

Groton Board of Education
Special Meeting Minutes
October 30, 2016 @ 1:00 p.m.
Zbierski House

Members Present: Kim Shepardson Watson-Chairperson, Andrea Ackerman-Vice Chairperson, Katrina Fitzgerald, Gretchen Newsome, Rosemary Robertson, Rita Volkmann, Jay Weitlauf, Lee White

Members Absent: Gary Baker

Also Present: Michael Graner, Susan Austin

Chairman Shepardson Watson called the meeting to order at 1:20 p.m. The Chairman stated that the purpose of the meeting was to conduct a Board retreat.

The retreat began with a book talk on Amanda Ripley's *The Smartest Kids in the World*. The Board members reviewed the key concepts from the book and noted how the lessons from the education systems in Finland, South Korea, and Poland were relevant to Groton Public Schools. Following the book discussion, the Board viewed a TED Talk by Amanda Ripley speaking about her work.

The next portion of the retreat was a review of the district's strategic plan. Mike Graner and Susan Austin reviewed the various curricular and instructional initiatives being implemented in the district currently and those planned for the next few years.

- Elementary School Level - The Board focused on the Readers' and Writers' Workshops as instructional models K-8. In addition, the group discussed the introduction of math workshops at the K-5 level.
- Middle School Level - The group also discussed the work being proposed for the middle schools; both Cutler and West Side may be proposed as magnet schools, and both schools are participating in a feasibility study to possibly implement the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program.
- High School Level - The discussion of Fitch High School initiatives focused on the academic integrity of the college prep courses, the feasibility study for an IB Career-related Program, and the expansion of AP courses.

The workshop also included a review of the reorganization being conducted in the Special Education Department with the establishment of an Academy Program at two elementary schools and the Transition Academy being relocated to the Central Office facility.

The strategic plan discussion ended with a proposal for the Board to create a committee to develop a more formal written strategic plan that would include multi-year goals as well as cost of each initiative.

Kim Shepardson Watson explained the recommendations of the Board's Ad Hoc Operations Committee. The Committee was comprised of Chairman Watson, Jay Weitlauf, Katrina Fitzgerald, and Rosemary Robertson. The Committee reviewed the Town Council meeting schedule and

proposed a similar meeting scheduled for the Board consisting of two C.O.W. meetings and two regular Board of Education meetings. The Ad Hoc Committee also recommended the elimination of all the standing committees with the exception of the Policy Committee. They also proposed that the Curriculum Committee would be replaced with a Curriculum and Instruction Council and that the work of the Finance/Facilities Committee would be discussed by the whole Board during C.O.W. meetings.

Those recommendations were discussed at length with the Board reaching consensus on the following proposal:

- The Board would hold two C.O.W. meetings and one regular BoE meeting per month.
- The Policy Committee would be scheduled to meet on the first Monday of the month with the meeting beginning at 5:00 p.m.
- The second and third Monday's of the month would be scheduled for C.O.W. meetings; the second Monday would typically focus on the referral list and the third Monday would focus on finance and facilities issues, as well as curriculum and instructional matters.
- The fourth Monday will be the regularly scheduled BoE meeting at the Town Hall Annex.

The retreat ended with a discussion regarding Board leadership and the responsibilities of Board members considering their influential role, especially when making public comments.

MOTION: Weitlauf, Robertson; to adjourn at 5:00 p.m.
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY