

2:30 PM School Committee Conference Room

Called for the purpose of discussing the new policy, to be rolled out in the Spring season.

Members Present: Ms. Nolan, Mr. Fantini

Also Present: Mr. Smith, Mr. Arria, Ms. Liss, Mr. Clark, Marc Levy, Mr. Galluccio, Mr. Childs

Student School Committee Members: Mr. Grassi, Mr. Escallon

In the absence of Mr. Kimbrough, the Chair, Mr. Fantini voted to elect a temporary Chair Ms. Nolan.

A quorum being present, Ms. Nolan called the meeting to order at 2:44 P.M. and read the call of the meeting.

Ms. Nolan gave a brief review of the MIAA eligibility which has not changed but probation for student on teams. More students will be able to get extra tutoring if their grade Ranges from 62.5 to 70.

Mr. Arria reiterated that in December the School Committee moved to change the academic grade from 67.5 to 70 for students to be able to continue to participate in sports. Tomorrow spring sports probationary number is going to be 60 as we check the eligibility range. It will be shared as we go thru the registration process. There are 60 students registered now until March 12. We will register approximately 500 kids but some will fall off. Sometime they can work toward eligibility that are on academic eligibility.

Ms. Nolan wants to clarify that the policy has been passed and will be put in place for the Spring season.

Mr. Arria stated that in December when it was passed the Winter season and the report cards were sent and students were advised of their eligibility. Anthony was going to share the information so kids know. At the end of 2nd quarter approximately four students fell between 60 and 67.5 for the Winter season sports.

Ms. Nolan asked what is the process to be sure supports are available to students. And how are they receiving notices and told what has to be done to participate?

Mr. Aria responded when students don't reach the academic probation standard grade of 70 which previously was 65 – 70 and now is 60 to 70. They are out of games for two weeks but are allowed to practice with the team and steered to the academic advisor, Mr. Saulnier. He seeks out students that are in that range, sends email and reaches out to Coaches so students can attend study halls which are 2-3 times per week. He has worked with teachers to be sure students know what work is required to participate in athletics. After two weeks they have to show me and Mr. Saulnier a progress report from teachers not only attendance, but effort and class participation then students are eligible to participate and be academically eligible. We also reach out to students with 75 or below or have a couple of D's., and share the information with parents to tell the students to come see us so they have a plan in place and academic success.

Mr. Smith added there was some concern about passing the motion at the time because Mr. Arria and I wanted to work with the coaches first for their support and then bring it to the teaching staff so they

2:30 PM School Committee Conference Room

would know that they are part of the eligibility process but the Committee wanted to move ahead faster. We all want kids going to programs at our school that lead to post-secondary success.

Ms. Nolan stated that we heard from five coaches that support the change. We did not hear any opposition from teachers.

Mr. Fantini said you had a system in place before we changed. Does this new structure need more budgetary support? Are we doing the same? Mr. Saulnier is a stipend position which doesn't seem to be enough.

Mr. Smith replied there are some benefits and challenges. The academic coordinator has been in place for two years which we did not have in place before that. There are challenges whether one academic coordinator can give the support that a number of our athletes may need help with. There is some room to grow in terms of providing individualized support. There is some accountability for the students too. If we expanded the parameters for student support and hire more tutors, that is something that we could not handle through the CRLS discretionary budget. Maybe Mr. Arria has some funds in athletics.

Mr. Fantini asked how will the new system engage parents.

Mr. Smith stated that the way he understood it was we are developing the new system together and as the Sub-Committee meets we can develop how to communicate with care givers and families. We may need to hire additional tutors and need funding for that. Tutoring may not be the only thing we need. We may need some sports consultants, social emotional counselors, a stronger support system. He thinks he can handle some with the discretionary funds but would come to the Committee for additional funds if needed.

Mr. Grassi put together some guidelines/suggestions. If a student plays Fall sports they need to be kept on track. Sports is a guideline for some of them and it is an easy way to fall off. Make sure grades are kept up throughout the year and not just during the sport season. Freshmen and JV kids start not being on target. Teachers need to sign off when on probation. More cooperation of all people in the schools.

Mr. Escallon thinks the teammates need to be informed because it is easier to engage when it is a friend/brother, however, a student may not want the whole team to know if they aren't doing good in school

Mr. Grassi added to provide the students with the same guidelines we want them to be involved in sports for all 4 years not just 2-3 years. The goal is to make sure kids out of season keep those standards. Maybe tell kids you won't be eligible if your grades keep up falling. Treat all teams equitably. The basketball team has a regular study hall throughout the season. When I played soccer and lacrosse there weren't supports. Offer tutors regularly throughout the year will be helpful.

Ms. Nolan noted that those are great suggestions. Please give to Ms. Gist in writing. You were sensitive to acknowledge if someone was falling behind.

Mr. Smith stated that there are a number of things that the students have put forward and are in line with what we have. How do we keep a student that is out of season engaged? There are other non-high school leagues that students are involved with. We want sports to be the hook to bring them into

2:30 PM School Committee Conference Room

other co-curricular activities. The athletic department does not have responsibility if student's grades drop during the off season. We do have off season football programs and a weight lifting program. We can partner on and extend the opportunity for coaches to be part of this Sub-Committee. We need to think about study halls across the spectrum. The school can recommend that the coaches do that. I need some coaches here to see how we can make it happen. Maintain the program. How do we talk to students/teams that may need academic support? The lacrosse team had time set aside time to talk about toxic masculinity but that took a lot of time away from practicing. How do we get everyone involved? It is a challenge to have meetings after school. Having a support plan in name only won't work. What changes can we bring in for year 3 and 4 to support all of our teams equitably.

Ms. Nolan sees one coach here. Were coaches advised of this meeting? It sounds like there was not an explicit invitation.

Mr. Smith do you want us to invite one or two coaches?

Ms. Nolan said only School Committee members can be on the Sub-Committee she will confer with Mr. Kimbrough and figure out how to include more voices.

Mr. Escallon asked so Mr. Smith and Mr. Arria are not members of the Sub-Committee?

Ms. Nolan said only School Committee Members can be on the Sub-Committee but we can create a task force so others can be on the Committee.

Mr. Escallon added if we can all participate in the conversation that would be great.

Mr. Fantini what is the role of the Deans in the houses as far as helping with academics? Is this only an athletic function?

Mr. Smith thinks there is a role for the Deans to be involved. He thinks the task force is the way to go, having more voices at the table is better. In the school community around grades in general there is a tension point threshold of a 70 and what goes into a 70 GPA, related to proficiency. There needs to be a larger conversation with Deans and Teachers around grades. F's are a 50. From 50-70 is a 20-point differential, however there aren't many F's on report cards now. What does a 65 mean in eligibility in proficiency and skill development? All staff need a deeper conversation of what is in that grade.

Mr. Fantini what is going on in the upper schools intermurals?

Mr. Arria responded that we maintained the structure when he arrived 4 years ago sport. There are one or two who complete at their school and some sports set up tournaments to play each other. It varies, right now we do cross county, basketball, orienteering, and soccer. Everybody has to be on the same page at the schools. If we do competitive interscholastic's do kids get cut, do we have time, and a space? We are limited because buildings are used for after school programs.

Mr. Fantini stated if a student has a 50 they can take courses in the summer to increase their grade. If kids can take a course in the summer do they get credit recovery?

Mr. Smith yes and the grade goes on the transcript for that year.

2:30 PM School Committee Conference Room

Mr. Fantini we talked about student leaders a few years ago. Is that still in the works?

Mr. Arria responded that he would like a student leadership program but it is hard to fit into the day. There is funding that would be helpful, expand the athletic dept. that would be ok. We did something last year during CM but it was not enough time. We did 2 meetings per month. At the league level I have been chairing a group that do some leadership workshops twice a year where each school sends 10-12 students to participate.

Ms. Liss asked in expanding the support network for kids with 60-70 and if some kids are lagging at 75, if that number were to come up how many kids would be on the radar and how do we reach more kids for support?

Mr. Arria there are quite a few students that are in the 75 number. When it was lowered to 60 I knew it would affect maybe 7-10 kids. Depending on how robust we want to be it takes personnel, resources and someone who can follow up daily with kids. Maybe 60 kids fall 75-85. I'm willing to make athletics accessible to as many kids as possible. We have 20-40 events per week with busses, coaches and other personnel. If that is the expectation, we need to decide on what resources we have so we have a robust program as possible.

Ms. Liss saw the new probation in the DYK newsletter. Is there any printed flyer about the program? Will it be provided on paper to bring home so it reaches more people?

Mr. Smith responded there is still some of our population that use paper but it is easier to do it electronically. We do encourage 9th graders to try out for things they may not think they are fit for. We don't advertise that way but it's a good idea to send to all community caregivers, with data attached, saying being involved in sports increases your chances of going to college.

Mr. Arria stated that we provide a handout every season with eligibility standards every year. We do a night when 8th grade parents come in and visit 8th grade classes and give handouts. We put flyers up at the school and on twitter.

Mr. Smith stated are we doing enough to attract diverse kids who may not consider themselves to be on a team. In general, we speak to a group of kids. Some say that is not for me and we know sometimes there are other factors involved. We are trying to change their concept of honor student we can also apply it to athletics.

Ms. Liss added in the freshman guide there are a lot of student voices.

Ms. Nolan stated this is a larger conversation, many sports have cut policies and we don't want to have more students that are cut.

Ms. Nolan opened the floor for the public to speak.

Mr. Galluccio stated that this should not be adversarial. We don't want to lose the message. People got caught up in the number. I agree with what Mr. Smith says but on specific issues we might disagree. If you put the GPA number aside. I'd like to see kids flagged at a 75. We all want to communicate better, more interventions, more supports, inspire better and utilize coaches. Coaches have an opportunity to

2:30 PM School Committee Conference Room

play a different role to hold kids to higher standards. Teachers want control, authority, and be able to tell the coach I want you to be able to validate what happened in my classroom today. This is not about resources, it's about communication, working together and acknowledging we are here for the betterment of the kids. What is your plan for academics, what will you do to make this a priority? There are times when I want to call a teacher or coach and ask do you know if there is something going on. We need to be sharing that information. How can we do this better? The middle school sports are important and student's being held accountable to academics with supports and good study habits. Have another student speak to Freshmen and tell them how he gets his homework done speak. The hardest part is Parent intervention and Coaches building a relationship with them is most important. Coaches can get more information then can push the kid harder. How to better connect with family's needs to be shared between teachers, coaches, guidance counselors. Probation is great it makes everybody stop and say we have a problem and the intervention works so the kid is successful.

Ms. Nolan reminded people that the policy has been changed we have moved forward and this is a check in to see how it's going if we need to make adjustments. This is not only for student athletes but for all students that need support.

Mr. Childs thanked the Sub-Committee for the attention to this and hopes the task force is created. In 2014 the DOE changed the laws around suspension zero tolerance did not work. The MiAA should have been more active in the suspension policy in athletics. There has been steady progress and that's exciting. This in not only about the four students that were not eligible but there are other kids that didn't even bother to try out. Students knew something was wrong when students were cut out. Wrap around services and the supports, social emotional issues and how can that be imbedded into sports.

Ms. Nolan appreciates his involvement in FOCA and this process. She appreciates the update regarding the policy implementation and where communication has been made. We will discuss a task force and involve other people. Our written policy on our website needs to be updated carefully and comprehensively. Communicating on the benefits of sports requires more communication.

Mr. Fantini moved for adjournment at 3:57 PM.