

Hanover School Oversight Committee



Public Meeting, April 30, 2013

History

- Town Warrant Article One, Special Town Meeting - May, 2012. Approved \$40,000 to hire an external consultant to conduct a review of the Hanover Public School System via an established School Oversight Committee.
- Five Committee Members
 - (1) School Committee - Will Mariner
 - (1) Hanover Students First - Courtnie Graybill (Secretary)
 - (1) Board of Selectman - John Barry
 - (2) Town of Hanover Citizens - Joan Port-Farwell & Sandi Leitao (Chair)
- Staff Support
 - Troy Clarkson, Town Manager
 - Ann Lee, Administrative Assistant

Timeline

- First Meeting - July 2, 2012
 - Goals of Committee
 - - Mission Statement
 - *“The mission of the Hanover School Oversight Committee, is to hire an external consultant to evaluate and identify inefficiencies within the Hanover Public School System operations and finances and to include the Town as it relates to the schools. The goal of the evaluation is to ensure each educational dollar is being spent to the fullest extent possible while providing the highest quality of education. Based on the findings of the consultant, the Committee will partner with the Town of Hanover school Administration, School Committee and Town Manager to improve efficiencies, reduce redundancies and generate new revenue opportunities with the goal of improving the quality of education for all students within the Hanover Public School system.”*
 - RFP - Three Main Focuses
 - Review School Administrative & Staffing Structure
 - Educational Performance
 - Focus on Finances
- Formal RFP posted - August, 2012
 - Nine Inquiries
 - Four Proposals Submitted
 - Two Asked for Interviews
 - Committee Vote to Hire The Abrahams Group- September, 2012

TAG Presenters

- Mark Abrahams, CPA, President, The Abrahams Group
- Susan Parrella, Former Waltham School Superintendent
- David King, Former Waltham School Business Manager
- www.theabrahamsgroup.com

Scope

I. Review School Administrative & Staffing Structure

- Conduct an organizational overview and provide a detailed organizational snapshot with job descriptions for key personnel and staff. This will be achieved by conducting a thorough evaluation of existing organizational structure and staffing and suggest changes as deemed most efficient or productive.
- Review the operational relationships between administration officials, principals and department heads and make recommendations for operational efficiencies and empowerment of staff.
- Benchmark 3-4 comparable School Departments for staffing levels and operational practices
- Evaluate Teacher/student ratios and offer recommendations

Scope

II. Educational Performance

- Establish matrix of current Town of Hanover educational performance outcomes, i.e., evaluate results from educational tests: MCAS, PSATs, SATs and others as suggested by the consultant and determined by the Town
- Review and make recommendations for efficiencies and costs of professional development

Scope

III. Focus on Finances

- Review current budget and make recommendations for opportunities for improvement or streamlining of budget and internal financial processes
- Review acceptance, operations, and accounting for grants and gifts and make recommendations on improving and/or documenting procedures
- Benchmark 3-4 comparable School Departments for spending trends and level of Town funding
- Review current budget and make recommendations for appropriate staffing to achieve educational goals as well as keeping class sizes consistent throughout the district

Reports

- The Focus on Finance (III) was originally submitted on April 9, 2013
- The Review School Administrative & Staffing Structure (I) and Educational Performance (II) were originally submitted in one report last week

Benchmarks

DESE DART

- District Analysis, Review & Assistance Tools
- 2011 and 2012 data
- Appendix II contains a lot of benchmark data

Communities

Two local south shore districts

- Norwell
- Scituate

Two DART districts

- Holliston
- Wayland

Benchmarks - In Perspective

Enrollment

- The Hanover Public Schools enrollment is 2,735 students
- 6.3% of the student population are low income
- 15.9% have disabilities
- 0.6% are English Language Learners
- These fall within the ranges of the four peer districts and all are less than the State average
- 94% of all Hanover's school aged children are enrolled in the public schools compared to the 91% State average.

Spending

- FY 2011 PPE is \$10,965
 - Lower than the State average of \$13,361
 - Lower than all four peer communities.
 - Of the 242 municipal reporting districts for the FY 2011 EOYR, Hanover ranked 213th lowest spending on a per pupil basis.
 - Hanover would need to spend \$6m more to reach the state average
- For FY 2012, only ten (10) municipal districts reported lower per pupil expenditures.

Benchmarking

Average Teacher Salary

- \$68,747
- Lower than the other two peer communities that reported this indicator
- Lower than the \$70,304 State average

Professional Development

- Per teacher FTE was \$1,708
- Falls within the ranges of the two peer districts reporting
- Lower than the State average of \$3,200

Benchmarking

Performance - Level Schools

- Three (3) of Hanover's schools are *Level 1* Schools (Cedar, Sylvester, High School) (the highest possible ranking)
- One (1) is a *Level 2* School (Middle School)
- One of Hanover's schools had insufficient data (Center) with limited test groups
- Center/Sylvester is considered one school in Hanover; however, DESE considers them as two schools

Performance - Other

- CPI Achievement Gap - ELA - Hanover (94%) fell within the range of the peer districts and higher than the State average of 87%
- CPI Achievement Gap - Mathematics - Hanover (86%) was the lowest of the peer districts and higher than the State average of 80%
- CPI Achievement Gap - Science - Hanover (89%) fell within the range of the peer districts and higher than the State average of 79%
- Annual Drop Out Rate - Hanover (0.1%) was the lowest of the peer districts and lower than the State average of 2.7%
- Graduation Rate - Hanover (96%) fell within the range of the peer districts and higher than the State average of 85%
- % Students Absent <10 Days - Hanover (79%) was the highest of the peer districts and higher than the State average of 68%

Benchmarking Big Picture Results

Proficiency

- 83% of Hanover students were proficient or higher in English Language Arts
- 68% were proficient or higher in Math
- 72% were proficient or higher in Science
- While each of these proficiency ratings was lower than the four peer districts in all three subjects, Hanover has increased its proficiency in each of these three subjects over the last five years

Benchmarking Big Picture Results

Hanover

- Spends substantially less than average per pupil for all pupils
- Spends substantially less on a comparative basis for students who attend out-of-district schools based on their needs and placements
- Receives less Chapter 70 Education Aid than most school districts
- Spends 14% more than required for net school spending
- Has good performance results as evidenced by several indicators as compared to the State average and peer districts.

Organization, Education Performance and Financial Focus Big Picture Results

- We found a culture of frustration, alienation, mistrust, poor communication, and a system that lost 25 teachers in six (6) years
- We found a town and a school system with significant turnover
 - Town: Finance Director, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Assistant Town Accountant
 - School: Interim Superintendent, Interim Business Manager, Interim PPS Administrator
- We also found through the Interim Superintendent a movement toward greater openness, communications and outreach

Review School Administrative & Staffing Structure and Educational Performance

DESE regulations 603 CMR 2.03 which are based on standards of effective policy and practice

- Leadership and governance
- Curriculum and instruction
- Assessment
- Human resources and professional development
- Student support
- Financial and asset management

Organization, Education Performance and Financial Focus Big Picture Results

- We were struck by the passion of the teachers who sought a vision, greater empowerment, greater involvement, greater alignment of curriculum and organization, and feedback
- We were also impressed with the achievements of the district especially in light of Hanover's per pupil spending
- Our Reports identify over 40 recommendations to improve the efficiency or the effectiveness of the Hanover Public Schools

Fact Finding

- Conducting Focus Groups at each school
- Interviewing Administrators
- Reviewing Job Analysis Questionnaire (JAQ)
- Results of a follow up survey that was posted online using Survey Monkey
- Hanover Schools Website and/or reported information on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website:
 - School Improvement Plans for each school
 - MCAS, Results and Report Cards, including a power point presentation of the Overview of 2012 MCAS Results
 - Mission, Beliefs and Core Values
 - Enrollment Information
 - School Year Information
 - Financial and organization/staffing data
 - K-12 Professional Development Plan
 - Class size

Leadership and Governance

- Establish a district vision
- Align job responsibilities with job descriptions
- Elementary schools should be functioning on the same accountability standards and criteria
- Clarify line of authority with regard to curriculum and instruction
- Adjust class size

Curriculum and Instruction

Align Curriculum

- Vertical alignment helps to ensure that appropriate skills and curriculum content are addressed each year between grades
- Horizontal alignment helps to ensure that appropriate skills and curriculum content are addressed across the same grade and across sections of the same course
- Middle and high school alignment
- Elementary alignment
- Communication and coordination

Assessment

Data analysis to improve instruction and test outcome

- At the High School, Data Teams have begun to look at the PSAT results for math, writing skills and critical reading. The Data Teams have identified problems in critical reading and finding the main idea in text.
- Data Teams at the Middle and Elementary levels work to analyze MCAS scores and determine if any performance decline falls in a specific type of test question (multiple choice, short answer, open response, or writing prompts) and/or with in a specific subgroup (students with disabilities, low income students, and English language learners/former English language learners). This analysis helps to examine teaching practices and areas that may need different or more emphasis.
- Data Teams at all levels should begin to expand by using walk through data (classroom practices) to help enhance learning beyond the data driven approach. In addition, the walk through data would help to identify teachers that should be observed by their peers as part of a professional development initiative.
- Hire Math coaches on the elementary level. The coach would be a professional development specialist in Math. The individual would provide ongoing support and modeling to teachers.

Human Resources and Professional Development

Planning and involvement effectiveness

- Professional Development for staff is necessary and should be more than just sitting and listening or writing
- Effective professional development should be focused on the improvement of student learning through the improvement of the skill and knowledge of educators
- Specific professional development activities would follow from a well-articulated vision
- It should be evaluated continuously
- Teachers should be informed as to how the professional development activities are expected to raise their capacity and improve their practice and performance.
- An opportunity for teachers to observe experts, to be observed by and to receive feedback from experts, and to engage in analysis of their own practice results is a practice that should be implemented. Good professional development is a necessity to improve student performance

Student Support

School Improvement Plans

- The School Improvement Plans (strategic plans) should be working documents that address goals set by each school and/or the district
- They should clearly document how the school plans on improving instruction and raise achievement for all students.
- Should follow the guidelines of DSAC (District and School Assistance Center) and have each school address how they would strengthen curriculum and instruction; improve educator effectiveness; and use data to support student achievement.
- High School should address how they prepare students for college and careers.
- The School Improvement Plans would have a tie to professional development if this guide were used

Technology

- Staffing: Replace School Technology Director with Town-wide Chief Information Officer
- Software: Improve use of eSped or use Aspen Special Education
- Network, email and internet connection: Eliminate Town-wide duplication
- Technology training: Expand teacher and technician training
- Facilities and Equipment: Develop and fund long term capital plan
- Consolidation: Combine IT operations of Schools and Several Town Departments

Finance

Budget

- Strengthen the budget as a communication tool, policy document and annual financial plan
- Move to site based budgeting with personal services and expense control; report transfers to school committee
- Expand principals' budget role
- Utilize SoftRight, eliminate dependency on spreadsheets
- Institute periodic budget to actual reports
- Include non general funds
- Adopt a budget calendar

Grants, Gifts/Donations, Student Activities

Move to SoftRight

- Eliminate dependency on spreadsheets
- Review all School non general funds and agree as to their classification, descriptions, and balances
- Institute periodic budget to actual reports
- Institute periodic balance sheet and income statement reports
- Create access for school business manager
- Standardize policies, procedures, and forms
- Train, train, train, train, train

Centralize all financial controls, decentralize over time

Revise chart of accounts

- Separate grants from gifts/donations and student activity accounts
- Add program segment to facilitate SPED reporting
- Segregate grant balances by fiscal year
- Create individual non general funds

School Committee should formally accept grants

Student activity checking account reimbursements and payments should be approved by the School Committee

Summary

- Move to site based budgeting, provide periodic reporting
- Centralize financial controls; decentralize over time
- Conduct a financial systems analysis to process, account and report on payroll, purchasing, accounts payable and cash receipts processing to maximize SoftRight
- Consolidate school and town IT
- Above all, Strengthen the professional culture of the school system
 - Develop a vision through a transparent and inclusive process
 - Communicate
 - Align curriculum vertically and horizontally
 - Align professional development
 - Align jobs and job descriptions
 - Use data results for instructional improvement
 - Maximize IT and financial systems support to the district

Summary

- Hanover has a great opportunity to strengthen its school system
- In order to move forward, Hanover must address some, if not all, of the recommendations in this report
- Developing a learning community where the district establishes a vision, aligns curriculum, uses data as a source of instructional improvements and professional development and ultimately provides high quality education for all students.