

**Work Session
September 27, 2021**

Opening

Call to Order

At 6:0p.m. School Board President Michael Marasco called the September 27, 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

Ms. Marelli made a motion to adopt the September 27, 2021 agenda and addendum as presented. Mr. Failing seconded the motion and after roll call, the motion carried 4-0 with one absent (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, and Denman).

Action Items

Adoption of the Extension of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) as authorized by the Office of Management and Budget and the State of DE.

Ms. Marelli made a motion to adopt the Extension of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) as authorized by the Office of Management and Budget and the State of DE as presented. Mr. Failing seconded the motion and after roll call, the motion carried 4-0 with one absent (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, and Denman).

Dr. Fitzgerald stated we are moving forward with FAQ and MOU to help facilitate pay for covering staff members. We hope to have this set by the end of the week. We reassure leave will be retroactive. If there is a need to work from home, this is also being considered.

Discussion Items

2021-22 SY Updates and School Supports

President Marasco stated how hard the principals have worked to get our kids back in school. As a School Board, they are here for support and know the extra work that is involved. He asked what the Board can do to support them at this time.

Dr. Fitzgerald introduced the administration for each level and asked for their needs. Each administrator gave an update on their building-level concerns.

- 1) Dr. Sherry Kijowski, CR High School Principal, stated a challenge has been the nurses who have been on the front lines and finding a balance with in-school care and then the COVID issues. Their caseload size is a concern. Additional help is required. The school families need to talk directly to the nurse so any support in this area is helpful.
- 2) Mrs. Kim Corbeil, Fred Fifer III Middle School Principal, agrees with the need for additional nurse help. Substitute coverage is needed across the board and buses are also a concern. They can move forward, but this has been a big challenge. She stated we just need people to fill positions. Substitutes are the biggest concern.

- 3) Mrs. Julie Lavender, Allen Frear Elementary School Principal, stated she has the same needs. She added we need to hire staff in all areas. Staff absences are not all COVID-related. There are regular absences that require coverage. Substitutes are needed.
- 4) Dr. Tina Sander-Loftus, John S. Charlton Principal, also agreed and stated they have the same needs as previously discussed. They have had a few circumstances where they were short-staffed and have to pull staff from off-site locations. She has approximately 213 staff in a given day with approximately 25-38 out for different reasons. This can be a safety issue as this staff requires specialty training. They need the flexibility to go hybrid, if needed, with parents and families also being flexible during this time.

President Marasco inquired on the ways other districts are attracting substitutes, bus drivers, etc.

Mr. Kevin Thompson, Director of Student Services, shared we have pulled from hospitals, etc. and it takes time to apply for specific training. Dr. Kijowski shared the legislation requires newly state retirees to have a six-month break in service before they can come back to substitute. Dr. Fitzgerald stated we have repeatedly asked and have had no luck with having this changed. We should continue to contact the legislators. The IRS sets the time frame for the break in service from one day – a year. The State Pension Office stated this would be six months for state retirees. They see no reason to change this. This has to be a legislative item signed by Governor.

President Marasco continued to ask about hiring custodians and what we can do to attract these candidates.

Mr. Failing stated everyone should hit the streets and ask for workers. Mrs. Corbeil stated she wasn't sure if another job fair would be helpful. Mr. Failing added there is a state job fair on Oct. 18th. We can make a decision if we want to participate in advance.

Dr. Denman inquired about being flexible with hybrid on a day-to-day basis. Dr. Sander-Loftus stated this could happen in cases where we know a day in advance. They can plan ahead. Mr. Failing added that Mr. Thompson could make that decision as if it was a snow day. If possible we should have a "go-to" plan in place. If we solve today's problems, this may also solve tomorrow's problems.

- 5) Mrs. Brook Castillo, McIlvaine Early Childhood Center Principal, stated they have the same problems. They recently had 14 absences with only 3 subs. They continue to pull from all areas. This is not a long-term solution. Her staff has not complained. They just do the coverage.

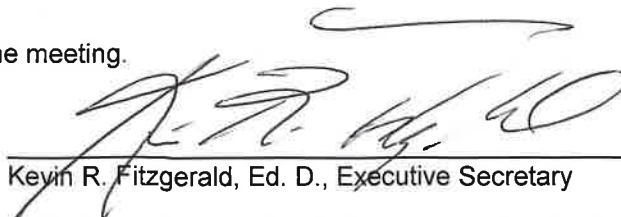
Mr. Failing thanked all administrators. He understands these are tough people stretching the rubber band to the limited. He wants staff to speak up loud and clear to the Board members. He understands this is so much added to their job. They see that and know how critical it is.

Executive Session

At 6:34 p.m. Ms. Marelli made a motion to go into executive session and to adjourn without coming back to open session. Mr. Failing seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-0. (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, and Denman).

Adjournment

At 7:50 p.m., President Marasco adjourned the meeting.


Kevin R. Fitzgerald, Ed. D., Executive Secretary
10/20/21
Date

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