



Mt. Greylock Regional School District

School Committee Education Sub-Committee Minutes

Date: July 14, 2020

Start: 2:33 PM

Adjourn: 3:31 PM

Location:

Zoom

In Attendance:

| Committee Members: | Also Present: |
|--|---|
| Steve Miller, Chair Christina Conry, Vice Chair Alison Carter, Secretary | Robert Putnam, Interim Superintendent Jake Schutz, MGRHS Principal Colin Shebar, MGRHS Assistant Principal Nolan Pratt, LES Principal Joelle Brookner, Director of Curriculum and Instruction Patrick Priester, Acting Director of Pupil Services Tim Sears, Director of Buildings & Grounds Amy Perry Mercier Christine Mastendino Foster Goodrich Geri O'Brien Jacqueline Vinette Janean Laidlaw Jennifer Szymanski Lindsey von Holtz Lynn's (Zoom name) Marty Walter Matthew Hane Maureen Andersen Pat Blackman Rob Mathews Stephen Dravis Susan Langman Wendy Powell |

| Item | Comments | Motion | Second | Vote |
|-----------------------|---|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Call to order | Meeting called to order by Steve at 2:33 PM | | | |
| Public comment | <u>Amy Perry Mercier</u> : Vice chair of PAC. Reaffirming statements made to SC last week on behalf of PAC. DESE guidance on special ed services in Dropbox folder. Must provide FAPE. Prioritize | | | |



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preschool and students with significant disabilities. Highlighted several key requirements from guidance.

Rob Matthews: Need to expect extended remote learning. Encourage adoption of Hyflex model for 20-21 academic year to provide flexibility and ensure implementation of all three scenarios.

Foster Goodrich: Can test for COVID in wastewater. At source point and for water district. Have the ability to test daily or weekly at wastewater treatment plant, or at any manhole for wastewater. Positive results detectable 10-14 d before symptoms. Challenge is funding. \$125K per year to test one source once per week. If all schools and jails drops to \$500/test. Less for academic year. Spoke with Senator Hinds; he had not heard of this discussion. Happy to discuss more with committee. Also, mechanical systems at MG have ability to increase or decrease ventilation – suggest looking at increasing ventilation to support cleaner educational environment.

Janean Laidlaw: Concerned about comments in iBerkshires article from the president of the PAC on disagreement with committee member. Disagrees with substance of the petition referenced, but agrees with right to petition. “One voice too many” - statement intended to stifle debate. Need to support free exchange of ideas.

[Please see **Appendix A** for full copies of above public comment.]

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|------------------------------------|--|-------|--------|-------|
| Approval of minutes | June 23 meeting | Conry | Carter | 2-0-1 |
| Reports from working groups | <p><u>Instructional</u> Joelle: Working out the three models. Committed to safety as a priority. Presentation given by Jude Higdon-Topaz on Hyflex model. Will share Hyflex doc.</p> <p><u>Governance</u> Rob: No update</p> <p><u>Technology</u> Pat: Distributed survey today to faculty and paras on how remote learning went. Rob: No matter what we do, will need familiarity with technology. Technology is key for a number of reasons. Need set-up in case schools close, any remote instruction. Eileen’s last day is Friday. She has been a tremendous asset. We are posting to replace her position and assigning some of her work to others until a new hire is on board. Steve: Do we have good technology in middle/high school for projecting, where teachers could teach and broadcast remotely? Jake: Have the hardware but not the software. Looking at Canvas for MG, has options for recording. Already have this software but would need to train staff, students, parents.</p> | | | |



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Facilities

Rob: Tim busy preparing classrooms. Ridding rooms of extraneous items. Optimizing classroom design. Hexagonal model allows the most seats with 6 ft distancing. Has completed LES and is working on WES.

Tim: Issue is desk size. Have individual desks at LES, but use tables at WES and MG. Can accommodate at least half of classrooms at WES with desks. At MG have 5-ft desks - students can be properly distanced but aisles are not 6 ft. Can fit 16-23 students per class depending on desk size. Figuring out what we can fit in classrooms, what other space is available.

Patrick: Looked at preschool classrooms. Social distancing hard for that age. Looked at hexagonal classrooms. Teacher concerns about children staying at desks; tables might work better.

Rob: Met with MGEA e-board to discuss challenges with getting children back in school.

Steve: Can we move resources between schools?

Tim: Yes, but don't have enough of things like desks.

Rob: Students in county decreased in recent years, can look into unused equipment.

Operations

Rob: No update

Wellness

Nolan: Group includes school nurses, school psychologists, local doctors and nurses. Discussed hand washing and sanitizing protocols, entry to building, lunch. Creating social stories about new protocols.

Mental health: Considering screeners for every student to stay on top of mental health (whether in school or remote).

Daily entry screenings: App or texting service for screening? Screening difficult because cumbersome and younger students coming off the bus may not be able to answer questions by themselves.

Rob: Discussed protocols with other orgs.

Steve: What about no-touch infrared thermometers?

Nolan: Childsy Art said temp taking is unreliable - false positives and negatives.

Rob: Foster's idea is interesting. Could we get town data? Would not be able to pinpoint any cases but would feel good if no traces in system.

[Please see **Appendix B** for more detail.]

Students

Jake: Starting to finalize plans to reach out to rising 7th graders and parents on orientation. Considering trainings and support for students and parents.

Discussion of back to school plans

Rob: Commissioner Riley made clear he wants in-person instruction or hybrid. Developing three plans. Focusing on feasibility study, what we need to increase skill in faculty. Need COVID-tracking procedures.



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| | <p>Upcoming meetings: Superintendent roundtable for Berkshire County tomorrow to share plans and ideas across districts. Thursday meeting of Commissioner and MASC. Expecting additional guidance, templates, if/then scenarios.</p> <p>Conducting a teacher survey to identify who planning to teach in person - what is our capacity. Then figure out how to fill the gaps.</p> | | | |
| Supplemental articles | Materials in Dropbox provided by Amie Hane | | | |
| Business not anticipated | None | | | |
| Adjourn | MOTION to adjourn at 3:31 PM | Carter | Conry | 3-0-0 |

Respectfully Submitted,
 Alison Carter
 Education Sub-Committee Secretary

Appendix A. Education Subcommittee Public Comment 7/14/20

Good afternoon. My name is Amy Perry Mercier, I am a parent of 3 children in Lanesborough Elementary School, and I am a practicing attorney. Further, I am vice chair of the Special Education Parents Advisory Council.

I am reaffirming the letter and statements made to the School Committee last week by members of the PAC. I did want to inform the this subcommittee that on the 9th of July, DESE released guidance which reiterated what I said to the school committee regarding the status of the law and the requirements on the district as it relates to children who receive special education services. The PAC has placed the memorandum in the Dropbox folder for your convenience.

In short, DESE reiterates that school districts must provide a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals in providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students.

Students with disabilities, especially those in preschool and those with significant and complex needs need to be prioritized for receiving in-person instruction. These students are identified as those with high needs as found in the IEP process (for example, those in substantially separate classrooms), students who cannot engage in remote learning due to their disability related needs, students who use aided and augmentative communication, those who are homeless, those in foster or congregate care and English Language Learners.

Again, I would point out there is a high portion of students with complex needs who also have co-morbidities that place them at higher risk for ill effects from contracting COVID-19;

Even if schools are operating in a hybrid or remote model, children with complex disabilities should STILL be considered for full-time in-person instruction;

In remote learning mode, an instruction and services model must be utilized. Further, those more complex students may require one on one in person instruction at home or in a community based setting;

In an in-person education setting, general education, special education and ELL staff must collaborate to establish appropriate modifications so students can receive their education in the Least Restrictive Environment;

Parents of students of special education students should be contacted in order to establish communication regarding their ability to access remote learning and observations regarding their well-being;

The guidance goes on to more fully describe what I have outlined with regard to the education requirements for students who receive special education if the school is in an in-person, hybrid or

remote learning mode. It describes the continued need for physical distancing and safety protocols for students. The PAC has advised the school committee pursuant to its legal obligation to do so that it supports 6 feet of social distancing, the use of masks by everyone if possible, and frequent hand washing, in addition to cleaning and other protocols, all supported by the best available science on this novel virus.

Amy Perry Mercier

To the Mount Greylock Regional School Committee,

The planning for the reopening of the Mount Greylock Regional schools is of utmost importance during the remaining months of this summer. It's clear that there are many concerns related to the safety and health of our students, faculty, and staff. It's also clear that while DESE has requested each school district to prepare plans for three different scenarios (fully in-person instruction, fully remote instruction, and a hybrid of the two), the idea that students will either be fully in-person or fully remote is unrealistic.

The simple truth is that regardless of the degree to which we open instruction on campus, any member of the student body, faculty, or staff who shows any cold or flu symptoms will need to self-quarantine for up to 14 days. Anyone who is exposed to someone with COVID-19 will have to self-quarantine. Anyone who interacts with immune-compromised family members will have to self-quarantine. We should expect this.

As the district continues with the planning for next academic year, we must design an adaptable system that allows for flexibility among students, faculty, and staff to be remote on any given day. To design anything else would be unrealistic, irresponsible, and would fail to meet the educational needs of the families and students in the district.

To that end, I encourage the School Committee to adopt a version of the HyFlex model to ensure that students, faculty, and staff can engage in meaningful instruction for the 2020-21 academic year. In addition to providing an effective way to educate our children while protecting the community, this model has the added benefit of responding to all three scenarios laid out by DESE.

Thank you,

Rob Mathews

Remarks to the Education Subcommittee of the Mount Greylock Regional School Committee:

I speak to you as a Williamstown taxpayer; a parent of three Williamstown Elementary School and Mt. Greylock graduates; a former member of the Mt. Greylock School Council; a former member of the Mt. Greylock faculty; and a former School Board member, although that was in Vermont. I say that to explain that my view on these remarks is informed by many perspectives.

I read a comment in an iBerkshires article of July 13th that concerned me. The article involves two people with whom I am not personally acquainted. It may well be that my concern is misplaced, because I was not present when the quoted remarks were offered, and context matters. Nevertheless, I would like to offer my view on the remarks, as these were quoted in iBerkshires.

iBerkshires describes the Chair of the Parent Advisory Council as in disagreement with a petition being circulated, and as in clear disagreement with a position taken by a member of the School Committee. Let me say, also, that I have absolutely nothing to do with the petition, and that the first I had heard of the petition was when I read about it in the iBerkshires article, *and* that I am inclined to disagree with the substance of the petition. I am, however, a firm believer in the United States Constitution and in the right to petition.

The Chair of the Parent Advisory Council is quoted as saying of this School Committee member that she, the Chair, had been told by members of the committee that this School Committee member's "voice" is just one on a seven-person panel, but, she said, quote, "this is one voice too many."

I wholeheartedly support civil public debate. This remark, however, seems intended to stifle debate. I am concerned and dismayed that anyone would seek to dismiss as superfluous a "voice," rather than to engage in the substance of the ideas offered by the speaker or petitioner.

Not only should we support the free and open exchange of ideas, but I would remind the Chair of the Parent Advisory Council that the "voice" that she found to be "one too many," and therefore gratuitous, is the voice of a duly elected member of a representative public board.

Janean Laidlaw

Appendix B. Wellness Committee Update

Mental Health Liaisons to outside organizations:

WES-Beth Persing

LES-Christy Viall

MGRS-Keith Jones

Mental Health Operations during the Academic Year:

Objective: Normalize feelings through forums and spaces where students and school staff can share, discuss, and process their experiences relative to Coronavirus.

Need: Formal Mental Health Screeners

WES- Beth Persing and Wendy Powell

LES- Christy Viall

MGRS- Geri O'Brien and Keith Jones

Preventing the Spread of Infection:

Objective: To keep all students, faculty, staff, and the greater community healthy through a set of protocols and precautions.

Need: PPE, Signage

Add supplies to the classroom list for elementary school students

Encourage students and staff to stay home when sick

Teach students how to properly use PPE; including how to discard PPE

Stress the importance of keeping hands away from the eyes, nose, and mouth.

Teach students and staff how to properly disinfect surfaces

Introduce Hand Washing Best Practices

Utilize hand washing signage

Continuously instruct proper hand hygiene

Use alcohol-based sanitizer when hands are not visibly soiled

Developing fixed schedules for hand washing (particularly, for younger students).(teachers to choose times in addition to upon arrival, before snack + lunch, after BR).

- Required times:
- upon arrival to school
- before eating
- before putting on and taking off masks
- before dismissal

Institute Limited Contact Policies

Relay the importance of minimal contact between students of a younger age

Spread Desks and seating arrangements to conform with Social Distancing Guidelines

Amend schedule to conform to social distancing guidelines

If necessary employ virtual meetings

Mask Guidance

Mask Guidance:

Students in grade 2 and above are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth.

Students in kindergarten and grade 1 should be encouraged to wear a mask/face covering.

Adults, including educators and staff, are required to wear masks/face coverings.

Exceptions to mask/face covering requirements must be made for those for whom it is not possible due to medical conditions, disability impact, or other health or safety factors.

Mask breaks should occur throughout the day (recess).

Masks/face coverings should be provided by the student/family, but extra disposable face masks should be made available by the school for students who need them.

Reusable masks/face coverings provided by families should be washed by families daily.

Masks/face coverings are required to be worn by everyone on the bus during school bus transportation.

Vaccinations Planning

Do not plan on a vaccine being ready for the 20/21 school year.

Guidance should be available upon the discovery of a vaccine

Potential for the vaccine to fall under school entry law.