

GATEWAY REGIONAL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The Gateway Regional School District will provide an exemplary education that challenges all students in an instructional setting appropriate to their needs.

All visitors attending the school committee meeting should sign in at the security booth.

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, November 13, 2024

Middle School Room 117/119

7:00 P.M.

7:04 PM I. OPENING OF MEETING & QUESTION TO SEE IF ANYONE IS RECORDING

Call to order: Mr. Forgue, Chairperson

BLANDFORD

Nicole Daviau
Keri Morawiec

CHESTER

Jeana Briggs
Brian Forgue
Jason Forgue

HUNTINGTON

Pegg Dragon
Lisa Goding

MIDDLEFIELD

Tash Strong

MONTGOMERY

RUSSELL

Tara Balboni
Lyndsey Papillon

SECRETARY

Stacy Stewart

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Kristen Smidy, Superintendent

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Theodore DeAngelis-Page
Ana Holmes, Alternate

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

Kurt Garivaltis, Pupil Services Director
Martha Gendron, Littleville Asst. Principal
Deanna LeBlanc, Curriculum Director
Vanna Maffuccio, Chester Principal
Melissa McCaul, Littleville Principal
Chris Parker, Technology Director
William Sullivan, GRS Principal
Chris Tamburrino, Asst. Pupil Services Dir.
Val Zeh, GRS Assistant Principal

OTHERS: Wendy Long, Amy Mason

7:02 PM II. PUBLIC INPUT

Guests attending the meeting may address the committee on topics not on the agenda. (There is a three minute time limit per guest)

- Ruth Kennedy, a former school committee member and current Russell finance committee member, thanked the superintendent and principal for allowing her and Jim Cortis to come in and host a veteran's day ceremony.

7:05 PM III. PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS/RECOGNITIONS

A. Kentucky Site Visit Report Out

- Mrs. Papillon gave a powerpoint presentation of the Kentucky trip sponsored by Next Generation and Barr.

Mrs. Briggs arrived 7:11

- Mr. Jason Forgue asked about the J term in terms of its relationship in time on learning, would it count as instructional learning?
- Mrs. Smidy and Mrs. Papillon said yes.
- Mr. Jason Forgue asked if Kentucky has an MCAS equivalent and is funding based on results.
- Will Sullivan said yes they have one but he isn't sure sure if funding is based on it. They focus on what is best for students.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said the teacher's union contract came up in increased advisory, prep time. How long is the Kentucky school day?
- Mrs. Smidy said it is 7 hours and they didn't attend Fridays.
- Mr. Papillon struggled with how we would incorporate this in Mass. Structure is important, and it needs to be manageable for staff and meaningful for students.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said the replacement they have talked about is similar to STEAM, but 3 years out.
- Ms. Dragon said she has looked at other school systems who don't use MCAS and CT is using a system that requires them to propose a portfolio. In the freshman year they set goals and each year they build upon them.
- Mr. Brian Forgue brought up dual enrollment courses and working with local businesses, cooperatives and towns. He is happy with how the water coordinator program went. Did she have businesses in mind, could we utilize a company like Azure Green and dual enrollment.
- Mrs. Papillon said there weren't any specific community partners, she was just thinking how we could build upon it.
- Mrs. Smidy said Kentucky had seniors at internships.

7:15 PM IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

A. MCAS Ballot Question Update (Enc.)

- DESE put out a document included in the packet. For those seniors who failed there will be guidance that will come out in December. There has been reference to appealing it.
- Mr. Jason Forgue said on December 1 the MCAS graduation requirement goes away, however other tests still remain. Does it change how students perceive the test? How do we relay the importance of trying. There is no reward for high performance. There are still repercussions for schools who don't do well overall. District wide, statewide all of them were partially meeting expectations.
- Mr. Brian Forgue talked about a tool to show how the state is doing overall.
- Mrs. Smidy said if mass core is adopted we are going to have to take a hard look at our schedule. We would need to hire three more teachers to meet that and it could be tricky.

7:20 PM V. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEM

A. Discussion and Vote on Superintendent's Evaluation Goals (Enc.)

- The committee met last week to narrow them down.

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to approve the FY '25 Superintendent goals.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Jason

- Mr. Brian Forgue asked if there is stakeholder input.
- Mrs. Smidy said the last one was sent last Friday. She received input from the central office and all staff so far.

B. Vote of GRS 2024-2025 School Improvement Plan (Enc.)

Mrs. Balboni made a motion seconded by Mr. Brian Forgue to approve the GRS School Improvement Plan.

- Mr. Brian Forgue is excited to revamp honors and AP courses.
- Ms. Goding talked about operation and efficiency. She likes a good flow chart but worries sometimes they are just a document somewhere.
- Ms. Dragon was impressed by the document, that there is a lot to it..
- Mr. Jason Forgue likes that it shows how you can make it better. He wishes we had more public input.
- Mrs. Smidy said sometimes multiple groups have input.

Mrs. Balboni made a motion seconded by Mr. Brian Forgue to approve the GRS School Improvement Plan.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Jason

C. Discussion and Vote on HCHC Playgroup in district

- Mrs. Smidy said they are no longer renting the space in Huntington and are looking for other areas to host their playgroup. Currently, it is being hosted in Worthington and the Chester train station which will no longer be available after December due to lack of heat. Russell had the police department which is in they old school. They were concerned about the holding cell. They asked the school to host the play group in Chester from January through the end of the school year. If it goes well, maybe host another one year. Principal Maffuccio has identified a space and is excited to host them.
- Ms. Dragon confirmed it is not taking away from regular space.
- Ms. Daviau asked if Friday was all they were looking for.
- Mr. Brian Forgue said the health center would oversee it.
- Mrs. Smidy said we would CORi the staff. We are doing a pilot to see how it goes. Some students and families have challenges.
- Mr. Jason Forgue asked where it falls in facilities use.
- Ms. Smidy said free.
- Mr. Brian Forgue said part of the concern in Russell was egress issues.
- Mrs. Smidy said we are concerned about that. The staff have checked out the space and are okay with it. There is a meeting tomorrow.
- Ms. Dragon said the school would be less squeamish than the Russell Police station.

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Morawiec to approve the trial period for the Chester Elementary to host the HCHC playgroup from January through the end of the year contingent on acceptance and approval of Chester school and town officials including that the agreement can be revoked any time.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 9 Nays Abstain 1 Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha

Abstain: Jason

- Ms. Dragon asked what happens in the summer.
- Mrs. Smidy imagines she may be back in May if all goes well.

D. First read of [sub rate policy GCE](#)

- Mrs. Smidy said this proposing and increase to the sub rates to reflect a rate where we might get subs plus the longer day. The new rates would be as follows: new teacher rate is \$175 a day, LPN \$30 per hour, RN \$40 per hour, custodian \$22 per hour, food services \$17, paraprofessional \$17 per hour, secretary \$22, security \$22 per hour and long term teacher sub Bachelors 1.
- This is the first read.
- Mr. Jason Forgue asked what is the rate for a starting teacher.
- Mrs. Smidy said \$49,773.
- Move to unfinished business.

7:30 PM VI. CONSENT ITEMS

A. Approval of 10/9/2024 Minutes (Enc.)

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Mrs. Papillon to approve the minutes of October 9, 2024.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 8 Nays Abstain 2 Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Jeana, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Keri, Lyndsey, Jason

Abstain: Tara, Tasha

B. Acceptance of Grants/Donations (Enc.)

Mr. Brian Forgue made a motion seconded by Ms. Dragon to approve the Grants and Donations listed for tonight.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 10 Nays Abstain Absent (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Jeana, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Jason

7:32 PM VII. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE

- Theodore DeAngelis-Page said the Barr interns elected last month are already working in groups to improve the district. Last Friday, Ruth Kennedy and Jim Cortis came and

hosted a veterans day program. It was very sweet and community building. The Gateway PTO is hosting a family movie Friday at 6pm.

- He sent out a survey this month to grades 6-12 about recent votes, changes, and experiences in the past couple of weeks. It included homework, Germany students, costumes policy, homework.
- The Semi formal was a hit and over 90 students went. There was a photo booth and good food. They had a spirit week.
- Fundraisers: seniors at Shortstop, juniors sold popcorn, sophomores at Applebees
- Field trips: Mr. Sheehan took his classes to a local lumber yard. Students interested in journalism went to Western Mass News today and students interested in Health are going to STCC. NHS is hosting a boot drive on November 23.
- Sports are winding down. 7 boys and 7 girls attended the state qualifiers. Soccer players came to him about the booster field saying it could be more attended to over the summer. There was a lack of mowing over the summer and for the first week or two of school it was very long. The first sports banquet is coming up November 19th..
- Middle School - Mrs. Keeler's exploratory block went on a field trip to Dakin. They raised over 7 boxes of supplies. There is a food bank located in the new free store. Some students have been interning at the free store.
- Littleville - Mrs. Kennedy talked about the history of veteran's day and read the book rolling thunder which honors the sacrifices made by veterans.
- Chester is holding a food drive. They are also hosting the Trees for Change fundraiser selling - gift cards to plant trees. They also created over 100 cards, poems, and pictures for the Holyoke Veterans at the soldiers home..
- Mr. Jason Forgue asked how many homework policy respondents there were.
- Theodore DeAngelis-Page said 90 respondents by 9-12.

7:37 PM VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. School Committee

Mrs. Briggs left at 8:23 p.m.

- Mr. Brian Forgue said his schedule has changed and he would like to join policy, and the superintendent's evaluation.

B. Chairperson - None

C. Superintendent - Central Office Update (Enc.)

- Mrs. Smidy said we have not seen any rural aid yet. They will be asking us how we are spending rural aid. It's hard to plan thoughtfully without knowing how much you will receive. Monday, we will have a roof inspection led by Curt Robe, the contractor who did it originally will work with us on how we can maintain it until we qualify to replace it.
- Mr. Jason Forgue asked to invite the supervisor on site.
- Mrs. Smidy said that was fine.

D. Assistant Superintendent - None

E. Administration (Enc.)

- Deanna LeBlanc said she held the annual meeting on Title I with low participation. All three buildings are eligible for Title I funds now, but we don't receive more funds,
- Ms. Goding said when they have an open house where her daughter goes they hold the Title I meeting before.

F. Town Officials

- Ruth Kennedy clarified they don't have a jail in their school building. There is a processing center. It is a bench where the prisoners are put until they are transferred. There is safety. The hours where kids would be there, there wouldn't have been any other activity. They didn't want to pay the price to have blocks put in for separation.

7:45 PM IX. COMMITTEE REPORTING (Enc.)

A. Superintendent's Evaluation - Met last week.

B. Legislative Liaison

- Mr. Brian Fogue said that Nick Boldyga is set to show up in our district. He is scheduled to come to a Chester selectboard meeting on December 2. They are already bringing up the after school grant program. He could invite Boldyga to come to the February meeting about rural aid and other priorities. The lame duck part of the legislature is being productive - enacting some changes and aspects of teacher certification to help diversify. Should be one more supplemental budget for 24 and apportionment of the millionaires tax. Almost all of it is going to transportation (the T. The text of the bill has not been released.
- Mrs. Smidy said statewide they talked about circuit breaker. The Governor initially proposed 225 million to go to filling in budget holes.
- Mr. Brian Fogue said Chester has also hinted in trying to get Senator Mark to attend the Chester meeting as well.

C. Negotiations - None

D. Building Liaisons

- Ms. Daviau spoke with teachers at the high school. Bill Brown likes his library situation this year. 7th grade is project based again. It is getting back to how it used to be.

E. CES Update - None

F. Policy

- Mrs. Smidy said policy met tonight and they brought the first read for GCE tonight. Take some time to look it over. They approved other policies and will have them available for the next meeting.
- Ms. Dragon said the homework policy is just in the beginning. If students are having trouble they should talk to their teachers. It is new for a lot of them so naturally. It needs to be productive and meaningful. The policy is broader. We want students to work with their teachers.
- Theodore DeAngelis-Page said maybe there is a courage part of it if you are struggling when they are surrounded by those that are not.
- Mrs. Smidy said we will be getting a first look at the budget with the new administration - we don't know what the department of education will be.

7:50 PM X. OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

7:52 PM XI. INFORMATION

The warrant signing committee had reviewed the following warrants, found them to be in order, and approved them.

AP#1029 \$170,045.82

PR #008 \$456,894.28

AP#1033 \$93,970.10

7:55 PM XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

8:00 PM XIII. ADJOURNMENT by 9 p.m. unless extended by majority vote.

Ms. Daviau made a motion seconded by Mrs. Papillon to adjourn at 8:47 p.m.

Motion Carried (VOTE) Yeas 9 Nays Abstain Absent 1 (Roll Call Vote)

Yeas: Tara, Nicole, Pegg, Brian, Lisa, Keri, Lyndsey, Tasha, Jason

Absent: Jeana

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy L Stewart

School Committee Secretary