

Social Service PILOT and Comparative Impact Study Committee
Conference Room 1 7:30 PM Memorial Building Framingham, Ma
Draft Minutes
March 22, 2006

Note: If a word or sentence is blue and underlined click for the link.

Note: A tape recording of these minutes is available upon request

Attendance: Bob Berman, Dawn Harkness, Cynthia Laurora., Laurie Lee, Nick Sanchez, Steve Orr absent; John Speranza, Jim Palmer, Wes Ritchie

Bob Berman called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

He welcomed our guests Dr. Chris Martes Superintendent of schools and Anna Cross from the Parent Information Center

Dr. Martes said they collect data to report student information to the DOE.

Anna Cross said that the information that they have is based on 2004-2005 numbers . Information based on the number of students in shelters, group homes etc. is just something they do not collect.

In general there is a specific definition of homeless children. It is based on the McKinney Vento guidelines.

Based on this definition, there are 135 homeless students residing in Framingham, throughout the community. In addition, we have 20 homeless students who are now living outside Framingham and enrolled in Framingham, we pays for this. There are also 22 students that are homeless and living in Framingham and going to schools outside of Framingham. In that case the other school pays.

For the last two situations, we split the transportation 50-50.

Nick asked if we sent the schools the addresses we are using? Laurie said yes, but they didn't seem to get it. Laurie will re-send it.

Laurie asked what exactly do we pay?

She brought out the appendix from the benchmarking study. What is considered the cost for a student?

Dr. Martes explained that for a regular day student it is \$8998; SPED \$13,047 and Bilingual \$10,524

He added that the costs different this year are small: It is a couple of \$100 more this year

Bob asked if they will be able to go over our address list and see if there is a number of students from these addresses. They agreed.

Nick asked about the costs. Are these from the general funds or do these include all special revenue, the ~ \$16M.

Dr. Martes thought it was inclusive

Bob asked, if there were 200 less students in the school system, would the impact be significantly greater than the actual dollar cost?

Dr. Martes said yes if they were all in one grade. If they are spread out, the impact wouldn't be increased in our large system.

There are 8300 students in Framingham schools.

We have 27% free and reduced lunch.

Dr. Martes said that ballpark there are:

We have total SPED 18%

We have total limited English 15.8%

Kids defined as homeless 1.6%

Children also have fees waived: parking, athletic

School transportation fee is \$25 or based on income

Bob asked if they can estimate what % of the above students are from the addresses we sent?

Anna said that she did not use the address list. She only looked at the number of kids that were defined as homeless.

(Inaudible..)

Cynthia asked if the number of homeless students fluctuates.

Anna said yes.

Two years ago we had a number of kids living in hotels. Now they are putting them in transitional housing.

Laurie asked, of the 155 students mentioned as homeless, what % are in SPED?

Anna said she will look at that. She wondered if that 18% number was consistent. IF there is a way to get a statistic like that, without breaking confidentiality can you tell us?

Bob asked if there are any programs run in conjunction with the SSA providers?

Anna said there are programs run through the McKinney grant. Working with the shelters and group homes

This makes sure the kids are getting to school and getting the services they need. They There needs to be some consistency.

We run a parent child home program that is grant funded.

Community Partnership Program that is state funded. 70% of that grant goes to provide scholarships for homeless children.

Laurie asked for a list of these.

Anna agreed.

Laurie discussed the project bread program for all children and offered to bring her the information.

Dawn wanted to follow up on Bob's comments She said that we have lots of SSA's in town and she is curious to what degree the school department utilizes the SSA's:

Substance abuse services, parent teen, violence.

Anna said that from her perspective, the community partnership brings all the organizations together. They do access the SSA's to go into the schools and offer support and help with the parents and counseling issues. Often too they are familiar with many of the families from the work they are doing.

We do go out and link up with those services.

Dawn asked how much it would cost the school system if those agencies were not in town to refer out to and the services had to be provided in house?

inaudible answer

Dawn asked if it is helpful to have the agencies in town.

Dr. Martes said the schools have an extensive network of psychologists and social workers... they do a lot of work with substance abuse, parents..

Anna added that they are able to access specific grants for mental health and other issues. (inaudible)

They work collaboratively with the agencies and refer many of their students out. We can go in and work with preschool teachers and families experiencing mental health issues.

Laurie asked for a list of collaborations.

They said they will get that from Nancy Keller

Laurie also asked if the grants she is discussing included in the total grant dollars we see in the benchmarking study.

Anna said some are small and continuing.

Dr. Martes said they are rolled into.

Laurie asked if they refer one of their students to an agency, we heard from Wayside the dollar costs if it is an hour of service or a day program, does the school pay for that or is it privately paid for by insurance?

Dr. Martes said it depends on the circumstance and type of services. That would be part of a collaborative decision.

Some we would pay for and some would pay privately.

Nick suggested we could look at the list on line.

Nick was surprised that mental issues or problems are a big issue now.

Anna said that they are seeing more issues in younger ages. They are finding students in pre-schools experiencing mental health issues, this is not specific to Framingham, it is national.

Expulsion rates in pre-schools are causing people to look at the issue.

Children are experiencing mental health issues. They are coming from families that are experiencing mental health issues and they are having difficulty functioning in pre-schools.

These issues existed before but we are seeing more of that.

Dawn wanted to clarify that the issues are not coming from children of homeless families, this is across the board and precinct.

Anna said it is not limited to economic or precinct.

Cynthia said that she knows it is expensive for children to be placed out of district. Are there, or have there been in the last few years, children from the list of addresses attending those programs?

Dr. Martes said he will find that out.

Cynthia was surprised at the figures.

Dr. Martes is advocating for more relief from the state.

The circuit breaker right now is the town pays the first \$32,000. The state picks up 74% of the remaining cost. They reimburse the schools. IT can be a huge budget buster. \$250-\$300 thousand dollars is a typical high cost.

We do have a few new students this year, we have more students moving in that need these types of schools.

Dr. Martes said he just added \$1M to the budget to cover those students.

They are trying to advocate a change in that formula.

If it is not residential but is a day program, SPED transportation costs is enormous and not factored into the cost reimbursement.

He said they will try to find this information.

Dawn asked if they can break it down into a list of children who are from Framingham and those who are homeless.

Dr. Martes said the bigger number is 155. There are 155 students in outplacement into day and residential.

Framingham does a lot to keep students in.

We keep them in and hire aids.

Laurie said the SPED transportation costs are high. Are those separate or rolled into the benchmarking study?

Dr. Martes said that in the final report they are rolled in.

All this benchmarking comes from the DOE website. IT was all apples to apples. It does include that.

Laurie said that she was confused about the benchmark appendix. Page 3 says per pupil spending plus grants is \$12,042 vs. the other number of \$8998

Dr. Martes said that includes the total number of grant dollars.

Nick is now confused. The two numbers are different.

Dr. Martes said that the \$8995 number does not include grant dollars. The \$12,042 does

Nick asked if the school has anything to do with trust revenues.

No one understood what that was.

Nick showed the state description of trust revenues.

Dr. Martes said probably not. He has never seen this.

Teacher retirement is a pay your own way system. The town doesn't pay that.

11% of our revenue goes into retirement.

Bob summed up and asked for the data, stressing that we are at the end of our work.

Cynthia said that as far as the influx and outflux due to SSA in town, is that a challenge to the department.

Dr. Martes said yes, it is a challenge. It is across the board not just SS kids. Budgeting and accountability is impacted.

Cynthia said that she read in the MWDN that Dr. Martes was surprised at the larger than expected enrollment this year.

Dr. Martes agreed and said our enrollment was expected to be flat for the next few years. But they had a large influx of Portuguese speaking students enroll. They had to open a second classroom to accommodate.

Dawn asked if that was related to SSA?

Dr. Martes said that he can't tell.

Anna said that is consistent with what she is seeing.

(Inaudible)

Cynthia asked about the 27.3% low income in the school. This comes from the free and reduced lunch number

Dawn asked if they know the income limited to qualify?

They said it is a complicated number related to income and number of children in family. And it has been consistent.

Dawn asked if they would describe them as the working poor. They said yes.(the tape stopped here)

Bob asked if there were more questions. The group said no, thanked Anna and Dr. Martes for coming.

Motion to adjourn Vote: 5 in favor 0 opposed 1 abstain