

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

May 11, 2020

Lincoln Center/Virtual Meeting

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

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & Special Services Radikas, Director of Finance & Management Clancy, Director of Human Resources Sone-Moyano. Building administrators were also present on the call.

ABSENT:

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Thames called the meeting to order at 5:39 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led 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. Mr. Geary and Mr. Thames are present at Lincoln Center, but everyone else is participating from their own residences. As there will be no public speaking this evening, please direct any questions or comments to the Superintendent. Mr. Pattacini thanked the public for their interest in this evening's meeting and the Manchester Public Schools.

A.4. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of April 20, 2020. Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Scappaticci seconded the motion.

9/0 – Voted in favor.

A.5. Approval of Minutes of Budget Workshop Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Budget Workshop of the Board of Education of May 6, 2020. Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Scappaticci 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. Establish an appropriation to increase to the Alliance District Grant FY 19/20 by \$327,414, bringing the total appropriation amount to \$5,936,857

C.3. Permission to apply for the Manchester Head Start Cost of Living and Quality Improvement Adjustments FY 20/21

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 packet.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

None.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Unavailable.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

F.1. Town Hall Meeting

Mr. Geary asked for a short recess, so that the Town Hall portion of the meeting could start as scheduled at 6:00 p.m.

Secretary Pattacini moved to go into recess. Mr. Scappaticci seconded the motion.

9/0 - Voted in favor. Recess called at 5:46 p.m.

Mr. Thames called the meeting back to order at 5:59 p.m.

Mr. Geary explained the format this evening was for administrators to respond to questions that parents have emailed. The first hour will apply to families in grades K-4 and the second hour is for those with children in grades 5-12.

Question	Answer
1 How is the Board of Education going to continue to support students throughout the rest of the school year and when they return to school?	Mr. Thames noted a lot of thought has gone into how the District can provide assistance with distance learning. We have already provided everyone that asked with a computer and/or a hotspot. We continue to support technology needs. Food is also being provided at four locations in town - Verplank, Robertson, Waddell and Bennet. Mr. Thames thanked parents for weathering this tremendous challenge. We understand there will be a loss of learning, not just the summer slide, to contend with in the fall.

<p>2 What do you say to parents who are concerned about learning loss that has happened since schools were closed and worried about how their kids can return to school safely?</p>	<p>Mr. Meggers reiterated Mr. Thames, stating the aim in the fall will be to get everyone caught up. Mr. Meggers noted that Governor Lamont spoke with Jan Hochael, from the American Federation of Teachers, who encouraged flexibility and that we will learn through the summer how best to resume in-person school. Right now we have no clarity but need to wait and be flexible. Mr. Meggers feels that Mr. Geary and the district have done a phenomenal job with distance learning. He hoped families would remain positive.</p>
<p>3 What can you tell us about summer plans?</p>	<p>Mr. Geary stated summer plans are still up in the air. He heard the guidance from the state around camps but expects further guidance in the next week or two around summer academics. Mr. Geary feels it is possible that some summer programming will take place in person, but virtual credit recovery and special education support may continue. As other states open before us we will learn more.</p>
<p>4 What ideas have been discussed about what the Fall could look like? Abbreviated day, smaller class sizes, etc.? If there is a staggered start to the school year, what do you tell families when one child goes into school while the other stays home?</p>	<p>Mr. Geary noted these are public safety decisions, but he recognized that there are parents who need to leave home to work, or have to work from home and need students back in school buildings. It will all depend on social distancing guidelines. The school day could be varied. We will make every effort to provide care and support to students and parents.</p>
<p>5 My child did OK at first but has lost motivation and I don't know what to do. Do you have any suggestions?</p>	<p>Mr. Robinson, principal of Highland Park, recommended encouraging your child to engage with their teacher in the google classroom. Kids want to see staff and other students. Also, a new recognition program has begun around attendance. There is also a "scholar lounge" for students in grades 3 and 4 for students to socialize with friends with staff looking on. The Family Resource Coordinators have also been reaching out to families.</p>
<p>6 My son who is in 4th grade has read all the books we have at home. We usually go to the library every weekend but can't and he doesn't like to read books on a screen. What can I do to get him more books?</p>	<p>Ms. Krisch, principal of Martin Elementary, agreed this is a challenge and the district is working on helping. We are awaiting a shipment from Scholastic in early June. Another suggestion is to have your child try an audiobook as an alternative to reading. Right now audible.com has free kids resources.</p>

<p>7 I try to help my daughter with her math but they teach differently from when I was in school. I want to help but don't know how.</p>	<p>Mr. Wolf, principal of Waddell, acknowledged that math is taught differently now than when we were young. He knows we cannot expect parents to teach in the same way as teachers. In grades K-4 math fluency (learning basic facts so they are automatic) is in each child's weekly plan. There are links for activities that students can do independently, such as flashcards and games. Students should aim for math fluency activities 2-3 times a week for 10 minutes each time. Another suggestion is to reach out to teachers. They want their students to succeed. If they know there is a particular struggle they will be better able to help and there may be other students with the same issues that can form a small group lesson to practice.</p>
<p>8 My son loves art so that's all he wants to do. It keeps him busy and happy but it's hard to get work on his reading and writing. What should I do?</p>	<p>Mr. Geary noted we are trying to meet students' various needs. Some families are overwhelmed, maybe parents are working or there are several kids in the house to help. If students are overwhelmed with the workload, cutting back on specials is advised, but not if the child has a passion for them. Mr. Jones, principal of Verplanck, added that trying to integrate art into the student's reading or other core subjects may help. Aso, it could be used as a reward after other work is completed. Mr. Jones also suggests asking questions about your child's artwork.</p>
<p>9 My three children are sharing two Chromebooks because one stopped working. Can we get it fixed?</p>	<p>Mr. Geary was happy to report that broken chromebooks can be fixed or swapped out at Illing on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10-12. Please email infosys@mpspride.org prior to going to the school.</p>
<p>10 Can you talk a little about the contingency planning that is happening for remote learning in the future? For example, are there any kind of district search for comprehensive learning programs that are better suited for home learning, will more technology training be offered for teachers so they can better utilize virtual classrooms, will there be plans and checks to</p>	<p>Dr. Radikas reviewed there is a core planning team looking at different scenarios for the fall, which may include full or part-time in buildings, virtual learning etc). Currently all grade levels are using the same plans across the board. Dr. Radikas noted there will be professional development offered to teachers on how to better utilize technology. While we were prepared for this use of technology, there is always room for growth.</p>

ensure every child is being reached?	
11 Why did only some grades receive their math books? Will other grades be receiving theirs?	Dr. Radikas noted that if they had any idea that the initial two week break would stretch so far they would have made everyone bring all their books home. A vendor offered to send one grade level a math book and the decision was made for that to be the kindergarteners. Other grade levels will be picking up books alongside the rest of their belongings curbside soon.
12 Can we implement google hangout meetings for music, science, art and gym class? I think the kids would benefit from interacting with their specials's teachers as well. It is a lot of work for a 6 year old to complete and to also have to do additional classes without any interaction with the teachers in their specials.	Dr. Radikas clarified that specials teachers do have google hangouts and classrooms, though they do not meet as often as core classes.
13 Will kids who have struggled pass onto the next grade? When will information about placement and classes for next year be available?	Ms. Johnston , principal of Keeney, stated that all students will pass on to the next grade level unless there were concerns prior to March. In the fall we will revisit the skills and concepts that were taught in the spring and imbed the priority standards and content from the spring into the fall. It is too early to discuss placement for next year.
14 My son has an IEP and his special education teacher is great. We get phone calls and extra attention but it's not the same as being there one on one. When will that start up again?	Ms. Burke , Director of Pupil Personnel Services, appreciated the positive comment. She also appreciated the efforts made by parents to help support their children. We will continue to review health and safety guidelines as we go.
15 Will the program for special needs students be open? The program is supposed to start July 6th.	Ms. Burke recognized that some special education student's IEPs include summer programming. At this time, we are not sure what that might look like this summer. We will act in accordance with health and safety guidelines and continue to think about other opportunities to provide remote support.

<p>16 I'm worried because now they say kids are getting Coronavirus. Is that true and how will that impact going back to school?</p>	<p>Ms. Reardon, Coordinator of School Health Services, confirmed some children have been diagnosed with Covid-19, though at a much slower rate than adults and with some different symptoms. We are monitoring this daily and over the summer we will see how these infections play out. We are working with the CDC, National School Nurse Association and State Health Department to keep kids safe and we will revise protocols as needed.</p>
<p>17 Will you have extra masks and hand sanitizers when the kids go back to school?</p>	<p>Ms. Clancy stated we will have those items and have already started purchasing or utilizing opportunities for future purchasing through legal council, who is connecting the district with manufacturing plants and we are also looking into purchasing through a consortium.</p>
<p>18 Will you be cleaning the schools and buses more than you used to when schools open up again?</p>	<p>Ms. Clancy stated we do plan to have cleaning done more often. The new bus protocol dictates bus drivers wiping the seats down between bus runs. Social distancing on a bus is a more difficult concern to deal with. In the buildings we have started discussions with the supervisors of Buildings & Grounds. There are about 60 custodians and 20 maintenance men in the district and about ⅓ of them work second shift. There has been discussion about possibly moving some of those people to 1st shift so that more cleaning can happen during the day. There are 7 special electrostatic sanitizing machines that we have, one of which we lent the town. We plan to purchase 4 more so we can more easily sanitize touch surfaces.</p>
<p>19 When schools are back in session I have concerns in regards to small kids missing their friends and wanting to hug and socialize. My fear is due to me having a severe asthmatic that although he knows to take the proper protocol put in place some of the kids won't understand. How can I be reassured that he will be safe? Are there options open for situations like these?</p>	<p>Dr. Ruggiero, Principal of Bowers, noted we have the same concerns. As we plan the specific needs of students, especially medically fragile students, will be considered thoughtfully and we will be flexible. Nurses and administrators will communicate with all adults regarding specific medical needs. Class spaces will look different, with smaller sizes. The roles of staff members may change. We will monitor social distancing and do our best to implement this with young children. We have the opportunity to learn from others as other places reopen first across the world. There can never be a 100% guarantee of preventing hugging or socializing, but we will try our best. One option may be to continue virtual learning, possibly splitting time with school-based learning.</p>

<p>20 What is the plan for the fall? How will we be keeping out kids and staff safe? Coming to school 24 hours after a child is fever free or vomiting is not long enough.</p>	<p>Ms. Reardon noted the current policy for sick students may need to be updated to reflect current times. We will work with local health officials and the CDC for guidance. We will do everything we can to protect the children. Mr. Geary added that communication is important and we will communicate a clear protocol when we have more information.</p>
<p>21 What's the plan for implementing hand washing as soon as kids arrive at school, before snack and lunch? There needs to be less time spent on teaching and focus on what matters! Give teachers an extra ten minutes to allow for hand washing!</p>	<p>Mr. Daly, Principal of Buckley, answered that safety is the ultimate focus. We will ensure students are washing hands (for 20 seconds) throughout the day, not just before eating. It will be built into the schedule, which will take minutes from other areas. Teachers are gifted in differentiating instruction to help students avoid any issues.</p>
<p>22 When will kids be allowed to pick up the stuff they left in their lockers? What about other items such as yearbooks?</p>	<p>Mr. Daly noted we are in the planning stages of a thoughtful and organized way for both staff and students to pick up their belongings. The plan will include social distancing and will be finalized in the coming weeks.</p>
<p>23 Will the elementary construction projects continue as scheduled</p>	<p>Ms. Clancy stated the construction will continue as scheduled. Work has already begun with the architect, energy consultant and construction manager. They are starting the design phase and looking at the HVAC systems. The plan is still to break ground at Buckley in July 2021. Mr. Geary added that the Town Building Committee oversees this project and they met with the architect recently for this critical step to stay on target.</p>
<p>Mr. Geary reminded us the school year officially ends June 15th. We will need to get staff into buildings to pack up their classrooms in June sometime. He realizes everyone's motivation and momentum is waning. The focus for students the first week of June will center on specials and STEM and materials will be going home for some hands-on learning. The second week of June will be the launch of the summer reading program.</p> <p>Mr. Geary thanked the elementary administrators for joining the meeting and noted the secondary meeting will be starting shortly.</p>	

Secretary Pattacini moved to have a five minute break. Mr. Scappaticci seconded the motion.

9/0 - Voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 6:68 p.m.

**Mr. Thames called the meeting back to order at 7:06 p.m.
Secondary Town Hall - Pertaining to grades 5-12**

Question	Answer
1 How is the Board of Education going to continue to support students throughout the rest of the school year and when they return to school?	Mr. Thames noted we have worked hard as a district to ramp up learning, including providing computers and hotspots to families as needed. He commends all involved in the quick move to virtual learning, including parents.
2 What do you say to parents who are concerned about learning loss that has happened since schools were closed and worried about how their kids can return to school safely?	Mr. Meggers noted the loss of learning is concerning to everyone. We need to ensure that all families have needed resources. We have done a terrific job so far and families are impressed with the administrators response to the situation. Mr. Meggers noted that Governor Lamont spoke with Jan Hochael, from the American Federation of Teachers, who encouraged flexibility and that we will learn through the summer how best to resume in-person school. Right now we have no clarity but need to wait and be flexible. Mr. Meggers feels that Mr. Geary and the district have done a phenomenal job with distance learning. He hoped families would remain positive. Mr. Thames added that the district continues to provide meals at Bennet, Waddell, Verplanck and MMA (Robertson).
3 What can you tell us about summer plans?	Mr. Geary stated summer plans are still up in the air. We will wait to see how the May 20th soft opening of public spaces goes. Mr. Geary does envision at minimum a virtual course for students in high school needed credit recovery as well as students with disabilities whose IEPs mandate summer learning.
4 What ideas have been discussed about what the Fall could look like? Abbreviated day, smaller class sizes, social distancing etc.?h If there is a staggered start to the school year, what do you tell families when one child goes into	Mr. Geary noted that there is a concern with students in middle and high school due to how much they move around the building. The schools have between 850 and 1600 students in each. Staggered days are being considered but Mr. Geary is also aware that sometimes older siblings provide child care assistance for younger siblings so that has to be considered as well.

school while the other stays home? If distance learning continues in the fall, how might it look different?	
5 My child did OK at first but has lost motivation and I don't know what to do. Do you have any suggestions?	Mr. Chella , Principal of Bennet Academy, noted that students and staff have done great over the last 6 weeks, but everyone is experiencing fatigue at this point. He noted it is helpful to create a schedule and stick to it. He encourages students to take breaks and get fresh air. Mr. Chella also suggested students attend google meets with their teachers and use that opportunity to socialize a bit with their peers. There is also a new incentive program centered around attendance and effort. We are also exploring ways to socialize outside of academics as well.
6 My three children are sharing two Chromebooks because one stopped working. Can we get it fixed?	Mr. Geary was happy to state that broken Chromebooks can be swapped out at Illing on Tuesday and Wednesday from 10-12. He suggests emailing infosys@mpspride.org prior to proceeding to the school so they are expecting you.
7 Can you talk a little about the contingency planning that is happening for remote learning in the future? For example, are there any kind of district search for comprehensive learning programs that are better suited for home learning, will more technology training be offered for teachers so they can better utilize virtual classrooms, will there be plans and checks to ensure every child is being reached?	Dr. Radikas noted there is a core planning group of administrators and teachers looking at learning platforms for the fall, possibly combining remote and in-person learning. The district has done a great job thus far and has been very clear in planning how curriculum is delivered consistently along grade levels. We will continue to offer technology professional development, which is always needed. Staff and families have done a great job with this situation. Students should be checking in with teachers through email, text, google meets and hangouts and mentor Mondays. We want all students to be successful and we will look at what we have done well so far and where there are opportunities for growth.
8 Will kids who have struggled pass onto the next grade? For students transitioning schools, is there a plan to help them with what will be an extra challenging transition because of the way school ended this year?	Mr. Chella stated no child will be held back due to issues during virtual learning. As for transitioning to a new school, that is in the planning phase. We hope to get families into the building, but it may be just virtual tours for now.

<p>9 My son has an IEP and his special education teacher is great. We get phone calls and extra attention but it's not the same as being there one on one. When will that start up again?</p>	<p>Ms. Burke thanked all the parents for helping support their students. She pointed out that staff really want to be in buildings working directly with students. We are reviewing health and safety guidance and thinking of new ways to support our district.</p>
<p>10 Will the program for special needs students be open? The program is supposed to start July 6th.</p>	<p>Ms. Burke stated that if a student's IEP dictates summer programming we will look for ways to provide this, possibly remotely.</p>
<p>11 I'm worried because now they say kids are getting Coronavirus. Is that true and how will that impact going back to school?</p>	<p>Ms. Reardon confirmed there are children that have been diagnosed with Covid19, although at a much slower rate than adults. We will watch this over the next couple of months and follow the CDC and state health department guidelines.</p>
<p>12 Will you have extra masks and hand sanitizers when the kids go back to school?</p>	<p>Ms. Clancy stated we will have those items and have already started purchasing them for next year. Also, we are being connected directly with manufacturers through our legal council as well as looking into purchasing through a consortium.</p>
<p>13 Will you be cleaning the schools and buses more than you used to when schools open up again?</p>	<p>Ms. Clancy noted that bus drivers will be wiping down seats between bus runs. The more difficult problem is how to socially distance kids on the bus. The district has 60 custodians and 20 maintenance men and about ⅔ work second shift. Administration is talking with the supervisors of Buildings & Grounds to look at how best to clean the school and it may be necessary to pull some workers to first shift so we can sanitize multiple times throughout the day.</p>
<p>14 What is the plan for the fall? How will we be keeping out kids and staff safe? Coming to school 24 hours after a child is fever free or vomiting is not long enough.</p>	<p>Ms. Reardon stated we will work on changing protocols over the summer as needed, possibly making a 72 hour window after a child is fever-free. Kids safety is our first priority. We will communicate with parents when a plan is in place. Ms. Reardon is working with the Medical Directors for schools and looking at the CDC and State Health Department guidelines. Mr. Geary added that it may be possible for a student to participate remotely in the fall if they are ill. We will be looking at the attendance policy and being flexible.</p>

<p>15 Why are the teachers taking the grading way too far? They grade us harder than when we were at school and it's making work harder and we are failing. Can we make sure all staff know that there should not be new work assigned on recharge days?</p>	<p>Ms. Miner, principal of MHS, will make sure teachers understand the recharge and review days. Each week students earn points based on participation, completing work and reflecting. Teachers should be giving feedback to students as well. If a student is frustrated there are teams to help, such as behavior techs, counselors, etc. Students should be attending google meets and asking for support.</p>
<p>16 Will there be summer school to make up credits?</p>	<p>Ms. Miner stated there is no official answer about in-person school during the summer at this time, though there will be virtual options for students needing credit recovery. We will be looking at virtual options for transition programming as well.</p>
<p>17 What are the plans for the next school year if schools cannot reopen? Distance learning the way was implemented this year doesn't work in the long run, schedules are shortened and many teachers have already announced that they won't be able to cover the entire curriculum for the year, so continuing the same way would put the kids more and more behind in their learning.</p>	<p>Mr. Geary noted that it is not optimal to continue distance learning as it is now. We hope to return in the fall at least part-time in person. This was an emergency situation and though he is hopeful to return to full days in person, we will adjust either way.</p>
<p>18 Why was it decided not to count the 3rd & 4th quarter marking period. What incentive does a student have to complete his/her work?</p>	<p>Ms. Gomero, principal of Illing, noted we are committed to providing equitable learning opportunities to all students. With online learning only there is a potential to create inequities for some families. Our families vary in their needs; some parents can assist, some cannot; some have multiple children they are helping; some adults need to work either at home or outside the home. Grades count, but there is the option if a student is struggling to change from a grade to Pass/Fail or incomplete. There are also incentives around attendance and the MPS values. The goal is to support every family.</p>

19 When will kids be allowed to pick up the stuff they left in their lockers? What about other items such as yearbooks?	Ms. Gomero stated we are drafting a plan for students and teachers to pick up their belongings at the end of May or early June. The yearbooks will be distributed at the same time.
20 Will all high school students be repeating the grade? Or held back?? When will information about placement and classes for next year be available?	Mr. Thorndike , principal of MRA, stated that students were on target for promotion the first three quarters of the year they will not be held back due to the virtual learning experience. If they were struggling prior to this and are not participating now they may lose credit. There are teams of people reaching out to connect with students. Next year's placement plans will be made over the summer.
21 Where are the best resources to prep juniors for tips for college apps since we weren't able to have the college planning meetings. Thanks!	Ms. Miner noted there will be options the first two weeks in June for Juniors, including resume writing, essay work and teacher recommendations. We are working with NEASC around how colleges are adjusting. There are also grant funds for a college application boot camp in August, which may be virtual.
22 Thank you for all that you are doing for our seniors to try and salvage what we can to celebrate them. Could you please share what preliminary ideas are for graduation of the class of 2020?	Ms. Miner thanked students, parents and community members for their support. She noted there has been a survey for students and parents with options and senior officers conducted focus groups. Project Graduation has also participated. When it is safe we would like to hold an in-person celebration for our graduates. When that will be is still undetermined. Some other ideas include a car parade in June, having students with immediate family at the school, outdoor in small groups. We would need to be flexible and sign up for times. The Commissioner will provide more guidance next week and we will see what is allowed. We are also working on treats for seniors. We want them to feel celebrated and acknowledged. Mr. Geary added that caps and gowns and yearbooks will be distributed and chromebooks will be returned and information on that schedule will be forthcoming.

Mr. Geary thanked Ms. Turnquest and the administrators for participating in the meeting. The goal was to let the community know that the district has one voice and there are a lot of dedicated people working on this.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

None.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Unavailable.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Mr. Thames noted the Budget Workshops scheduled for May 13 and May 20 have been cancelled.

June 8 and June 22 Board meetings agenda and location TBD.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Scappaticci seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary