

Malden School Committee
Subcommittee on Technology and Student Services
October 27, 2014, Subcommittee Meeting Notes
Superintendent's Office

Attendance: Maria Doucette, Chair; Pietro Cicolini; Larry Silverman; Adam Weldai
(Notes taken by Cicolini)

Also Present:

- Joyce LaTulippe, Technology Innovation Specialist and Consultant to the school district
- Michael Schiavo, Manager, Information Technology, Malden Public Schools
- Joseph Gray, parent and former Malden School Committee candidate

-MEETING OPENED at 6:32 PM

1. Subcommittee met the new Information Technology manager, Mike Schiavo, for the first time.
 - a. Doucette inquired about the status of the high school computers.
 - i. Schiavo reported that the firewall was coming online that week.
 - ii. Computers are back up and operational.
 - b. Cicolini inquired about the status of the district's ability to administer the online PARCC exam.
 - i. Schiavo was not on board last year when Ferryway piloted the PARCC exam.
 1. Schiavo was working in Lynnfield when he saw a pilot of the exam.
 2. Issues that surfaced in Lynnfield stemmed from the PARCC's end and not the district.
 - a. He heard that many of the issues that did surface at the Ferryway pilot were similar to Lynnfield's findings, in that the issues were on PARCC's end and not the district's.
 - b. LaTulippe was present in Malden for the pilot and concurred with that report.
 3. Schiavo informed the committee that Pearson (entity running PARCC) is on west coast time, so when we start our testing, their customer service department is not available until approximately 11:00 AM (Eastern Time), if not later, to assist with those issues.
 - ii. Schiavo also reported that the district was receiving a limited supply of (about 2,200) Google Chromebooks through a grant with Sprint and in cooperation with Senator Markey's office.
 1. By the 1st/2nd week in November, we should have the 200 Chromebooks for the staff.
 2. By the 1st/2nd week in December, the remaining 2,000 Chromebooks for the students will arrive. Not enough for all students.
 3. These Chromebooks are coming at the district really fast.

- a. Schiavo has had little to no lead time to properly prepare our system to receive these new devices or determine what is necessary to keep them running.
 - b. This project was literally dropped in his lap within the last several weeks.
 - 4. Hopefully, these Chromebooks will give the district another option when it comes time to take the PARCC exam if needed.
 - c. Silverman asked Schiavo if the Chromebooks represented a potential first step in taking the district entirely onto a Google based platform, to include document sharing, email system for students and staff, and collaborative working.
 - i. Schiavo would like to see the district go in that direction
 - 1. It would save money on Microsoft Office license renewals/upgrades.
 - a. Weldai works in Belmont, and informed the members that Belmont Schools have switched to Google based platforms. Weldai raised the concern that he does not like Google Docs and Spreadsheet and other teachers in the district also find it hard to make the transition to Google programs from the Microsoft Office suite. Some teachers still refuse to use the Google programs.
 - i. Schiavo responded by saying that any transition is hard.
 - 1. Proper training/professional development is needed.
 - 2. Full integration is important.
 - 3. Support must be in place.
 - 4. Google Docs may be more limited in terms of the word processing options available, but Google provides only the most widely used tools/features from Microsoft Word and Excel into their programs.
 - a. Schiavo contended that most users would not find themselves wanting a feature in Google Docs or Spreadsheets that is not there. The more mainstream, more commonly used features are there.
 - 2. The traffic on our server would be minimized considerably and our cyber storage capabilities would increase.
 - a. Google would store the files on their servers.
 - b. Initial downloads/uploads would be the most traffic that our lines would see.
 - c. Subsequent changes to documents are small data sets that transfer back and forth
 - i. In other words, you are just transmitting the change, not the entire document when you save a change.

3. Huge potential for student to student or student to teacher or students to teacher collaboration.
 - a. Real time changes.
 - b. Online chat windows during projects.
- d. Doucette and Cicolini asked Schiavo where he saw our district technologically deficient and if he had any “wish list” requests already.
 - i. Schiavo made no real requests, but indicated that the Student Information System (“SIS”) needs a lot of work.
 1. Schiavo is a proponent of using the SIS we have in place already.
 - a. The system we have generates reports, compiles data, and will function well enough to do what we need it to do
 - b. The old manager used to export the data from this system and into his own database, and then manipulated the data to generate his reports.
 - i. Reports were not entirely reliable that way.
 - c. Schiavo will utilize the tools we have more effectively to maintain and monitor our systems and hardware.
 - ii. The state of our network is good.
 1. We may need to upgrade servers soon, which are still running old versions of Windows, but generally, we are in good shape.
 - iii. Schiavo also mentioned that the district is receiving, as part of the Sprint grant, 500 “hotspots” for high school students.
 1. These are devices that someone can place near their laptop or smartphone, and the hotspot will provide a wireless signal that can be used to access the internet.
 2. Mr. Joseph Gray had multiple questions about the hotspots and was concerned that the rollout of these devices and of the Chromebooks mentioned earlier was not being planned well enough.
 - a. He is a member of the parent organization at the high school and already spoke with the high school principal about the rollout of the Chromebooks.
 - i. He recalled how concerned the parents were at the lack of information that the principal had on these devices and on how they would be rolled out
 - b. Mr. Gray is a technician at work and volunteered his services if it would assist Schiavo and his department to implement the rollout.
 - c. Schiavo stated he was a member of teams in previous jobs for rollouts much larger than this one. While he may have received this project at the last minute, he is confident his team will be able to execute the rollout.
 - i. If help is needed, the request will go out.
 - iv. Lastly, Schiavo reported that the high school wireless network would soon be upgraded/expanded with \$125k we are receiving from Sprint.
 - e. Silverman confirmed with Schiavo the size and amount staff in the department.

- i. Schiavo reported that Information Technology has 3 technicians, 2 network techs, and himself.
 - f. Schiavo will continue to think about the wish list and will forward such requests to the Committee through the superintendent.

2. **MOTION – by Silverman – To adjourn the meeting**

- a. Seconded – by Cicolini
- b. VOTED – Unanimous in favor

-MEETING ADJOURNED at 7:35 PM-