

**Regular Meeting Agenda**

July 11, 2018 **6:00 PM**

**I. Call to Order /Pledge of Allegiance**

- A. Introductions
- B. Communication

**II. Consent Agenda**

- A. Approval of Agenda
- B. Approval of Minutes for June 20, 2018
- C. Certificated Nominations

The Superintendent recommends the following certificated contracts pending appropriate certification and/or license:

- a. Samuel Carignan, Gr. 5/6 Teacher - Sherwood Heights
- b. Lauralee Bruner, ELL Teacher - ELHS
- c. Craig Latuscha, Assistant Principal - ELHS
- d. Mikeckney Ward, Science Teacher - AMS
- e. Melissa Sundell, ELL Teacher - Park Avenue

\_\_\_\_\_ Moved to approve the Consent Agenda.

\_\_\_\_\_ Seconded

\_\_\_\_\_ Motion passed/defeated \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ approve the Consent Agenda.

**III. Public Participation**

The School Committee asks the Public to remember our System-Wide Code of Conduct and the six core values of Respect, Honesty, Courage, Compassion, Fairness, and Responsibility while directly addressing the group. Our policy JIC states that we expect people to ‘Treat others as you would like to be treated, Use language that is appropriate and kind, and be truthful and forthright in speech and actions.’ Per our policy, BEDH - Public Participation at School Committee Meetings: Citizens may comment on any general topics related to the school system during this portion of the agenda. Comments related to specific agenda items may be held until the appropriate time. Please be succinct and speak once for less than three minutes. Other limitations may be necessary. The School Committee may respond to your concerns at a later date by answering through the administration or by placing the item on a future agenda. It is requested that comments related to specific personnel be channeled privately to the appropriate administrator.

**IV. Upcoming Meetings**

- July 25, 2018 at 6:00 pm for hiring then workshop with Harriman
- August 8, 2018 at 6:00 pm

First Regular School Committee Meeting for 2018-2019

- August 22, 2018 at 7:00 pm

**V. Executive Session**

If the School Committee makes a motion to enter executive session, the precise nature of business to be considered will be indicated in the motion. The items, which may be discussed, by law, may include one or more of the following:

1. To discuss personnel.
2. To discuss or consider the suspension or expulsion of a student.
3. To discuss or consider the condition, acquisition, or the use of real or personal property only if premature disclosure would prejudice the competitive or bargaining of the body or agency.
4. To discuss labor contracts, proposals and/or meetings related to negotiations.
5. To consult with the School Committee's attorney concerning legal rights, pending litigation, and settlement offers, when premature public knowledge would give the School Committee substantial disadvantage.
6. To discuss records made, maintained, or received by the School Committee or department, of access is prohibited by statute.

**VI. Adjournment**

\_\_\_\_\_ Moved to adjourn at \_\_\_\_\_ P.M.

\_\_\_\_\_ Seconded

\_\_\_\_\_ Motion passed/defeated \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ adjourn at \_\_\_\_\_ P.M.

**REPORT OF REGULAR SESSION MEETING OF THE AUBURN SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Auburn Hall

June 20, 2018

Members Present: Ms. Faith Fontaine Mr. Daniel Poisson  
Ms. Patricia Gautier Ms. Jenna Scrivner  
Mr. Thomas Kendall Ms. Alfreda Fournier

Others Present: Katherine Grondin, Superintendent; Michelle McClellan, Assistant Superintendent; Adam Hanson, Business Manager; Olivia Roth and Kiara Fournier, Student Representative.

**I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

A. Introductions

Mr. Kendall called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. He led the pledge of allegiance and members introduced themselves noting the ward they represent. He noted that Ms. Bonnie Hayes and Mr. Bob Mennealy had excused absence this evening

B. Communications

Carol Celani was recognized for completing her Literacy Coaching certification. Debra Hogate, University of Maine Teacher Leader, introduced Carol Celani, noting that Carol brought the rich history of Auburn, the voice of reason, and her experience to the younger students in the group. Ms. Hogate presented Carol with her certificate and pin.

Mr. Kendall noted that Laura Garcia had provided communication regarding her thoughts on the Task Force and noted that it will go into the minutes.

**II. CONSENT AGENDA**

A. Approval of Agenda

B. Approval of Minutes for Minutes for June 6, 2018

C. Certificated Contract Nomination

The Superintendent recommends the following certificated contract nomination pending appropriate certification and/or license:

1. Caitlyn Currie, Special Education Teacher - Sherwood Heights
2. Abigail Day, Grade 3 & 4 Combo Classroom Teacher - Walton
3. Susan Melcher, Special Education Teacher - RETC
4. Caroline Baker, Science Teacher - AMS
5. Emily Marean, Grade 4 Teacher - Park Avenue
6. Carol Reed, Grade 6 Teacher - Park Avenue
7. Stephen Amoroso, Art Teacher - Fairview
8. Angela Wahler, Guidance Counselor - ELHS

It was moved by Ms. Gautier, seconded by Ms. Fontaine and voted unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda for tonight's meeting including the addendum.

**III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Chris Cloutier, of Goff Street spoke about ELHS having American Sign Language, noting that this is the 3rd most used language in American, provided many reasons why this would benefit students and staff, options for funding this program, and stated that it would be helpful to have this as an option at ELHS.

Stacey Fournier, of Cherryvale Circle, spoke once again about PBL noting that she was speaking for many parents about their feelings of PBL being a disservice to Auburn students. She feels that students who finished 7th grade math, basically taught themselves this year. She noted that the flyer about the summer math program went out to all the students and her son is excited about the summer program so he can see his friends; however, some parents may not have the option to have

others assist them in getting their students there. She asked what happens next year, does she need to pay a tutor, does he have to wait until his teacher catches up? She stated that the system is failing our students and she wants a formal meeting with AMS staff, the School Committee, and Administration to reassure her and her husband that their son is receiving the education that he deserves in every way possible.

Mr. Kendall noted that he would be sure she gets a response.

Ms. Celeste Beaudet clarified that her daughter just graduated from ELHS in the top ten and also participated in the summer math program more than one time and it was a positive experience for her.

Matt Hynman of Pownall Rd. provided his perspective of a parent of students in ELHS and AMS noting that his children have participated in the summer math program and found it to be a positive experience. He stated that the PBL program has allowed his children to grow and excel and be ahead of where they typically would be with the program that was used in the past. He noted that he also knows several others who are very much in favor of the program, stating that people who are opposed tend to be more vocal.

Ms. Fournier stated that she is a very involved parent and her son has ADD, which they work through. She stated that the lack of communication leading to the belief that he was on track only to find out that he wasn't. She noted that it is one thing to take summer math to excel and another thing to have to take summer math to finish 7th grade math. She stated that this is a huge difference and her son feels that he has to take this program because he didn't finish. She noted that she still doesn't have confirmation that her son is actually enrolled in a summer program.

Ms. Grondin replied that she would call Ms. Fournier tomorrow.

Connor Dion of Lothrop Street stated that every student got a paper about the summer math program because it gives them an opportunity to move ahead if they choose to. He stated that PBL has allowed him to get his work done at his own pace and have an opportunity to succeed. He stated that his grades have improved significantly due to this grading system.

Kate Dion of Lothrop Street stated that she is Connor's mom and also has another middle school student and is an educator for 25 years, teaching at a community college. She noted that her son has been allowed to focus on whether or not he has learned the material and PBL has been a successful system of him. She noted that her other student has been as much as two years behind in school, is now moving ahead and moving into AP classes and a large part of this has been the PBL system. She noted that as a parent and a teacher it has been illuminating to see him develop enormous executive functioning skills and planning skills. She noted that she can't believe how much he has blossomed. She noted that in her college teaching she has recognized that one of the biggest problems is that students don't come prepared to take responsibility for their learning, but PBL prepares them well for this skill. She stated that she is thrilled with PBL and is trying to convince her college peers to begin this process in college.

Barbara Howenic of Nottingham Road noted that she has served on the task force. She stated that she wants to be sure that it was on record that some of those had issues in the manner in which the task force was organized, some of the meetings, some of the outcomes or lack thereof. She noted that they were not permitted to give input into the surveys. She stated that she and others would have formatted them differently, noting that they would have ensured that the questions were clear and that teachers could respond to the survey without fear of identification. She stated that they were not given the comments to review until 2 days before the vote and what they received were excerpts rather than the raw data because parents put a child's name or providing a phone number. She stated that members should have seen the raw data. She also stated that at the initial meeting members were told that the purpose of the task force was to discuss the issues and concerns with PBL; however the discussions were about the grading system. She expressed that the Task Force recommended a return to the 0-100 grading and moving back to PowerSchool. She stated that the outcome should have been a foregone conclusion given the data collected by the surveys, but

instead we spent nearly ten hours hashing this out. She stated that instead they could have discussed retakes of summary assessments, rewriting papers, no due dates, and dual grading which is an unnecessary burden for teachers. She stated that these topics are sore points for those of us opposed to the system and need to be addressed sooner rather than later. She noted that several on the Task Force feel that they were given a bone and the results are exactly as they had predicted and the remaining issues need to be addressed. She stated that although she had agreed to spend time this summer reviewing comments from the survey, she noted that she did not feel this was a good use of her time since she has heard enough to know what the remaining issues are. She stated that at the last two meetings of the Task Force she recorded the meetings and would share those recordings with anyone who would like to have them. She explained that while the task force by a majority vote recommended a return to a zero to one hundred grading, a parent expressed that this might be a temporary measure and once the hoopla died down, there would be a return to the 1-4 grading. Two committee members, Ms. Hayes and Ms. Fortier, said this would not happen; however, the Assistant Superintendent stated that she could not say that this wouldn't happen. Ms. Howenic stated that this is very upsetting to hear and also upsetting to not be working further on these issues this summer. She noted that the Senate tabled the measure to repeal the Proficiency Based Diploma. She noted that she has spent hours on this and it doesn't seem that it is ever going away. She stated that she and her husband are looking into other options for their children's education. She expressed that there is a real breakdown in the system and she hopes it will be addressed very quickly.

Claire Nacinovich, Joselyn St. stated that she has two students in Auburn schools and feels that it is a positive step to create the task force and also feels that dual grading is a step in the right direction; however, the work is not done. She feels we need to discover what the problems are and address them, with one issue keeping the communication open between parent and staff.

Matt Hynman of Pownal Rd stated that he also served on the task force and with the varying degree of concerns throughout the community, we'd be foolish to think that a task force that is meeting for a handful of meetings is going to solve all these problems. He also noted that listening to the comments, he's learned that some children do well with this program and others don't; however, the ability for children to ebb and flow with their education is what makes this program what it is. He stated that he did not feel the system has failed. Mr. Hynman also stated that he would like to address the negative aspects of the task force on social media, noting that the task force was formed by a variety of people who submitted applications, a survey was submitted to get a feeling for what people felt about their current situation and those were taken as the primary duties during the first few sessions. He noted that the amount of time to implement the changes is very tight and brings a strain on the staff. He also noted that he was not in favor of the zero to one hundred grading system because he feels that is going to cause additional work for the teachers. He suggested that the School Department offer more education to the citizens and parents in the form of forums, videos, etc. so they can understand what the program offers the children. He noted that he has had to take time to learn new techniques to allow him to communicate with his children about these techniques.

Barbara Howenic of Nottingham Rd restated that lack of agreement does not equate to ignorance or lack of understanding. Myself and many others are well versed in this program. She noted that some have testified in Augusta, some have attended meetings for 16 months now and to make it seem like another educational program to teach us about Proficiency Based Learning is insulting.

Connor Dion stated that he personally knows some people who are failing and he knows why they are failing. He stated that some people simply didn't finish their work, some haven't revised their work.

Donna Civiny of Grandview Avenue stated that she would like to address a problem in the English Department related to the PBL program. She stated that the number of freshmen failing English is appalling. She reported that she had a conversation with an administrator at the end of March and

was told that this was being worked on. She stated that she followed up with an e-mail and was told that a support person would be joining the class. She stated that a 90 percent failure rate is not a student failure, it is a teacher and program failure. She noted that she followed up several times with e-mails and was told that a support person would be added to the class until finally she stopped getting responses. She stated that this needs to be addressed now.

Kate Dion of Lothrop Street stated that she isn't sure that these issues are new. She stated that when her child got a C in a class, she didn't know which things her child was not learning; however, now she can see what they learn and don't learn. She stated that she doesn't feel these are new problems, but doesn't feel that the concerns are all created by Proficiency Based Learning.

Kim Taylor of Beech Hill Road stated that she has a unique perspective in that her child went through a traditional model and there were issues in that program. She stated that Kate had a point because no matter what program we follow, there will be issues we need to work through. She explained that when her son went to college, he felt like he was behind in English. She noted that she also has a daughter who just finished 9th grade was in the PBL program. She explained that when she reached out to the teachers, she got answers that made sense. She noted that her youngest will be going into middle school now and she knows she will need more guidance and require more questions. She explained that any time there is change, we need to work through the struggles or decide to abandon the program and go back to the traditional. She noted that we will still have struggles and need to ask questions. She stated that the lady before her made a good point that there would be struggles no matter what program we use.

#### **IV. STUDENT INFORMATION ITEMS**

The Students stated that they are in the Leadership Council and are both mentors. They reported about the Senior Send Off explaining the various activities that were planned, noting that this made it special for the students. They also reported that the Student Leadership Council is taking over the Kick-Off Mentor program because it wasn't enforced as much as it should have been. They also reported that applications were provided to bring more students into the Kick-Off Mentor Program.

#### **V. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

##### **A. Information**

##### **1. Task Force Recommendations**

Michelle McClellan, Assistant Superintendent, and Shelly Mogul, OLT Director, shared the Task Force recommendations regarding grading and reporting for grades 7-12. Ms. McClellan reported that the diverse Task Force membership met and shared a variety of perspectives and opinions regarding Proficiency Based Education and the implementation of that model. She noted that the first item the task force was to look at concerned grading and reporting because that was what was overwhelmingly heard about and would be time consuming to change. She explained that the survey that was conducted of students, staff and parents needed to be developed and go out quickly. She provided background on how the survey was developed and how the survey results were reviewed by the task force. She explained that there was an attempt to reach consensus; however after two attempts consensus was not reached so the members moved to a majority method.

Ms. Mogul presented information regarding the recommendations of the task force noting what the concern was, the recommendation, and where the responsibility would be for action. She noted that the recommendations were to move back to PowerSchool as the reporting platform for grades 7-12 and to reinstate the traditional grading scale for 7-12 and to certify proficiency. She noted that consensus was reached on the first issue, but not the second. She noted that there will be some PowerSchool training to ensure that teachers can make the platform shift and there is also an opportunity for members of the task force who choose to volunteer to mine the survey for open response comments. She noted that the survey response was about 600 parents, 200 teachers, and the student response was less than we had hoped and the survey was filled out via google.

Ms. McClellan reported that this is ongoing and we will be following up after school starts and checking to see how this is being communicated to students and parents.

Ms. Grondin reported that parents will look at PowerSchool Pro and it will look very similar; however there will be more detailed information available for student's grades.

Ms. Mogul reported that in the raw data, less than appropriate language, blank rows, and student information was removed. She noted that this raw data is available for all task force members.

Ms. Mogul and Ms. McClellan responded to questions from committee members, providing further clarification.

## 2. End of the Year Data Report

Sue Dorris, .5 District Administrator, and Michelle McClellan, Assistant Superintendent, shared spring student data and teacher effectiveness data. They outlined the district goals and provided a data review. Ms. Dorris reported that the three primary goals included: strengthen teacher skills, increase student achievement in reading and in math. She outlined the spring assessment results, data highlights, challenges, and action steps. They responded to questions from committee members, providing further clarification.

Ms. McClellan provided information regarding how teacher skills are strengthened including Marzano Instructional Framework for professional curriculum, ongoing professional development, instructional coaches, and the PEPG system. She noted that this is a key piece of our student achievement. She noted that teachers have been used to setting goals and monitoring goals and have achieved high scores; however there are still some challenges.

## B. Business

### 1. Flexible Benefit Plan for Employees who work July - June

Adam Hanson, Business Manager, presented the 2018-19 Flexible Benefit Plan for employees who work under July through June. He noted that this is a plan originally put into place in 2011; however, there have been some changes to the plan and now it needs to be adopted.

It was moved by Ms. Fournier, seconded by Mr. Poisson to approve the amended Cafeteria Plan including a Health Flexible Spending Account and Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account effective July 01, 2018 as presented and authorize the Superintendent and Business Manager to execute and deliver to the Administrator of the Plan one or more counterparts of the Plan.

### 2. Finance Report - May 2018

Mr. Hanson presented the Finance Report for May 2018. He noted that the MaineCare revenue is coming in higher than he had predicted and the MaineCare Seed component has come in within the budget. He noted that we should be within our budget, but will need to shift some funds between cost centers. He noted that this will be brought to the School Committee for a vote in August or September.

It was moved by Ms. Fournier, seconded by Ms. Scrivner and voted unanimously to approve the Finance Report for May 2018 as presented.

## VI. INFORMATION/SUB COMMITTEE REPORTS

STANDING COMMITTEES	
Finance Subcommittee-B. Hayes, F. Fontaine	Policy Subcommittee-T. Kendall, B. Mennealy
SUBCOMMITTEES	

City Council Update-A. Fournier	Wellness Subcommittee-F. Fontaine, J. Scrivner
Communications Subcommittee-TBD	Audit Subcommittee-B. Hayes, F. Fontaine
Curriculum Subcommittee-P. Gautier	Transportation Appeals-D. Poisson, J. Scrivner
Community Learning Center-P. Gautier	SHARECenter-P. Gautier
New ELHS Building Committee-T. Kendall	Negotiations - T. Kendall, B. Hayes

Ms. Fournier reported that the budget has been passed. She also reported that the celebration of the 150th anniversary of our City is being planned. She requested that if anyone wants to volunteer, that they contact the Mayor or the City Manager. She also reported that there are still concerns about parking for the library. She reported that the Vietnam Vets are having a BBQ at the Lewiston Vet Center in Lewiston and all are welcome. She noted that there is a yard sale and a bottle drive to restore the Marshall's Popcorn Truck. She stated that Lewiston Middle School will be holding a discussion about the opioid epidemic on June 28th from 6:00 - 8:00. She reported that on July 2nd the City will unveil the new City insignia and provide information about the 150th celebration.

Mr. Kendall reported that Leveraging Learning Conference will be held on November 8th and 9th. He stated that the sessions are planned and early bird registration is out.

Mr. Kendall reported that the ELHS Building Committee visited Sanford on Monday to look for ideas on the new ELHS.

#### **VII. UPCOMING MEETINGS**

Summer Meetings for hiring purposes only

- July 11, 2018 at 6:00pm
- July 25, 2018 at 6:00pm for hiring then workshop with Harriman
- August 8, 2018 at 6:00pm

First Regular School Committee Meeting for 2018-2019

- August 22, 2018 at 7:00pm

#### **VIII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS/REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION**

- Field Trip Policy

#### **IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

#### **X. ADJOURNMENT**

It was moved by Mr. Poisson seconded by Ms. Fontaine and voted unanimously to adjourn from regular session at 9:20 PM.

Attest, a true record,



Katherine Grondin, Secretary  
Superintendent of Schools

KG/rmw

TO: School Committee

FROM: Laura Garcia

Submitted for the record for the meeting of June 20, 2018

## **STATEMENT REGARDING THE TASK FORCE**

### **PROCESS/PROCEDURE FOR TASK FORCE**

As you know, parents were not included in the process used to determine what the task force would look like (i.e. membership, process) and how it would proceed. Rather they learned about it from a teacher posting on Facebook. From the outset, who was to be on the task force seemed to change without explanation. At first, students were to be included, and then they were not. Parents of 6<sup>th</sup> graders were told they could not serve as their students were not those readily impacted. And yet, the task force included a pro-PBL 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. Surveys which focused almost exclusively on grading/reporting were sent out prior to the task force meeting or having an opportunity to discuss/review them. Additionally, the manner in which they were distributed to teachers and students was inconsistent. Also, grading and reporting were to be our first task, but it was clear from Superintendent Grondin's mandate that other issues which had been raised would also be examined. We were told the meetings would be recorded, but they were not. Although, Barbara Howaneic did record the last two meetings with her own device. The task force did not review and approve minutes that were kept by Val Ackley at the start of each meeting. There was very little consistency with process throughout the meetings. As someone accustomed to following procedures for the purposes of transparency, clearly defined expectations and accountability, I found the process both frustrating and unpredictable.

That being said, we did have 5 meetings.

### **THE MEETINGS**

**May 15, 2018:** The first meeting consisted of discussing desirable approaches for tackling the issues. The process to be used was not discussed. I raised at this first meeting that we should try to be consistent with whatever procedures we decided upon for taking up issues. Due to not enough time, we were told that we could discuss the adoption of procedures at the next meeting.

**May 24, 2018:** At this meeting the administration explained the process they had decided would be used to go forward. We were to begin by processing the data from the surveys in sub groups, dedicated to each group of stakeholders, i.e. teachers, parents, and students. The sub groups, with the exception of the teacher group, reported out to the task force the "findings." The data (minus comments or answers to open ended questions) from the surveys had been compiled by Val Ackley and presented to the task force.

**May 31, 2018:** We began by reporting "findings" on the data from the teacher surveys. The third meeting was a discussion around what the data from the surveys told us about the preferences with



regard to grading and the reporting platform. Overwhelmingly the data (from parents, teachers and students) supported a return to the traditional grading system. Additionally, people clearly wished to ditch Empower and return to Powerschool. Recommendations were proposed, but a consensus (what the administration said we needed to move forward) was not reached. Two members felt they could not at that time support the recommendations. I feel it is very important to add that at our third meeting, the suggestion was made that we would be able to wrap up our work quickly since the data seemed pretty clear about the grading and reporting recommendations. Barbara Howaneic pointed out that the task force mandate was to address concerns regarding PBL/Mass Customized Learning, not just grading and reporting. When confronted with this, the administration agreed. However at our fifth and final meeting, without asking members if they could meet over the summer, Michelle McClellan disbanded the task force until September/October. **See Below, June 14, 2018 meeting.**

**June 5, 2018:** The fourth meeting was in large part a repeat of the discussions had during the fourth meeting but tended to focus on the preferences of the task force members versus the survey results. Two members of the task force who had not attended the May 31, 2018 meeting were present and disagreed with the recommendations. An attempt to reach consensus was made by offering suggesting items that might convince them to support the recommendations. We could not reach a consensus. The administration said they would be meeting with leadership teams shortly and could get input from them about the grading system. It is worth noting, at this point we still had not had a chance to review the actual surveys or the comments included in the surveys.

\*\*\*Prior to the June 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, I learned from different sources that the leadership teams were asked for input. I heard there was discussion about not letting a poor grade on a final exam affect one's overall grade if they were proficient. I also heard there was discussion about an alternative to the 0-100% scale being used, such as a 50-100% so that students would not be discouraged for getting a 0 for work they did not do. Finally, I was told that the administration asked for volunteers to serve on a grading committee over the summer. Interestingly, the administration did not report out to the task force about what the thoughts of the leadership teams were with regard to grading on a traditional % scale and certifying proficiency. Nor did they initially mention that they had decided to form a grading committee.

**June 14, 2018:** A few of us felt that it was very important to at least see the comments on the surveys before making a final recommendation. The comments were provided to us the day before the final meeting. They had been edited/redacted for privacy, as well as appropriate language. Finally, the last meeting began with a demonstration of Powerschool Plus (the new platform being offered by Powerschool which, like Empower, has the option of reporting targets/proficiency in addition to % grades). Following the demonstration there was discussion around the recommendations to be made. Recommendations were made. Because a consensus could not be reached, a majority vote was taken. A few members of the task force felt they could not support the recommendations, including Shelly Mogul, our curriculum director.

**Also, it was made clear that the recommendations did not have to go to the school committee as the school committee did not “authorize” or request the task force.** Rather the administration maintained that the task force recommendations were for them because Superintendent Grondin had set up the task force. As noted above, task force members were not given a chance to discuss next steps. We were not asked if we could or were able to meet over the summer. Rather the administration made the plan. Michelle McClellan disbanded the task force until September/October. Michelle said that volunteers from the task force could review the comments from this summer and see if there are issues that need to be further addressed come this fall. The meeting was ended a half hour early.

I disagree with the delay in addressing additional issues until fall. Waiting means that students will likely be impacted again with changes next year, possibly during the school year. There are clear issues that have been identified that the task force could have and should have taken up over the summer in concert with the teachers looking at grading and proficiency ratings. For example, I related to the task force that I have heard from teachers and read in the survey comments that the number of targets in some content areas are too numerous resulting in extensive data entry which can be cumbersome and also takes some of the autonomy out of teaching. I think everyone, myself included, feel that standards are important and that aligning the curriculum is a positive. Yet the multiple targets and/or breaking down curriculum content into bite size pieces has been raised as an issue. Another item that has been identified by many but we did not address is the retaking of tests and the "flexible" deadlines, meaning there are no penalties for late work.

Finally, no decision was made with regard to how the school department might handle the conversion of the freshman grades from this year to a % grade. It was suggested that the ASD may want to reach out to other districts dealing with this same issue. The administration indicated that it was in touch with other districts on the matter.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.) Empower will be replaced by PowerSchool (likely PowerSchool Pro); and
- 2.) the traditional grading will be reinstated (grades 7-12) and teachers will certify proficiency.

There was a fair amount of debate about what #2 means. Concerns included whether we would be asking teachers to grade assignments twice.....once on a % scale and once on the 1-4 scale. The data on the teacher surveys was clear that they did not want to be asked to grade assignments twice.

**I would note (as I have done on many occasions) that the state DOES NOT require the 1-4 grades to certify proficiency. Nor does the state require the certifying of the multiple targets that have been identified for the several content areas.** For example, we could decide that anything over 80% means one is proficient in a content area. I believe this may be Lewiston's approach. I would prefer this method thereby alleviating the burden of extensive tracking and input that will be required if teachers are expected to grade student's work twice.

**Interestingly, despite not being part of the task force recommendation, Michelle insisted that the following be included as suggestions/considerations when implementing the grading scale recommendation that A.)Targets are retained; B.) Habits of Work are still reported out (format TBD).**

These were suggestions/considerations that had been made at the June 5th meeting when we were trying to get a consensus on grading. That is, we were looking for compromises as a means of convincing the dissenters to be ok with the majority's desire to return to the traditional grading scale. Before voting on the task force grading recommendation, in response to my questions/concerns about the number of targets, Michelle maintained that A. and B. above were not part of the proposed recommendation. I asked her to delete them so that there would be no confusion before we voted. She would not. She said they would be listed as suggestions/considerations.

**We did not discuss these issues as concerns, nor did we vote to retain all targets or keep HOW grades.** I hope that is clearly communicated to the teachers that are left with the task of determining how proficiency will be determined under a traditional percentage based grading system.

Michelle McClellan and Shelly Mogul decided before we met on June 14, that they would form a group of teachers to determine how grading in this "dual" system will be done. **They said they would be asking for volunteers from the teaching staff. Again, I took this opportunity to express concern that if we do not address the communication issue (fear of retaliation or being labeled negative) between administration and teachers then teachers with concerns likely would not feel comfortable being part of that process.** I also pointed out that the number of targets (a concern of teachers) should be considered. These were issues that I noted in reviewing the comments from the surveys.

The administration clearly wants to retain the targets and assessments of proficiency as was being done this year. In other words, the administration was agreeable to giving up Empower for grades 7-12 because Powerschool now offers a reporting platform which is similar to Empower (providing for proficiency grading in addition to traditional grading). However, the administration did indicate they would hold onto Empower for grades k-6. The continued use of Empower without a discussion about targets concerns me because elementary teachers (who are afraid to speak up) have told me that the number of targets in content areas that they must track students are not reasonable and take too much time. While parents do not receive this information, the teachers are still required to report it out on Empower.

**I expressed concern based on the last two task force meetings that it sounded like the agreement to return to the traditional grading was going to be a temporary solution/fix and that in a couple of years the administration would once again propose the 1-4 grading. Bonnie's Hayes and Pat Gautier began vehemently shaking their heads that, no that would not happen. However, a little while later as the meeting was being wrapped up, unprompted Michelle McClellan went on the record saying that despite the school committee members reaction she could not say that that we would not return to 1-4 grading.**

Of course, no one knows what the future holds. I found it curious that she circled back to the issue and felt the need to clearly state that she could not say that we would not be returning to the 1-4 grading. Also worth noting, I specifically asked Michelle if the administration could make a statement as to whether or not we are doing customized learning. She refused to answer. I genuinely believe the public wants, needs and is entitled to know the plan going forward about what we are doing.

### **MY IMPRESSION/CONCERNS GOING FORWARD...**

I am wondering if upon reading this if people people can understand why I worry that the traditional grading will be a temporary fix. I suspect the administration will continue with its plan to pursue customized learning. There will be an argument made that the reason students, parents and teachers overwhelmingly favored traditional grading was because the roll out of PBL, customized learning, 1-4 grading fell short in the training, education and communication department. I expect that more time, energy and money will be put into those issues. I know other districts (RSU 5 Freeport/Durham/Pownal, for one) have the same concern. I do not want to have to fight this battle again in two years. And yet, I have no faith that there will be little if any more examination of the issue or merits of the changes made over the last few years. This is my opinion and observations.

Others on the task force may disagree with me and for the sake of transparency, I invite them to share their perspective. Honestly, I hope my impressions are wrong.

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