

MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee
School Committee Meeting
Monday, October 21, 2024 - 6:30 p.m.
Hoosac Valley High School - Resource Room
125 Savoy Road, Cheshire, MA

PRESENT: John Duval, Adam Emerson, Robert Tetlow, Erin Milne, Fred Lora, Mike Henault

ABSENT: Andy Przystanski

OTHERS: Superintendent Aaron Dean

104241 Call to Order

Chairman Adam Emerson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

104242 Public Comment or Question - None

104243 Approval of Minutes - September 23, 2024 & September 30, 2024

MOTION: On Motion of Mike Henault and second by Erin Milne:

VOTED: to approve the September 23, 2024 & minutes. The vote was unanimous

MOTION: On Motion of Mike Henault and second by Erin Milne with the amendment of the I to aye.

VOTED: to approve the September 30, 2024 minutes, amending the I to aye. The vote was unanimous.

104244 Report of Business Manager - S.C. Order 2501 - Reclassify Budget - Aaron went over the Reclassification. Erin asked for more clarification. Aaron reported some shifts were for curriculum consumables, teacher classifications, teachers that came in higher and/or lower than expected, special ed. Department, made shifts in structures, mostly salary alignments.

MOTION: On Motion of Mike Henault and second by John Duval:

VOTED: Submitted herein for your approval is a request to reclassify the FY25 budget to align with actual expenditures. See attached transfer funds. The vote was unanimous.

104245 Report of Sub Committee - None

104246 Communications -

A. Abby Ruble - Therapy Dog - Trying to get a therapy dog in the school for years. Abby has a dog named Bruno, Bassetdoodle, half Basset Hound/Poodle mix, who turned one at the end of September. He is hypoallergenic. Specialty trained dogs that work alongside educators and students to create a positive and supportive learning environment. A lot of research shows the value of having an animal in school and how it can bring anxiety levels and stress levels down for both students and adults, while increasing student attendance. Courses Bruno has taken: Puppy I, Puppy II, Canine Good Citizen and Tricks certified. Passed Therapy I and now enrolled in Therapy II, his last therapy class is on November 7th. He is not a service dog. Abby showed a video of Bruno. Working with Canine Link for training. Other surrounding schools have therapy dogs (Lenox, Lee & Drury). Next steps: Creating an understanding of Bruno's role at the school, with students and staff. Creating a schedule for Bruno. Sharing information with families about Bruno and why he is here. Working on getting insurance for Bruno. Questions? Erin Milne: Currently our school policy doesn't allow for this, we will need to work on the policy with the policy committee if we want to have him in Schools. Aaron: We would need an MOA to outline specifics. Mike Henault: - need further discussions, a lot of information to go over and talk about, but it is

a possibility. Mike discussed various liabilities. Adam: We need to adopt the policy first. The purpose would be to assist in behavior with a student who may be in crisis? Would students come to expect that? But he wouldn't be there everyday? Abby: Bruno can't be their main source of support, he won't be here everyday. There are other sources of support from adults that would be discussed with the students. Mike: Recommendation - Would like to get the material and at the next policy subcommittee, if the policy subcommittee changes the policy and the policy gets updated where it's a possibility then put it on the next agenda to have a discussion to move to have a therapy dog but making sure that the policy is set first. If it is the will of the policy subcommittee to change the policy, then we can bring it back to the S.C. and have a full discussion. Abby hopes the policy committee will see there is a need for a therapy dog. The committee thanked Abby for bringing this forward.

B. Spotlight on Applied Learning - Kristen Palatt, Scott Krzanik and four grade 4 students presented to the Committee. Committed to taking the learning that is happening at the schools and showing the school committee - calling it spotlight on applied learning, the focus is in all three buildings - with particular attention to middle and high school. Kristen was invited into Mr. Krzanik's classroom where students were presenting prototypes of prosthetics that they designed for animals that lost limbs, suffered injuries or were born with disabilities. Fourth grade projects will be submitted at the end of the year to a statewide PLTW showcase. Scott explained the unit. Students, Gregory, Aleigha, Cassandra, and Colton each discussed their projects. Kristen thanked the students for a great presentation. Q & A with the School Committee and students. Scott Krzanik discussed the need for a turbidimeter. Parent stated that her daughter is excited about PLTW, she didn't have this when she was in school. Discussion from parents on fundraising for turbidimeters, etc. Kristen stated that the District has committed to PLT funding and the district also has partnerships and grant funding to help. Mike Henault reported that the S.C. supports PLTW, however, it takes people showing up and supporting our budget at the towns so we can further support this learning.

Grade 5 teacher Sue Garcia & Paraprofessional Jen Gageant presented on Ramblewild: Sue: Working with Feronia Forward for 8 years which is a non profit that supports schools going to Ramblewild. Took all 91 5th grade students to Ramblewild, went to base camp October 3rd & 4th, ziplines were the favorite, and in spring going to the aerial park - Sue discussed the challenges and how the students supported each other during the course. The kindness, support and passion that they saw watching the kids supporting and cheering each other. SEL work is working, this is about problem solving and perseverance. Jen Gageant presented her experience on the trip.

104247 Report of Superintendent

A. **October 1, 2024 enrollment** - We currently have 1,006 students. Last year we were at 985. We have some decent gains in Pre-K - expanded that program. Aaron discussed the enrollment numbers in each school.

B. **Accountability Data** - Kristen Palatt presented the highlights from the 23-24 MCAS Data (see slideshow) could have presented a ton of stuff, but decided to frame it in the context of our SIP - Where we invest our time and energy we see payouts everytime. Kristen showed the SIP from last year for comparison. High School Attendance - on the 24 MCAS earned 4 out of 4, last year we received nothing. Positive and Supportive School Culture - earned 11 out of 12, last year 2 out of 12; High Standards and Academic Success - 2 out of 4 in ELA, 2 out of 4 in Math and 4 out of 4 in science for our 8th graders and then all of our students who didn't get ELA points, 2 out of 4 for Math and 3 out of 4 for science. 8 out 12 for eighth graders and 5 out of 12 for high school, compared to last year 0 out of 12 for 8th graders and 0 out of 12 for all students.

Overall Accountability: 2023 - 13%; 2024 - 58% huge increase - Outlining a SIP that continues this momentum, especially in service of our students with disabilities.

Middle School: School Culture - received all of their accountability points for chronic absenteeism; We had some significant events that happened last year in ELA with the passing of a teacher and other things, we expected to see challenges with our achievement data in those areas. End of year goals: High Academic Achievement - 75% of SWD achieve proficiency on math and ELA MCAS; 100% of SWD show growth in both math and ELA MCAS; High Expectations for Behavior - Suspensions decrease by 30% and referrals to the SSC decrease by 50%

Elementary School: 2023- 5% of their accountability points and this year 53% of accountability points. Outlining SIP that continues this momentum in supporting our high needs students through MTSS. Capitalizing on GLEAM, Wilson and hopefully PRISM support to strengthen Science of Reading aligned instruction at all three tiers.

There is a ton of data - you can look at the DESE profile and not just see how we did but compare us with our counterparts around the county.

Mike Henault: this is the accountability path, which is important and great progress, not telling the story that we are going to hear about when we go to the budget table, which is the assessment side, the achievement scores, which is the other side of MCAS, this has to be good in order to get the achievement results, the numbers that people go to are the percent meeting or exceeding expectations and our percentile compared to the state, are still relatively low. We're still in the teens with our accountability percentile, set up statistically for incremental growth, if you are hitting those targets that means you are doing what you can do to move kids at the rate that they can be moved. If you are hitting 100% of your targets, you are doing what the state says is statistically probable, but we have to keep that going, where we didn't make the points is in academics, not across the board, specifically in ELA. When the SIP comes in - highlight how you are going to move from these areas of strength which is the growth that you are seeing and how it is going to specifically target those gaps in achievement, would like to see measures that relate to specific moves in achievement or student growth, so that we are transparent and this is the work we need to do, we are building off of success and this is how we are going to target those areas. Kristen: we know how hard it is to move the accountability. Looking at the middle school, two years ago we were in the 8th percentile which made us in status with the state, last year we were in the 11th percentile, which got us out of status with the state, this year we are in the 13th percentile and we are targeting the sub groups that are identified that are needing targeting assistance that will hopefully transfer to all students. We are doing the right work, it takes time. Bob: Are you looking at changing the math curriculum? Kristen: we are in pilot with the math curriculum right now - we are following the DESE implement process for piloting the curriculum, started that process last January - put together a match curriculum counsel - looked at all the curriculum that are out there, we picked two. Trained teachers this summer.

Aaron: without Kristen's leadership and the APs of teaching and learning, none of the curriculum would get done. Kristen has done a lot of great work.

104248 Chairman's Report - None

104249 Unfinished Business -

A. Superintendent's evaluation - Mike Henault: talked about narrowing down the focus indicators - talked with Aaron, for this year, we will be doing all the indicators, that is the way his goals were laid out. Went deep into the MASC recommended evaluation system. Would suggest once Aaron is done with this cycle, and what other districts are doing and recommended by MASC is to narrow down the focus indicators. Rather than having to be evaluated on 21 indicators, we and Aaron can choose the ones most likely to have an impact on students and those would be the ones he builds his goals around and measures. Also suggest, he is not a first year Superintendent to move to a 2 year cycle. We could have a cleaner timeline, could do quarterly check-ins, can see progress towards indicators. Best practice - only new Superintendents get evaluated every year. This year, evaluate Aaron, google forms are ready to go, when talking about new goals, will go to a 2 year cycle. Erin Milne agrees. Aaron shared his evidence that he put together with the committee. Mike asked the Committee if they could fill out by November 11th for feedback, would give Mike time to go through the narrative. Will do the quantitative piece with the rating scale and put slides together with the feedback for the next meeting.

B. School Committee facebook account - Erin Milne: working on a mechanism to better inform the public on work that we do. There is really no way for S.C. to communicate with the public - according to bylaws is one of our responsibilities - which is public relations. Would like to propose the formation of a new sub-committee - would like to establish a Public Relations Committee - John Duval is in favor of the idea; clearly a need to get the right information out there and a committee like this would be a good step forward. Adam: how would this committee work with the schools? Would they collaborate? Erin: we can work that out with the subcommittee - Erin: press releases still have to be handled through the Superintendent, however, we wouldn't be doing press releases, but we should be communicating our work with the community. Mike Henault: Do we have enough volunteers to be part of this committee? supports it but doesn't have the time to commit to another committee - supports it as long as we have people to volunteer - John and Erin reported they would volunteer to be on the committee as did Bob.

MOTION: On Motion of Erin Milne and second by John Duval:

VOTED: To be adopted: In accordance with [HVRSD Policy BDE](#), the School Committee hereby establishes a Public Relations subcommittee for an initial term lasting until the 2025 School Committee organizational meeting, and which may be renewed annually thereafter at the discretion of the Chair. The subcommittee will comprise 3 Members appointed annually by the Chair. The Public Relations subcommittee will be tasked with carrying out the Committee's stated duty of Public Relations as expressed in [Policy BBA](#): [Public relations](#). The Committee is responsible for providing adequate and direct means for keeping the local citizenry

informed about the schools and for keeping itself and the school staff informed about the needs and wishes of the public. The vote was unanimous.

104250 New Business - Erin Milne: next agenda, reappointing members of DEIB advisory committee - had several requests from people to get more involved. Also, researching what the S.C. duties are - supposed to be evaluating ourselves, would like that on the next agenda as well.

Bob Tetlow: talked about absenteeism last spring - asked if we get a monthly report - Mike Henault: we could just put an absenteeism report on the agenda at every meeting.

Fred Lora: Asked if the school district maintains a master calendar? Aaron: reported that we do. Fred asked if we could incorporate a calendar of events as part of the meetings? Aaron stated that we will put in on the agendas going forward. Adam: encourage principals to email them to invite the Committee to events as well.

Fred: does the District have an organizational chart? Aaron: we do - not posted anywhere but we have it. Had to put it together for our Tier Focused Monitor last year.

104251 Action Items - None

104252 For the Good of the Order -

John Duval: enjoyed the student and teachers presentation. Very clear teachers have high expectations for the kids and they are rising to the challenge.

Erin Milne: Approaching election season - question 2 - would eliminate MCAS as graduation requirement. A Yes vote on 2 would go a long way allowing school staff to focus on the kind of education like we heard today. Doesn't eliminate the MCAS it will eliminate a whole lot of stress for students and faculty. Supported by most organizations - MASC supports it

Adam Emerson: great seeing what was presented tonight. And second Erin's comment.

C. Ratify Secretary Contract - to go into executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigation position of the school committee; to conduct strategy sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contact negotiations with nonunion personnel -

MOTION: On Motion of Erin Milne and second by Mike Henault:

VOTED: to go into executive session at 8:40 p.m., the committee will reconvene in open session. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

MOTION: On Motion of Erin Milne and second by John Duval:

VOTED: to ratify the Secretary Contract. The vote was unanimous.

MOTION: On Motion of Erin Milne and second by Robert Tetlow:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Lisa Bresett, Recording Secretary .