

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting September 28, 2020 Lincoln Center/Virtual Meeting

PRESENT: Gundersen, Heinrich, Hughes, Pattacini, Patterson, Scappaticci, Thames

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

ABSENT: Meggers, Stefanovicz

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Thames called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led virtually by Mr. Thames.

A.3. Secretary's Welcome

Mr. Pattacini stated that as Secretary of the Board of Education, he wished to welcome the online viewers to this regular meeting of the Board of Education. He, along with the Board and the Superintendent, were pleased to be in celebrating the achievement, reviewing information, and discussing areas for growth, along with making policy decisions related to the effective operation of the Manchester Public Schools. Mr. Pattacini explained that this is a regular meeting of the Board and all items that will be discussed or voted on this evening have been posted, as required by state law. For the public speak section, speakers are asked to sign up in advance. If a member of the public is not able to virtually attend this meeting, they are welcome to reach out to the Superintendent via email.

Mr. Pattacini thanked the public for their interest in this evening's meeting and the Manchester Public Schools. He is proud of the work happening in Manchester.

A.4. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of September 14, 2020. Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Scappaticci seconded the motion.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Policy Committee

Mr. Hughes reviewed the last Policy Committee meeting took place September 14, 2020. Members present were Mark Gundersen, Scott Hughes, Melanie Stefanovicz and Darryl Thames Sr. along with Superintendent Matt Geary. The meeting was held virtually.

The members reviewed the Equity Policy and provided feedback. The Superintendent will create a form that includes a rubric to go with the policy and share with committee members prior to the next meeting.

The members discussed the addition of language on face coverings to the Covid-19 temporary policy and will move the policy revision to the full Board of Education for a first reading.

The committee discussed the current format of virtual Board of Education Meetings. At this time the committee recommends that the format remain virtual as it allows Board members to participate in a way where their faces are visible and voices are audible which would be a challenge in an in person setting. Additionally, the administration will develop ideas to engage the community in virtual public comment which could allow for increased participation.

The committee discussed School Resource Officers who are currently providing coverage at Illing Middle School, Manchester High School, Manchester Middle Academy, and Manchester Regional Academy while also assisting at all elementary schools and Bennet as needed. The Superintendent shared the original MOU between MPD and MHS. The Superintendent will gather additional information on school based arrests and student interaction with School Resource Officers and the committee will seek an opportunity to discuss this issue further with the Board of Directors.

Board Members shared ideas for future policy discussions including the use of electronic devices in grades 5 - 12. The Superintendent will bring additional information on current practice and policies in other districts to the next meeting.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented 4 items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

C.1. Personnel Action

None.

C.2. Transfer of Funds

- **Transfer from Buckley School Administration Office Supplies and Materials account to Buckley School Administration Printing and Advertising account in the amount of \$200.00.**
- **Transfer from MRA Special Education Field Trips account to MRA Special Education Computer Supplies and Materials account in the amount of \$4,327.00.**
- **Transfer from System-wide Language Arts Travel and Lodging account in the amount of \$5,000.00 and transfer from System-wide Language Arts Dues and Fees account in the amount of \$4,662.00. Transfer to System-wide Language Arts Instructional Supplies and Materials account in the total amount of \$9,662.00.**
- **Transfer from System-wide World Languages Contracted Substitutes account in the amount of \$3,000.00 and transfer from System-wide Social Studies Contracted Substitutes account**

in the amount of \$5,000.00. Transfer to System-wide Language Arts Instructional Supplies and Materials account for a total transfer in the amount of \$8,000.00.

C.3. Establish an appropriation for the Manchester Regional Academy (MRA) tuition for the FY20-21 in the amount of \$800,000

C.4. Permission to apply for the Nellie Mae Black Lives Matter for Black Educators Grant for the FY20-21 in the amount of \$30,000

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Scappaticci seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in the evening's agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Pattacini asked Mr. Geary to elaborate on the Nellie Mae Grant. Mr. Geary reviewed there are two different grants and this is the first from the Nellie Mae Foundation which is centered on work on equity. This smaller \$30,000 grant promotes an anti-racism youth voice. In the next few weeks a \$250,000 grant from Nellie Mae will provide for professional development for staff. Many foundations are asking how they can directly connect their funding to race and equity work. Mr. Pattacini thanked the administration for their work in finding alternate funding sources for the district.

Mr. Scappaticci wanted to confirm there were no personnel actions for this agenda. There were not.

The vote was called.

7/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

None.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Geary reviewed a conversation he had with the Policy Committee on his thoughts about how to enhance the public comment sessions during these virtual meetings. Some things talked about were highlighting the topic of the evening; having a Google form available for written comments; using social media/Facebook during the meeting to field questions; and sharing with the Board the trending topics on social media.

There were no public comments at this time.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

F.1. Update on Technology

Mr. Geary introduced Kerri Kearney, Director of Instructional Technology, and Jessica Williams, District Teacher of the Year.

Ms. Williams gave a shortened version of her Teacher of the Year presentation, which highlighted that chaos precedes great change. She encouraged people to seek out their ensemble and embrace the chaos, which is a doorway to opportunity. We need to expand the ways we connect with kids and find our voices and lift others.

Ms. Kearney reviewed the equity of access to technology. Not every student will do well with just one option for technology. The decision was made to provide IPADs for the pre-K through grade 1 students so they can have more independence and less typing needed. The Dalio Foundation provided Dell laptops that can also be used as tablets for the high school students. Students in grades 5-8 are using Chromebooks.

Ms. Kearney also reviewed some new programs being used with the younger students, such as Seesaw and Razkids, which have audio instructions and picture responses. Some other new programs include JamBoard, which is a virtual whiteboard, and Dreamboard, which is an adaptive math program.

For families that have internet connection issues hot spots have been used. Currently the district is working with Cox Cable to provide internet service to qualified families for better connectivity.

Ms. Kearney reminded us we need to be flexible. Perfection is the enemy of progress. (Winston Churchill).

Mr. Gundersen enjoyed the presentation and said his four year old granddaughter was engaged with the IPAD he borrowed. He is concerned, however, that there were no safeguards on the device. Mr. Gundersen noted he was able to get on YOUTube and mentioned the accessibility of the camera with GPS location tied to it. Ms. Learned explained that there are some safeguards in place, but sites like YOUTube are used by teachers for recorded books and other appropriate videos. The GPS locator is used to track the IPADS in case they get lost. At that age, Ms. Kearney reviewed that a child should not have access to the device unsupervised and would not have access to email, texting, etc. Mr. Gundersen stated that he would follow up with Ms. Kearney about some other concerns privately. He suggested a one page disclosure to parents about the risks of the device, which Ms. Kearney noted they do give to parents when issuing the IPAD.

Mr. Pattacini was interested in what might work in the post-pandemic classroom. Ms. Kearney noted they are looking towards the future, but need lots of input from students, families and teachers. Mr. Geary agreed that we will look for feedback from all stakeholders. The online learning this fall is very different from last spring, with more live lessons and more thoughtful applications. Dr. Radikas noted we learned from our mistakes and there are a lot of people working behind the scenes to make this work.

Mr. Geary mentioned the budget development calendar for 21-22 and noted that there are Library Media Specialists at every elementary school, Bennet, Illing and MHS along with some Technology Integration Specialists. If we did not have those people he does not know where we would be. We depend on them and their expertise. He commended the Board for their investment in technology

development and reminded the public that these positions are not luxuries, but are needed.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Geary reviewed the language regarding face coverings, which was presented for a first reading. If Board members have feedback they should send it along to Mr. Geary. This language was taken from Shipman & Goodwin and will be on the next agenda for adoption.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, reminded us that Columbus Day is next month. He recommended several books and magazine articles. He hopes for a great school year. Mr. Stringfellow hopes that all students can get along with one another. He thinks Manchester is doing a great job and he would like to see the mental health of children discussed in a presentation.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Geary noted that 9/15 started Hispanic Heritage Month and we are working to recognize and celebrate that. He noted that about 30% of our population is Latino.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

October 14 - Bennet School Improvement Plan

October 26 - Update on Human Resources

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.

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

7/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary