

**MINUTES**

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee  
School Committee Meeting  
Monday, October 23, 2023 - 6:30 p.m.  
Hoosac Valley High School  
125 Savoy Road, Cheshire, MA

**PRESENT:** Mike Mucci, John Duval, Adam Emerson, Andrew Przystanski, Bethany DeMarco, Erin Milne, Mike Henault

**ABSENT:**

**OTHERS:** Superintendent Aaron Dean

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**104101 Call to Order**

Chairman Bethany DeMarco called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**104102 Public Comment or Question - None**

**104103 Approval of Minutes - September 18, 2023**

**MOTION:** On Motion of Mike Henault and second by John Duval :

VOTED: to approve the September 18, 2023 School Committee minutes. The vote was unanimous.

**104104 Report of Treasurer/Business Manager -**

A. Reclassify Budget - S.C. Order 2401

Submitted herein for your approval is a request to reclassify the FY24 budget to align with projected expenditures. Be it hereby ordered to transfer funds between various accounts. See attached.

**MOTION:** On Motion of Mike Henault and second by Adam Emerson:

VOTED: To approve S.C. Order 2401. The vote was unanimous.

Started audit - may have received an email. E & D certified on September 19th it was for \$1,056,146 and that represents 4.94% of our FY24 budget. We have a 5% threshold that we cannot go over.

**104105 Report of Sub Committee -**

**A. Policy -** Erin Milne: reviewed the device policy to make the language we approved is in line with the practices of the school that they wanted to implement. Would like to contract with MSAC to review our policies. Would work out well with our equity audit that our DEI consultant is going to deliver and incorporate those findings. There have been a lot of leadership changes, so this will make sure everything is in the same place, everything is defined. And as a board - Who we are, what our purposes are and how we operate. We would contract with MASC - engage in reviewing these documents for about a year, the policy sub committee would lead that work. Bring changes to the full committee. Aaron will get price points from Glenn Koocher at MASC. Approximately \$3,500/per year, could be negotiable because it is a smaller District. It is a considerable amount of work. To do list for later in the year: get language set for the sports advisory board. Adam: policy review, it is in our policy manual, that we update our policy every three years. It has been about 10 years since this has happened.

**B. Maintenance** - Aaron: talked about current projects that are going on in the buildings and future projects coming up. We have the roof project at the middle/high school that is taking place, we have weekly project meetings with them to make sure it's going as expected. Hoping to have this done by the end of November for both roofs. Heating controllers, HVAC controllers, entered into a service agreement with CTC, and have been working on energy efficiency. Issues that come up with communication with the heating controllers, had automation issues as well. We are finally getting some headway on. Some issues will require upgrades with hardware and software. Other issues: Parking lot repairs, repainting parking lot lines, we will have another evaluation of all our HVAC systems at the high school. Elementary School: Sidewalks looking at for the summertime, gym roof top unit is problematic. Fire control systems are going to need to be updated in the next few years. Other odds and ends that we will look at as well. Mike Mucci: met with Bob and he is working with all the custodians in the buildings and his role with them is getting off the ground well, and is going in the right direction with what his role is going to be. Bringing in outside contractors that we don't typically use to help fill voids.

**104106 Communications -**

**A. Nature's Classroom Trip** - Committee was presented with a letter request from Justin Luciani for approval of the trip. The cost would be \$300.00/ student. The date of the trip is March 4 - 8, 2024. The new location will be in Charlton, MA. Mike H. - how do students access funding if they can't afford it? - ACE Grant available. Payment plan is also available. Erica Girgenti will talk to businesses about sponsorships. Bussing comes out of district miles. Trip is for Grade 6 only. Mike Henault: want to make sure that students are opting out because they don't want to go, not because of financial burden. Uncomfortable with the price point for our families. Lisa Lesser responded that she will make sure that any students who want to go will go.

**MOTION:** On Motion of Mike Mucci and second by John Duval:

VOTED: to approve the Nature's Classroom Trip, Grade 6 to Charlton, MA. The vote was unanimous.

**104107 Report of Superintendent -**

**A.. Accountability & Enrollment Data** - Aaron addressed this year's enrollment versus last year. Came in under projection - down 42 students from last year. Some of this is natural moves, particularly in the elementary school, some are a typical grade 3 to 4 shift, gained 11 students in 7th grade. Grade 9 numbers didn't come in as high as we thought they would. Our number coming into this year is 985. Doing work around our programming to maintain/gain enrollments. A big part has been our programming and what we need to do. Recently a visit from Portrait Of a Graduate was a positive visit with the shifts we are making.

This past year, had a study done, by Vanderbilt, around our enrollment, and what we can do about it. Our district has 1,486 eligible students, our current enrollment is 985, we have 500 students in different places, some at McCann, St. Stan's, BART and the remainder are school choicing out to other schools. 67% choose HVRSD and 12.% participate in open enrollment. There are a lot of options. We need to have quality programming, done a lot of work to build that but have to do more work.

Problem of Practice: A cycle of declining enrollment. Students opt out, fewer fiscal resources, decreased academic offering, reduction in staff, loss of morale.

What push factors cause families to leave here? Vanderbilt brought in focus groups, real information from families, why they made their decisions. School and class are in chaos, perceptions of disorder; low levels of resources; low academic achievement; school structures and facilities; communication.

Perceptions of Disorder: A driving factor in considering other school districts is the perception of disorder within HVRSD and that student behavior is affecting the social emotional well-being and academic success of all students. Establish a committee to create an updated code of conduct; Provide professional learning opportunities to help teachers respond to behavior concerns. Talked about suspension rates.

Levels of Resources: Low levels of resources have created a perception that other districts have more and higher quality academic and non-academic programming; continue exploring shared service agreements with surrounding districts, municipalities and colleges to increase access to the desired programming.

Academic Achievement: low academic achievement is a push factor that contributes to families choosing other districts. Leverage existing professional learning communities to increase rigor and improve instructional practices; continue the pursuit of DESE approved "pathways" that create clear options for specific college and career outcomes. Discussed MCAS data.

Structure & Facilities: A perception exists that the district facilities are deteriorating and that the current two-buildings necessitate non-traditional age groupings at the elementary and middle schools. Partner with the MSBA to complete an assessment of current facilities in exploration of restructuring HVRSD schools into more traditional grade distributions. Only 3 of 1856 schools in Massachusetts have a 4 - 7 grade span.

Communication: Communication with families is overly complex and does not effectively provide information that is important to families. Develop a streamlined, district-wide communication plan that increases teacher-parent contact while limiting methods of messaging. We need to look at ways to communicate with families, not just platforms, but face to face. We need teacher's talking to families. Principals send out notes every week, which has been consistent.

High standards/high expectations: We are pushing our staff to hold students to high standards and the level of rigor we expect from our students. Our belief in all of our students' capacity to accomplish or produce work to our standards.

Overall District Accountability: Achievement; growth, high school completion; progress toward attaining English language proficiency - additional indicators (chronic absenteeism; advanced coursework completion) see attached graph.

**B. School Improvement Plan - Erin Beaulac:** looked at data from last year, fastbridge, panorama, MCAS.

Priority areas: active partnerships: Caregivers will feel their child has a sense of belonging at HVES. Driver: feedback from caregivers - 2 surveys - at least one additional feedback opportunity; Caregivers will feel that HVES is a good fit for their child and their cultural background; Drivers to making that change: teachers will collaborate with caregivers to create individual student profiles that highlight strengths, interests and ways to support their child; ILT will analyze survey results and support their colleagues in engagement with families.

Priority 2: Goal 1: positive school culture of high standards and high expectations - Staff and students will feel HVES is a positive environment; - Drivers: training in and implementation of Responsive Classroom and Growth Mindset;

Goal 3: at least 75% of students will meet or exceed expectations in math and reading - drivers: weekly BBT and content specific collaboration planning; implement research-based high quality curriculum; provide high quality professional development; calibrate ILT members around high standards, high expectations and accommodations/differentiation.

**Middle School:** Priority 1: School Culture - Goal: increase positive/supportive school culture among students, staff and families - Drivers: create a school year event calendar for caregivers and staff; implement Hurricane Crew advisory program; Build a Hurricane Heroes Mentor Program; Pilot Bloomz as a school-wide communication tool; Quarterly acknowledgment for attendance and addles earned;

Priority 2: High Academic Achievement; Goal: increase the number of students meeting or exceeding grade-level standards; Driver: Weekly SST and content-specific collaborative planning; one faculty meeting a month focused on SWD as a result of SST meetings; provide high quality professional development; Calibrate ILT members around high standards and high expectations.

Priority 3: High Expectations for Behavior: Goal: create and maintain a safe environment that inhibits disruptive behaviors and increase time spent on learning. Drivers: clarify and refine usage of data systems; implement CREW advisory program; Hold Weekly SST meetings and weekly staff SST/SAC meetings to calibrate; opportunities to utilize consultancy protocol to brainstorm potential solutions for a problem of practice as it relates to student challenges; establish school-wide behavior expectations based on the tenets of PRIDE.

**High School:** Priority 1: School Attendance: Goal 1: increase attendance among students who historically have missed 10 or more days by 50% - Drivers: provide every student a teacher champion through daily CREW opportunities; developing skills around the PoG competencies with a focus on attendance, attitude and academics; DATA team looking at trends

Priority 2: Positive & Supportive School Culture - Goal: Increase positive/supportive school culture among students, staff, and families - Drivers: Providing teachers with autonomy in choosing their CREW topic - 100% of teachers participate in CREW kick-off, provide their plans; Providing students choice in CREW selection; Restructuring open house opportunities to showcase

curriculum/PBL/Pathways/CREW; DATA-team analyzes multiple data sources from a culture and BEIB lens in order to communicate early worries, successes, and trends in need of addressing.

Priority 3: High Standards and Academic Success - Goal: Increase number of students passing all classes at year end by 50% - Drivers: launch tutoring center program; launch math intervention program; create a year-long scope of touchpoints for families of struggling students; CREW champion monitoring student progress; Project-based learning; DATA team

Mike H.: Goal 1: quick math, could meet that goal and not lose your accountability target. Regina will look at the numbers again.

Aaron: SIP take them, give feedback, come back next month and vote on them, where we will present the DIP that supports all of these areas.

**104108 Chairman's - None**

**104109 Unfinished Business - Superintendent Evaluation** - Mike Henault: used the same methodology for the last 2 years; Used the indicator rubric for Superintendent Evaluation (DESE); committee members rated Aaron on each indicator for each of the four standards on a scale from needs improvement to exemplary. This year, we used Aaron's self assessment; Mike went through each Standards.

Standard I: Instructional leadership: Proficient

Standard II: Management and Operations: Proficient

Standard III: Family & Community Engagement - Proficient

Standard IV: Professional Culture - Proficient

Overall Rating: Proficient

Aaron addressed the teacher retention rate.

The committee will gather information and recommend an increase at the next school committee meeting.

**104110 New Business - None**

**104111 Action Items - None**

**104112 For the Good of the Order -**

Bethany DeMarco: thanked everyone for their presentations tonight.

**MOTION:** On Motion of Mike Mucci and second by Adam Emerson:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Lisa Bresett, Recording Secretary