

PTO Regular Meeting

January 9, 2014

8:40 a.m.

- Looking for a Core Values Chair. If interested, please contact PTO Co-Presidents. Core Values night is second Wednesday in March.
- Looking for someone to fill the position of Secretary for second part of school year. This is a great way to get involved with the PTO and the time commitment is minimal. If interested, please contact PTO Co-Presidents, or Lisa Adams, who is Acting Secretary.
- Understanding our Differences events coming up for 3rd, 4th and 5th grades. Check Cabot Events or PTO website for dates and to volunteer. It is a fun program and worthwhile to volunteer with a minimal time commitment.
- Ahead of the Game sports in Cabot gym- adding a second session by popular demand! Soccer and basketball classes to begin again on January 21st. Sign up on-line through PTO website.
- Campaign for Cabot- continues through January 24th. Need \$5K more to reach goal.
- Guest Speaker- Dr. David A. Fleishman, Superintendent
Also present: School Committee members Angela Pitter-Wright, Margaret Albright and Ruth Goldman.
 - Overview of discussion:
 - Initiatives this year
 - Cabot re-build
 - Building Projects
 - Middle School Transition for Cabot Students:
 - All Cabot students at F.A. Day Middle School now (except out-of-district placements)
 - 4 teams, reasonable class sizes, new parts of building
 - All seems to be going well
 - Writing a focus at Cabot this year
 - End of MCAS era; transitioning to PARCC exam (PARCC stands for Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers)
 - MA has rigorous state assessments; there are 2 national groups developing assessments.
 - PARCC assessments: new standards, new curriculum, more non-fiction
 - MA is piloting PARCC assessments this spring and Cabot has been selected to pilot 4th grade math by computer. Purpose of pilot is to work out kinks in system. Test date will be announced (likely April or May).
 - Well-being and social-emotional development of students important too- this has been a focus during this school year.
 - Building Projects: Cabot was asked to submit a plan for re-build to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) and the MSBA is reviewing

Cabot's submission. Next steps: hire project manager and designer, and conduct a feasibility study (will take some time).

- **Q&A:** (opportunity for parents to ask questions of Superintendent)
 1. **Q:** Concern about focusing too much on non-fiction with common core and fiction being left out.
A: Common core balances fiction with non-fiction, but also balances type of fiction; with common core, there is better/richer non-fiction options.
 2. **Q:** Walking to school is very difficult in winter because sidewalks and blacktop not cleared, treated, road not plowed wide enough and field inaccessible because snow piled too high at crosswalk.
A: Contact Chief of Operations of City / contact Ward Alderman (Emily).
 3. **Q:** When does MCAS go away?
A: A notice will go out at the end of January explaining transition. In the meantime, can check out PARCC website for explanation of assessment.
 4. **Q:** What tools does the district use as a system to give feedback to teachers?
A: Use MCAS data to measure who needs support, but MCAS is of limited utility. School does benchmarking and teachers meet with Principal every 2 weeks to look at data. Services added if necessary based on these discussions.
 5. **Q:** What is district's plan to accommodate growing population at F.A. Day Middle School with respect to sports, drama and other extracurricular offerings?
A: District is aware of issues with sports teams, drama, etc. not serving enough kids/trying to work out a solution/have looked at adding teams, but difficulty arises in matching up multiple teams to play other schools with fewer teams/still trying to arrive at a solution.
 6. **Q:** What does Out of District placement look like for Cabot kids at Bigelow Middle School next year?
A: The upcoming sixth grade class is smaller this year. Don't want to create overcrowding at schools. Decent shot at being accepted for OOD placement this year at Bigelow.
 7. **Q:** What is the timeline for renovations at Cabot?
A: There is no set date at this time. The key is the feasibility study, which will determine what needs to be addressed. Zervas' feasibility study is starting soon and swing space is included in this study.
 8. **Q:** Where does the district stand with full-day Kindergarten?
A: Supports it. Need reasonable class sizes (like at Cabot this year). Discussions have included what types of things they would add with additional time? Need support to make this work.
 9. **Q:** Where does the district stand with respect to voting in elementary schools? What has happened since last discussions?

A: Have worked with Principal to implement further measures to ensure students remain safe on voting days and not mingling with public. Have two officers on duty at the school. Have discussed using one entrance for voters, another entrance for students- not sure if that is feasible yet. Will continue to discuss the issue. Moving voting out of elementary schools raises other issues like voter disenfranchisement. Parent comment: Will have to move voting out of Cabot during re-build, so perhaps that offers an opportunity to find another location and keep voting out of the new Cabot.

10. Q: Why do we still have half-day Tuesdays?

A: They allow for teacher collaboration, training and conferences. District is aware that half-day Thursdays present issues as well.

11. Q: Has district considered changing start-times for older students (move to later time)?

A: Need to look at this again, but trade-off is that sports practice ends in dark and the bus schedule is affected. Next year, the change in start time to 8:25 a.m. for Cabot students will be clarified.

12. Q: How do we get feedback on teacher satisfaction?

A: Personal conversations; teacher association; state level survey; exit interviews.

13. Q: Adding computer programming to curriculum?

A: Issue is having qualified teachers, but integrating technology is going well. Google + Microsoft working together on a program. Focusing on some automatic areas (typing, multiplication tables). PARCC emphasizes even less of this and more on analytics. Looking at different on-line options.

Meeting adjourned: 10:20 a.m.