



## School Committee Considers New Way Of Measuring Success

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How do you gauge the success of children in school? Standardized testing is one way, but the district is looking beyond those measures with the possible adoption of the Whole Child Initiative Project, a program supported by both the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and the Massachusetts arm of that organization.

On Tuesday, Andrea B. Schwamb and Jennifer Butler, assistant principals at the Morse Pond School, presented details of the initiative to the Falmouth School Committee at their meeting at the middle school.

Ms. Schwamb was trained last fall at the ASCD headquarters in Virginia to facilitate this model of instruction. The ASCD is an educational organization comprising college professors, superintendents, principals, teachers, and school committee members. It is focused on supporting educators with political advocacy, sponsoring professional development and licensing programs, and providing educational resources for its members. Superintendent of Schools Dennis A. Richards is president of the state chapter.

The goal of the whole child initiative, Ms. Schwamb said, is to create a school environment that is healthy, safe, engaging, supportive and challenging for children.

Both she and Ms. Butler showed how their school, as well as the district, are taking steps to make these concepts a reality.

The Morse Pond School's purchase of a salad bar, adoption of a mileage club during recess to promote walking, and coordination of a nutritious snack month, Ms. Schwamb said, are ways her school tries to create a healthy environment. Beyond that, she said, the district's policies on immunization also address this issue.

In terms of safety, she pointed to the PeaceBuilders program, which looks to address bullying while promoting an atmosphere of kindness, as one way the school focuses on this concept.

Ms. Butler pointed to several examples of how the Morse Pond School engages students, ranging from differentiated instruction, in which each student works at his own level, to hosting author visits, to holding a Battle of the Books competition, pitting classrooms against each other in an effort to promote reading.

The school also tries to support its students through a variety of avenues, Ms. Schwamb said. This includes the involvement of the parent-teacher organization in providing enough money for every student to attend a field trip, she said, which are often tied to the curriculum. In addition, she said, students will read the morning announcements, another way in which staff tries to support them.

Morse Pond Idol, a take-off of "American Idol," the school's Talented Eager and Motivated (TEAM) program, and Morse Pond's after-school activities, such as the chess and Lego clubs, are ways that students are challenged beyond normal academics, Ms. Butler said.

The district, they said, does its part in all these areas, but both women challenged the school committee to do more. The first step, Ms. Schwamb said, will be for them to adopt the initiative system-wide.

The committee agreed to consider this at the policy subcommittee level before making a decision. School committee member Samuel H. Patterson Jr. wondered what purpose the whole child initiative would serve in Falmouth. "Does everyone sign this and we have a smile on our face and it just gets buried on a pile somewhere?" he asked. "How does this fit in with what we are doing?"

Ms. Butler said it would be used as a guide for staff and administrators when making decisions. "It would be something you take into consideration when making those decisions," she said.

"This is really precipitated by standardized testing," Ms. Schwamb added. "We can take the results of standardized tests as part of the child," but there are other issues that need to be looked at as well that the whole child initiative attempts to address.