

**Work Session
May 24, 2021**

Opening

Call to Order

At 6:04 p.m. School Board President Michael Marasco called the May 24, 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, and Executive Secretary Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald. Mr. P. Scott Wilson was not present.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Failing made a motion to adopt the May 24, 2021 agenda as presented. Ms. Marelli seconded the motion and after roll call, the motion carried 4-0 with one absent (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, and Denman).

Mr. P Scott Wilson joined the meeting.

Discussion Items

Update of School Return- 2021-22 SY

Dr. Fitzgerald stated face coverings are still required in our schools per the Governor's latest executive order modification.

He shared that Patricia Ewing from the Department of Defense came for a visit. She provided us with some grant opportunities, professional development options, and took a tour of the Bedrock Technology Lab on the base. We are working on having our students utilize this facility. The new base school will be another year or two before opening. Visits to CR school off base were also included during her visit. She hopes to return in the fall.

Dr. Fitzgerald shared since Star Hill Elementary School (SHE) relocation decisions have been made, the Nellie Hughes Stokes (NHS) Principal has requested a SHE re-assignment. She would like to return to the school where she began her career. A vacancy for the NHS principal will be posted.

Dr. Sherry Kijowski, CRHS Principal, gave an update on awards night and graduation. She stated that on June 3rd they are planning a yearbook signing in the parking lot before graduation practice. That evening will be the senior awards night in the auditorium. COVID rules and restrictions will be practiced. Board members are invited to attend. June 5th is the traditional graduation ceremony. Dr. Tony Allen, graduation speaker, will join live. The link for the live stream will be available the day before. Start time at 9 a.m. Dr. Fitzgerald asked about the Board scholar recognitions. Dr. Kijowski stated they will be the first seniors recognized at the awards ceremony. She shared the program timeline for the evening and included the additional recognitions included. Dr. Fitzgerald asked about other speeches at graduation. Dr. Kijowski stated there will be some speeches since this is now a traditional graduation ceremony.

Mrs. Tara Faircloth, Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction, gave an update on the August 2021 reopening and summer school. She shared a PowerPoint presentation with the history of what our current plans are and what we need to do with the new guidelines. Regarding transportation, we can go back to the way we were pre-pandemic with bell times. Lunch requirements are still three feet of social distancing. We continue to look at this. We continue to hire additional staff. Social-emotional learning is a district priority. We have a mental health counselor now for all levels. Math coaches are also being hired. Providing breakfast and changes for serving are being reconsidered. A seven-period day for secondary is the plan. A nine-period day is a backup plan. There are challenges in everything but mostly it is providing lunches. The district is looking into having

pole barns vs a tent. The district is trying to get away from students zooming in. But quarantined students would stay home and be assigned additional staff members for instruction. She shared the advantages and disadvantages of remote instruction for the Board's consideration. Timing is a concern as decisions would need to be made early for those families wanting the remote option. Additional meal prep areas would be needed. Immersion and some other district programs are not all available for the remote setting. Athletics and other extra-curriculum activities would need to be considered. She stated homebound instruction would continue. This is instruction for those students who are unable to attend school for various medical reasons. Students who are quarantined would have to zoom during the quarantine period. Ms. Marelli stated homebound instruction is short-term. She asked about the long-term needs of students lasting more than a school year. Dr. Denman asked about the social distancing in a cafeteria with no restrictions. Mrs. Faircloth stated students normally are shoulder to shoulder, but nose to nose is the three-foot rule.

Mr. Failing stated offering remote learning is the big question we need to answer. He asked about our current situation and if the Governor lifts restrictions, do we return to no remote option. Dr. Fitzgerald stated if the Governor's executive order is lifted, we return full-time. But the Department of Education (DOE) will allow remote learning for one additional year. It is up to districts if they want to open with a remote option. This decision won't be tied to COVID once the executive order is lifted. Dr. Fitzgerald continued to share that some districts will offer remote learning and some districts do not plan to.

Mr. Failing stated we need to make this decision as quickly as possible so we can plan. He is concerned about staffing. President Marasco asked about additional technology for our teachers. Mrs. Faircloth stated we have a quote for a remote instruction setting similar to how the Board meeting is set up. President Marasco asked about additional staffing needs if we continue with remote learning. Mrs. Faircloth stated it depends on family commitment. She added we have a teacher shortage and we need to get ahead of it. This would be a district-wide decision, not by an individual school. Ms. Marelli asked about getting a commitment. Dr. Denman suggested a checklist of specific criteria to apply for the remote option. Mr. Failing stated the Board needs to be accessible to the public. Ms. Marelli asked for the best communication option for families. Dr. Fitzgerald stated if we send a survey, the board is committing to offering that as an option.

Mr. Wilson stated this is a board decision, not a community decision. If restrictions are lifted we need to make that decision immediately. Dr. Denman stated there would be situations we need to consider. Mr. Wilson continued to state the CDC and Governor wants students back in school and this is a Board decision. President Marasco stated having a medical note is a good idea for families wanting remote learning. Dr. Fitzgerald shared we could create criteria for the Board and we could explore options. He continued to say we are fortunate with the work we have done getting everyone back. Mr. Failing stated we could really dig into this at the next workshop and make a decision no later than the June regular meeting.

President Marasco asked about lunch schedules. Mrs. Faircloth shared the elementary schools have bigger cafeterias. The middle schools and high school numbers are the concerns. We are looking at options.

Mrs. Faircloth continued to share information about summer school. We are offering programs remotely and in-person June 21-July 20 (Monday-Thursday). Kindergarten will be face-to-face. Some elementary will also be face to face. The secondary will be remote. Extended school year services are being provided. We are exploring options for tutoring. ELL will be in person. The high school summer camps were shared. A variety of content is being offered. The time is 9-3 p.m. with meals available. President Marasco asked about the limit for the camps. Dr. Kijowski stated we are being creative with participation. Having a CTE course is a requirement. Students may sign up for more than one camp. Dr. Kijowski's presentation will be shared on the district website. Dr. Denman loved the summer camps. She asked about the summer school schedule. Professional Development for summer school is one day outside of the 16 instructional days. Mr. Failing loves the tutoring idea. Any time in the evening a parent or student can get help. Mrs. Faircloth stated our base liaison, Mrs. Laurie Sisk, shared this information with the district for consideration.

Dr. Michael Noel, Assistant Superintendent/ Human Resources Director, gave an update on the elementary realignment. We have a narrative posted on the website for the two-year realignment plan. The elementary change for this coming school year breakdown by neighborhood will also be posted. They are working with principals, Mrs. Mary Birney, Student Data Specialist, and Mr. John Laznik, University of Delaware, for the enrollment list for next year. The first committee for the 2022-23 realignment is now being formed. Dr. Fitzgerald asked about any parent questions we receive and how they are being answered. Dr. Noel stated once the neighborhood changes are posted an FAQ will also be posted.

Dr. Fitzgerald recently walked through Magnolia Middle School (MMS). He is pleased with the improvement, but a lot of work still needs to be done. Mr. Ken Starke, Supervisor of Facilities Management, gave an update. They have been collaborating in all areas. The following has been done at MMS: kitchen ceiling, kitchen set-up, cafeteria and library ceiling tiles, and some flooring replacement. Painting is also being done. Funding was discussed. Furniture and that setup are pending. Technology is working hard on security. There is a lot going on, but we will be ready for students in August. He stated a walk-thru can be done anytime, but this is still a work in progress. Ms. Marelli asked if the building will look like a CR building. Mr. Starke stated that about 90% will be blue and gold. Dr. Fitzgerald was appreciative of the work everyone has done. The gym floor was replaced. The custodians have changed over the bleachers. He stated he has confidence we will be able to get in the building. He gave kudos to the chief custodian and staff at MMS. He continued to state some things are not up to standards until we own the building and passing a referendum would be needed. President Marasco asked about adding a constable. Dr. Fitzgerald stated we would do this for MMS and they would be assisting at DER. President Marelli stated she receives a lot of positive feedback from her children on their constables. Dr. Tamara Toles-Torain, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, stated the constables are part of their school community and we are proud of them. Middle school sports at MMS were discussed. We are currently seeking approval. This will depend on the student population. We plan to offer the same activities as other middle schools. Mr. Failing stated the sports facilities are much better at MMS.

President Marasco asked about moving SH to DER and if the staffing has been considered. He asked if we need to recruit. Dr. Noel stated transfer opportunities would be considered.

Mrs. Kim Judy, Director of Business and Finance, gave an ESSER funding update. She shared we are doing our best for staffing and transportation needs. DOE has assigned liaisons and we have been assigned, Dr. Christine Alois. We will meet tomorrow for a grant review. She will have more solid answers on positions, etc. in the next coming weeks. She reminded the Board when they release funds we will have 30 days to post our return to school plan. Ms. Marelli asked Dr. Noel about posting job vacancies. He stated we posted 8-10 positions today. Dr. Fitzgerald asked about the hiring of two full-time bus drivers. These positions were vacancies within the original six D.O. positions. They were van drivers who received their certification to be licensed bus drivers.

Mr. Failing stated he is pleased with our communications at the work sessions and hopes the public agrees. President Marasco agreed. He appreciates all of the behind-the-scenes work being done. Dr. Fitzgerald added we want to see a successful end of this school year, a successful summer school, and have a successful opening for the 2021-2022 school year.

Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

Adjournment

At 7:24 p.m. Ms. Marelli made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Failing seconded the motion and the motion carried 5-0. (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, Wilson, and Denman).


Kevin R. Fitzgerald, Ed. D., Executive Secretary
6/15/21 Date

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