

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting September 27, 2021 Lincoln/Virtual

PRESENT: Hughes, Meggers, Pattacini, Patterson, Stefanovicz, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & Special Services Radikas, Assistant Superintendent Clancy, Assistant Superintendent Sone-Moyano

ABSENT: Heinrich, Luna

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Thames called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Thames.

A.3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of September 13, 2021. Secretary Pattacini moved and Ms. Stefanovicz seconded the motion.

6/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented eight items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

C.1. Personnel Action

Details had already been provided to the Board members with their agenda.

C.2. Transfer of Funds

None.

C.3. Permission to apply for the Title I, Part A - Improving Basic Programs Grant for the FY 21/23 in the amount of \$2,027,650

C.4. Permission to apply for the Title II, Part A - Supporting Effective Instruction Grant for the FY 21/23 in the amount of \$235,679

C.5. Permission to apply for the Title III, Part A - Language Instruction for English Learners Grant for the FY 21/23 in the amount of \$60,720

C.6. Permission to apply for the Bilingual Education Program Grant for the FY 21/22 in the amount of \$12,585

C.7. Permission to apply for the American Rescue Plan (ARP) - IDEA 611 for the FY 21/24 in the amount of \$422,390

C.8. Permission to apply for the American Rescue Plan (ARP) - IDEA 619 for the FY 21/24 in the amount of \$40,059

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Ms. Stefanovicz seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in this evening's agenda.

6/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Leila Affini and Alexandra Hamza were both present. Leila shared that the first full day of school for all grades was September 9th with six periods lasting about an hour each.

All fall sports have begun. Each team has faced at least two opponents so far.

The quarantine process is still being used for anyone who is exposed to COVID. This involves attending classes online instead of in person for two weeks.

Finally, clubs are up and running and fall festivities like the homecoming parade are being planned.

SEAT and the World Language Club have been playing music, sharing cultures and traditions in honor of Hispanic Heritage month. They have been working hard to celebrate each culture in different ways. This has been responded to by both students and staff in a positive manner.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Thames reviewed the rules of engagement for public speakers. He noted that speakers should not expect an immediate response, though at the Chair's discretion it is possible. Written comments are also acceptable. Mr. Thames noted that this is not the forum for personnel or legal issues and asked speakers to refrain from derogatory and profane language.

Rhonda Philbert, 785 Tolland Turnpike, noted she is not here as Equity Coordinator, but as a grandparent of a 7 year old grandson who attends Bowers. Ms. Philbert recalled the summer of 2020 as a turbulent time, with the murder of George Floyd and Jose Soto, young black males being harrassed in town, BLM events, and COVID affecting people of color at three times the rate of whites and two times more likely to die. The development of the Race & Equity Read Alouds help to diminish the racial trauma our children have lived through. Exposing our students to different cultures is not critical race theory. To deny the opportunity for our black and brown students to experience the joy of seeing themselves in stories is racist.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, mentioned Critical Race Theory. He says we should not make children ashamed of their culture. Mr. Stringfellow spoke about the reconstruction after the Civil War and recommended several articles and books. He also mentioned we are in the midst of Latino History Month.

Vanessa Reichelt, 97 Prospect Street, has two children attending Keeney Elementary. She is concerned about the lack of communication between the administration and parents as well as community engagement. Parents were not notified of the vacancies

at Keeney and their children have had subs for two weeks. Last year the Keeney PTA was inactive and there was no communication with parents about this. Ms. Reichelt wonders who the Board of Education liaison for Keeney is, when they are going to come to Keeney and meet the current PTA, and wonders where they were last year. Ms. Reichelt was also upset that even though Mr. Geary said parents would be allowed in the schools this year, her offer to volunteer in the class has been denied. The FRC, with the wonderful Mr. Hassan, planned a back to school outdoor picnic that was cancelled last minute "because of COVID" and that was a huge disappointment. Families want to be involved and are being denied. The lack of communication to parents about the equity curriculum contents is a district-wide concern.

Sarah Somers, 53 Mather Street, is an elementary school parent and active PTA member. Though there have been no COVID cases at her school, she mentioned the 45 cases in the district since August 31st. Ms. Somers is not happy that they were forced to cancel a back to school BBQ and to hold open house virtually. The rest of the town gathers in the community yet our children are disconnected from their school community. The school has a nice outdoor area, why can't we access that to allow outdoor activities. Our children deserve to thrive.

Elizabeth D'Auria, 17 McDivitt Drive, noted this is the 14th day of school and her child, along with the others families that have children that qualified for remote learning due to medical issues or living with someone at high risk, has received zero instruction thus far. She checks daily for news about when remote learning will begin and this morning Mr. Wolf told them the best option is to live stream the students into regular in-person classes. If this is actually an equitable way to learn, why wasn't it started the first day of school? Ms. D'Auria believes this method is inequitable for both the remote and in-person students and is an extra demand on teachers. While she is hopeful her student will start class by the end of the week, she would like the instruction to be in an equitable and sustainable manner.

F. Superintendent's Report

F.1. Update on Race and Equity Work

Mr. Geary noted we have a diverse community and the goal is safe, inclusive schools. Five years ago we participated in an Equity Informed School Climate Assessment that gave direction to the district on what to address. Dr. Diane Clare-Kearney, noted we needed to reimagine what we do to get students

globally ready. It is critical to understand history through the lens of all students and they should see themselves in all views. We do not teach critical race theory - that is taught primarily in law school that justice is not blind.

Mr. Geary noted we have made efforts to hire a more diverse staff. Dr. Kearney spoke about the purpose of the read alouds, in which staff and other community members of color read books with characters of color so that our students may learn about themselves and foster a positive sense of self. Talking about race is healthy for all because racism hurts us all. Two times a week for 20 minutes students are able to see people of color in all walks of life (we have read alouds done by the Board Chair, principals, Dr. Kearney, etc) and students can see themselves through these adults and feel "regular" and empowered to experience the beauty in who they are and give students a voice.

Mr. Parker and Ms. Perkins were also present to review the SEL (Social Emotional Learning) aspect of the Race & Equity Read Alouds.

Ms. Stefanovicz loved the idea of students embracing themselves and understanding others. When she grew up her view was that people were all the same, but now we celebrate the differences and can be curious about others. She looks forward to the day all books reflect our populations and focus on celebration and not just negative history.

Ms. Patterson supports this work and notes it is important work that is part of the daily lives and reality of our community and we should embrace it. She asked for examples of action projects students have done. Ms. Perkins reviewed some students made signs for a march and she will send examples to the Board.

Mr. Pattacini noted that when the EISCA report came out five years ago the Board laid out a vision for how to proceed and this hits every point in that vision, some of which include foundational skills in reading, demonstrating positive values and beliefs, a growth mindset, embracing differences in people. We need this as a society and he is grateful. Students will grow in an environment where every individual matters. Mr. Pattacini is proud that our vision has been brought to life.

Mr. Thames noted he didn't have this when he was a child and it is important to both African American children and other children to see these positive stories and not just bad news and slavery topics.

F.2. Summer Programming Update

Mr. Geary reviewed the summer program this year was of a size and scope never before attempted in Manchester. About 700 high school students earned or recovered credit in the Summer Slam. We learned a lot in putting these programs together and they will only improve next year.

Mr. Pattacini wondered if we expect a similar number of participants next year. Mr. Geary reviewed that an 8-4 day was long for some. Mr. Pattacini wondered if we had a waiting list and Mr. Geary noted they accepted nearly everyone even though many applied past the deadline.

Ms. Patterson was happy to hear that next year will see an increase in "campiness". Mr. Geary noted they surveyed students, staff and families for feedback. We also employed many high school students, for many it was a good opportunity for their first job. The biggest challenge was how to engage the middle school students.

Mr. Thames noted we provided opportunities outside the classroom for experiences and social interactions that students do not always have.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Policy Recommendations:

The Policy Committee submits to the full Board its recommended policy changes for a first reading in accordance with its policy on policy changes. These items will be voted on at a future Board meeting. Mr. Geary noted that these revisions all reflect legislative updates.

A. Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace -

Policy # 4013. This policy clarifies sexual orientation and gender identity.

B. Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment - Students - Policy

5013. Same as item A.

C. Non-Discrimination - Policy 1503, 4114, 5014. Identifies Veterans as a protected class and adds procedural updates.

D. Bullying and Safe School Climate - Policy # 5131.1. Modifies the definition of bullying to be either over time or one extreme act.

E. Health Examinations/Assessments and Immunizations - Policy # 5141.3. Adds vision screening language and asthma diagnosis.

F. Deadly Weapons and Firearms - Policy #1504. Clarification about buses.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

Mr. Thames again reviewed the rules for public speakers.

Gigi Adler, 81 Dennison Ridge Road, had an issue with her child being told to put their mask back on at recess and they couldn't catch their breath. She noted the Covid liaison is not CPR certified or trained. The schools do not have oxygen monitors, which are only \$25 and she offered to donate for her school. Asthmatics are impacted. A reading of 94 without a mask is low and a reading of 91-92 indicates a need for oxygen. Why aren't we checking this? Ms. Adler noted that last year in Vernon a child with asthma fainted and they left their mask on. The first rule in CPR is to remove a mask of a person in distress. Students are eating lunch in the classrooms and the monitors are not trained to deal with students in distress. We need more training.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, enjoyed listening to the student representatives' report. He gave his approval to all items on the Consent Calendar, especially the ESL grant. Mr. Stringfellow talked about cyber bullying and an article in USA Today. He enjoyed Dr. Kearney's presentation and noted that not all black history is negative and black people have served our country in all wars.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Thames announced the resignation of Board Member Emily Luna. Mr. Pattacini read part of her letter of resignation, which referenced her full time work and attendance at law school in the evenings. Ms. Luna appreciates the trust voters placed in her and thanks the Board for their support and valuable experience. She was proud to be the first Mexican-American elected in Manchester.

Mr. Thames thanked Ms. Luna for her service.

Ms. Patterson will miss Ms. Luna and has learned from her and will continue the work started.

Mr. Pattacini appreciates the hard work of Ms. Luna and notes that she is a great example of the type of student Manchester Public Schools produces.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Thursday, October 14, 2021 - Update on Human Resources and Talent Development

Monday, October 25, 2021 - Update on Technology

Monday, November 8, 2021 - Reaffirmation of Board of Education Bylaws/Bowers Update

Monday, November 22, 2021 - Update on Humanities/STEM PK-4/Update on Building Projects

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Ms. Patterson seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

5/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 9:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary