

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting
March 21, 2022
MHS Room 293/Virtual

PRESENT: Eisenthal, Kohls, Meggers, Mix, Ntem-mensah, Orsene, Pattacini, Patterson, Stefanovicz

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & Special Services Radikas, Director of Finance & Management Clancy

ABSENT:

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Pattacini called the meeting to order at 7:17 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Pattacini.

A.3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of February 28, 2022. Secretary Patterson moved and Mr. Eisenthal seconded the motion.

9/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented eight items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

C.1. Personnel Action

Details had already been provided to the Board members with their agenda.

C.2. Transfer of Funds

- Transfer from Keeney School Administration Contracted Substitutes account to Keeney School Administration General Supplies account in the amount of \$1,500.00
- Transfer from Bentley Alternative Education Iling Middle School Administration Other Purchased Services account to Iling Middle School Administration General Supplies and Materials account in the amount of \$6,000

C.3. Establish an appropriation for the Manchester Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Grant for the FY 22/23 in the amount of \$7,604

C.4. Establish an appropriation for the Manchester Head Start Program Operations Grant for the FY 22/23 in the amount of \$650,245

C.5. Establish an appropriation for the Enfield Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Grant for the FY 22/23 in the amount of \$5,621

C.6. Establish an appropriation for the Enfield Head Start Program Operations Grant for the FY 22/23 in the amount of \$480,615

C.7. Establish an appropriation for the American Rescue Plan (ARP) ESSER Homeless Children and Youth (HCY) II Grant for the FY 21/23 in the amount of \$49,635

C.8. Permission to apply for the ED-244 Adult Education Grant for the FY 22/23 in the amount of \$1,552,228

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Patterson moved and Ms. Stefanovicz seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in the agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Pattacini asked Mr. Geary to speak about the Head Start Grants, specifically Enfield, for those that do not know what they represent, along with item #8, the Adult Education Grant.

Mr. Geary noted that Head Start in Manchester is the fiscal agent for Head Start in Enfield, so all of their funding flows through us. Manchester receives about \$1.3million in funding and Enfield receives just under \$1million.

Regarding the Adult Ed Program, Manchester pays part of the cost and the state pays part, in an approximate 45/55 split.

The vote was called.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Alexandra Hamza hopes everyone has been enjoying the warm weather we have been having recently. With the warmer weather comes the start of Spring sports. Sports such as tennis and track and field have begun.

-Winter sports officially ended with some MHS students on the hockey team that won the state championships. Some Track and Field athletes also had the opportunity to compete at the National Competition as well.

-At Manchester High we strive to celebrate and explore diversity. Last week, members of the Student Equity Advisory Team and other MHS students were able to visit and explore the African American Museum in Boston and learn more about African American and American history.

-A group of MHS freshmen sent out a survey about school lunch last week. Many students are looking for more variety in school food.

-Many events such as Senior Picnic, Junior and Senior Prom, and graduation dates have been given to students. Many people are very excited for the end of the year events.

-Finally, this Thursday, Friday and Saturday, the musical Beauty and the Beast will be playing in the Bailey auditorium at 7pm each day. This is the first musical in three years. Tickets are \$12 and will be available at the door.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, spoke about several articles and books he enjoyed, though due to technical difficulties only those in the room were able to hear his comments.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

F.1. Update on Food Services

Mr. Geary introduced Nick Aldi, Food Service Director, and told the Board that Nick was flexible, thoughtful, and not afraid to take on a challenge. When Covid hit, the food services department was feeding people within days. Nick and his team have gone above and beyond for this community.

Mr. Aldi stated he has had questions about the food service program over the last couple of years. When COVID hit they first used four locations for food pickup (Waddell, Robertson, Verplanck and Bennet). In the first five months of COVID, food services served over 108,000. Mr. Aldi reminded us that in those first months of the pandemic there was a lot of uncertainty with the virus, before masks were common, and the food services staff really stepped up for the community. About 95% of the FS staff live in Manchester and all of them are dedicated to our students.

There have been some concerns about the quality of food. With supply chain issues, it is unknown from day to day if items will be substituted, or delayed. Sometimes the substitution may not travel as well as the original item ordered. One example is that previously pizza in this district was made with 100% mozzarella cheese. With supply issues, it is now a 50/50 split between mozzarella and another cheese, which may not be as appealing visually. Also,

with students having grab and go meals during much of this time, fewer choices are available. As we start to transition back into cafeterias, some of these issues will resolve.

Ms. Mix called the food services staff the heroes of the pandemic and she knows the community appreciated their service.

Mr. Eisenthal echoed Ms. Mix, noting the amount of meals served was impressive. He wondered what the typical number of meals served a year pre-pandemic was. Mr. Aldi estimated that there were 750,000 lunches and about 200,000 breakfasts served. He reminded the Board that Manchester currently qualifies for free meals through the Community Eligibility program so he feels that participation will only increase.

Ms. Stefanovicz thanked Mr. Aldi and his team for providing much needed stability to our students. She thought the survey is a fantastic way to see what students want or dislike. Ms. Stefanovicz wondered if there was a plan for those food items that get thrown away untouched. Mr. Aldi noted that was a challenge because school meals are a regulated program. There is a requirement that students must take a fruit or vegetable, regardless of whether they want it. Mr. Aldi also mentioned that some items need to be refrigerated and may become unstable once on a student's tray. He can talk to the local health department to see what might be done to reclaim food and reduce food waste. Ms. Stefanovicz thought the FRC could use the extra snacks. She also wondered, if a student wants more food, are they required to buy a whole new "meal" or can they purchase a la carte? Mr. Aldi noted that at MHS food is available a la carte.

Mr. Ntem-Mensah commended Mr. Aldi and his team for all the work they are doing. He suggested that Mr. Aldi should look into a way to get recognition for his team for all their hard work. Appreciating people goes a long way.

Mr. Pattacini added his thanks and mentioned that food services had provided the Board members with meal samples so the board could see and taste first hand what our students are being fed.

F.2. Covid Update

Mr. Geary noted that he is no longer doing daily COVID update emails and from March 1-12 Manchester Public Schools had 7 cases. The town currently has under 5/100,000 cases. Mr. Geary informed the Board that students were all sent home with two tests which expire 6/30/22. A vaccine clinic was held March 17th at Verplanck and about 100 people participated. This will be followed by another June 7 for those needing a second or third shot.

Ms. Patterson wondered about the process for securing tests if a family needs them. Mr. Geary stated they could contact the nurse at their child's school and based on symptoms the nurse will provide tests for them to take home.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

G.1. Policy Recommendations

Mr. Geary spoke with the Board's attorneys regarding the controlled substance policy. It seems that the controlled substances list is different at the state and federal level and that is why the policy is so specific. The point is that even if you have a prescription for medical cannabis, you still cannot use it at work.

Secretary Patterson moved for the Board to approve the revisions to the following policies:

- **Policy # 6127 - Graduation Requirements**
- **Policy #2001 - Retention of Electronic Records**
- **Policy 4118 - Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug-free Workplace**
- **Policy 6146.1 - Weighted Grading and Calculation of Grade Point Averages.**

Mr. Eisenthal seconded the motion.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

Chairperson Pattacini thanked the administration as well as the Policy Committee for bringing these policy revisions to the Board.

G.2. Revision to School Calendar

Mr. Geary had hoped the state would allow us some leeway in making up snow days, but they have not. We will attend school for 180 days, the state minimum. That means school will end for all but Illing on Thursday, June 23rd and Illing will end the following day (to make up for a day they were closed due to staff shortages during Covid). The last week of school will run at an emergency dismissal time with MHS dismissing at 11:00, the two middle schools at 11:45 and elementary schools ending at 12:30.

Ms. Stefanovicz wondered about our normal approach to snow days. Mr. Geary noted if we were to go past a certain day (this year being June 24) we would typically pull from April break, which we never want to do. We tried to look at starting school before Labor Day, but the construction crews and maintenance staff will need that last weekend to finish projects, move in staff and unpack prior to the first day of school for students.

Secretary Patterson moved for the Board of Education to approve the revised 21-22 school calendar. Ms. Mix seconded the motion.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Policy Recommendations

The Policy Committee brought to the Board policy changes for four policies this evening: Student Privacy (PPRA), Attendance, Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism, Drug and Alcohol Use by Students, and Chemical Health for Student Athletes.

Mr. Pattacini reminded us this is a first reading and uncontested items will come back for a vote at the next meeting.

Mr. Geary noted all the changes were driven by legislative changes. When legislation changes our attorneys at Shipman and Goodwin recommend policy changes.

- a. Student Privacy - has to do with consent for surveys, giving parents the option to opt-out for their student.
- b. Attendance, Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism - adds two wellness days excused absences for students, though their absences still count toward chronic absenteeism as do all absences.
- c. Drug & Alcohol Use by Students - clarifies that marijuana use should not result in a greater punishment than alcohol use does.
- d. Chemical Health for Student Athletes - also has the same marijuana/alcohol rule.

Mr. Eisenthal asked if the state has a plan for chronic absenteeism intervention. Mr. Geary stated they have multiple plans at the state level and he will clarify the latest, which he believes to be The Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP).

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, supports the Consent Calendar. He also supports the revisions to the policies. Mr. Stringfellow warned us about huffing and vaping and notes they can cause brain damage and kids are finding ways to get around the rules. He also mentioned both domestic and dating violence. Mr. Stringfellow enjoyed Mr. Aldi's presentation and he hopes the state will visit Manchester and see our program and all the other good things happening in Manchester.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Eisenthal recently attended a PTA meeting at Buckley (currently housed in the Robertson building). Principal Ann Johnston gave a tour of the school, which he enjoyed. The 4th grade class is hosting a fundraiser at Silk City Coffee, March 25th from 1:00-6:00 pm for a graduation event.

Mr. Pattacini noticed during the Pledge this evening, a poster for a fundraiser happening Friday at MHS - a pajama day to benefit the Ukraine people. He is pleased to see that our students are socially aware and supporting people around the globe.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

*****Wednesday, March 23, 2022 - Board of Directors 2nd Budget Workshop**

5:30 pm - Lincoln Center***

Monday, March 28, 2022	Update on Humanities / STEM 5-12
Monday, April 25, 2022	Update on Technology
Monday, May 9, 2022	Manchester Preschool Center Update

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Patterson moved and Mr. Ntem-Mensah seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

9/0 - Voted in favor. Adjournment 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Patterson, Board Secretary