

## MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee  
School Committee Meeting - Adams Visitor Center  
Monday, February 7, 2022 - 6:30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Mike Mucci, Bethany DeMarco, Mike Henault, Adam Emerson, Regina Hill

**REMOTE:** Nannette Reid, Erin Milne

**ABSENT:**

**OTHERS:** Superintendent Aaron Dean

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**103894 Call to Order**

Chairman Mike Mucci called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**103895 Public Comment or Questions - None**

**103896 Approval of Minutes - January 10, 2022**

**MOTION:** On Motion of Bethany DeMarco and second by Mike Henault:

VOTED: to approve the January 10, 2022. A roll call vote was taken. 5-0-1

**103897 Report of Treasurer/Business Manager -**

A. Scholarship Account - District Treasurer, Richard Jette, brought forward some comparisons between 2 groups, Berkshire Taconic Foundation and Bartholomew & Company. See attached handouts. He discussed with the committee what each group has to offer and the risks involved. Both companies are available to meet with the committee to discuss further. With the scholarship money housed at the bank in C.D.'s and money market accounts, it doesn't earn much interest which prompted us to look at other options. Obviously the bank is the safest route, but it's not keeping up with inflation. Also, the district does not have an investment policy and each organization would help us draft one. Our auditors also commented on this as well. We can continue to stay with the bank which is the safest route but funds will continue to dwindle.

Mike Mucci thanked Dick for the breakdown. Where are the contributions coming from with the 10 year plan? These are people adding to existing scholarships or adding new scholarships. Mike Heanault: what accounts for the variance of the spending ratios? Dick: Basically the scholarship committee at the high school makes the decision of how much to award. We do provide them with what money is available, since these funds don't have any endowment provisions, they can spend as they wish. It is generally 30,000 spent per year. Regina asked Dick what he felt between 2 groups? Going through Bartholomew doesn't give us much of a boost, might as well stay with the bank. If we want to see these funds grow, we need to use Berkshire Taconic, but it comes at a higher risk. Mike Heanault: We have a declining population, not sure if that means fewer contributions, if we reach a point where we are not getting contributions and having a year or two of loss, just worried about that risk. Dick, that is the risk, we have 10 or more years of good return in the market, but could be headed into some years when the returns aren't so good. Mike Mucci - wants involvement from the whole board, Mike Mucci stated he is a little more comfortable with risk. Regina: Would Berkshire Taconic Fund give a recommendation of what amount of money we give out? Dick: They will if we ask them. Erin: Is there a scenario of putting \$200,000 in the bank then giving the rest to Berkshire Taconic, is that too complicated? Dick: We could split it up, but it does complicate the accounting somewhat. Regina: worked with Berkshire Taconic on ACE and always felt they did a good job. She would be comfortable recommending Berkshire Taconic. Mike Mucci would like the district to put together an investment policy making sure our policy is in alignment with what we want to do is probably a good exercise. Erin Milne: thinks that makes sense and would like to look at it more

before taking an official vote. Dick Jette - we have some sample investment policies that we could work with and we independently reached out to district counsel to get their input. It is a 5 or 6 page policy, pretty generic. I agree that it would be putting the cart in front of the horse by voting on this before we have an investment policy in place. Erin Milne thought it should go through the policy committee first. Aaron: We also have a couple more policies to bring to that group as well. The committee agreed to bring it forward to the policy committee first.

#### **103898 Report of Sub Committee -**

**A. Audit & Evaluation -** Bethany DeMarco went over the initial budget numbers, talked about how the split would work with the 2 towns. Reviewed priorities that Aaron brought forth. Aaron: It's going to be pretty vanilla regarding the budget. We have ESSER funds. The next couple of years will be difficult. Looking at enrollment, pretty stable from Prek-8 - high school we struggle with enrollment with the options that are out there. We have to take a look at the high school with pathways, etc. and what is attracting students and what is not. There are a few different pathways that are solid. February 15th we are having a pathway promotion and bringing it out in the spotlight. Important to showcase this. Believes there are a number of students that would be a good match with our offerings. We may be looking at a reduction of staff this year, looking at making sound educational decisions. We are doing a lot of work with the quality of the program. We have some tough decisions to make with the budget in the coming years. Our insurance is going up 8%, a boost in expense, our bus contract is out to bid so that's another expense. Mike Henault: something coming out of the statehouse about rural transportation and possible reimbursement for cost is this something that we benefit from? Aaron: The only thing we benefit from is the regional transportation benefit, next year the dollar amount they are projecting for us is 75% along with circuit breaker is what we get funding for. Within the next couple weeks we can schedule another A & E and do a final review before we bring it to the committee in March. Erin Milne asked if they could get the budget within a couple days before the hearing? Erika stated yes.

#### **103899 Communications -**

**A. Kristen Palatt - Curriculum Renewal Cycle/Data -** Kristen shared the winter benchmark data -

Acknowledging the current reality. How we analyze data this year is different from how we did it in the past. Acknowledging our reality: Data from students who completed screenings beginning in the fall 2020 indicate that COVID has negatively influenced K-8 students' learning in math and reading. Losses are consistently greater in math than reading. Losses are largest in the late elementary and middle school grades. It is recommended that schools continue to conduct screening to identify the largest learning gaps and address these through intensified Tier 1 instruction. Look to benchmark as the goal for all students to get back to while understanding that Rate of Improvement is the key metric to focus on when conducting progress monitoring, since many students will start the year significantly behind the norm.

Reiterating a focus on growth: fastbridge normative data is updated every 3-4 years. Any normative comparisons we make this year will be compared to national norms pre-pandemic. Another reason we are looking at growth is connected to our MCAS data.

Typical to aggressive growth is indicative of instruction, curricular materials, and allocation of resources effectively meeting student needs. Typical to aggressive growth is what we are looking at.

Early Reading: what it measures? Pre-K (letter names, onset sounds, letter sounds, concepts of print) Kindergarten (onset sounds, letter sounds, word segmenting, nonsense words, letter names) First Grade (word segmenting, nonsense words, sight words 150, CBM reading). See attached early reading growth percentiles by student start score.

ARreading: what it measures? Grades K-5 areas of focus are: concepts of print; phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary and comprehension. Grades 6-10 areas of focus are: Orthography, Morphology, Vocabulary and Comprehension. See attached growth percentiles by start score.

CBM: what it measures? CBMreading measures a student's proficiency in the following foundational skills subcategories:

Print concepts: the organization and basic feature or print; Phonological Awareness: the understanding of spoken word syllables and sounds or phonemes; Phonics and word recognition: the application of grade-level and phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words; Fluency: reading on-level texts with sufficient purposes, accuracy, and fluency to support comprehension. See attached growth percentile chart.

Early Math: similar to early reading in that it changes depending on grade level and time of year. What it measures: Pre-k (Number ID, match quantities, number sequencing); Kindergarten: (Number ID, match quantities, number sequencing, decomposing); First Grade: Number ID, number sequencing, decomposing, place value). See growth chart.

AMath: what it measures? Grades 2-10 areas of focus: counting and cardinality, operations and algebraic thinking, number and operations in Base 10, number and operations, measurement and data and geometry. See growth chart.

Next steps: Celebrate our solid growth. Use appreciative inquiry to identify the factors contributing to this growth. Continue to raise the bar. Providing targeted instruction that will get even more students to make aggressive growth as we work toward getting all students to benchmark by the end of the school year.

Updating the District Improvement Plan: student fastbridge benchmark data measuring typical to aggressive rates of improvement from Fall to Winter and Winter to Spring. Would like to see 100% of students in the bottom quartile based on fall benchmark performance and MCAS reported data making aggressive growth. 80% of all students in HVRSD making typical to aggressive growth.

Mike Henault liked how this was presented in showing all the positives and the growth the students have made and not looking at the negative. Aaron stated that we threw a lot at the teachers with curriculum, etc and they have made great strides. Mike asked if there is a plan for the 1st grade cohort that didn't make much growth, same cohort that missed so much with the pandemic. Kristen, they are the largest number of students accessing Tier 2 and 3 for support. Met with Erin and Lisa and looked at the individual student level of needs. Aaron: heading into next year, focus is looking at schedules, getting students into more targeted groups than they are now.

Curriculum Implementation and Renewal- Aaron: last meeting we put in front of you a replacement plan for each of our areas knowing that the district hasn't had anything for planning. Went to the state on this and pulled from their model and put together a plan where we are implementing curriculum, looking at things that will get the big purchases out of the way for the next couple of years. Where we are monitoring, reviewing and replacing. In ELA and math we are in great shape - we have great programs that are on the market and seeing the progress early on because of it. Making sure we are using the sources in the right way. Science and social studies, important for us to look to see what is out there for programs, etc. The goal is to put high quality curriculum in the hands of all teachers. Building consistency with our students so they know what to expect. The other layer is the hope that we can develop a multi year selection and implementation process, so nothing is a surprise. Erin Milne asked if we could add the arts to this? Aaron: This is something we are going to support but they are smaller isolated groups, because you are not purchasing a curriculum for music or a general art class - great question. See attached Tier 1 (core) curriculum areas table. Next steps is to bring to policy sub committee to get ideas for a process and bring back to the full committee to adopt.

Erin Milne: What is the district doing for black history month? We pushed out a resource page, we linked a series of re alouds, pushed out resources from the district side. Chris Sposato: sent out the ADL link, one free activity happens during our break, hoping to show our students. Chris gave an update on what some teachers are doing. Colleen: talk about Pride and what that means - read about prominent leaders in the community, talk about local and national leaders, had an assembly, which focused on integrity and diversity Erin Beaulac: celebrating PRIDE and making connections that way. First year in the school and asked teachers what they have done, teachers celebrate day to day and not specifically to the month. Appreciated the resource that Kristen shared today. Looking forward to those resources being used going forward.

## **103900 Report of Superintendent**

A. Covid Update - Started the at home testing program. Big reason is because our nursing staff is being inundated with contract tracing. It provides an option to have students test every week 308 students enrolled already and is continuing to grow. 129 staff members are participating. Staff test on Tuesday, students on Thursdays. Still doing symptomatic testing, they can get that testing. This is a relief for the nursing staff. The state has eliminated the contract tracing. Mask mandate the state has mandated in through February. The nursing staff has done a great job keeping up on things and making sure they have everything they need.

February 15th the pathway promotion for the 7 & 8th grade one at 11:30 and then 6:00- great to see our students promoting our pathways and talking about why they go to Hoosac. We have a ton of AP offerings that people don't realize so it's important to get this out.

Bethany - any update on the percentage of vaccinations for the district? Aaron: We have not had a chance to get an update, the nurses have been so busy, but we can get that information.

We started family forums this year. March 3rd at the senior center in Cheshire, Opportunity for the community to ask questions, etc.

**103901 Chairman's Report -**

**A. Superintendent Evaluation -** Mike Henault: presented the Superintendent's evaluation via powerpoint. We used the indicator rubric for the Superintendent's Evaluation. Each committee member rated Aaron on each indicator for each of the four standards on a scale from needs improvement to exemplary. The ratings were completed through a google form linked to hoosacvalley.org email address, ensuring each member could only vote once and creating a public record. Aggregated rankings were compiled and can be found in this presentation. Standard I: Instructional Leadership - Overall Rating was Proficient. Aaron has invested in new ELA curriculum and in supporting staff in implementing the programs through P.D. 's and the support of the new Director of Curriculum. The district can continue to grow by expanding the similar curriculum work across other subject areas with similar rigor. Measurable outcomes: MCAS scores remain low in both overall achievement and student growth. Standard II: Management and Operations - Overall Rating was Proficient. Aaron has made every effort to ensure the budgetary process was completed with consideration to both towns and their current budgetary situations. It is impressive that the district continues to seek outside funding in order to meet students' needs within its financial constraints. He has developed management procedures and continuity in district-wide P.D., partnering with various consultants to help meet the needs of the district. An area of growth could be in recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce. Standard III; Family & Community Engagement - Overall Rating was Proficient. There are consistent surveys, student leadership opportunities, social media presence, newsletters, parent advisory which all assist in providing effective communication to families, students and staff; The district has increased outreach efforts by incorporating different locations and modalities, which should be continued. There is an open dialogue with the school community by inviting families to contact him should they have questions or concerns. Cultural responsiveness is a thread throughout each of the elements of Standard III and he should make sure the district administration has increased training in these practices in their implementation. Standard IV: Professional Culture - Overall Rating was Proficient. Aaron holds himself and his staff to high standards consistently noting that our primary focus is on our students. His vision is clear and is willing to share and update as necessary. He has a high commitment to this district and consistently communicates the need for growth, the raising of standards and high expectations. Future space for reflective practice among all levels and subjects. Increased focus on Hoosac PRIDE is a unifying standard across the district's schools, which can be expanded to family and community partnerships. Overall Rating: Proficient - Areas of Strength: Communication, Managing Conflict, Commitment to High Standards, Fiscal Systems and Assessments. Areas for Growth: Human Resources, Family Engagement, Student Learning. As a committee we feel that Aaron has led the district through a very challenging time. The district is poised to continue its improvement under his leadership. While there are areas for improvement, we are hopeful that continued strategic planning will set the stage for continued future growth. Overall, Aaron should be commended for navigating the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic with clear decision making, consistent communication and continued commitment to HVRSD.

Mike Mucci: - Aaron is doing a great job - your whole tenure here has been through a pandemic and it certainly has been challenging and you are doing a great job.

Aaron thanked the committee. It was a thorough evaluation with excellent feedback.

**103902 Unfinished Business - None**

**103903 New Business:**

**A. District Office Space -** Mike Mucci: We met at the Adams visitor center last meeting. Has pro's and con's for the needs of the district. Has a good lease price comparable to what we have now. Some issues with Cheshire regarding mold, etc. Aaron: The air quality came back good In terms of space, comparing the 2 - we are separated here and the move to Adams would take some adjustments. It would be an interesting shift for people. In terms of being in a new building, bathrooms are better and kitchenette. If it was a larger space, it could be good. Mike would like to know if the Town of Cheshire can come down on price and is negotiable. Would like to negotiate for multiple years and find out what the Town of Cheshire thinks is fair. Look to schedule a maintenance meeting and set up a meeting with the Town of Cheshire.

**103904 Action Items - None**

**103905 For the Good of the Order -**

Adam Emerson: Would like to put in a plug for the frosty fest at the elementary school on February 15th from 3:30-4:30

**MOTION:** On Motion of Adam Emerson and second by Bethany DeMarco:

**VOTED:** To adjourn the meeting at 8:48 p.m. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Lisa Bresett, Recording Secretary