in the athletics program. It would not be successful if a new approach were forced on the athletics programs. Gordon noted that the SC needed to lead this, though, and establish a vision for what it saw in an athletic program. The SC needs to answer the basic question: What does Newburyport want out of its athletic programs? What would the ideal athletic program look and feel like?

The group decided to take a stab at drafting such a vision statement for consideration and discussion at an upcoming SC meeting. Nick DeKanter agreed to draft an athletic vision statement.

<dekanter> write an athletic vision statement for review and presentation at an SC meeting. Present at the same SC meeting as athletic fees are presented.

Benchmark Work

Gordon proposed a format for the summary page (shown below). The summary page would provide a simple, straightforward assessment of the District in each benchmark category, making the Benchmark more accessible to everyone in Newburyport. There would be several additional pages of detailed supporting data to go with the summary, for those interested in details. The group agreed that the format looked good.

XYZ Benchmark Component

B-

Performance on Internal Metrics

Metric	This Year	Last Year
Math	XX	YY
English	XX	YY
Dropout	XX	YY
College	XX	YY
blah	XX	YY
blah	XX	YY
blah	XX	YY
blah	XX	YY

Written Observations
- blah
-blah
…
-blah

Performance on External Metrics

Metric	Nbpt.	Group
Math	XX	YY
English	XX	YY
Dropout	XX	YY
College	XX	YY
blah	XX	YY
blah	XX	YY
blah	XX	YY
blah	XX	YY

The group quickly brainstormed a productive way to continue work on the Benchmark. We decided to pick a few metrics from each category of the Benchmark, and work them into the suggested format. This process will enlighten us on how best to construct the Benchmark from raw data and give us practice on its construction. When we're a little better at it and have tuned/adjusted it, we can add all the metrics we're considering to each Benchmark category.

Nick noted that several metrics have different meanings depending on who's presenting the data. It's often like comparing apples to oranges. For instance, median income could mean one thing to the DOE and another to the DOR. He noted that we'll need to weed out these metrics, or identify a way to modify the raw data into an unambiguous and consistent definition.

Nick also volunteered to put the data and the Benchmark into an database, such as Microsoft Access. This would allow much quicker adjustment of formats and formulas, and allow the Benchmark to be updated more quickly in future years.

Finally, the group enthusiastically agreed that we need to produce a Benchmark by the end of the year. Even if it's not as complete as we'd like, it's better to get something out this year than wait until it's perfect. We can always add, subtract or modify the Benchmark in subsequent years based on feedback, discussion and use.

<dekanter> Build a preliminary version of the Benchmark database.

<all> take a shot at coalescing each category into a small trial subset of metrics.