Concord School District
Instructional Committee Minutes

School Board Committee: Instructional

Date: Monday, October 12, 2009

Committee Members Present: Clint Cogswell, Chairperson; Chris Casko, Jennifer Patterson

Other Board Member(s) Present: Eric Williams, Jack Dunn, Kass Ardinger, Megan DeVorsey, Laura Bonk

Administration: Susan Noyes, Deb McNeish, Mark Denoncour, Chris Demers, Ed Barnwell, Barbara Hemingway, Rob Prohl, Chris Rath

Chairperson Cogswell called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

The agenda for this meeting was to discuss kindergarten, preschool programming and class size policy.

1. Kindergarten
Members of the Board had reviewed a number of different research articles on the effect on student achievement of full day kindergarten vs. half day kindergarten. Eric Williams, Laura Bonk, Chris Casko, Clint Cogswell reviewed the findings in the article each read. It was the consensus of the committee that the research seemed to indicate that students in full day kindergarten showed gains greater than half day kindergarten at the end of kindergarten. The research that was subsequently conducted with these children in the third grade and then the fifth grade suggested that the benefits of a full day program over a half day program were not factors in student achievement by grade 3 or grade 5.

(Note: There was a longitudinal study that Board member Bonk will review and report on at a subsequent meeting).

It was also noted that full day kindergarten would increase the state’s adequacy aid grant but not to the extent that it would pay for the longer program.

2. Preschool programming
Assistant Superintendent Rob Prohl reported on the work session that took place after Dr. Hornstein’s presentation to the Instructional Committee on September 25, 2009. At this time, Mr. Prohl indicated that there is a need for six preschool classrooms to be available in the district. Mr. Prohl reported that the group had discussed the issue of one site or two sites and, while each had positives and negatives, the final consensus was to have two sites for the district’s center-based program.
The committee discussed the pros and cons of one site, two sites or four sites for preschool classes.

- Board members asked about the length of time preschool children might spend on a bus; administration will follow up with more specific information about transportation of children to preschool.

- It was noted by Board member Ardinger that there is an advantage for families of children in the preschool program is to meet other parents and form supportive networks; this opportunity would be greater if the program was located at one site.

- The committee asked the administration for more details on the possible use of Title I funds to support preschool programs.

- Board member Cogswell, who earlier had supported four sites, reported on research he did with staff who explained the difficulties for the specialists in the four schools to serve additional children if each school had a preschool program.

The committee and administrators discussed how best to use the capacity that currently exists at Beaver Meadow School. It was noted that moving all or part of the preschool program to Beaver Meadow may necessitate relocating the 3R program to one of the other schools.

No action was taken. The administration will take the information from this evening’s discussion and bring recommendations to the Instructional Committee very soon.

3. Class Size
The Instructional Committee discussed the advantages and disadvantages of using various class size numbers in the program for the new or renovated schools. There emerged some consensus that kindergarten be programmed for 17 students, first and second grades at 18 students and grades three, four and five at 23 students.

4. Board Retreat
It was suggested that the Board meet for a morning work session on Saturday, October 31. Superintendent Rath will ask Linden to query all members about their availability on this date.

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Clint Cogswell, Chair
Chris Rath, Recorder