Derry Township School District
Hershey High School

Meeting Minutes

BAT Meeting

Wednesday, November 8, 2023
8:20 A.M. – Zoom

Lindsey Schmidt (Chair)
High School Principal

- Laurie Wade (Co-Chair)
  HS Assistant Principal
- Brendan Hensel (Co-Chair)
  Guidance Counselor

Present:

Staff: Lindsey Schmidt, Laurie Wade, Greg Miller, Jamie Bean, Alaric Krause, Brendan Hensel, Ashlee McCann

Parents: Angela Mullen, Archana Sehgal, Eric Callahan

Topics for Discussion: Attendance

Discussions:

1. Meeting opened at 8:15 A.M.; waiting to see if other parents that registered would join the Zoom meeting.
2. Meeting began at 8:20 A.M.
3. Ms. Schmidt opened the meeting by thanking the parents in attendance for joining us today; she introduced HHS staff in attendance as well as the parents.
4. Ms. Schmidt provided todays topic of discussion: Attendance
5. Ms. Schmidt started by switching the original direction of an overview of attendance to asking if the veteran parents had any questions around attendance
    a. Ms. Schmidt explained that this year K-12 had to follow the school board policies to a T regarding educational trip forms and they understand that was a change to families.

b. Ms. Schmidt stated that information about this change was sent out at the beginning of the year and have continued to communicate to families of the expectation that the educational trip forms are handed in 10 calendar days before the trip.
c. Ms. Schmidt was going to spend sometime today talking to families about three unexcused absences would lead to a conference around attendance with the purpose is just attendance improvement and working together with families and schools. However, the parents in attendance have a good grasp on attendance and none of their children have attendance issues and Ms. Schmidt did not want to waste their time talking about something that the parents may feel confident in.
d. Ms. Schmidt decided to tweak the topic and ask if any of the parents in attendance had any questions around attendance this year or past circumstances you might want to work through or have answered.

6. Mr. Callahan – Parent
    a. Mr. Callahan stated that Mr. Hensel knows that he has emailed about attendance.
    b. Mr. Callahan stated that the new system takes attendance in each class.
        i. The way that parents can see the period by period attendance on parent vue is by the red x's that jump out at you.
        ii. Mr. Callahan stated that his son Mason's schedule is a little different with an internship and there have been errors.
            1. Concerned about going back and forth with multiple staff members and not being fixed.
            2. Wondering about the implementation of the new policy and are there little glitches like this and how are they being rectified?
7. Ms. Schmidt answered Mr. Callahan's questions with the following:
    a. We are doing period by period attendance which is a total shift for the High School. It is also happening at the middle school but has less of an impact on them as we have more flexibility in our schedules here at the high school just as you mentioned with the internship.
    b. Ms. Schmidt asked if it was ok to clean up Mason's attendance and cleaned up the other days that were missed.
    c. Ms. Schmidt stated that it was a glitch in our system that the timing in the system was not accurate.
    d. Ms. Schmidt stated that all we have asked is that if you see a red x in the system please reach out and we can clean it up.
        i. This was an issue with synergy for our flex kids we were originally giving them to the start of second period to be in class but synergy was marking them unlawful if they had not checked in before the bell rang at the end of first period. The system was not jiving with our process.

e. Ms. Schmidt again encouraged families that have questions to please reach out as we are new to the period by period attendance.
f. Ms. Schmidt stated that there were glitches that they could anticipate and others that they couldn't anticipate.

8. Ms. Mullen asked who they should reach out to if they have any questions.
    a. Ms. Schmidt stated to either reach out to Mr. Blair, your child's guidance counselor or if you have a unique situation like Mr. Callahan was mentioning where your student works with Ms. Smith the internship coordinator.
        i. Ms. Schmidt stated that Mr. Blair is the first and best place to start and he should be able to direct you to the correct person if it is a unique situation.
9. Mr. Callahan stated that issues are coming up more often when there is a sub.
    a. Mr. Callahan asked what is the process for taking attendance in the class to the kids have to check in or do the teachers take the attendance? He stated that she mentioned a check in by the students.
        i. Ms. Schmidt answered Mr. Callahan's question by stating that the teachers take the attendance at the period for the students.
            1. Ms. Schmidt mentioned that the check in she was talking about was for the flex campus kids.
                a. Flex campus kids which are Juniors and Seniors that have flex campus and they need to scan their QR code that logs them into the system and present for the day.
                b. Flex campus kids are listed as absent for the day until they log into the system with their QR code and then the absent mark is cleared. However, in each class where the teacher is taking attendance then the teacher can clean up or clarify of the student is marking absent since they were not there for the start of the period but they walk in with a pass. They can clean up there attendance right there.
                c. Starting in October the subs were given iPad and they are taking attendance as if they are the teacher and this has cleared up some of the issues we have had with sub attendance.
10. Ms. Schmidt stated that the period by period attendance is a work in progress and that there are unintended consequences that we couldn't anticipate when we went to this. However overall the data that we are getting and the accountability that is on kids that they have to be in class. Class cuts have drastically been reduced.
11. Ms. Schmidt asked if there are any other attendance questions and it can be specific to your kid or broad questions.

12. Ms. Mullen hasn't had any attendance issues with her high school child but the she has with the middle school child.
    a. Ms. Mullen mentioned about athlete attendance that she has heard about some parents stating that their athlete was dismissed with the team but marked unexcused period absences. Giving feedback of some things that are coming up.
        i. Ms. Schmidt stated that sports teams had more issues than we could have anticipated this fall as synergy allows us to code a sports team dismissal but there were some human error just not understanding the systems.
        ii. Ms. Schmidt stated that if anyone ever has questions to please reach out.
    b. Ms. Mullen stated that she thinks the period by period attendance was a great idea she would love to know if her child is cutting class.
13. Mr. Callahan stated we had our troubles with attendance office but he appreciates what Ms. Schmidt stating about how overwhelming it has been with trying to fix the clerical errors.
14. Mr. Callahan mentioned that he was concerned about colleges looking at Mason's attendance and seeing all of the errors and it looking poorly on him and that is why they wanted to get the errors corrected. He stated that this is their first senior and he is not sure how important attendance is in the first marking period of the senior year.
15. Mr. Callahan how the students should try to correct these errors if they are supposed to correct them on their own.
16. Ms. Schmidt stated that the student should start by going back to person they were physically present with or who gave the pass to them.
    a. Example – Nurse is marking the students that are coming to them. If there was an issue with the time they were with the nurse they would go back to the nurse first to correct it.
17. Mr. Callahan asked if there are still paper passes.
    a. Ms. Schmidt stated that there are two forms of paper passes.
        i. One pass is a bathroom pass
        ii. Second pass is a hallway pass to go in the hallways when the student is supposed to be in a classroom.
            1. These passes are color coded.
    b. Ms. Schmidt said there are a lot of checks and balances but also a lot of opportunity for human error and when you have staff of over 100 people involved in attendance there will be errors.
18. Ms. Schmidt stated that if you ever get an unlawful letter the language is intense.
    a. Ms. Schmidt stated that the law requires certain things to be sent out each unlawful absence. The law also requires that those absences be coded unlawful and not unexcused.

b. Ms. Schmidt stated that PA a few years ago, changed their attendance laws and it made the wording in the letters harsher and we have to quote law. We have to tell a parent if you are not sending your student to school X, Y and Z could happen.
c. Ms. Schmidt stated that she being a parent of a high school student who received one of those letters she understands how it feels because her daughter did not turn in the note.
d. Ms. Schmidt stated that we will always work with families and in no way do we want a relationship to go south because of an attendance letter.
e. Ms. Schmidt stated that we always want to work with families and our goal is the kids to be with us. If there is a barrier to attendance we want to remove them. If it is just an issue with a note we will work through them.

19. Mr. Callahan stated when the red x shows up that it raises a question mark. Now what happens here at home is now I have to raise an eyebrow at my son and say what is going on here and there is a moment of awkwardness because they feel accused. When this stuff happens there is an awkwardness we just want to all be on the same page. We end up grilling them about not messing around and if there is an error we question them and they just want to come home and forget about school.
20. Ms. Schmidt commends the parents in attendance are showing up to these meetings and providing feedback and you are involved in what is happening in your child's educational process. We do have the opposite side where we do not have parent involvement and it really does make a true impact on a kid's ability to feel supported and feel successful when they know they have family at home to hold them accountable the same way the school is.
21. Ms. Schmidt asked if there were others questions?
22. Ms. Schmidt stated that we were just going to talk about attendance to clear that up since we have wrapped up the first marking period.
23. Ms. Schmidt stated that you will get an email on November 17th letting you know that report cards are in the documents tab of parent vue.
24. Ms. Schmidt opened it up for any questions the parents might have.
25. Ms. Sehgal asked when teachers have to put in their grades?
    a. Ms. Schmidt stated that the window to put grades in is open until November 16th.
        i. She stated that teachers were asked to finish before that date as there are reports that they need to run.
        ii. There are hard deadlines at the end of the year but throughout the year we can be very flexible with going back and correcting grades.
26. Ms. Schmidt stated that November 21 Tuesday will be the Junior / Senior Powder Puff Football Game.

a. Some students will be allowed to go outside and some will watch it on the live stream.
b. They will have farm show milkshakes and hot chocolate.
c. We will be using it as a community building opportunity as well as a way to raise money for mini-thon.

27. Ms. Schmidt stated that they are announcing that they are bringing back the Volleyball Tournament and it will be the December 21st the Friday before their holiday winter break.
    a. No classes will be run that day
    b. Activities
        i. Play in the volleyball games
        ii. Read a book in the library
        iii. Cafeteria for crafts
        iv. Movies
        v. Hang out time
28. Ms. Schmidt stated that they want to bring the kids together and do something fun before they go on break.
29. Ms. Schmidt mentioned that the football team is in playoffs and go to New Oxford on Friday. Band and cheer are still competed to supporting the football team.
30. Ms. Schmidt mentioned that the Field Hockey team and the Boys Soccer team both won Tuesday night in the first round of states and both play Saturday.
    a. We could possibly have two state championship games to win on Saturday November 18th at Cumberland Valley High School if they win.
    b. Awesome showing for both teams last night.
    c. We encourage the kids to come out to any games that they can.
    d. Congratulations to those athletes we are truly dominating the fall sports.
    e. Winter season starts in a week.
31. Ms. Schmidt stated that she appreciates the three parents that came to the meeting and asked them to reach out to any of us with any questions. We appreciate your feedback and we want to continue to build a strong community of family and school.

Meeting dismissed at 8:47 A.M.

Minutes Prepared by: Ashlee McCann, Administrative Assistant to the Athletic Director