

**JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
OLD ROCHESTER REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENCY UNION #55**

**June 11, 2020 – 6:30 p.m.**

**MEETING HELD REMOTELY THROUGH ZOOM  
Mattapoisett, MA 02739**

**District Members Present:** Cary Humphrey, Chairperson, Michelle Smith, James Muse, Stefan Gabriel, Heather Burke, Suzanne Tseki and Joe Pires.

**District Members Absent:** Tina Rood and Paul Goulet

**Union Members Present:** Shannon Finning, Chairperson, Carole Clifford, Anne Fernandes, Nichole Daniel, Sharon Hartley April Rios, Robin Rounseville and Karin Barrows.

**Union Members Absent:** Ronald Gerhart.

**Other Staff Members Present:** Douglas R. White, Superintendent of Schools, Michael Nelson, Asst. Superintendent and administrative team, members of the staff, community and press.

Meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chairperson Humphrey of the ORR School Committee and Chairperson Finning of the Massachusetts School Superintendency Union #55.

**RECOGNITION:**

Chairperson Humphrey and Chairperson Finning recognized Dr. Douglas White for his ten years of service as Superintendent of Schools to the Old Rochester Regional School District and Massachusetts Superintendency Union #55. Mr. Humphrey and Dr. Finning thanked Dr. White for his service to the district and to the school committee, he thanked him for his leadership and wished him well in his retirement and congratulated him on his retirement.

Rose Bowman, Principal of Mattapoisett Public Schools read the following statement on behalf of The Leadership Council.

*This evening it is my privilege to represent all of the administrators, past and present, as we recognize and honor Dr. Douglas R. White as he retires from his position as the Superintendent of Schools for the Old Rochester Regional School District and Superintendency Union #55.*

*Over the last ten years Doug has been the educational leader in communities where collaboration between home and school and school committees and town municipalities have been a primary focus. The continual goal of all of the stakeholders was to provide the optimum educational opportunities for all students.*

*In his initial year as Superintendent Doug focused on the value and importance of Professional Learning Communities – PLCs. The importance of working together to plan and implement the best practices in the educational community was the mission of each PLC. As part of this initiative Doug attended conferences with the administration team and together, in our role as educators, we increased our knowledge of the best methods to educate each child in our schools. A primary tool in the elementary schools is the use of the flex block where guidance and support were provided to enhance student understanding of the work done in the classroom. Advisory blocks in the JHS and HS provided social and emotional support for every student. Throughout the years the academic and social emotional well-being of all students in all schools has been a primary focus in Doug's leadership role.*

*A special highlight of Doug's career at ORR has been the collaboration among all educators in the development and implementation of two Strategic Plans. The use of technology in each school district has grown to provide students the optimum learning opportunities in an ever-changing world. The use of Chromebooks for our students has proven to be an invaluable gift. High*

*achievement as measured by MCAS and the high graduation rate truly acknowledge the fact that hard work, dedication and strong support from families and communities impacts the lives children and their future success. What a wonderful reflection for a person who has dedicated the last ten years of his life to our children and their well-being as citizens of the world's community. Thank you, Doug, for your leadership.*

*On July 1 a new chapter in your life will begin. We want to share our appreciation with you for being a dedicated educational leader for our district over the last decade. We extend our appreciation to your wife Kathy and all of your family members for their continued support over the last ten years. May love and happiness light your way as you continue on your journey. Congratulations on a job well done!*

### **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT:**

Dr. Finning read the following statement:

*I'm struck that tonight is a night of celebration and congratulations for Dr. White but it's also a night of introspections and reflections for many around our community and well beyond our community are hurting. I've been heartened by the response and engagement of our Central Office, The Leadership Council as well as teachers, paras and many of our school committee members at last Friday's Black Lives Matter march in Mattapoissett, last Monday in Marion and I hope engagement in tomorrow's march in Rochester. I applaud the voices that have been raised on Facebook for members of our community who have felt like they heard, seen like they matter, and I know all members of our committees take that very seriously. Many of you know that when I ran for school committee as a write in Mattapoissett, I ran because I wanted to make sure that all of our students, particularly our students from unrepresented populations (low income, low social economical and students of color) felt supported, welcomed and included in our environment, that equity mattered. I was heartened when I joined the committee and we joined with the members of the community to hear their experiences, I'm proud of the work (and it's not down and it never will be done) that's been done and in terms of our commitment to ant-racism, the work needs to continue with professional development, the task force, my one regret is that we did not share as much as we should have with the community the work that was happening. I look at forward to the conversation that we will have on Monday, I have no doubt it will be challenging, difficult and moving, but I'm confident that working together that we will be able to ensure that all of our children and all of our families joined together, this is not just a school issue, it's a community issue, but together I think we can make a difference and ensure the very best outcomes for all members of our communities.*

### **I. Consent Agenda**

#### **A. Approval of Minutes**

Motion to approve the March 23, 2020 minutes as presented

District, Mr. Muse

Union, Ms. Daniel

District, Mr. Gabriel

Union, Ms. Fernandes

Motion Passed

### **V. General**

#### **A. Cultural Proficiency**

Asst. Supt. Nelson gave an overview on the Cultural Proficiency Teams in each building and the work that has been taking place this year.

## 2019-2020 School Year Cultural Proficiency Efforts Overview

### PLANNING & COLLABORATION

- Since the summer of 2019 each school within the Old Rochester Regional School District & Massachusetts Union #55 have formed and maintained Cultural Proficiency TEAMS. All six teams are comprised of volunteer teachers, paraprofessionals, and/or administrators. Each TEAM has 5-10 members who regularly attend system-wide cultural proficiency meetings to discuss needs, efforts, and action steps. These individuals embrace the role of teacher leaders in regard to cultural proficiency school-based efforts.

### OPENING DAY MESSAGING

- To start the school year off – on August 26, 2020 the opening day keynote speaker selected to address the faculty of our schools was Mr. Steve Pemberton. Among many other accomplishments, Mr. Pemberton is the author of the book titled “A Chance in the World”. During his personal keynote presentation, Mr. Pemberton focused on the importance of educators and their roles in all students’ lives. Specifically, Pemberton stressed the importance for being an advocate for those students who may have been left in the “shadows”. He has been a champion for equality, access, and opportunity both in his professional and personal life. Staff members left this meeting with a clear message that the impact they can have on a student’s life is immeasurable.

### CULTURAL PROFICIENCY TEAM TRAINING (ChangeWorks Consulting Organization)

- Ms. Patti DeRosa a cultural proficiency training facilitator with decades of experience working with both private and public agencies, provided in-depth professional development for our Cultural Proficiency Teams on October 31, 2019. The title of the workshop was titled “Unpacking Equity and Cultural Proficiency in Schools”. The workshop objectives for the participants were:
  1. Engaging in self-exploration and reflection of personal attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions regarding equity, cultural proficiency, and anti-bias education.
  2. Become familiar with the principles, elements, and tools of, and barriers to, equity and cultural proficiency in schools.
  3. Begin to develop awareness, knowledge, and skills for interrupting bias, and creating policies and practices that support educational equity.

### CULTURAL PROFICIENCY ADMINISTRATOR TRAINING (ChangeWorks Consulting Organization)

- All building and central administrators participated in the same in-depth workshop facilitated by Ms. Patti DeRosa on November 1, 2019. The title of the workshop was titled “Unpacking Equity and Cultural Proficiency in Schools”. The workshop objectives for the participants were:
  1. Engaging in self-exploration and reflection of personal attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions regarding equity, cultural proficiency, and anti-bias education.
  2. Become familiar with the principles, elements, and tools of, and barriers to, equity and cultural proficiency in schools.
  3. Begin to develop awareness, knowledge, and skills for interrupting bias, and creating policies and practices that support educational equity.

### DIVERSITY TALKS KEYNOTE PRESENTATION TO FACULTY

- On January 17, 2020 three high school students from Diversity Talks led an hour long presentation for our entire faculty. Diversity Talks specializes in providing student-led professional development grounded in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Their student leaders aim to increase the cultural competence of adults by fostering a healing space for adults and youth to have culturally relevant and responsive conversations. This presentation focused on inclusion, student voice, and the role of power in schools.

### BUILDING-BASED TRAINING LED BY CULTURAL PROFICIENCY TEAMS

- During our January, 2020 professional development day our Cultural Proficiency Teams led building-based cultural proficiency training. Our teams worked with their colleagues to explore their on implicit bias, positionality, and the ideology of white privilege. Ultimately, each team aimed to help their colleagues understand that we all have an invisible backpack that we carry with us – and that as educators we must embrace this thinking and support all of our students.

### DR. ADOLPH BROWN KEY NOTE PRESENTATION TO FACULTY

- All staff members within our schools also listened to the message of Dr. Adolph Brown. Dr. Brown describes himself as a servant-leader at heart and a life-long social justice advocate. His message to our staff encouraged the idea of “real talk” around the topics of unconscious bias, equity, diversity, and inclusion. He encouraged our faculty to understand structural inequities, but more importantly start the work of dismantling the foundations from which these structures are built.

## **DIVERSITY TALKS KEYNOTE PRESENTATION TO JUNIOR HIGH AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

- On May 26<sup>th</sup> an evening presentation led by a student speaker from Diversity Talks a webinar for our Junior High and High School students. Over 700 students participated; many with their families by listening to our guest presenter speak about her experiences as a high school student. As she shared her experience – she focused on topics of staff support, the demographics of staff members, and her views of micro aggressions and staff interventions. During the presentation three polls were conducted with the audience to gauge student perspective. Ultimately, this presentation highlighted the need for student voice and empowerment within our schools.

## **POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION ITEMS**

- Partner with cultural proficiency consultant and/or hire internal position
- Surveying students (grades 6-12) and stakeholders on the topic of equity and inclusion
- Provide cultural proficiency anti-racism learning opportunities for students
- Start comprehensive review of curriculum to ensure culturally proficient teaching and learning
- Policy/procedure review in relation to anti-racism, cultural proficiency, and social media
- Review of hiring practices and recruitment efforts
- Social media training for students

Mr. Humphrey thanked Mr. Nelson for his very thorough presentation and expressed how important it was to continue this work around cultural proficiency.

Dr. White urged the school committees to revisit our policies and practices and make sure we are giving direction and support for our educators, Dr. White also urged the school committees to look at the curriculum and make sure it is embedded to help our students as they address these difficult times not only in the Tri-Town but also nationally and globally.

Dr. Finning thanked Dr. White for his comment and also expressed it's also important to working on bringing diversity to our hiring process and our staff and educators, she also stated that we as a committee know that representation matters.

Ms. Hartley also thanked Dr. White for his comments and the list of priorities that he outlined, policy and curriculum, Ms. Hartley expressed that she had planned to address these two items tonight and make a suggestion to the that the school committee should also add individual introspection and commitment for teachers, staff school committee members, students and community members. Ms. Hartley expressed that as she thought about what was going on locally and nationally she went to review our policies online and could not find an anti-racism policy, and she expressed when she started doing research she could only find two nationwide. Ms. Hartley made a suggestion and urged that the policy sub-committee to place such a policy on their agenda for their next meeting.

Ms. Burke thanked Ms. Hartley for all her research on the policy and asked her to forward the policies to the Diana so that the Policy Sub Committee could review at their next meeting. Mr. Burke expressed that while an anti-racism is not policy she knows that at ORR it's embedded in the Mission Statement of the School, where there is language about respect, values and integrity, however she stated we should still take a look at this policy.

Ms. Tseki also agreed that the Policy Sub-Committee should review this policy. Ms. Tseki also expressed that she believes that there is some language in the student handbook around civil rights, hate crimes and harassment. Mr. Devoll did confirm what Ms. Tseki said however expressed that he is interested in having a policy addressing, restorative and social change.

Ms. Burke asked that all the chairpersons check in with their school committees to make sure that the policy sub-committee has a member from each of the school committees.

## **B. Approval of Professional Development Plan**

Asst. Superintendent Nelson presented the Professional Development Plan for the 2020-2021 school year. (please see attachment A)

Comments/Feedback:

Ms. Fernandes asked about more information about the Dyslexia Professional Development and what it could possibly look like. Mr. Nelson expressed that once the professional development plan is approved the administrative team will work on more specific information for the professional development.

Ms. Burke expressed she was excited to see that the professional development in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion continues for next year, she expressed there has been a lot of investment in this area in the last 18 months and she expressed she's glad the work is continuing, however she's concerned that it needs to be done sooner than October, 2020 and she expressed she believes it needs to be baked into every professional development opportunity. Mr. Nelson thanked Ms. Burke for her feedback and expressed he would take into advisement, he expressed that Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is very important to the Leadership Team as well as our staff.

Ms. Hartley expressed that she believes it's critically important to make sure that each individual educator process, reflect and reinforce what is learned at each professional development.

Motion to approve the professional development plan as presented

District, Ms. Smith

Union, Ms. Barrows

District, Mr. Muse

Union, Ms. Rios

Motion Passed

## **C. 2020-2021 School Committee Dates**

Superintendent White reviewed the school committee dates for the following year with the school committee, pointing out that additional meetings might need to be added during the summer months to appoint central office staff positions that are currently vacant.

Ms. Smith expressed that she believes it's important to think about having a school committee retreat or training soon to review duties and responsibilities, especially this year because we will have a few new members.

Motion to approve the school committee dates for the 2020-2021 school year

District, Ms. Smith

Union, Ms. Hartley

District, Mr. Muse (Mr. Gabriel abstained)

Union, Ms. Rios

Motion Passed

## **D. Superintendent's Final Thoughts**

Dr. White expressed his gratitude to the leadership council for the last ten years and more importantly for this past school year. At this time Dr. White asked Mr. Nelson to share his presentation around curriculum and all the work that's been done this year. Mr. Nelson and members of the leadership council presented a "curriculum documentation presentation" (please see attachment B)

Superintendent White read the following statement:

*Back in the Fall of 2009, I received a phone call from Chairperson Hartley and Chairperson Bangs telling me I had been selected as the next Superintendent of Schools for the Old Rochester Regional School District and Superintendency Union #55. After ten great years, I sit with you in my last joint meeting and with over 400 school committee meeting to our credit. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve in this role. I can tell you that I am very proud of the effort and the work of everyone involved in these three amazing towns. Although it has not always been easy, we have all worked to make decisions and take actions that would ensure that all of our children received the best education we could possibly provide them.*

*After being notified that I would be the new superintendent in the tri-towns, I traveled to Rochester on the day of the vote for the new addition and renovation to their building. I remember the excitement and anticipation that the citizens of Rochester showed as they would be getting a new facility that would better serve their children. No more overcrowded classrooms and band classes in the hallways. So my first 18 months were a blur as I worked closely with school committee, staff, town representatives and contractors as we added on and renovated Rochester Memorial School. That renovation and addition, to this day has served the child of Rochester well. School committees have continued to work with their towns to make updates and changes to educational spaces to address the ever changing educational need. As a result of these interactions, I learned quickly that these towns cherish their schools.*

*I want to thank the parents and guardians in the tri-towns for sharing their children with us every day. I have worked in multiple school districts, and I can say the families in the tri-towns are the best. Family engagement is the highest I have seen anywhere. Parental support is outstanding at any school event, open houses, teacher conferences, concerts, plays, sporting events, class presentations etc. No matter the cause, there is always support; I hope that will always be the case. The research says the stronger the relationship between the school and the home the better outcome for the students.*

*I would like to take this opportunity to thank the educators and support staffs in all of the buildings. As a result of your commitment and dedication to all students, we have witnessed many great accomplishments, such as academic excellence awards, national, state, and local recognition in athletics, music and drama. Our graduation rate is among the top in the state, the number of students looking to go on to college is a testament to how we prepare our students for the future. I am very proud that we find ways to educate every student to meet their potential; we have created programming that meets the needs of our most complex students, the low number of students that receive services outside the district is a tribute to our special education staff. In the ten years I have been here, we have transitioned through No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, Student Opportunity Acts, DDMS, MCAS, PARCC, MCAS 2.0, paper and pencil tests, computerized tests, Next Generation Science, new educators evaluation and most recently remote learning to name a few. Over the years we have been able to align curriculum with state standards in our districts, creating district wide grade level and content teams to guarantee similar experiences across all three districts, making the transition to the junior high equitable for all. Throughout the many initiatives that came with these changes the staff has remained committed to doing what is best for students. In my tenure, I have been privileged to work with talented administrators that remained intact until last summer. The team developed into a strong professional learning community whose work was embedded in the following: What do we want kids to know, how do we know they know, what do we do when they don't, what do we do when they do. As a result of being together for almost ten years, we were able to develop two strategic plans with the help of stakeholders that have helped shape the work for the last decade. I tapped into the expertise of administrators to help with different aspects of each plan, which has assisted us in meeting the expectations of the plans. The areas we have focused on and I feel have made gains are: rigorous curriculum, 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, social and emotional learning, technology, global awareness, multiculturalism, relationship with the towns, and organizational restructuring.*

*I want to give a shout out to Gene Jones for his efforts to make sure all of our buildings are in top shape. Under his guidance, we have been able to update HVAC systems, install high quality cameras, improve classroom spaces, build security vestibules in all of our buildings, upgrade lighting, while reducing energy costs, and reduce personnel overhead costs. He secured alternative revenue sources, such as wind turbines, rental accounts, and utility rebates. As a result of his efforts and the support of the school committees, our buildings, despite aging are in very good shape and provide learning environments that are conducive to learning. The work has got tougher as we prepare our building to reopen in the fall we will need to follow the new CDC guidelines, but I can tell you we are in good shape as we have already started the process by purchasing the necessary safety equipment to ensure the health and wellbeing of our students and staff.*

***When I arrived** our food service program was losing money, the equipment was breaking down and there was a strong push to outsource. Under the leadership of Jill Hennessey, food service director, the food service program has made a great comeback. We have improved our menu choices, we have installed online payment systems, and we have repaired and purchased new kitchen equipment. We have offered in-house training for staff. For the past three months the food services staff has been heroes providing over 30,000 breakfast and lunches for our students in the tri-towns. The food services program is in the black and has received several accolades from the Department of Nutrition.*

*When I arrived we had computer labs, projectors and Elmo's in our classrooms. I want to thank the school committee for supporting the strategic plan to infuse more technology into the lives of our students. I want to extend a thank you to the tech department for helping see the vision of a device for every student. I know that we still need to find balance as to what is the right amount of technology needed in a child's day, but our districts are in a far better place today. All of our buildings have the necessary infrastructure to support every person having multiple devices. We have gone from students visiting labs to get onto the internet, to almost every student having direct access at their desk. Most of our teachers have an interactive whiteboard in their classroom. We have not only improved access, we have increased the opportunities through curriculum to use the device to expand and explore 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. The number of technology offering at the high school has expanded tenfold. As result of the pandemic, we are learning to interact across multiple platforms. In person meetings may never be the same. In the coming months our phone systems across all districts will be upgrade. Although technology has become a way of life, I still believe it is the job of education to teach our students to use it in a productive and respectful manner.*

*I need to send out my deepest appreciate to the central office staff. They are the backbone of the day-to-day operations of our districts. They have been a wonderful team and have provided the outstanding support which has allowed me, as Bill Belichick would say, do my job. I personally want to thank Diana Russo for keeping me on track every day. Mike, she is a key to a superintendent's success. She is organized, has great communications skills, and is able to solve most of the district issues before they will ever get to you. I wish the central office staff the very best as they transition to a new administrative team.*

*I had the pleasure of working with a number of school committee members during my time, of those three of them have been with me the entire time and I want to personally thank them for their belief in me and their willingness to continue to do this important work for children (Sharon Hartley, Tina Rood and Robin Rounseville). I want to thank every school committee member for taking time out of your very busy lives to help guide the work of the schools. You have created policies, developed budgets, created governances that have helped me and the administrators lead the district. I have seen your passion, frustration, and determination to make sure that our students and educators have the resources to do their jobs. I have gotten to know many of you not only as school committee members, but also as parents, grandparents, citizens, and friends. We have spent hours together discussing a variety of educational topics and I feel that as a result of your great work you have made my job easier. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. It has been a pleasure to work with all of you.*

*Over the years I have been able to work with school committee members to develop good relationships with the towns. For the last ten years we have been able to develop budgets that have met the needs of our students. Although at times we had our moments, in the end I always felt the town officials and the citizens supported education and our children's future. I feel that the timing for this transition to new leadership is perfect since two of the three towns have new town managers as well and I think all of the new leaders can work together to move the schools forward.*

*I think the district is positioned well to continue to meet the needs of all students. I feel Mike has the skills and institutional knowledge to keep the strategic plan a focal point. I think the TLC members are committed to the plan, their buildings and their students. I believe the three areas of the plan align the district to meet the challenges ahead for educating children in the new normal. As the district transitions back to school, I would recommend you keep your focus on 21st Century learning, multiculturalism and global awareness and most importantly our students are going to need social emotional learning support. The hiring of central office administration is going to be key. I still believe there is a lack of middle management which at some point will need to be addressed to meet the changes in education. I think you are going to need to watch Chapter 70 funding and the impact it might have on future budgets. And lastly, I think remote learning is here to stay, so you are going to need to look for ways to improve how we train the staff and teach the children.*

*Finally, I want to take this moment publicly to thank my wife Kathy, my daughters Shawna, Jessica and Ashley and their families for always supporting, and being understanding when I could not be at one of their events or support them when they needed me because I was helping others and give my all to the students I have served. I thank my family for letting me chase my passion, dreams and being there for me. It is time for me to go home and give them a 100% of me and I can't wait to get to know my grandchildren better and share in their lives like I have the many students I have served for the last 35 years.*

*Thank you for this opportunity and I wish you all success going forward.*

**FUTURE BUSINESS:** Mr. Humphrey reminded everyone that there is a Special Joint meeting on June 15<sup>th</sup> with the Tri-Town Against Racism Association. Mr. Humphrey expressed that the association asked to meet with the ORR School Committee however after further discussion it was thought that the association would be better served if they met with the Joint School Committee. Mr. Humphrey expressed that the school committee has also invited the town selectmen and the police chiefs. Mr. Humphrey expressed that at the end of the meeting his hope is that we are walking in the same direction with the same goal in mind.

Dr. Finning share with the committee members that herself and Mr. Humphrey will be meeting with Mr. Nelson to go over the strategy and approach for the meeting and details will be shared with the school committee members.

Dr. Finning thanked Mr. Gabriel for his service to the school committee.

**OPEN COMMENTS: NONE**

Motion for meeting to adjourn at 8:50 p.m.

District, Mr. Muse,

Union, Ms. Daniel

District, Ms. Tseki

Union, Ms. Hartley