

Cohasset Public Schools

Empower Students to Improve Communities

COHASSET SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, May 8, 2024

6:00 PM

Learning Commons
Cohasset Middle and High School
143 Pond Street
Cohasset, MA 02025

Streamed Live on Cohasset 143TV
Zoom (*chat enabled*)
Cohasset Live Streaming Facebook
(*watch / listen only*)

In Attendance:

Ted Carr, Secretary
Lance Dial, Chair
Paul Kearney
Craig MacLellan, Vice Chair
Jennifer Lesky

Also, In Attendance:

Nathan Askjaer, Superintendent CHS Student Advisory Council Liaison
Karina Nelson, CMS History Teacher & Students
Carolyn Crimmins, CMS History Teacher & Students
Paula Jewel, CMS Science Teacher & CMS Student Council
Erin Ryan, CMS Social Studies Teacher & CMS Student Council
Rock Roberts, Director of Data, Evaluation, and Curriculum
Barbara Cerwonka, Director of Student Services
Dr. Leslie Scollins, Assistant Superintendent
Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Superintendent

AGENDA

Call to Order

Call to Order for the regular School Committee meeting for Wednesday, May 8, 2024 was made by Chairman Dial promptly at 6:00 P.M. All members of the Cohasset School Committee who are present are asked by the Chair to please indicate so with **Roll Call: Mr. Kearney-Present; Ms. Lesky-Present; Mr. Dial-Present; Mr. Carr and Mr. MacLellan are a bit delayed.**

Opening Remarks

Chairman Dial says it's great to see so many people in the audience tonight for a school committee meeting. They may have cheated a little bit since many of them are presenters, but it's really great to see everybody. Today's School Committee meeting has a packed agenda wrapping up this school year or at least getting close to that.

Public Comment

None

Invited Guests

• Superintendent Student Advisory Council (SSAC) Liaison Report (Nathan Askjaer)

Nathan would like to report that he and his fellow high school classmates found something that could be improved upon for students since Nathan has always been asked by members of the school committee if there is something where students feel needs improvement. A lot of students have been using the weight room at CHS, it's been super good for training with practice for Spring sports. Mr. Tango, the CHS Assistant Football Coach, has been supervising in the weight room all this time and during the Winter season.

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• Superintendent Student Advisory Council (SSAC) Liaison Report (Nathan Askjaer)

Mr. Tango won't be able to supervise now in the weight room since he'll be assisting the Coach with the start of the Lacrosse season. Since the weight room requires adult supervision, students can't utilize the room because there's no one in there and this puts students in a tough spot. From Nathan's experience with track during the season students have said the weight room helps them strengthen a lot and it's been pretty noticeable by students not being able to go there.

Nathan is on the track team and he's happy to report both boys and girls track are having a pretty good season with a meet tomorrow. The league championships will be happening soon, and some individuals will probably compete in the State Championships this season. Divisionals will hopefully make it to the State Championship after. The Spring sports season just started and teams are not quite in the playoffs just yet. The boys and girls Tennis team are looking pretty good, they've travelled to some far places and played against some big towns. Both the boys and the girls Lacrosse team are having a good season, they'll be in the playoffs as well as the boys' baseball and the girls' softball team will be fighting for a spot in the playoffs soon.

Cohasset High School students have AP exams this week going into next week. It's been pretty busy around the school right now with the last day for the Senior class being May 24th, the same day as Senior Prom. Some Juniors and Seniors from CHS went on the Europe trip along with *Mr. Willis, Coach A, Mr. Welsh, and Ms. Hansen*. Sadly, Nathan didn't go but heard the trip was really awesome where they visited Normandy and Versailles, he heard it was a cool experience. The Panama Trip obviously sounded awesome from some of Nathan's friends who went on the service trip.

There will be a "Red Carpet" in Town by the Common for Senior Prom. Nathan said he didn't plan on going to Prom but lucked out by missing a day or two with his track and field schedule where he's now able to go and he's looking forward to Prom with a bunch of friends.

Dr. Sullivan notes Nathan's initial report where there's no supervision in the weight room just like earlier in the school year when Charlie Lankow pointed out the lighting in classrooms, this is something they can fix.

Mr. Kearney congratulates Nathan on a great job, he appreciates the good reports here because this school district has student voice.

Ms. Lesky is happy to hear that the red carpet still continues, a lot of the townspeople really enjoy seeing this. Ms. Lesky also appreciates Nathan for coming to the school committee meeting tonight to let them know about the supervising issue in the weight room.

Mr. Carr congratulates Nathan. He did an excellent report and greatly appreciates the work with the updates.

Mr. Dial is glad Nathan brought something the school committee can work on. It sounds like Dr. Sullivan is already working on it, and very much appreciates Nathan's report.

Chairman Dial notes for the record, Mr. Carr arrived at 6:03 p.m.

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• Panama Trip (Ms. Karina Nelson and Mrs. Carolyn Crimmins)

Mrs. Crimmins and Ms. Nelson highlight the Panama Trip with students showing pictures of their first day of the trip with 540 students lined up with their individual name tags. Ms. Crimmins said they found out later these students started walking from their homes at 6:00 AM that morning and waited in anticipation for Cohasset students to arrive there in which they arrived there at 9:00 AM. Students spent the entire week with the community in Los Santos starting at 9:00 AM on the work site. Students were transported by vans up the mountain every day that took 45 minutes to 1 hour to go to an Indigenous Community called the “Comarca.” Cohasset High School students helped the Comarca community build a classroom and a playground through “School the World.” The work Cohasset students did was amazing and remarkable working in 90-to-96-degree weather under full sun every day. Everyone was kind and respectful, offering each other breaks when needed. With the language barrier, students played games with children from the Comarca community and found ways to bond that Ms. Nelson and Mrs. Crimmins found Cohasset High School students really interacting with the Comarca community and students was remarkably amazing.

The nurse for the trip was extraordinary, so helpful and super sweet. She was always making sure students were okay. There were two kinds of activities built in through “School the World,” one was Cohasset High School students led a lesson in the classroom for students. Students were broken into groups and Cohasset students went into the classroom and taught a lesson. The second one was the home visits where Cohasset students were allowed to shadow Indigenous families who volunteered to see living conditions in their homes, and daily habits on how they get their water and how they cook their food.

The kids in the Comarca community were so loving and Cohasset students were so sweet embracing so many hugs and playing games that formed bonds which was one of the takeaways. Mrs. Crimmins says students that went on this trip were so eager to immediately help and the connections they made were so impressive to see.

Mrs. Crimmins would like to thank the school committee for their support and was happy about being able to do this service trip. Everybody in this community was so supportive of the fundraising that really came together. What was more important is that Cohasset students on this service trip made connections with that community.

Paul Kearney is so proud of the students who went on this service trip. It’s such a great learning experience not only for Cohasset students but for those students there. To see Cohasset students reach out is remarkable.

Jennifer Lesky would like to add an addition to Mr. Kearney comments that she too is so proud of the students for the work that they did. She’s so proud of the students for being willing to try something new in a new place. Being Ambassadors for high school age students especially here in Cohasset where it seems like they were recognized as a gift that our students were given in terms of “School the World,” and seeing what life can be like outside of Cohasset, Massachusetts. Well, done all around and thank you to the CHS teachers for making this possible.

Ted Carr congratulates students here that went on the service trip, their fundraising efforts went a long way. Mr. Carr is very impressed with “School the World,” they’re a great partner and did a great job being communicative with families where they didn’t have to worry about their student safety.

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Lance Dial says this kind of stuff is really a nexus of things to him to know what it's like right in the field working and seeing students from Cohasset help other people, seeing students grow, and seeing exposure like he did. Chairman Dial expresses his thank you to the students for volunteering and hopes it was a lifelong experience for them and for their teachers. Thank you to the administration here in Cohasset Public Schools for being supportive of these sorts of initiatives. We can learn a lot of things in school, but these are priceless experiences that really make you into a person. Thank you to everyone for making this happen, these students made a difference in that community, and to a lot of kids.

Invited Guests

• Cohasset Middle School Spotlight on Learning: Student Council (Ms. Paula Jewel, Ms. Erin Ryan, and Students)

Principal Mills would like to thank the school committee for spotlighting Cohasset Middle School once again. A couple of years ago at a school committee meeting held at the Wilcutt Commons, Ms. Jewel, and Ms. Ryan organized Student Council to really enhance the role of student voice to be more inclusive, and even have more students involved and active in Student Council. Principal Mills says this is a great time to circle back to show the school committee how far they've come.

Ms. Jewel is a 7th grade Science teacher and Ms. Ryan is a 7th grade Social Studies teacher at CMS explains a glimpse into how they present Student Council to the student body. Both Ms. Jewel and Ms. Ryan do a presentation at the beginning of the school year to all the student body even before the election process. Ms. Ryan talks about the Cohasset Middle School Student Council Vision. The CMS Student Council (StuCo) vision strives to be an inclusive, representative, and effective collaboration among members, teachers, administrators, and peers to improve student life by giving student voice and leadership opportunities. Ms. Ryan says this allowed her and Ms. Jewel to take a step back a bit more and allow students to really take this and run with it, which exceeded both their expectations as their students always do, which is awesome.

The structure of the faculty and the students are the base. The big change for CMS Student Council was when they came up with this new structure, it was to provide leadership opportunities to all three grade levels at CMS. Student Council was only offered to 8th grade students, but they also wanted to hear from others, so they've expanded the numbers of officers at each grade level. Both Ms. Jewel and Ms. Ryan advise and then work with the administrators to make sure everything happens. The leadership roles are a president elect, a communications officers, a secretary to help make sure they're taking all their notes at meetings to report their records. They have student ambassadors who talk with students that are representing them. They have a new role this year from the feedback from students, an events coordinator, planner, and now have five representatives from each grade.

Ms. Jewel and Ms. Ryan developed a new slide this year to make it very clear the three P's are recognized as Participation, Presence, and Passion. The students that came tonight to the school committee meeting are certainly active members and they have great ideas. They debate a little bit about the ideas and talk about the practicalities of things. The students come regularly to the meetings even when thrown a curved ball for the day. Passion is probably the best thing going and the students that do come really have great ideas.

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- **Cohasset Middle School Spotlight on Learning: Student Council
(Ms. Paula Jewel, Ms. Erin Ryan, and Students)**

Some of the things the Student Council at CMS were able to do this year was assist the Cohasset High School Football Team during their food pantry, food drive which has now been built into the Cohasset Middle School. They met that goal and ended up with a fabulous movie day and jam day in CMS auditorium. They've hosted Fall Spookiness Day, decorating classroom doors that came out fantastic. The Snow in the Dark Dance was such a hit, having their first dance for the first time at the Deer Hill School gymnasium. Ms. Jewel would like to thank everyone at the Deer Hill School for accommodating them, it was such a fun nostalgic thing for students, they were really into it, and it was great. The Student Council also had a "Spread the Love" campaign on Valentine's Day, even when things were a little dicey with the weather but were able to pivot making sure everybody got a sweet candy pop that day at lunch. They're currently preparing for the final big event this year, "Spring Fling Dance" on May 31st.

The students' experience is so valuable and it's why they do this. Students are asked why they ran or joined the Student Council and what has been their experience. What skills have they gained or further developed being on the Student Council. Students learn success in working when it actually has to get done.

Ms. Jewel and Ms. Ryan have done an amazing job of establishing what StuCo does. Every year it's just been the same where it's a tradition, or this is what they do A, B, and C. Instead, what Ms. Jewel and Ms. Ryan have done was make this brand new to students every year so students bring their voice and continually think of what would be fun, what would make their experience great, and this really empowers the students. Principal Mills says these students are very empowering, truly creative, and really positive because of Ms. Jewel and Ms. Ryan engaging students at CMS, they're so lucky to have them both.

Superintendent Patrick Sullivan says this is all great, it really builds up the community and the culture of the school which is so important.

Paul Kearney likes how students take themselves out of their comfort zone and get out there that will take them to new levels. It's a collaborative way of thinking to get to the same common goal. Mr. Kearney says this is the biggest thing he's seen as a school committee member. He can see so many proud faces in the room from the families to the administrators. Honestly, this is one of the best things that ever happened for the school and the town, it's been really nice to be part of, thank you.

Jennifer Lesky loves everything about this, she knows Ms. Jewel and Ms. Ryan very well and she has seen these students that are here tonight grow, working on the fact this is project based, its community based, it's collaborative, and so many life learning skills there. Ms. Lesky is just struck and it's very obvious she was struck by the way in which they're sitting here today mirroring what goes on in our hometown in terms of having responsibility and being involved in the community as well as being civic minded. Those are the seeds that are planted for such a fun, positive experience. One of these days, one of these students here tonight will be sitting in these chairs listening to students and that to her is really a cool thing.

Chairman Dial notes for the record, Mr. MacLellan arrived at 6:40 PM.

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- **Cohasset Middle School Spotlight on Learning: Student Council (Ms. Paula Jewel, Ms. Erin Ryan, and Students)**

Ted Carr hopes the students here tonight will run again and join CMS Student Council every year, the presentation was terrific.

Craig MacLellan says Ms. Jewel and Ms. Ryan did a great job with students' involvement like this. It's a great way for them to use their skills to help others. Craig MacLellan really enjoys engaging in public service, trying to effectuate meaningful policy changes or some tangible, visible improvements for the school district, that's why he's on the school committee. It's really a fulfilling enterprise and undertaking and he hopes students feel fulfillment for themselves from the positive changes they've brought to their classmates that sure appreciate as well. Ms. Jewel and Ms. Ryan focused on student interest and taking initiatives for oneself and placed the emphasis on that especially for younger people, that makes the experience a lot more robust, meaningful, and educational. The Student Council at CMS has more standard rules, but also has a press secretary, an events coordinator, public relations person, and that's amazing. Now they can look at more specific interest's students have and control the process any way to make sure they're presenting candidates that have already proven themselves in terms of aptitude and interest for a Student Council position, which is really awesome, creative, and super clever. Down the road, Mr. MacLellan encourages Ms. Jewel and Ms. Ryan to broadcast this method that can be replicated Commonwealth wide. There are so many advantages to it, and it is really powerful. Mr. MacLellan is super proud of the students and thanks both Ms. Jewel and Ms. Ryan.

Lance Dial certainly echoes all the comments made by members of the school committee and appreciates Ms. Jewel and Ms. Ryan for pushing this forward. He also agrees that they've come up with a very unique way of encouraging student participation that brings everybody into the fold. This seems to be working for those who are participating in this and the people who work are the ones who really are the ones shaping what happens next. It's not always just the president on top that has influence, to have influence is just going and being committed using those three P's. Thank you all so much for being here and presenting this, it's a great idea and he shares Mr. MacLellan's zeal for what Ms. Jewel and Ms. Ryan came up with and looks forward to seeing this grow.

School Updates

- **School News (Dr. Patrick Sullivan)**

Some great events happened over the last couple of weeks. They had their electric school bus ribbon cutting ceremony that was wonderful. Dr. Sullivan would like to thank Mr. Carr for his incredible work organizing this behind the scenes and of course Tonya Bodell, Director of the Alternative Energy Committee who did so much work with human service for Cohasset Public Schools and for the Town of Cohasset. This was such a great day and a wonderful experience mostly because the students joined, and some were able to take the first maiden voyage on the electric school bus. There's not a lot of communities that have an electric bus and Cohasset is lucky to have one of them that may perhaps start a trend.

The Joseph Osgood School had a lovely "Osgood Arts Night" a great showing of the student's artwork put together by the Arts Teachers for the community with Principal Farrell and her team who really do a lot of flare there, a great community day enjoyed by everyone. Students in grades 3-5 had their families come in where students taught their family members games which were really nice, really successful, and the turnout was amazing.

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School Updates

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Students in grades 3-5 had their families come in where students taught their family members games which was really nice. *Ms. Bonet and Ms. Harney* who are both Math Specialist had a presentation, so parents had the option to stay and learn more about the Bridges Math curriculum. It was really successful, and the turnout was amazing.

The Cohasset Harts for Autism Celebration was held at the Osgood School with lots of families who attended that was a wonderful night. They had staff from both the Osgood School and the Deer Hill School there with different tables set up so students could participate in all kinds of activities. This was well received and so much fun for everyone. Dr. Scollins says one piece that really resonated with her was the parent connection. Families there communicated with other family members and made those connections which was really nice to see.

There's been a series of acknowledgements for School Lunch Hero Day with a great crew there. Mr. Cordone and a good number of Food Service workers from CMS were there who all did a wonderful job.

Cohasset Public Schools had National Principals Day for 4 amazing Principals they have in Cohasset Public Schools and folks should feel very fortunate to have them. They're all very caring individuals who are very good at their craft and nice to work with every day.

This week is Teacher Appreciation Week and Dr. Sullivan says they'll be acknowledgements for them all this coming Friday. The relationship between the person who provides direct service, whatever that role may be, and the student is the most important relationship in the building. They foster that by supporting them as much as they can and to never lose sight of how important that is, they all do a great job. Today happens to be "School Nurse Day" and Dr. Sullivan would like to thank all the school nurses for everything they do.

The 15th Annual Deer Hill Spelling Bee will be held by the Deer Hill staff and the Cohasset Educational Foundation on May 13-15, 2024. Students work in teams and it's always a wonderful event. There will be a High Five this coming Friday, May 10th for First Responders. Students and Staff are always so honored to thank their First Responders, which has always been a nice event for the school community.

A lot of positive energy is happening at CHS in the run up to Graduation and everyone is very excited to celebrate the "Class of 2024" next month.

Teaching and Learning

• Academic Initiatives / Updates: Presentation on Elementary Literacy (Dr. Leslie Scollins, Mrs. Barbara Cerwonka, and Mr. Rock Roberts)

Dr. Scollins introduces the first topic on Teaching and Learning Beliefs and what guides their practices on literacy at the elementary level. The educators here have an important quote they like to go by that was written by Benjamin Franklin, "*Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.*" Dr. Scollins says this quote really does explain why they do what they do and the importance of having those opportunities for students to learn. The district's core values are what drives the reasons why they've chosen the literacy approaches and programs they have. Placing students first with continuous personal growth and achievement that educators want students to have.

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Educators will be able to create an optimum teaching and learning environment for students that creates strong school community engagement, utilizing their resources to support teaching, learning, and leadership. These are all part of their strategic plan and core values which are so very important. On top of that is the vision for the Graduates, where do they want to see students in the end when they leave and what do they want them to walk away with. Educators want students to strive to act with integrity and want them to live purposefully, recognizing that there is no one path to success because students learn differently and have different needs. Success for one student is very different than to another student. Educators want students to seek continuous understanding by employing a self-disciplined, open minded, patient, and resilient approach to learning. One of things that teachers want for students is to walk away with all these pieces of resilience and be able to have productive struggle and be able to work through their problems to have someone guiding them on the side, but at the same time digging in when they need to because it's such an important skill for students to have. Life can be bumpy, and they want students to be able to have the skills to be able to get through those pieces.

Connection to literacy instruction promoting lifelong readers and learners. Focusing on the individual needs of each student. Implementing responsive teaching practices is so important. The one lever that is most important in child education is the proficiency of the teacher. The second lever is good leadership, and those are the two strongest pieces that will grow students and create achievement that is really important and why they have responsive teaching practices and they do that through Professional Development. Focusing on the whole student, having flexibility, utilizing evidence-based practices, recognizing, and embracing student motivation, a very big piece to make sure students are motivated.

Looking at how are these beliefs manifested in the literacy classroom and how to reflect this in the classroom around literacy. They looked at "Readers Workshop" specifically around short, explicit, robust instruction. Then moving, there's a gradual release of responsibility where students move into independent practice designed to be meaningful, and students are accountable for what they're doing in that independent work. Students take ownership of their work with their independent time, they're engaged in what they're doing and oftentimes there's choice and that time is used as a very flexible time, but when students do have choice, its accountable choice. Real time spent reading and writing real texts. Outside of "Readers Workshop" time there's explicit instruction in phonics awareness at the lower grades which is more of teacher's directed time that is very much a student's centered time that really connects to some of those values they always talk about in terms of putting students first. The key aspect of the curriculum is student talk to build connections, to build and create their own mode of instruction.

The components involved to literacy instruction is the connection to the science of reading. Cohasset Public Schools have different components for different parts of literacy instruction. For the "Readers Workshop" piece they've used units of study which have received some bad press. A lot of that bad press revolved around the fact that it didn't contain systematic phonics instruction. The school district brought in Hegarty as that component to take that piece. Reading can be so complicated and how to acquire those reading skills where there's so much going on in terms of neurons, neuroscience, cognitive theory, constructivist theory. One of the things that often times gets missed in this process is motivation theory. "The science of reading is a phrase representing the accumulated knowledge about reading, reading development, and best practices for reading instruction obtained by the use of the scientific method."

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The school district has used these components in units of study that is structured literacy where they're using phonics for phonics awareness. Those are the structured literacy pieces with science of reading in addition to making sure students have strong comprehension and strong motivation, so students become lifelong readers. The comprehensive piece is looking at the research around how students read and some of the best practices from before and combining both of those. When getting into the components of literacy educators put this in their reading programs phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension which are the big five components.

Reading has no easy way, there's no one-way and there's no right way, it works differently for different students depending on their neurodiversity, and how students learn. All these things come into play where there is no one right answer. Educators can then adjust each individual student accordingly, which is a big undertaking.

Rock Roberts quotes from a great quotation from someone who is very involved in the research on reading science and education practice. *"Although reading science is highly relevant to learning in the classroom setting, it does not yet speak to what to teach, when, how, and for whom at a level that is useful for teachers."* Students come into the classroom with motivation and engaging, and these components come into play for students to learn which gets students to reading.

Student Services focuses on being sure they are meeting the needs of students in the reading approach. The areas really focused on are making sure all students have access to it, and the benefits of needing specialized instruction. They want to know what teachers are seeing in order to access those models, particularly students on IEP's and for students being able to get support through previewing and reviewing so students can then participate in classroom experience. Able to utilize small group structured instruction for students so it's meaningful and students can learn from it. Giving students support with assessments particularly where students are seeing support to access that through the grade level reading and writing assessments and teachers are aware of students on IEP's getting the supports and able to fully access in the classroom. Special Education Educators are seeing great benefits in what they're doing right now in reading in a comparative way. Educators see students accessing grade level texts read aloud, and whole group portion, which is really important for students to get that experience right there in that grade level. Students are also able to access their own books at both the independent and instructional levels, which is also important for all students in the classroom. Students are building reading stamina with collaboration with their peers which is huge for student learning. Students particularly on IEP's are increasing engagement, more improvements, students' self-esteem in reading is growing, and this is what the Special Education teachers are seeing more of than ever before. The whole approach to reading in specialized instruction and special education is the name of the game to be highly dependent for students on individual IEPs. Educators have phonics-based reading and writing in specialized instruction with students in smaller groups in the classroom with individual settings working on reading comprehension, working on decoding and sight words, working on fluency. These are the overall arching areas of specialized instruction focusing on students so they can get access to the benefits when in a general instruction classroom. What is really important for all students particularly students on IEPs, "There is no such thing as a 'magic bullet' program. There is no program in existence that will fully meet the literacy needs of every student in a given classroom. However, many programs offer components that, when matched with students' needs, can be combined, and implemented in ways that will result in reading growth."

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Rock Roberts started working with early literacy with grades K-12 in 2016 and the one thing that was a major concern to him was when he walked through the classrooms that were led by teachers all the time and this needed change. They wanted to have students active in the classroom and engaged in what they're doing here in Cohasset. The child centered style classroom shows a faster development in higher order reading skills compared to their counterparts in teacher directed style classrooms that showed no differences in basic reading skills. The mixed teaching style proved to be more beneficial than the teacher directed style for children's development of both and this is exactly what the district is doing. They want to see students in the classroom engaged in some level of choice and some voice starting at a young age and grow that through the years that becomes part of the culture in the classroom. Studies have found that students who are motivated to read will read more often and have better reading comprehension ability. Reading instruction should not only focus on skill instruction, but also the promotion of reading motivation.

Megan Barry from 11 Tad Lane chimes in via Zoom Q&A feature to ask, "what does the Readers Workshop independent reading session look like for struggling readers if there are not enough teaching resources on a certain day?"

Dr. Scollins replies their structures are in place and the teacher is probably the one that is going to spend a bit more time with students that are struggling versus students that are better at reading above grade level. It doesn't mean that they're not teaching throughout the week in small groups or in their conferencing, but those students are probably in a rotation. Students are going to work with that teacher more often throughout the week. Students will also be given work at their reading grade level because then students can access the information they're given with specific tools and tasks during independent time. Students also have to build up stamina and read books that are at their grade level, there's instructional and independent reading. Teachers are taught in the classroom to take that component and make sure students build stamina, self-esteem, and teachers want to be able to coach them.

Mr. Carr just has an observation on the flexibility of this avocado mode that allows teachers to pivot, change, address issues that may not be perfect but he's more convinced this is a good thing in his opinion. He also really likes the use of data that also gives them a great deal of information at every level down to the individual and be able to adjust.

Mr. MacLellan would like to go back to the starting point for not just himself but for everyone in the room who is committed to all facets of education and passionate about it. To Mr. MacLellan if they had to pick one thing that is the most important part of the educational experience here is delivering literacy to students. This ranks above numeracy, above STEM, above the Arts, above social emotional health. The most fundamental skill is communication, it's a great equalizer. When this was rolled out this is what should have been presented. They should have told people they were doing the MTSS process and moving in a different direction with literacy. This should have been presented with discussions before implementing it. There have been a lot of concerns surrounding the literacy issue and that is the common theme behind a lot of literacy curriculum that is thrown around. The common denominator of concern for parents especially within the special education realm they use to present explained a lot of the rationale and acknowledged there are critical assessments of the effectiveness of units of study, but acknowledging and understanding that it's the right fit because of X, Y, and Z.

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A tremendous amount of work was put together for this presentation and Mr. MacLellan really appreciates it but wishes they had done this when they rolled this out because it would have alleviated a lot of concerns for a lot of families. Hoping for that second phase on this where this is shared with families and how they're going to evaluate the effectiveness of their custom approach that they've come up with here which is creative. Mr. MacLellan has faith in the educators that run this school district. How are they evaluating the effectiveness of doing that, and how do they share that analysis with families keeping themselves accountable and being transparent about the literacy program when something needs to change. This should be shared with families at some point which is a whole different conversation, and perhaps at the end of the academic school year or Summertime might be a good time to do this. It needs to be viewed more with more substantive time in order to truly grasp the effectiveness of any one particular learning solution.

There's a large and growing body of research that demonstrates that skilled readers are highly active, strategic, and engaged, deploying executive skills to manage the reading process. The educators implement the learning of basic decoding skills around sound and letter relationships that all come together. Students take those skills and practice them and pull them all together and keep adding more and more skills to repertoire until students become really proficient readers. Educators want to see the child in pursuit of knowledge, and not knowledge in pursuit of the child and that is why they've implemented Professional Development because it is so very important here in Cohasset.

Chairman Dial knows this is a complicating issue, it's great to recognize comparing viewpoints because it's out there. The gravity of this is to do something different than what they're doing here.

Dr. Scollins says to make the decision and to take something that may not be popular but truly believe is good for students as long as their watching it making sure all the components are together, they'll be able to invest in teachers and give them Professional Development. The Cohasset school district is a unique small district, they have strong teachers and have the ability to provide Professional Development that is necessary. To Dr. Scollins this was the risk to take to what they know and make it theirs, that was the consensus.

Literacy Foundations is phonics and decoding with letters and sound and how they come together for grades K-3. Phonics is very systematic for students to decode that is an instructional program and what science in reading is advocating for. The next part of this is phonemic awareness which is another part of decoding that Foundations didn't give that additional part because if students don't have that awareness, it can be really hard for students to decode.

Hegarty is also systematic and it's a quick hit with 15 minutes a day engaging, and students love it. Teachers feel it's very comfortable for students because the buy-in is really quick and teachers saw immediate results. This is used predominantly for grades K-1 and when students are struggling with this it's usually a flag that the student might need support because it's critical if students don't get the sound piece the letters don't break down.

Readers Workshop is an instructional model, it's based around student centered learning and the structure of this is a 10-minute explicit instruction mini lesson from the teacher and the learning target of the day and what teachers are going to focus on. In that mini lesson a gradual release of responsibility where students break off into independent work time and working on that target.

Cohasset Public Schools

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Teaching and Learning

- **Academic Initiatives / Updates: Presentation on Elementary Literacy (Dr. Leslie Scollins, Mrs. Barbara Cerwonka, and Mr. Rock Roberts)**

Megan Barry from 11 Tad Lane chimes in with another question. Do elementary teachers still utilize “Lucy Calkins” queuing strategy to teach reading?

Dr. Scollins reiterates no, the district moved away from that. They’ll keep looking at the data and base it on what the data tells them and if this is not the best approach, they’ll make changes. They’ve partnered with the Teaching and Learning Alliance (TLA) because they’re in it for the long haul.

Dr. Sullivan says they’re trying to use the best approach for Cohasset, and this is what they feel works best here in Cohasset.

Mr. Kearney wants to thank the administration for putting this on the school committee agenda, this is great. This just tells them where the district is in this Town. This was put in terms to understand, same thing as math trying to get to the pluses and minuses to advance to get to that foundation. Mr. Kearney also appreciates bringing everybody up because they don’t want children that are ready to advance and get bored who are really smart and have no finesse for this because it comes easy for them, and students are not being challenged. This is the kind of stuff that makes Cohasset.

Ms. Lesky thinks this is very comprehensive and this would be a wonderful presentation for a SEPAC meeting in a modified setting so there can be some conversation and discussion about how the district arrived at the methodologies and approaches they did. What will the administration do about the new faculty that comes in. Teaching in a classroom takes a lot of finesse, especially in classroom management and setting up routines that requires a higher-level of teaching skills and how would the faculty be brought up to speed.

Chairman Dial appreciates all the work Dr. Scollins, Mrs. Cerwonka, and Mr. Roberts putting this together, it was a tremendous presentation and thank you Dr. Scollins for taking that risk. The one element that wasn’t talked upon in literacy that maybe is adjacent to it, is spelling. It seems like spelling is a challenge for students that maybe is the reverse of phonics and phonic awareness. As good as readers students are, they are not good spellers. Looking at English language particular is spelling is somewhat arbitrary. Students learn by visual memorization that pertains maybe 10% of students who read it and write it on a page and the element of writing is making sure it gets corrected and the process of writing increases students spelling. Chairman Dial hopes this helped the community because it certainly helped him with what’s going on.

Teaching and Learning

- **Director of Student Services Update (Mrs. Barbara Cerwonka)**
 - **Update on Data and Individualized Education Program (IEP) Surveys**

Student Services held 50 IEP meetings during the month of April, 2024 that were across the board at the elementary and secondary level in the school district that were identified coming from the MTSS process. There were four (4) parent requests from the elementary level and it’s honestly a privilege to test students where parents are concerned and these four (4) students from parent requests did not require services that were very relieving for those parents and good news for the student.

Cohasset Public Schools

Empower Students to Improve Communities

Teaching and Learning

• Director of Student Services Update (Mrs. Barbara Cerwonka)

➤ Update on Data and Individualized Education Program (IEP) Surveys

There were two (2) requests from the secondary level, not attending Cohasset Public Schools to which a student may have been attending a private school or in early intervention with one (1) who was eligible, and one (1) was not eligible. That data continues to show those processes continue on a trajectory and want to continue on. Parent surveys for the month have been received and all were 100% agreed and strongly agreed in terms of understanding their child's IEP meetings and are satisfied with the results for their child and hope to continue receiving positive feedback. IEP meetings continue for the month of May, 2024.

Ms. Lesky has a question to ask. When an IEP meeting occurs, and an IEP is developed and there's some back and forth with some discussion about it, she was wondering if there's a way to show in the data how many open cases still exist, or don't exist over time that is part of the process. Is the process running in a way with any sort of discussions are resolved in a timely way, in a quicker, easy manner. Is there a way of sharing some of that data about how many IEPs are closed within that thirty (30) day process and how many are still outstanding from those meetings that occurred in that month, because understanding the flow of that process would be helpful.

Mrs. Cerwonka says that within every process, parents have thirty (30) days to respond to the IEP and when Student Services does not get a response to that IEP, it is Student Services due diligence to reach out and use some of the other processes that are in place whether that IEP needs to be sent to the Bureau of Special Education Appeals or whatever it is to get a response. If for some reason that IEP continues to be a disagreement after that IEP was sent out, there will be a meeting on it within a certain time frame of getting that IEP back and continue that rolling. All those kinds of things are built into that process to make that happen.

Chairman Dial has one observation, Mrs. Cerwonka did a phenomenal job with the presentation without her laptop, without slides, it was straight to the point, excellent job and her updates are very much appreciated.

➤ Update on Extended School Year (ESY)

Student Services sent information out on the Extended School Year (ESY) to 90% of families who have a child on an IEP. Mrs. Cerwonka says when all the IEP meetings are over for the month of May, more information around the plans of the ESY and schedules will be sent to families.

Budget, Resources and Governance

• Budget and Finance

The School Committee has had many discussions over the past school committee meetings and has been through the process for the most part of the Budget with the Director of Finance and Operations, Mrs. Owen, who is not present tonight, and not feeling well.

• Food Service

This is a placeholder item on the school committee meeting agenda because it reminds the community, the Food Service Department is a very complex operation, and the Food Service Department continues to get accolades. Mr. Carr says he finally met the new chef, he's a great guy and did a terrific job with the electric bus ribbon cutting ceremony.

Cohasset Public Schools

Empower Students to Improve Communities

Community Relations / Communication

- **School Facilities Committee Update and Discussion**
 - **School Facilities Committee Charge**

Chairman Dial says the intent here was to have a discussion and vote on the School Facilities Committee Charge. Vice Chair MacLellan reminded the Chair that the school committee is not quite ready to do that. The School Committee has submitted this to the School Facilities Committee to discuss who would structure the charge with some agency there. The School Facilities Committee will submit a draft to the School Committee to discuss and decide the final charge.

Community Relations / Communication

- **Reports from School Committee Sub-Committees and Liaisons**

Mr. MacLellan has a question on an Ad hoc Committee issue that he would like to address to the school committee with Mrs. Cerwonka notice she'll no longer be here for the next academic school year. Dr. Scollins will be running the selection process for Mrs. Cerwonka replacement, and they'll need a School Committee Representative on that Ad hoc Selection Committee Board. Mr. MacLellan would like to nominate Ms. Lesky as the School Committee Representative if she's willing to do this.

Ms. Lesky states there's no need for further discussion, she'll be a representative for the School Committee on the Selection Committee process for Mrs. Cerwonka's replacement.

School Committee Governance

- **Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair**

There were no topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair.

- **Approval of Minutes ****

There are no School Committee Meeting Minutes to approve.

School Committee Governance

- **Future Agenda Items**

- ✓ Invite Officer Taylor to talk and share about the RAD Program and Substance Abuse Diversion.
- ✓ Invite the Food Service Director, Vincent Cordone, to a school committee meeting closer to the school year end to see the roll out plans for the Food Service Department will be for the next academic 2024-2025 school year.
- ✓ More discussion on School Choice.
- ✓ Spotlights from students from recent Europe Trip.

Cohasset Public Schools
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School Committee Governance

- **Executive Session¹ ** #3. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation.**

Chairman Dial states there is a reason to move into Executive Session¹ to discuss strategy with the respect to collective bargaining or litigation.

¹ Chapter 30A, Section 21(a) mandates that in order to go into Executive Session the Committee must:

1. Do so on a roll call vote
2. State the purpose for executive session.
3. Indicate whether the body will reconvene in public session

Motion made by Mr. Kearney to move into Executive Session¹ #3. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation. The School Committee will not reconvene in general session, thereafter, seconded by Mr. Carr. Roll Call Vote: Mr. Kearney-Aye; Ms. Lesky-Aye; Mr. Carr-Aye; Mr. MacLellan-Aye; Mr. Dial-Aye.

The regular meeting of the Cohasset School Committee for Wednesday, May 8, 2024 adjourned at 9:00 PM.

** Requires Committee Vote / Action

All school committee meetings are recorded.

School Committee Meeting 05.08.2024
Minutes Submitted by
Kathleen Bock