

**Work Session
August 2, 2021**

Opening

Call to Order

At 6:01 p.m. School Board President Michael Marasco called the August 2, 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 Assistant Superintendent/Human Resources Director Dr. Michael Noel.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Failing seconded the motion and after roll call, Ms. Marelli seconded the motion carried 5-0 (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, Wilson, and Denman).

Discussion Items

School Opening 2021-2022 SY

Dr. Noel thanked everyone for attending and stated we are excited to open school fully in-person this school year.

Mrs. Tara Faircloth, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, began to explain we will be piloting an AG Program at the middle schools. Dr. Kristina Failing and Ms. Kimberly Corbeil, Middle School Principals, joined the discussion. Dr. Failing shared there is a strong AG Program at the high school and we will have a Distance Learning Lab for 8th graders. Lauren Ruskey and Mark Breeding, CRHS Teachers, have shared resources for the middle school level. This program will complement the current Family Consumer Science and the Art programs we already have. The AG Science levels by grade were discussed. Ms. Corbeil stated Fred Fifer III Middle School (FMS) will offer five options for students and parents to select four programs. She stated this is easy to schedule. Band and Chorus will not be replaced. Essential Arts classes tend to be larger and this allows us to have more social distancing with five essential arts. Mrs. Faircloth shared we have support for both schools throughout the pilot. We will write a grant for making this an approved CTE Program.

Dr. Denman asked about funding for the pilot. We will use ESSER funds and absorb some additional funding. Mr. Wilson asked if we are keeping the music class and have five options why would we not do this at F. Niel Postlethwait Middle School (PMS) and if this program has been approved by the Department of Education (DOE). PMS can maintain the smaller class sizes with their current enrollment numbers. We have asked for approval. 6th-grade programs were discussed. Mr. Failing explained we are continuing expanded band and chorus for 6th grade. We also still have extra programs outside of school for music enrichment, Music dance and theater will be available. Dr. Denman asked if we like it, could we expand to all three middle schools next year. Mr. Failing stated we will need to see how it goes and if it is accepted as CTE Pathway. President Marasco asked how long the pilot would be. Mrs. Faircloth stated a pilot is typically 1-2 years. Ms. Marelli asked for clarification on the staff. There will be one for each school. Dr. Noel shared we have applicants. Mrs. Faircloth continued to state for the past 18 months our students didn't get that music instruction, but we can have that now. President Marasco liked that this was a great way to add to the visual arts programs. Ms. Marelli asked about Magnolia Middle School (MMS). Mrs. Faircloth stated that distance learning is available there.

Dr. Noel stated we are very excited to receive updates from Magnolia Middle School and thrilled to open two new schools this year. Mr. Jimmy Pennewell, Supervisor of Facilities Management, and Keith Wisher, MMS Principal, joined the meeting. Mr. Wisher stated we are on target to successfully open for all students. He has learned a lot about facilities and working with Mr. Pennewell, technology, and instructional needs. He is truly

excited about the programs being offered. They will implement enrichment opportunities such as physical fitness, foreign language, and STEM. They are building a partnership with the community. He thanked everyone for their support and the community members for their patience. Mr. Pennewell stated we are still doing the cosmetic work. We are in good shape for opening.

Ms. Marelli asked about the kitchen area. The Child Nutrition team has done a great job and the final work is being done. It will be ready for opening. President Marasco asked about flooring. Mr. Pennewell continued to share that some carpet will remain with work continuing over the holiday break. Dr. Denman asked about the air filtration. There is all new ductwork. Roof issues have been addressed. Class size was discussed. Mr. Wisner stated class sizes are 25-27 as he continued to work with the master schedule. We will be creative with storage space for staff. They are working with student services for the special education classes. Mr. Failing asked about serving lunch. There will be two serving lines and we will look at this more for future expansion. Mr. Failing stated our budget allows for us to expand without asking for additional money from the public.

Dr. Noel asked Mrs. Faircloth and Dr. Sherry Kijowski, CRHS Principal, to share the summer programs. Mrs. Faircloth gave kudos to Dr. Kijowski. She was impressed with the programs we offered. Dr. Kijowski stated there was the end of year zoom fatigue and our students and staff were craving one on one connections. They had a six-week summer innovation program for students and staff with over 14 different programs offered. Targeted activities were planned. There were low tech/ no zoom with a few exceptions. Over 400 students participated. Dr. Kijowski continued to share some updates from the high school. The marching band starts on August 5th. ELL camp has another two weeks. Freshman Success Academy will be soon with over 150 students participating. Students will be comfortable with the protocols etc. College interns were invaluable this summer. Sports will be starting very soon. Senior photos start on August 9th. President Marasco stated the students were happy with the programs offered. We are looking at funding this for next year.

Mrs. Faircloth shared that the elementary held summer school and a very few students were remote. Approximately 95% were face to face. ELL camp at Nellie Hughes Stokes Elementary (NHS) were face to face for several weeks. McIlvaine Early Childhood Center (MCI) had only face to face and included high school students interested in becoming a teacher to support the summer camp.

Dr. Noel stated everyone has done a fantastic job with getting students and staff excited to come back. Mr. Kevin Thompson, Director of Student Services, shared 12 month special needs students were serviced all summer. There were a lot of folks behind the scenes working this summer.

Dr. Jason Bonner, Supervisor of Transportation, gave a bussing update. It has been a very busy summer with the face-to-face instruction required bussing. For the regular school year, all routes are being finalized. Parents have until August 4th to get on a bus route. Letters will go out with bus information. 80+ students are scheduled for pre-k transportation. He continued to share we hope to be fully staff soon. Appoquinimink School District posted on Facebook they are offering a bonus of \$4,200 to work for them. We are looking at what to do next. We have 20 buses and have 19 drivers at this time with possibly a few routes being turned over. We will firm up those numbers soon. New this year Middle School Immersion will give us 20-30 students as an extra responsibility. Our goal is to have 12 van drivers. We currently have eight. We own two vans and lease ten from the state. Extracurricular activities and travel was discussed. Generally speaking, drivers are free during the day. Outside contractors can be requested.

President Marasco asked Dr. Noel to address the elementary redistricting questions. Barrett Farms was referenced as to their request to attend David E. Robison Elementary (DRE). The board has considered overcrowding and they want students in all of our schools. They will keep Barrett Farms attending Star Hill Elementary School (SHE) for a few reasons. Dr. Noel stated the board approved Phase 1 of the realignment and to keep SHE as an elementary school which includes Barrett Farms. This keeps those students in the PMS feeder pattern. This will keep consistency with the elementary schools and balance the student populations. It is a two-year phase. This will remain for this school year. The committee will continue to meet regarding the next year's demographics and attendance.

Mr. Failing stated we want to be equitable and fit the two new schools into the mix. There have been many meetings and it is tremendously complicated. Overcrowding was considered but they did not get there this past year due to COVID. He would like to see more balance. But reducing SHE any further would be not feasible. Each year our needs change and we need to make those adjustments. Students will get a super experience

no matter what school they attend. Ms. Marelli added we are looking at the big picture. Mr. Failing stated we have done a great job keeping all of our schools have been updated and they have done this efficiently.

Dr. Noel continued to share it is a two-year rollout, so community members can voice their opinions and we can gather additional information. Mr. Wilson shared he received an email stated for more detailed information. He stated the decisions were not arbitrary and a detailed study was presented. Those presentations are on the website for the public to view.

Mrs. Faircloth met with the teacher's union rep regarding students and COVID quarantining, etc. Several options were presented and those ideas will be presented to staff for their input. Options are being explored for those quarantined students without adding more work on the teachers. There will be more information to come. Dr. Denman asked for COVID testing. Mrs. Faircloth stated we can't require testing. We are trying to find a solution if a student should quarantine. Dr. Tamara Toles- Torain, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, met with the COVID testing vendor.

President Maraco stated the Board will not make this decision at this time on mask-wearing. This is an ongoing daily discussion based on the Governor. Public opinion was shared. Most do not want to wear a mask or they want to have the option. Dr. Noel stated it is the Governor's decision. Ms. Marelli stated the Dover Air Force Base is requiring masks which means those base schools are also required to wear a mask. Dr. Noel stated all federal buildings will. Those schools are on federal property. Mr. Failing added the Board can't make this decision and it should be made by experts.

Mr. P Scott Wilson left the meeting.

Ms. Marelli stated we cannot require vaccinations for students and staff. The dates of the mobile testing and vaccinations were shared by Dr. Kijowski.

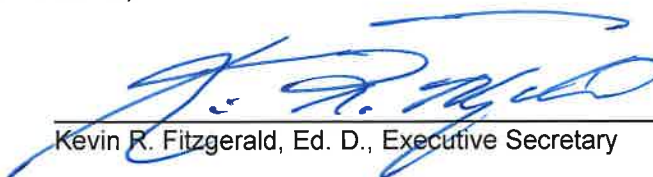
Mr. Failing stated the Monday work sessions and individual meetings will continue to be more transparent. He feels it is important to share the information with the public as we move forward.

Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

Adjournment

At 7:29 Ms. Marelli made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Failing seconded the motion and the motion carried 4-0 with one absent. (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, and Denman).


Kevin R. Fitzgerald, Ed. D., Executive Secretary
Date 9/17/21