

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting December 6, 2021 Lincoln/Virtual

PRESENT: Eisenthal, Kohls, Meggers, Mix, Orsene, Pattacini, Patterson, Stefanovicz, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & Special Services Radikas, Director of Finance & Management Clancy

ABSENT:

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Pattacini 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. Pattacini.

A.3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of November 22, 2021. Secretary Patterson moved and Mr. Orsene seconded the motion.

9/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented three 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

- Transfer from System-wide Plant Maintenance Maintenance Supplies and Materials account to System-wide Plant Maintenance Dues and Fees account in the amount of \$1,520.00

C.3. Establish an appropriation for the Adult Education Program Enhancement Project (PEP) Grant for the FY 21/22 in the amount of \$40,000

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Pattacini asked Mr. Geary to describe the PEP Grant. Mr. Geary reviewed the \$40,000 grant will help support adult learners access the adult ed space and programming.

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Patterson moved and Mr. Eisenthal seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Alexandra Hamza expressed hope that everyone here is having a good transition into the colder weather and is as excited for the upcoming winter holidays as she is.

Alexandra reported a successful volleyball tournament was hosted by the senior class before the Thanksgiving break. It was great to see the excitement and watch some impressive players.

Another annual game occurred last Thursday, Turkey bowl. The junior Turkey bowl team won the game against the senior team by one touchdown.

While seniors did not win the turkey bowl game this year, each senior is slowly solidifying post-secondary plans. Many college readiness resources have been made available to seniors this year including a financial aid night tomorrow at 6:30pm, and post-secondary help sessions next week.

During the Thanksgiving break a few MHS cross-country athletes ran and medaled at the Northeast east bay regional race including: Jamie Dykstra, Kamili Riera, Mia Gilbert, Aidan Puffer, Sean Barkasy and Abdullah Barlas.

Finally, winter sports, including Boy's swim, Indoor track, wrestling and girl basketball, are underway. Boys basketball will be holding their tryouts today.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, recommended the History Channel to learn about Pearl Harbor. He also mentioned an article in the JI about the 30 survivors of the event which occurred 80 years ago.

Mr. Stringfellow recommended several books, including the Lincoln Brigade and Introduction to Systemic Racism by Delgado. An article in All About History magazine on the Spanish Inquisition was also interesting to him.

Last, Mr. Stringfellow mentioned Sandy Hook and the recent school shooting in Michigan and his hope that students can go to school safely.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Fall Data Update

Mr. Geary gave a presentation on the fall data results. He noted updates are given in Fall, Winter and Spring.

Mr. Geary also spoke about COVID-19 and the fact that cases are rising across the country as well as in our district. We have dealt with teacher absences, shortages of bus drivers and shortages of supplies.

Mr. Geary is thinking about extending the elementary school day back to normal in January and having them release early for PD on Wednesdays like the upper grades have been doing.

Ms. Mix was confused about the data around Robertson and Buckley and it was explained that Buckley is currently using the Robertson building, but that Robertson is no longer a school.

Mr. Eisenthal pointed out that at the 40th day of school, missing only 4 days would make a student labeled chronically absent. He also wondered if the ISS/OSS numbers were individual students or the number of suspensions total. Mr. Geary explained those numbers represent the number of instances and it may be that some students have multiple suspensions. Mr. Eisenthal also wondered how representative the staff response to the survey was. Mr. Geary noted he would like to see closer to 600-650 responses to be a more accurate representation.

Ms. Stefanovicz wondered if some schools, specifically Verplanck, need to be approached differently and asked how many coaches we have. Mr. Geary reviewed there are different needs at each school and currently there are 3 reading consultants at Verplanck. He noted we will look further into this during budget development. Ms. Stefanovicz also wants to be sure parents know and understand the needs of their students. Mr. Geary noted there are funds from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to support events and books to be sent home to involve parents. He recalled about 5 years ago we underwent a lot of parent training in the elementary schools. Ms. Stefanovicz noted in a crisis we have to make tough decisions about what is essential.

Ms. Patterson wondered about participation in advanced classes and what keeps students from getting there. Mr. Geary stated we have to be mindful of the criteria, such as taking advanced math in grade 6. We constantly review assessments and make sure kids are in courses that are appropriate and support them and their interests.

Ms. Patterson wondered what the criteria was for an ISS (in-school suspension) vs an OSS (out-of-school suspension). Mr. Geary noted that some offenses (such as having a weapon) demand a specific OSS, while other offenses are in the grey area.

Mr. Orsene asked if there is a 5 or 10 year plan for the schools or do we go year to year. Mr. Geary noted that typically we work on a three year plan. He expected this year to be more typical but clearly it has not been. He has been working on more of a 6 month plan at this point. We have never had to deal with so many unpredictable factors that are out of our control.

Ms. Stefanovicz asked if Mr. Geary knew why the suspensions at Illing were on the rise. She didn't know if it was a specific cohort of students that had struggled all along. Mr. Geary will look at the cohort information. He also noted that middle school is a notoriously difficult age which has become more challenging due to the pandemic.

Ms. Stefanovicz wants to continue to partner with parents to improve school climate and culture. Mr. Geary agreed that we always want to partner with families and be transparent. He noted that the most extreme behaviors do not represent the whole school. He would also like to start getting parents into buildings more.

Mr. Thames thanked Mr. Geary for dispelling the myth that we do not discipline students with egregious behavior. The safety of our students is paramount. He is concerned about the disparity of disproportionate punishments and wondered if this data is analyzed by teacher or school and if any trends are noted. Mr. Thames also asked what we are doing to help teachers with classroom management skills. Mr. Geary noted that coaches are used to help teachers learn classroom management skills if they struggle. We will also look at the data and see if we could use more PD around that.

Ms. Patterson wondered if we are continuing to experience a loss in learning or are we catching up. Mr. Geary noted that this year has been more consistent than last year. We are trying to get kids working on grade level, but it is hard to get a sense of how successful that is until about 80 days in. He feels it is not as bad as last year.

Mr. Pattacini noted that historically we have a multi-year plan for the Board and now we are looking at it in 6 month chunks. Mr. Geary noted there is still a three year plan, but we adjust as we go. After winter data comes in we adjust as well as after spring data. We do need to be mindful to avoid a funding/spending cliff.

Mr. Geary responded to a question asked online that if the number of students below grade level is high we adjust the tier 1 instruction for those in need.

Mr. Pattacini thanked Mr. Geary and the administration and staff for their work during this stressful time, noting they are all frontline workers.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

None.

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

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, enjoyed this evening's presentation and supports the Consent Calendar. He recommended the book *White by Law*. He suggested an article in *Attitude* magazine about special needs students. Mr. Stringfellow mentioned the violence in schools and anger management, involving parents and DCF. An article in the *Boston Globe* about students fighting bias interested him as well as an article in *USA Today* about closing the racial wealth gap.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Monday, December 20, 2021 - Board of Education Professional Learning Session

Monday, January 10, 2022 - Budget Presentation

Update on School Climate and Culture

Monday, January 24, 2021 Update on Humanities / STEM 5-12

Budget Presentation

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Patterson moved and Mr. Kohls seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Patterson
Board Secretary