

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION**Regular Meeting
November 9, 2020
Lincoln Center/Virtual Meeting**

PRESENT: Gundersen, Heinrich, Hughes, Luna, Meggers, Pattacini, Patterson, Scappaticci (last meeting), 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: None.

A. OPENING**A.1. & 2. Meeting Called to Order**

Mr. Geary called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. as this is the operational meeting for the Board of Education. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led virtually by Mr. Geary.

A.3. Recognition of Board Member

Mr. Geary recalled that Jason Scappaticci has been on the Board for Mr. Geary's entire time as Superintendent. He appreciates all the work Mr. Scappaticci has done on behalf of the students in Manchester and the support he has shown the Superintendent.

The entire board took time to thank Mr. Scappaticci for his time making the district more successful and focusing on student needs. His banter made otherwise dry meetings lively and exciting and he will be missed by the entire board.

Mr. Scappaticci took time to reflect on his relationships during his time on the Board and thanked each one of his colleagues for their own dedication to being part of a bipartisan board. He also thanked the administration for their drive to do what is right by the students.

Mr. Scappaticci is pursuing his doctorate in higher education and we wish the 1999 winner of Mr. MHS the best in his pursuits.

A.4. Introduction of New Board Member

Mr. Geary welcomed Emily Luna to the Board. Ms. Luna is a 2017 graduate of UCONN and currently acts as the Director of Scheduling for the office of Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz. Mr. Geary noted that Ms. Luna was sworn in last fall after the election, but her term did not start until this month.

A.5. Election of New Board Chair and Board Secretary

Mr. Heinrich nominated Darryl Thames to continue his role as Board Chair. Mr. Heinrich feels Mr. Thames has been doing a phenomenal job and has shown great leadership. Mr. Meggers seconded the nomination.

9/0 - Voted in favor. Mr. Thames assumed control of the gavel and thanked everyone for their support.

Ms. Patterson nominated Christopher Pattacini for Secretary of the Board, noting he is the epitome of a Board Member and his passion shines through. Mr. Meggers seconded the nomination.

9/0 - Voted in favor. Mr. Pattacini thanked the Board for their support and looks forward to improving the school district.

Mr. Thames asked for a moment of silence in memory of Sgt. Stephen Bresciano of the Manchester Police Department, who lost his battle with pancreatic cancer recently. Sgt. Bresciano was dedicated to his family and to

serving Manchester and deep condolences were offered to his family and the Manchester Police Department.

A.6. Reaffirmation of Board of Education Bylaws

Secretary Pattacini moved for the Board to reaffirm the Board of Education bylaws. Ms. Stefanovicz seconded the motion.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

A.7. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

APPROVED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of October 14, 2020. Secretary Pattacini moved and Ms. Stefanovicz seconded the motion.

8/0/1 - Voted in favor.

B. COMMITTEE REPORTS

B.1. Curriculum & Instruction Committee

Mr. Gundersen reported that the last meeting was held October 14, 2020 with the following in attendance: Mark Gundersen, Peter Meggers, Amy Radikas, Diane Burns, Pari Ghetia, Beth Hayes, Josh Steffenson, and Tracy Ariel (MCC).

MHS/MCC Manufacturing Update: Josh Steffenson, Assistant Principal at Manchester High School (STEM admin), Beth Hayes, Manchester's Supervisor of Career and Technical Education/Business Partnerships, and Tracy Ariel, Director of Manufacturing at Manchester Community College (MCC) provided an update of new course offerings at MHS. New courses included: Manufacturing, UConn - Allied Health Professional, and CNA/EMT certification. Partnership with MCC allows MHS students course offerings and pathways for authentic, engaging learning experiences while simultaneously fulfilling graduation requirements and preparing students for post high school opportunities. Federal funds through

Carl D. Perkins grant are used to support these opportunities and some items in the new manufacturing room at MHS.

Curriculum and Instruction Update: Diane Sheehan-Burns and Pari Ghetia, Directors of Teaching & Learning, gave an update on teaching and learning in the pandemic, including but not limited to, teaching through technology, connecting with students and families, engaging students on and off the screen, pacing of curriculum implementation in remote/hybrid experiences and reflecting upon shifts in systems, structures and strategies we may consider keeping to support teaching and learning.

B.2. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee

Ms. Patterson reported the last meeting was held virtually on October 21, 2020. In attendance were Committee members Peter Meggers, Tracy Patterson and Darryl Thames Sr. Also present were Diane Clare-Kearney, Matt Geary and Sophia Krisch.

The members reviewed the Board of Education resolution on Promoting Equity and Antiracism. Dr. Clare-Kearney, Director of Equity and Adult Education, gave an overview of the district equity work to date. Below are some key priorities:

- Create a strategic plan to promote a culture of anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion.
- Establish and facilitate a district-wide Equity Leadership Team, composed of administrators, teachers, support staff, students, parents, and community members.
- Strengthen school based Equity Leadership Teams.
- Engage all staff in professional learning related to cultural competence, anti-bias training and conversations about race.
- Identify community partners and develop a collaborative body to engage in community conversations that will lead to systemic improvements.
- Center student voices in matters related to anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion.

Mr. Meggers expressed that we should put an emphasis on parental communication. Programming or professional development that engages parents in conversations around race to get them talking and to get them comfortable without being judged would be good.

Ms. Patterson echoed the same thoughts. She suggested that perhaps we can connect with families through zoom or google meets, or provide resources and/or videos about racial equity to help parents get comfortable and to inform.

Mr. Thames said he would like some time to reflect on what he thinks an actionable step should be. He is concerned about the perceptions and the messages that are being conveyed politically.

Mr. Geary shared that future meetings will include community organizations who have an interest in racial equity work. This meeting was organizational to brainstorm thoughts and ideas from Board members about what the goal and focus of the committee will be.

C. CONSENT CALENDAR

Mr. Geary presented 10 items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

C.1. Personnel Action

Details were provided to Board Members in their packet.

C.2. Transfer of Funds

- **Transfer from System-wide Plant Maintenance Capital Repair account to System-wide Plant Maintenance Contracted Services account in the amount of \$2,911**
- **Transfer from System-wide Language Arts Contracted Substitutes account to System-wide Language Arts Instructional Supplies & Materials account in the amount of \$4,470**
- **Transfer from Manchester High School Classroom Instruction - Other Purchased Services account to Manchester High School School Administration Dues & Fees account in the amount of \$2,820.00**
- **Transfer from System-wide Science Contracted Substitutes account to System-wide Science Consultants account in the amount of \$20,000.00**

C.3. Permission to Apply for the Manchester Head Start Services Grant for the FY 20/21 in the amount of \$145,127

C.4. Permission to Apply for the Enfield Head Start Innovative Enhancement Grant for the FY 20/21 in the amount of \$100,000

C.5. Establish an appropriation for the Title I, Part A - Improving Basic Programs Grant for the FY 20/22 in the amount of \$2,072,452

C.6. Establish an appropriation for the Title II, Part A - Supporting Effective Instruction Grant for the FY 20/22 in the amount of \$259,222

C.7. Establish an appropriation for the Bilingual Grant for the FY20/21 in the amount of \$11,367

C.8. Establish an appropriation for the Adult Education - Program Enhancement Project (PEP) Grant for the FY20/21 in the amount of \$40,000

C.9. Establish an appropriation for the General Improvements to Alliance Districts' School Buildings Grant Program for the FY 20/22 in the amount of \$1,079,152

C.10 Permission to Participate in Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) Trial Membership (reduced rate)

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Thames noted that our district used to belong to CABE, but as priorities changed over the last few years we have not continued that membership. Currently, CABE is offering a 50% discount and he has formed a closer relationship with CABE as chairperson. About 90% of Connecticut school districts are members of CABE.

The Chairman called for a motion.

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

9/0 - Voted in favor.

D. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

None.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Brian Gerrity, 87 Greenwood Drive, has three students attending Manchester schools in elementary, middle and high school. He recently attended virtual open houses and he knows teaching and learning is challenging during these times and health and safety is important. He is concerned with the kind of evaluations that are happening as we move through the school year in a remote setting. He feels there is a lot less instruction happening and the student workload is less. One example is for one of his children the math course used to cover 8 units and it now covers 6 units. He is concerned with when the students will catch up. He hopes we will evaluate this early and not wait until next year to address the shortfall.

Mr. Thames replied that we understand the concerns and we are actively trying our best to educate our students safely. There are some parents that advocate for full time, in-person schooling and those that are opposed to returning to the buildings at all at this time.

F. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

F.1. Update on Human Resources

Mr. Geary introduced Sinthia Sone-Moyano, Director of Human Resources, who along with Cindy Martinez gave a presentation. You can view the presentation online.

The Relay Program currently has five non-certified staff participating. While the goal was ten, it is a good start. Ms. Sone-Moyano thanked the Board for

allocating the funds for this program in the budget and she is starting to develop more partnerships for different routes to certification.

Ms. Patterson thanked the ladies for their presentation and noted she is a big believer in seeing results first hand. The testimony of those participating in the program was powerful. The fact that some are MHS alumni speaks to the community and environment in Manchester.

Mr. Thames asked for clarity about the number of participants. Ms. Sone-Moyano noted her goal was to have 10 participants. In the Spring they started the process with 7 people and ultimately 5 started the program over the summer. They currently teach and attend classes and the district is supporting them with instructional coaches to help. They also meet weekly with a resident advisor for 1 on 1 guidance. Administrators in buildings that have a Relay teacher also meet monthly with HR. Mr. Thames commended Ms. Sone-Moyano and Ms. Martinez for their efforts in bringing this program from nothing to something.

F.2. Update on COVID-19

Mr. Geary noted the three colored levels the state uses to indicate COVID cases are yellow, orange and red. We were in yellow for much of the time, however Manchester is currently in the orange level, along with most of the state. The state has rolled back to Phase 2 in many cases. Red happens when we have 15 cases per 100,000 people a day and we are currently at 14.1 in Manchester. The Governor is working diligently to keep schools open as much as possible.

However, Mr. Geary noted that sometimes, when enough staff are undergoing quarantine due to exposure, there is not enough physical staff present to run a building safely. There is also a nationwide substitute shortage. That situation happened with Bennet recently. The first step was to put a hold on childcare to reallocate those staff members to classrooms. However, the next case at Bennet necessitated making the entire school move to remote learning for nearly 2 weeks. They return to the building next Monday, November 16.

Elementary schools returned to full time with a modified schedule of 9:10-2:10 and that seems to be going well with class sizes capped at 14 students.

Mr. Geary noted that he has seen an influx of parents opting to move their children to remote learning based on community spread. He noted that there has been minimal spread across cohorts in schools.

The fall sports statewide were successful with soccer, swimming, x-country, volleyball and football with modifications in place. Winter sports are being evaluated for modifications and state guidance is pending. The CIAC is working with the Department of Public Health and we will see what they suggest for winter sports, including swimming, wrestling, basketball and indoor track.

One concern is travel over the holiday season and the potential for increased exposure to COVID. Anyone infected and those who are in close contact with an infected person must quarantine for 14 days and you cannot test out of quarantine.

Parents were surveyed regarding the hybrid 5-12 program and parents were on both sides of the issue. We have prioritized standards and the state has also provided guidance on this. We simply cannot do 100% of what we have done in the past.

Last, Mr. Geary mentioned that some schools are looking at rapid testing for COVID, however he notes that we cannot test out of quarantine regardless.

Mr. Gundersen thanked Mr. Geary for the comprehensive update and wondered the plan if the state moves to red. Mr. Geary hopes that is not going to happen and he does not expect a situation like in the spring when we were in total lockdown. The tipping point will be the impact of the community spread and if too many staff are in quarantine then the last option is to move to a remote learning situation temporarily, as was done with Bennet. Mr. Geary noted that people need to curtail their exposure/activities if they want to insure that schools stay open.

Ms. Luna wondered what we are doing about holiday travel out of state. Mr. Geary noted we will have clear communication with parents and staff about the rules. The big concern is that this time of year we often gather with friends and family we do not usually see and that will impact us regardless of where that occurs. Luckily, so far parents have been open and honest with us about suspected positive cases and we have reacted swiftly.

Mr. Thames wondered how the K-4 parents are feeling with the return to a full time schedule. Mr. Geary noted the vast majority of parents are very excited. We will wait a couple of weeks to formally ask them for feedback. Mr. Geary noted that all mitigating strategies are still in place (ie masks, social distancing, etc.)

Mr. Meggers wondered how our teachers and staff are holding up. Mr. Geary noted that stress levels are high with worry about getting sick, having to learn new technology, and trying to connect with their students remotely. We are trying to help people manage their stress. Students are not feeling the full effect of that stress. We are seeing students work and staff focused, warm and caring. Staff are doing a good job keeping it together. Mr. Meggers noted we have to be patient during these times. Mr. Geary agreed, noting that it is hard for perfectionist teachers to teach remotely.

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

H. NEW BUSINESS

None.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, spoke about NPR radio having the Commissioner of Education as a guest. He mentioned the *Hartford Courant* article recently on homeless students, as well as an article on agoraphobia. He noted that lawsuits regarding mask requirements have been dismissed. Mr. Stringfellow noted that we are coming up on 30 years since the 1990 Disability Act. He also mentioned Native American History Month and recommended a book *History of the US* for children.

Mr. Stringfellow mentioned the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII as well as it being 80 years since the Battle of Britain. He is mindful of veterans around today. Mr. Stringfellow mentioned Earth Day and climate change and suggested two books for students, *Who is Greta Thunberg* and *Who is Rachel Carson*.

J. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

November 18 - Update on STEAM and Humanities

December 14 - Fall Data Update

January 11 - Budget Presentation

L. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thames called for a motion to adjourn.

Secretary Pattacini moved and Mr. Gundersen seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

9/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 9:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary