

**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
100 MAPLE AVENUE
SHREWSBURY, MASSACHUSETTS**

**MINUTES OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE SESSION
Conference Room A
Shrewsbury Town Hall**

Wednesday, October 5, 2016

Present: Ms. Sandy Fryc, Chairperson; Dr. Dale Magee, Vice Chairperson; Ms. Erin Canzano; Mr. John Samia; Dr. Joseph Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools; Ms. Mary Beth Banios, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Ms. Barb Malone, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Patrick Collins, Assistant Superintendent for Finances and Operations; Ms. Barbara Connery, Representative from the Massachusetts Teachers Association; Mr. Gary Chalmers, Co-President of the Shrewsbury Education Association; and Ms. Lori Blasioli, Shrewsbury Education Association member. Absent: Mr. Jon Wensky, School Committee member.

The executive session was opened by Sandy Fryc at 6:08 pm for the purpose of hearing a Level III grievance made by a Shrewsbury Education Association member on a motion made by Erin Canzano, and seconded by John Samia. Roll call votes are as follows: Dale Magee, yes; Erin Canzano, yes; John Samia, yes; and Sandy Fryc, yes.

Level III Grievance

Barbara Connery presented to the committee the issue of the grievance, which revolves around the denial of application for credit or reimbursement for four graduate level classes for which SEA member, Lorrie D'Ascanio sought approval. Barbara Connery said that the proposed classes from Learner's Edge were related to Ms. D'Ascanio's field of study and to her instruction, and therefore should have been approved. The denial of these classes, according to Ms. Connery, violated the contract between the SEA and the School Committee, which triggered the grievance, and she also suggested that the decision was financially motivated to slow down the progress of this educator through the salary schedule. According to SEA leadership, Learner's Edge classes had been approved before, were affordable, and offered classes to specialists who struggle to find appropriate classes. The approval process of graduate classes had been changed in the previous year, and Ms. Connery contended that the change itself should have been re-negotiated, and that it was not in the authority of the Assistant Superintendent. Gary Chalmers and Lori Blasioli discussed survey data that they received when they surveyed their membership about Learner's Edge classes being approved or denied. They contend that the approval process was inconsistent, and that membership was confused by the approval of some and the denial of others.

Mary Beth Banios presented to the committee her perspective. She referred to the contract with the SEA, and pointed out the language which gives the Assistant Superintendent the authority to approve

or deny graduate classes. She also referenced the Professional Development Committee, of which Gary Chalmers, and nine other SEA members, are members. The PDC worked on this issue of the approval process in the spring of 2015 due to the fact that with the influx of on-line courses, that rigor and quality were becoming a concern. This committee researched this topic and came to consensus that rigor and quality were standards of qualification for the process, and that syllabi, reading assignments, and professor's credentials needed to be submitted as part of the approval process. Mary Beth Banios submitted to the School Committee the email that went out to all staff in June of 2015 highlighting the outcome of the PDC. In the case of Ms. D'Ascanio, Ms. Banios sent her other choices of classes, and informed the committee that this educator did indeed take two Learner's Edge classes, found two other classes, all of which were approved, and therefore, this educator was qualified to move up on the salary schedule.

Gary Chalmers and Lori Blasioli argued that those other classes came at a higher price, and were not as affordable as the original Learner's Edge classes, and that the approval of two Learner's Edge classes, and not the four, was inconsistent. Mary Beth Banios spoke of her concern about the quality of Learner's Edge, but understood that there was value in taking those classes with a group of teachers and approaching it as a study group. She also recognized that Learner's Edge provides classes for subject specialists, which are difficult to find (Ms. D'Ascanio is not a specialist, as she is a Grade 5 English language arts and social studies teacher).

After the school committee asked a few clarifying questions related to contract language, Learner's Edge qualifications and evaluations, and the role of the Assistant Superintendent, the meeting came to a close.

Adjournment

On a motion from Dale Magee, seconded by John Samia, executive session was adjourned into open session at 7:01 pm. Roll call votes are as follows: Dale Magee, yes; Erin Canzano, yes; John Samia, yes; and Sandy Fryc, yes.

On a motion from Dale Magee, seconded by John Samia, open session was adjourned at 7:02 pm. Roll call votes are as follows: Dale Magee, yes; Erin Canzano, yes; John Samia, yes; and Sandy Fryc, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin H. Canzano

School Committee member

Documents referenced:

1. A document from Mary Beth Banios detailing a sampling of graduate level courses submitted by SEA members for approval that were denied

2. A document of an email dated June 1, 2015 re: Course Approval and On-Line Courses that Mary Beth Banios sent to staff
3. A document submitted by Mary Beth Banios from Learner's Edge entitled "The Finish Line"
4. Grievance Packet