

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Special Meeting

March 30, 2020

Lincoln Center/Virtual Participation

PRESENT: Gundersen, Heinrich, Hughes, Meggers, Pattacini, Patterson, Scappaticci, Stefanovicz, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & Special Services Radikas, Director of Finance & Management Clancy, Director of Human Resources Sone-Moyano

ABSENT:

A. OPENING

A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Thames called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Thames.

A.3. Secretary's Welcome

Mr. Pattacini stated that as Secretary of the Board of Education, he wished to welcome the online viewers to this special meeting of the Board of Education. Mr. Geary and Mr. Thames are present at Lincoln Center, but everyone else is participating from their own residences. He looks forward to hearing the update from the Superintendent this evening. As there will be no public speaking this evening, please direct any questions or comments to the Superintendent. Mr. Pattacini thanked the public for their interest in this evening's meeting and the Manchester Public Schools.

A.4. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of March 9, 2020. Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Scappaticci seconded the motion.

9/0 – Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented three 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 Bennet Academy School Administration Printing & Advertising account to Bennet Academy School Administration General Supplies & Materials account in the amount of \$2,500.
- Transfer from Illing Middle School Family & Consumer Science Repairs account to Illing Middle School Family & Consumer Science Instructional Supplies & Materials account in the amount of \$243.
- Transfer from Buildings & Grounds Maintenance Data Bases account to Buildings & Grounds Software Licenses & Fees account in the amount of \$13,750.

C.3. Approval to donate \$1,000 to MHS Project Graduation for the 2019-2020 School Year

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Ms. Patterson seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in this evening's agenda.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

None.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Unavailable.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART I

F.1. Update on Interim Learning Opportunities

Mr. Geary gave an update on the current situation. You may view his presentation online in full. Mr. Geary reviewed that on March 12th the decision was made to close schools effective March 16 for approximately 2 weeks, initially with the intention to make up those school days in June. Soon it was realized that we would need to remain out of schools for longer and the Governor waived the 180 day requirement for students, which allowed greater flexibility. At this point in time, the schools are closed until at least April 20th and may need to be closed longer than that.

A Core Planning Team was assembled quickly, comprised of teachers, administrators, union representatives and other staff and their first meeting was held on March 18th with the goal to ensure the continuity of learning for our students. The original intention was for a mix of hard copy and online experiences. With staff, parents and kids home or possibly balancing work, this plan had to be flexible and a partnership between school and family.

Teachers began calling parents on March 19th to assess their technology access and 92% of parents were reached. Administrators attempted to contact the remaining 550 families and were able to reach 350 of them. It is thought that at least some of the remaining 200 families are no longer in town.

Lead planners were identified in each subject area (i.e., Director of Teaching & Learning, coaches, admin etc.) to design the content of the on-line curriculum.

Wednesday teachers were exposed to their learning plans and they are there to facilitate the lessons, not create them.

Legal counsel says online groups for special education services are encouraged during this time. The 504/special education language guidance from the federal level is to do the best we can.

EL teachers, tutors, STEM specialists, and Math Interventionists will be assigned as teachers to Google classrooms where they have students they support. Music, Art, PE, STEM and electives will all have Google classrooms.

Parents can sign in as their student or through the app to see what the classroom looks like. Approximately 2600 ChromeBooks were given to students last week and we have about 300 left. We are ordering 250 more (approximate cost \$50,000) to be used primarily as replacements if there are issues. The Dalio Foundation is providing more for MHS. More ChromeBooks will be handed out March 31st at Illing (tomorrow).

Not all families in town have internet access or enough access. Many of the current "deals" on internet service have restrictions that mean not all families in need qualify for a deal or free trial. We have ordered 300 hotspots to support these families. The cost is about \$42,000 and until they arrive those families will be provided paper packets of work.

Students in Pre-K are expected to participate in learning activities for about 1.5 hours a day; grades K-4 students will do 3 to 3.5 hours; and students in grades 5-12 should be working for 4 hours a day Monday through Friday. Art, music, PE and STEM will provide activities twice a week PK-8. Students in grades 9-12 will participate in electives as scheduled. Staff are expected to work 9-3 and will have a one hour time slot (which may not fall in the 9-3 workday if needed) for office hours daily. These guidelines were communicated to teachers and students. Virtual and phone contact is important.

Attendance will be taken on Tuesdays for students who have participated Monday and Tuesday. That leaves Wednesday, Thursday and Friday for following up with families whose child has not been attending virtual school.

Meals will continue to be served at Bennet, Waddell, MMA and Squire Village. Dinner was added this week as well as breakfast and lunch. The week of 3/16 approximately 2506 meals were served and the week of 3/23 that rose to 4906. We are utilizing a curbside pickup at this time.

Communication has been through One Manchester and daily emails. The Core Team meets daily as well as the administrators. People needing tech support can call 86-682-0607 or email infosyst@mpspride.org. For other support please email support@mpspride.org or call 860-647-5041.

Standardized testing has been waived by the state so no further summative standardized academic testing will be done this year. Grade 11 students typically partake in SAT day and we are working with the College Board to allow testing at no cost at a later time. The AP test will still happen in May, online from home.

Tips and information on dealing with stress has been communicated. Administrators were also asked to check in with all their staff by phone.

All staff will continue to be paid during this time and their workload will increase now that interim learning has begun. Non-certified staff were surveyed to see what they are comfortable with and the roles document was sent out. Adult Ed is going through a similar process.

Shortly some supplies and materials will be sent home, including some 500 Pearson workbooks, writing journals and some other items.

We are reviewing the contracts with the bus company and magnet schools. The federal relief package is also being reviewed.

Extra-curricular clubs, such as chess club, will soon have virtual classrooms as well. Junior Prom is scheduled for May 1st and the Illing DC trip for the end of May and decisions on those activities will be made shortly.

The budget impact for the 19-20 school year is being reviewed. There is some savings to be gained in transportation, magnet schools and sub services. There are also costs associated with interim learning opportunities. We also need to keep in mind that we do not want the bus company and other contractors to go out of business.

For the 20-21 budget we are looking at the state and national situation. The General Manager has asked us to look at possible reductions to our budget and provide a list of potential cuts. Administration is working on this.

Summer learning is on hold at this point, though is possible. We do not know when we will be able to return to the buildings.

Mr. Meggers applauded how well Mr. Geary has been handling this situation. People in the community have expressed how impressed they are and how well the plan has been communicated. Mr. Meggers wanted to point out that we need to remember some people are losing their jobs during this time, so things like providing meals is a necessity for some. He wondered how families might qualify for a hotspot. Mr. Geary noted that when families were called about their access to technology a list was started with issues. Many of those issues have been resolved, but the list is ongoing. Mr. Meggers also wanted to point out that teachers are working very hard from home and Mr. Geary agreed, noting most teachers would rather be in their classrooms teaching. Mr. Geary also pointed out that the meals being provided are being federally funded and are reimbursable and not impacting our budget.

Mr. Gundersen appreciates all the work that has been done. He wondered if there are any plans to furlough workers, or even hire more at this point. Mr. Geary noted all employees have been retained and he does not plan to furlough anyone. He noted that there is a possibility of hiring interpreters if we cannot find staff within our district to assist with a few languages. Mr. Geary reviewed

that custodians are currently starting on their summer cleaning. Paras and tutors will filter into classrooms soon. Security guards have been helping with meals and handing out Chromebooks.

Mr. Gundersen wondered if there was an opportunity to do any repairs to buildings or put them into dormancy to save funds. Mr. Geary noted that currently the buildings are being cleaned and staff, in a limited fashion, have been entering spaces to get supplies they didn't know they would need when we left. After that access to buildings will be very limited. Summer deep cleaning may commence and small capital projects such as painting may also be undertaken. They are also reviewing possible savings in utilities.

Mr. Gundersen also asked what art and music looks like. Mr. Geary noted that music, art, PE and STEM all have google classrooms and will post assignments twice a week. Those that have instruments at school will be getting those in the next week or so. Mr. Geary reviewed his own child's classroom and invited Board members to a class so they can see first hand what they look like.

Mr. Pattacini thanked Mr. Geary and the staff for their work and efforts to support remote learning. He wondered about any feedback from the state. Mr. Geary noted he participates in conference calls with the Governor and Commissioner around education items. They are working on answers regarding contracts, special education costs, etc. We are waiting on state guidance. Mr. Pattacini told Mr. Geary if there is anything the Board can do to lend assistance to let them know.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

H.1. Policy Recommendation - Credit for Interim Learning Opportunities

Mr. Geary reviewed that this was a first reading of this policy, which allows for credit for Interim Learning Opportunities based on performance. He explained that CAPS is paying Shipman to advise on this policy.

H.2. Revision to the Board of Education Meeting Schedule

Mr. Geary reviewed that the March 23rd Board meeting was replaced with a community update and this evening's special meeting was scheduled. He recommends cancelling the April 6th Board meeting, as it is only a week away. He further recommends that future meetings be held in the same fashion as this evening's meeting, through GOTOMEETING, until buildings reopen. Subcommittees will also have virtual meetings.

Secretary Pattacini moved to cancel the Board of Education meeting scheduled for April 6, 2020 and to hold all future Board of Education meetings using GOTOMEETING until school buildings reopen. Ms. Patterson seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Thames asked about the video presentation last week. Mr. Geary reviewed it was a Q&A with Ms. Latasha Turnquest. He answered prewritten questions for the public and the interview was posted online. He noted that he may do more of these interviews in weeks when we do not have a Board meeting.

The vote was called.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

H.3. Revision to the 2019-2020 School Calendar

Mr. Geary suggested that we eliminate April break this year, since students are just starting interim learning. As nobody will be traveling during this time, he feels it makes more sense to continue the learning at home. He also noted that ending school on the original end date of June 15 aligns with teachers working 187 contracted days. Mr. Geary reviewed that we had 2 snow days earlier in the year and teachers had 3 days off this month before they began calling parents. Those 5 days would be effectively made up by skipping April break.

Secretary Pattacini moved to eliminate the April break for the 2019-2020 School Year and to close school on June 15, 2020. Ms. Stefanovicz seconded the motion.

DISCUSSIONS:

Mr. Thames asked if the union is okay with this plan. Mr. Geary reviewed union representatives have been at the table for all planning and they have been flexible and collaborative. They are also part of the Core Planning Team and support this plan.

Mr. Thames asked if there would be a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) regarding this. Mr. Geary explained there would not be a need for this for the teacher's union because teachers will still be working their contracted 187 days. He further explained there will be MOUs for the other bargaining units.

The vote was called.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

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

J. COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Thames thanked students and parents for their willingness and courage during this virtual learning experience. He encouraged everyone to remain inside and safe.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Monday, April 6, 2020 - cancelled

Monday, April 20, 2020 - Virtual Meeting - Agenda TBD

Wednesday, May 6, 2020 - Budget Workshop

Monday, May 11, 2020 - Agenda TBD

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Pattacini moved and Ms. Stefanovicz seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary