

**Work Session  
January 10, 2022**

**Opening**

Call to Order

At 6:08 p.m. School Board President Michael Marasco called the January 10, 2022, Caesar Rodney School District Work Session to order.

Roll Call

Members present in addition to President Marasco were Vice President, Board Members Mr. Dave Failing, Dr. Joyce Denman, Mr. P. Scott Wilson, and Executive Secretary Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald. Vice president Jessica Marelli was not present.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Failing made a motion to adopt the January 10, 2022 agenda as presented. Dr. Denman seconded the motion and after roll call, the motion carried 4-0 with one absent (Marasco, Failing, Wilson, and Denman).

**Discussion Items**

2021-22 SY Updates and School Supports

President Marasco stated we are planning to keep our schools open as best we can during this time.

Dr. Fitzgerald shared the updated COVID statistics. We were only in session one day last week due to snow. We have much better numbers today compared to last Thursday. The test-to-stay tests were given. We will have to reduce the testing locations to only having one available at CRHS due to staffing issues with the company. We have a trend to see more students testing positive than staff. This ranges to about 83%-85% of students in school. We have several child nutrition staff and bus contractors out. Those bus routes did not run. The biggest concern is our nursing staff. We are moving them around to cover all buildings. The CDC is assisting. Mr. Kevin Thompson, Director of Student Services, is currently interviewing for more nurses. But if there is a large number of nurse absences we may need to shut down individual schools as needed. Mr. Thompson stated our lead nurse has been very helpful with this covering process. He also gave a shout-out to the CRHS nursing staff for their assistance. Tomorrow and Wednesday will be the same with nurses out. Friday this will increase and we don't have coverage. We have reached out to outside agencies but this is not a guarantee. Dr. Denman asked about recent retirees assisting. Mr. Thompson stated the two most recent retirees are unable to help at this time. The temp agencies simply do not have anyone to spare. Dr. Denman asked about using other medical people. This could only be a possibility for substitute nursing which does not require certification.

President Marasco asked if we have to close a school would they be able to go virtual. Dr. Fitzgerald stated yes in a worst-case scenario that school would go remote for that day. We will take a look at nurse staffing and individual buildings. Some schools may be better prepared for remote learning. We want to keep the schools open which only allows 24-hour notice to parents. Mr. Failing stated as much as we are totally committed to keeping schools open, formal notification to parents stating this as one of the things on the table is needed. He continued to state with COVID it is a day-to-day thing and we need to make an announcement clearing up the process so parents understand. Dr. Denman and President Marasco agreed to have this communication go out.

President Marasco asked about staff shortages across the district. Dr. Fitzgerald stated they are doing the best that they can and are making it work. He reminded the Board that we do receive requests to go fully

remote but our position is to keep schools open. Mr. Failing stated staff shortages will peak and the snow days actually helped us with those absences last week.

President Marasco asked about the recent change allowing retirees to return to work earlier. Dr. Fitzgerald stated we have had none come forward yet. We are reaching out to our newest retirees keeping in mind we still use Kelly Services for our substitutes and need to find the requirement with using their services. Dr. Fitzgerald stated he has been in contact with the CREA President, we have purchased more masks and we will keep the protocols in place for cleaning. Dr. Denman stated she likes the test-to-stay program. Dr. Tamara Toles-Torain, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, is handling this program and doing a great job.

Mr. Failing mentioned there was a conversation about acquiring land near Allen Frear Elementary School. This will be on the market soon. There are 206 acres available. He would like this to be on the agenda for the next meeting as a discussion item.

President Marasco asked about school constables. Dr. Fitzgerald stated we have hired some constables and they are started in our schools.

Lt. Col. Michael Mariotti, Base Liaison, stated they also feel the staffing problem. There are new mandates and restrictions on the base. He asked about extracurriculars and following state guidelines does this add up to the governor's new mandate for gatherings. Dr. Fitzgerald stated DIAA, Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association, has not weighed in on the number of spectators allowed. The principals have stated more middle school parents are now coming. He is suggesting a limit for athletic families being allowed to attend. Then possibly offer tickets online to follow social distancing and mask-wearing restrictions. Lt. Col. Mariotti stated the base can walk hand in hand with the district on this.

## **Executive Session**

There was no executive session

## **Adjournment**

At 6:36 p.m. Mr. Marasco adjourned the meeting.

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Kevin R. Fitzgerald, Ed. D., Executive Secretary

Date

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