

**The Hamilton Wenham Regional School District  
School Committee Retreat  
Buker Elementary School Administration Offices  
Wednesday, June 27, 2018 6:30 PM**

**Present:**

Michelle Bailey  
Jeanise Bertrand  
Kerry Gertz  
Gene Lee, Vice Chairperson  
Stacey Metternick, Secretary  
David Polito, Chairperson  
Peter Wolczik, Assistant Secretary

**Also Present:**

Michael Harvey, Superintendent  
Kevin Fahey, Retreat Facilitator

**1. Call to Order**

**6:30pm**

David Polito calls the meeting to order at 6:44 pm.

Kevin Fahey, coordinator/mediator for meeting this evening. Mr. Fahey has extensive educational background, specifically coordinating educational leadership programs.

**2. Goals for Meeting**

- a. Develop agreements about group practice
- b. Clarify and build a shared understanding of the differences between “committee and administration” work

Kevin reviews the retreat agenda for the evening. Provides overview of the activities and the ultimate goals desired from the meeting.

**3. Who are we? What will we learn together?**

- a. Introductions, review agenda, goals
- b. The most important job of the School Committee is...

School Committee Members introduce themselves, their day jobs, and what they believe to be the most important role of the School Committee.

**4. What do we need from each other to do our best work?**

- a. Some thoughts about norms
- b. Individual → pair → small group → agreements

This is “the norm conversation”. The end product of this activity will be the solidification of 6 written norms for the group, which will ultimately create a higher functioning group.

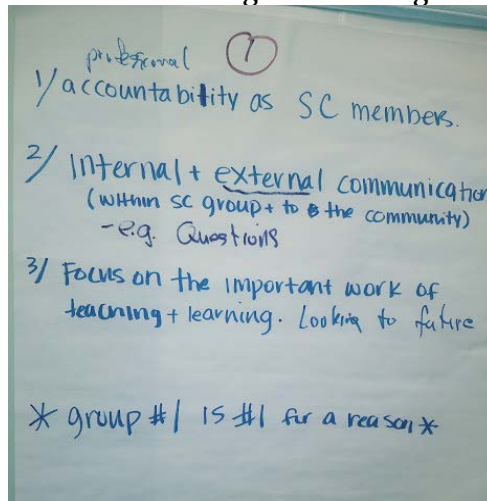
Process follows the steps below:

- Each School Committee member will work individually to develop their 3 most important norms (norms can also be defined as what members need from each other);
- School Committee members pair up and consolidate their lists into 3 norms;
- School Committee members split into 2 groups (4 members each) and further consolidate their lists into 3 norms. Each group writes the agreed-on norms on the provided post its;
- School Committee members then have the opportunity to ask one another about the norms they have shared:
  - Michelle Bailey asks about Group 1's norm #3, "Focus on the important work of teaching and learning". Stacey Metternick explains this norm as a way to focus on forward thinking and growth.
  - David Polito asks about Group 1's norm #1, "Accountability as School Committee members". Jeanise Bertrand explains that this norm is about demonstrating respect for other School Committee members, showing up on time, remaining in consistent communication should you find yourself running behind, etc. Gene Lee adds that this is particularly crucial with regards to warrant meetings. Kerry Gertz adds her interpretation as knowing and honoring one's role.
  - Kevin Fahey asks about Group 2's norm #2, "Respect". David Polito talks about respect meaning the way we treat each other, other bodies/entities, the way we interact with community members. David further explains that this is also known as professional accountability, as School Committee members should be consistently following through with all their responsibilities. Respect also entails not speaking over one another and allowing space for others to finish thoughts and ideas. Michelle Bailey points out there is no established policy guiding members speaking during meeting.
  - Kerry Gertz asks about Group 2's norm #1, "Information for informed decision making". Michelle Bailey elaborates on this norm, explaining that Peter Wolczik had mentioned the Turf Field project, and the fact that it is not easy to find information about the background/history of this project. Kevin Fahey suggests adding the word "relevant" to this norm, as it is possible, also, to have too much information.
    - Kerry Gertz points out that Group 1's norm #3 and Group 2's norm #1 intersect ("Focus on the important work of teaching and learning" & "Information for informed decision making")
    - Stacey Metternick and Jeanise Bertrand point out that Group 1's norm #2 and Group 2's norm #1 are very similar ("Internal & external communication [within school committee and with community]" & "Information for informed decision making")
    - Peter Wolczik points out that, in addition to the similarities pointed out in the bullet above, that we can also consider the similarities for Group 1's norm #3 ("Focus on the important work of teaching and learning")
    - Discussion regarding how similar and intersecting all norms written are. Kevin Fahey asks if any group members adamantly disagree with any of the norms written (no disagreement).

### **Group 1 Norms**

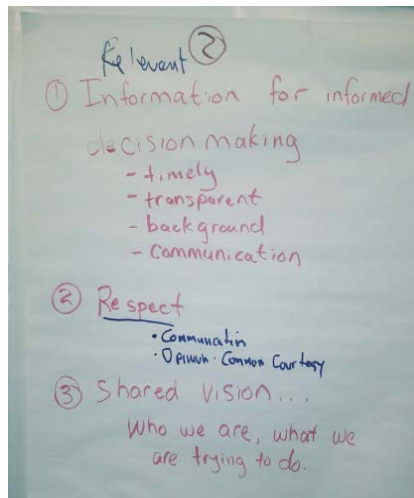
1. Professional accountability as School Committee members;
2. Internal and external communication - within School Committee and to the community (e.g. questions)

3. Focus on the important work of teaching and learning. Looking to future.



**Group 2 Norms**

1. Relevant information for informed decision making
  - a. timely
  - b. transparent
  - c. background
  - d. communication
2. Respect- communication, common courtesy
3. Shared vision - who we are, what we are trying to do

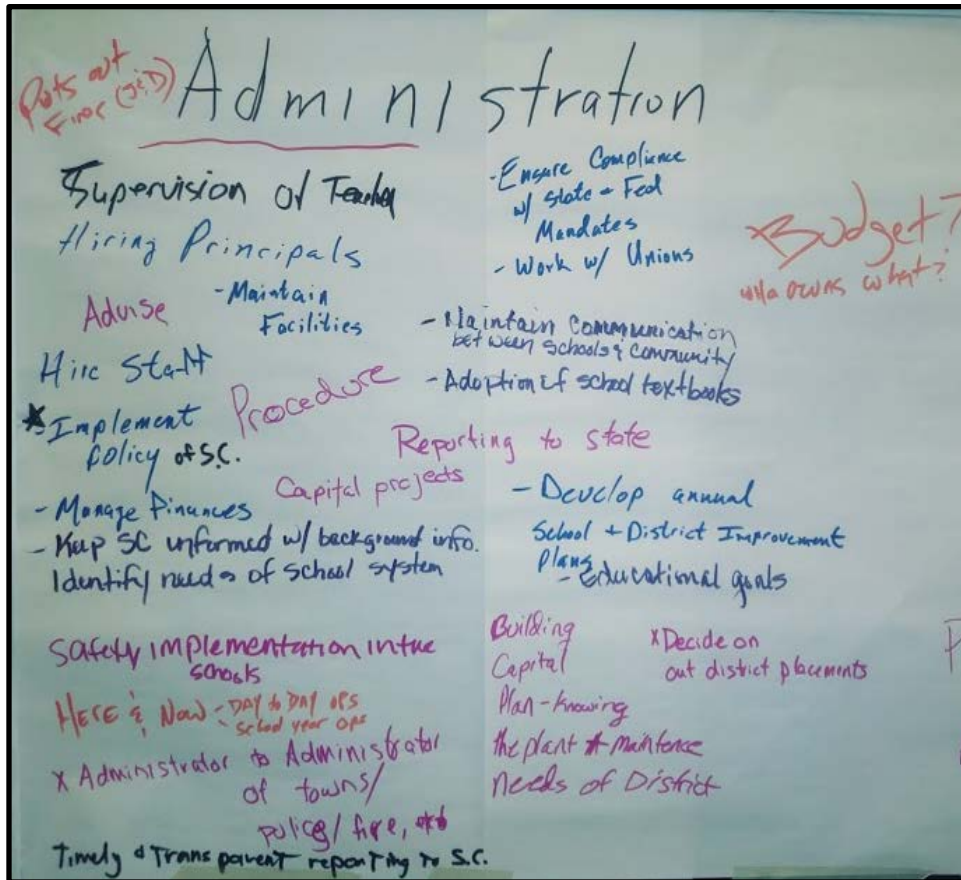


**5. What is School Committee work? Administration work? Where are the questions?**

a. Chalk Talk Exercise - Whole Group

Kevin Fahey explains this process as a brainstorm. Every member will grab a marker and write their thoughts in response to the question: "What is the work of administration/ and what is the work of the school committee?" Also included is the questions section- the responsibilities that are expected but are either shared responsibilities or responsibilities that are not clearly designated to either administration or the School Committee.

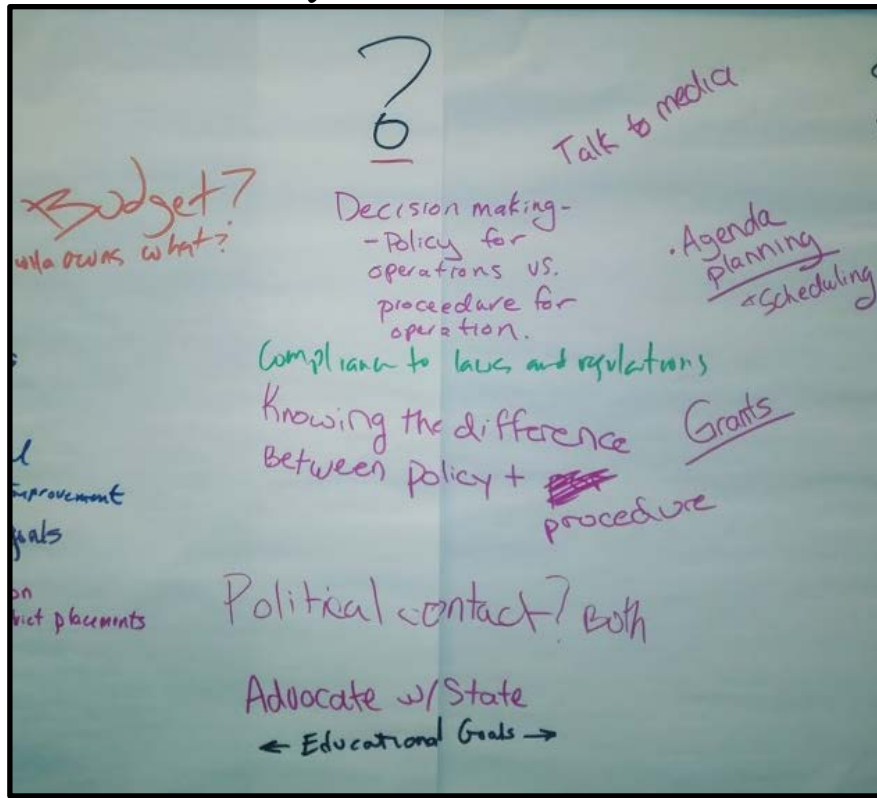
# Administration



- Supervision of teachers
- Hiring principals
- Maintaining facilities
- Advise
- Hire staff
- Implement policy of school committee
- Procedure
- Manage finances
- Capital projects
- Keep SC informed with background information
- Identify needs of school system
- Safety implementation in the schools
- 'Here and now' - day to day operations, school year operations
- Administrator to Administrator of towns/ policy/ fire etc.
- Timely & transparent reporting to School Committee
- Ensure compliance with state and federal mandates
- Work with unions
- Maintain communication between schools and community
- Adoption of school textbooks
- Reporting to state
- Develop annual school and district improvement plans
- Educational goals



# Questionable



- Talk to media
- Decision making
- Policy for operations vs. procedure for operation
- Compliance to laws and regulations
- Knowing the difference between policy and procedure
- Grants
- Political contact
- Advocate with state
- Educational goals
- Agenda planning
- Scheduling
- Budget who owns what?

School Committee members have a broader discussion on overall trends they notice through the written responsibilities.

Michelle asks, and Dr. Harvey talks about weekly or more meetings with Teachers' Union. AS an example, the last day of school is a half day to avoid employee grievances.

Michelle asks about district improvement plan, and Dr. Harvey speaks about administration taking this on. Dr. Harvey also mentions role in strategic planning.

Jeanise asks about the ? "decisions making policy for operations versus procedures". Michelle explains that decision making is a shared responsibility, hence she wrote it in this category.

Discussion regarding media inquiries. Jeanise says she is occasionally contacted. Members agree that this responsibility is subject specific. Discussion: local inquiries can be handled by committee members, and global/national can be handled by Dr. Harvey. Dr. Harvey meets

regularly with Chronicle reporters and was contacted by The Salem Evening News last week about the user fees.

David talks about the “budget- who owns what” responsibility. He intentionally wrote it between administrative and questionable columns. Jeanise adds that administration is needed to report to School Committee, and School Committee will not know the detailed aspects of budget unless administration reports this to them.

Further discussion regarding budget, with Jeanise recommending that members ask questions. Michelle and Stacey state their frustration with not being able to ask questions about more detailed budget information.

Kevin Fahey asks for clarification on the definition of shared/ separated roles in the budget process.

Discussion regarding opening up line item discussion to public form, with David stating this could take days. Stacey disagrees and thinks there should be a better communication of needs. David states School Committee members have access and they have every right to bring it up during these meetings and discussions around the budget. School Committee members embark on a passionate exchange of ideas around issues relating to the transparency of the budget process.

Kevin Fahey acknowledges School Committee members’ dedication to this subject, and asks given the nature of the conversation and strong feelings about it, “moving forward, what do you need from each other to do your best work?”

David points out that he heard Stacey say that she needed the budget information in different form. Moving forward, David suggests, we can implement practices in order to see needed documents beforehand. Stacey mentions the process should start earlier.

Discussion regarding budget timeline, with Kerry intervening that this is a specific issue and suggests moving to the larger conversation regarding norms.

Discussion regarding School Committee’s responsibility in determining priorities. Gene Lee points out that the towns want District to prioritize OPEB, but it then becomes the School Committee’s responsibility to make that a priority.

Discussion regarding trust issues and the miscommunication/misunderstanding of Towns and District.

David states that a clear understanding of long term goals is needed in order to have a deeper understanding and move forward in the right direction when the school year begins.

[specific issue discussion (budget) continue]

Discussion regarding different working environments and different preferences on being alerted to changing agendas or availability of documents. David states he has set up alerts on his laptop, but understands others may not employ a similar strategy, or not find it helpful.

## **6. Final Words? Thought? Reflection?**

Most members pass, however members who offered thoughts are summarized below:

Kerry: First time participating in a meeting styled like this, and it shows we can come to agreement.

Jeanise: I appreciated what was said. The things we wrote out and talked about and we should all take time to be reflective and take this responsibility of being the voice for community seriously

David: Thank you everyone for coming. This is the way I think and operate in a lot of things. I take this all very seriously. I have love and admiration for this district. I found this helpful and helps me to do my job better.

Kevin Fahey: Thank you all for being so welcoming and having me here this evening!

**August 1st 7:00 pm: set goals**

**August 29th 7:00 pm: vote on goals**

David will email current goals to all School Committee members, and per request of Stacey, he will also email about the superintendent review process.

**7. Adjournment**

**9:00pm**

**I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
ADJOURN AT 9:06 PM.**

**MOTION by Kerry Gertz; SECONDED by Jeanise Bertrand.  
Unanimously approved by 7 members present.**