Name of Committee: Override Study Committee – School Programs Task Force

Meeting Date: January 9, 2014   Time: 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: Town Hall

Members Present:

    Beth Jackson Stram (Chair)   X   Lisa Serafin Sheehan

X   Jim Stergios   X   Timothy Sullivan

Staff Present and Participating: William Lupini, Peter Rowe, Jennifer Fischer-Mueller, and Scott Moore

Other OSC Members Present and Participating: Susan Wolf Ditkoff

Jim Stergios acted as Chair in Beth's absence. Jennifer Fischer-Mueller introduced Alan November. She described Mr. November as an expert in Education Technology and someone who had consulted with the PBS for a number of years. Mr. November gave a presentation on the use of technology in the classroom. He wanted to provide context about the technology plan and about its alignment with the curriculum. He said the plan was not about technology but was about information. He described how students get information in the Internet age and talked about where once information was pre-selected it is not anymore. He used an example of the Iranian hostage crisis and provided a demonstration. He talked about the transition away from books to and to digital resources (iTunes U as an example.)

Mr. November talked about some of the important reasons to invest in education technology including that the common core tests are taken on computers and that web content is important information for testing.

Jennifer Fischer-Mueller discussed how the district framework and strategic plan framework goals work together and did a demonstration that drilled down from the broader frameworks into individual curriculum elements and lessons.

There was a discussion about infrastructure and data dashboard and where Brookline falls short in technology. Scott Moore provided some information about the availability of computers at each school in Brookline as well as Brookline's device per student average being behind the state and peer district averages. There was a discussion about bandwidth and Mr. November identified this as the top priority, noting getting to 1GB per school was a worthwhile short-term goal. He noted that school districts in the United States were probably not the best comparisons and identified the approach in several other countries as being preferable. He also identified teacher devices and library revisions as important priorities.

A series of questions and answers followed, based on the questions provided to the School staff prior to the meeting. Jim made clear that the questions were not "his" questions but were those

of the Task Force and also noted that they were not a criticism of education technology and were questions about the PSB plan itself.

There was a discussion about the education technology effort at each school. There were noted disparities from school to school. Jim asked about the ET Specialists at each school. Scott Moore talked about their role and about the lifecycle at each school. He said the ET Specialists were responsible for the culture of technology at each school. He said he met with them monthly and that they had varying backgrounds. Dr. Lupini talked about the disparity at schools based on PTO contributions. Jennifer Fischer-Mueller talked about being behind an already low benchmark. Jennifer Fischer-Mueller said the benchmark was 2 standard desktop computers, a teacher laptop, a mounted projector and a document camera. The goal was also 1 laptop cart for each 4 sections at a school. There was a discussion about Heath based on its PTO contribution of computers and Scott Moore's comment that they had a strong ET Specialist.

An extended conversation on computer labs took place. Tim asked if computer labs were a thing of the past and if an investment in technology could render them obsolete, perhaps helping to identify additional classrooms. Most but not all the schools have labs and some have lost the lab due to space. There was a discussion about the educational benefits of labs with Susan noting she wanted them as a means of providing for advanced programming and graphics. There was a brief discussion about whether laptops could provide comparable functionality. Scott did not think the labs could be eliminated as part of the PSB's plan.

Jim asked if the implementation should not be targeted, at least initially, toward older grades. Mr. November suggested that younger grades would in fact be better and Jennifer Fischer-Mueller did not agree that more targeted rollout was appropriate.

There was a discussion about investment leading to cost efficiencies or better student achievement. Scott suggested there would not be reduced costs. Mr. November said the application of knowledge grows through better access to technology and is measurable citing a Frederick Douglass technology application as an example.

Jim asked about flipped classrooms and collaborative learning and how the implementation of technology would be rolled out. Jennifer Fischer-Mueller said they would not prescribe any particular means of rolling technology resources into teaching but said the PSB had curriculum and professional support to help foster its use.

Lisa asked how the schools decide what technology to purchase, noting that the plan called for iPads and not tablets. The plan called for a shorter life cycle helping to increase the likelihood that devices would keep up with needs.