

**Work Session
March 9, 2021**

Opening

Call to Order

At 6:01 p.m. School Board President Michael Marasco called the March 9, 2021, Caesar Rodney School District Work Session to order.

Roll Call

Members present in addition to President Marasco were Vice President, Ms. Jessica Marelli, Board Members Mr. Dave Failing, Dr. Joyce Denman, Mr. P. Scott Wilson, and Executive Secretary Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald.

Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Marelli made a motion to adopt the March 9, 2021 agenda as presented. Mr. Failing seconded the motion and after roll call, the motion carried 5-0 (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, Wilson, and Denman).

Discussion Items

Dr. Fitzgerald began the discussion with some district updates.

He informed the board that our COVID numbers are down with staff and students. Our attendance rate remains consistent at 92%. He announced on March 15th Cohort "C" will be merged with the Cohort "A" & "B" students. Mrs. Tara Faircloth, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, stated we have looked at our numbers for students who wanted to attend hybrid. We were able to bring students into two cohorts and still follow the mandated restrictions. Transportation is currently being worked out and this information will be posted on the website. President Marasco asked about the community feedback. Mrs. Faircloth stated the feedback she has received thus far has been positive.

Mr. Wilson asked Dr. Fitzgerald to reiterate our mandates for bringing students back full-time for the public who may be listening to this meeting. Dr. Fitzgerald stated the mandates have not changed. They are still 23 students on a bus, 3-6ft. social distance in a classroom (if they are less than 6ft. they can't eat in that area), and cleaning every 15 minutes-2 hours.

Vaccinations for second doses have started. This would be for the "B" group. This is a much larger group and time will be needed to vaccinate these educators. Secretary of Education, Dr. Susan Bunting has requested state assessments not be used for accountability. There is concern over meeting the academic needs. We are still waiting for the U.S. Department of Education to provide more guidance. We are looking for ways to increase instruction. We are adding an eighth period to achieve this.

Dr. Fitzgerald stated the governor still has the same restrictions and mandates in place. The Delaware Department of Health (DPH) is standing firm on them. We cannot violate the law. Mr. Wilson added the public needs to be aware that this is not a board or district decision. He stated we are in full support of getting the students back in school, but we are still restricted.

Dr. Fitzgerald continued to inform the Board that transportation concerns are still a challenge. A bus contractor has recently dropped all bus routes which serve the Star Hill, Allen Frear, and Postlethwait schools. We are working on meeting the needs of those children. We were also informed by another contractor that they have lost four drivers. As a district, we are trying to find bus drivers. Community members interested should contact the District Office as we are actively recruiting at this time.

President Marasco asked if we need to take board action on the contractor who dropped routes. Dr. Fitzgerald stated we are in process of speaking with the Department of Education (DOE) for possible solutions. Bus

routes may be consolidated. We want to fair to all contractors. This is not a unique problem as this is across the entire state. Dr. Fitzgerald informed the Board that today, we had several buses at Fred Fifer III Middle School (FMS) vandalized and one bus was stolen at 3:30 am. We have a description of a white male who was involved. Anyone with information should contact Camden Police.

Dr. Fitzgerald also reminded the Board that March was our target date for installing WIFI on our buses. Technology has now come in and we are currently installing this.

Mr. Failing stated he knows we don't have the number of staff who have been vaccinated. He asked if we would have the number of who will get vaccinated and who will not. We don't have that information from DOE. The sign-up asked for only what county the individual lives in, not where they work. DOE is going to try to go back and identify the staff members. Dr. Fitzgerald will share that information with the board when it is provided.

Mr. Failing stated we have done an amazing job with our decisions thus far. He understands it has been a tough task for all involved. He asked the community for their patience.

Follow-Up: Acquisition of the Thomas More School and the District Realignment

Dr. Michael Noel, Assistant Superintendent/ Human Resources Director, gave an overview of the middle school realignment with the details from last week's meeting. We have received eight new questions.

1. Curriculum and Hours- This will be in line with other middle schools. It will not be a religious school. We will provide the current middle school curriculum. The Immersion Programs will continue at FMS and PMS. The Magnolia Middle School (MMS) will not have an Immersion Program.
2. Traffic Management- Mr. Ken Starke (Facilities Management Supervisor) stated there is no need for a DELDOT traffic study because this school will be of the same capacity as the Thomas More School.
3. School Choice- These inquiries were answered individually.

Dr. Noel continued to state the questions received and those answers will be posted on the website for the community to share. Mr. John Lazinck, University of DE, was also in attendance for any questions, etc. President Marasco thanked Dr. Noel and Mr. Laznick. He is looking forward to moving into the new school in Magnolia.

President Marasco asked for clarification on the 92% attendance rate. Dr. Tamara Toles-Torain, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, stated it is combined attendance of both remote and hybrid students.

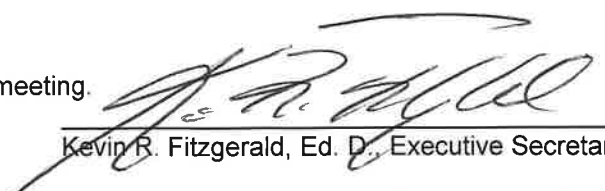
Mr. Failing thanked Dr. Toles-Torain and technical staff for the updated communication equipment for the Board meetings.

Executive Session

At 6:25 p.m. Ms. Marelli made a motion to go into Executive Session and for the meeting to be adjourned without returning to the general session. Dr. Denman seconded the motion and the motion carried 5-0. (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, Wilson, and Denman).

Adjournment

At 8:06 p.m., President Marasco adjourned the meeting.


Kevin R. Fitzgerald, Ed. D., Executive Secretary Date 3/16/21

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