

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)
WORKSHOP APPROVED MINUTES

Auditorium
Administration Building
15 Charter Road, Acton

May 6, 2021
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Diane Baum, Kyra Cook, Adam Klein, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, John Petersen, Nora Shine, Angie Tso, Yebin Wang
Members Absent: Ginny Kremer
Others: Ben Blumenthal, Andrew Schwartz, Marie Altieri, Dawn Bentley, Deborah Bookis, Peter Light, Beth Petr,

Tessa called the ABRSC to order at 7:08 p.m.

1. **Welcome**

Mr. Light welcomed everyone to the workshop and introductions were done. It was noted that Ben Blumenthal and Andrew Schwartz joined the meeting although they will not be sworn in as Acton members until after Town Meeting in June. The goal of the workshop is for School Committee members to provide feedback on the district strategy that will be voted at the next meeting.

2. **Discussion (Small Groups/Whole Group)**

Members broke into small groups and were asked to spend a few minutes searching “School Committee pandemic” to see what came up. After sharing their impressions with their group, everyone talked about the common themes. A member summed it up saying that the exercise made him realize the enormity of the pandemic this year. He said it didn’t seem “like a lot” until he read about it now. The enormity of it all – parents trying to help and teach their children, legal implications for school districts, and trying to keep a sense of normalcy, were comments made. Several members felt like they had PTSD and that they needed “to take a big breath”.

3. **Overview of process in developing the strategy**

Mr. Light reviewed the process using the slides in the packet, noting the interruption created by the pandemic.

4. **SWOT Analysis Discussion/Debrief**

Members returned to new groups and discussed the Aggregate SWOT Analysis that they had all contributed to individually prior to the meeting. When they returned to the meeting, each person was given 3 colored stickers for each of the four categories and asked to prioritize the top three subheadings in each category.

a. Critical Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

- i. ***Which threats most need our attention or they will negatively impact our continued growth as a district?*** (Mr. Light noted that starting with the threats was intentional because it directly affects how the Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities are addressed.)

#1 threat by far was not having community support (25 points)

#2 change (15)

#3 racism, hate bias (13)

ii. Which weaknesses could we address that would have the greatest positive impact for our district?

These results were consistent with our goals.

#1 issues of access race/racism/bias (16) 4 put it green

#2 assessment (11)

#3 inconsistent/inequitable outcomes for students (9)

#4 change (8)

iii. Which opportunities should we take advantage of that can propel our work forward?

#1 Engagement in Teaching and Learning (23)

#2 Student support (19)

#3 DEI work (11)

#4 Communication (10)

iv. What are our greatest strengths that we can leverage to most effectively address threats, weaknesses and opportunities

#1 Mission, Vision, Values (17)

#2 Community Value for Education (15)

#3 Diversity (9)

#4 Student Engagement/Motivation (8)

Members agreed that this was a very helpful way to consider priorities and stay focused given all of the information contained in the aggregate document. There aren't many opportunities for members to get the big picture of what the collective group is thinking. It's also very valuable to know the tensions/disagreements that exist between members regarding the categories and priorities. It was noted that some items are not in the School Committee's purview. Given the "green/inexperienced" nature of the current School Committee, some education will be provided based on some of the comments. Mr. Light will share this information with the leadership team as they finalize the District Strategy.

5. Feedback on the District Strategy

Small group discussions of the overarching objectives in the District Strategy considered the following questions and then returned for a group discussion:

- Is there anything there that may have been relevant a year and a half ago, that might not be now?
- Might be missing that we should consider?

- As we exit a pandemic, what should top priorities be in this strategy?
- Other thoughts/feedback?

a) Engaged Learning

- Improve based on best practices learned this past year, including remote learning, rather than focus as it was written, and integrate this into the culture of professional learning.
- Build a community process where each school has an opportunity to create a plan that will allow differentiators between them that are more intentional than apocryphal.
- There must be a shared vision between the community and the school district.
- 1.5 may not be as relevant, but should be maintained, some felt it was not needed.

b) Inclusive Practices

- We need to find a way to do anti-bias and anti-racist training without feel like we are doing anti-bias training.
- What do you mean by “Restorative Justice” – should be defined, more related to the issue than the consequence. Helps students have strong relationships with each other.
- Expansion of diversification of staff is important.
- Inclusive practices will enhance our curriculum
- It’s meaningful learning, in the “real world”.
- Relook at leveling classes that is historically exclusive.
- It’s important to emphasize relationships including student to student, not just student to adult.
- Can we look at our cultures to be sure our unique cultures are all taught in our schools? This should include all of our student body.
- The Policy subcommittee was thanked for their efforts laying this groundwork.

c) Equitable Opportunities and Outcomes

- All Day Kindergarten (ADK) should be a priority, especially now that the federal government wants to offer free preschool.
- Apply what we’ve learned from the Remote Learning Program. It was noted that the flexibility that the Administration had to design this program, based on MTSS, was invaluable. There was also a lack of discussion about disproportionality.
- How do we measure equitable opportunity? Is there a qualitative method other than for math and reading?
- 3rd grade literacy rates are the gateway to learning; 8th grade math proficiency is a gateway to high school success.
- Is ADK the best use for our resources?
- Looking at the full range of students and the gaps due to pandemic, how will all students be challenged to work at their own level?

d) Social-emotional Learning (SEL)

- What does competency mean?
- We need unified language and consistency.
- How will students be comfortable engaging after the pandemic? How will we overcome the loneliness that has been created? How will we make up for the social skills that have been lost this year? Adjusting to being maskless.
- Each student needs to feel accepted and included in their school.

- How will we add opportunity for schools to work collaboratively, projects, teamwork?

Members reviewed the District Strategy 2021 - 2026 in the packet. The Alignment of Objectives and Initiatives graph on page 7 is an early diagram from a School Committee meeting. The more points of intersection, the more important the item is. The diagram will be updated once the new issues are confirmed. Two or three metrics will be decided on for each of the key outcomes and indicators on page 8. The Administration will report on them throughout the year so progress can be measured. Action plans will be built out for the year's initiatives.

6. Wrap Up/ Next Steps

- In the Fall 2021, the Annual District Goals will be presented to the School Committee.
- The School Improvement Plans will be shared with the Committee and approved by the Superintendent in the Fall. Several members were particularly happy about the new process that will make them more consistent in the Fall.
- Build out will continue on the Strategies.

At 9:47 p.m. John Petersen moved, Amy Krishnamurthy seconded and it was unanimously, **VOTED**: to adjourn the ABRSC.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Petr

List of Documents Used:

Agenda with Discussion Groups, District Strategy: Process Overview 5/6/21, ABRSD District Strategy 2021-2026, Draft School Improvement Plan 2021-2022 for comment, Draft Timeline for Improvement Planning 2021-2022, Aggregate SWOT Analysis, Superintendent's Report of Entry Findings (Spring 2019)