

Blackstone-Millville Regional District School Committee
Minutes of Virtual Meeting
October 8, 2020
6:00 p.m.

Introduction of Members:

Jane C Reggio, Chairperson
Erin P. Vinacco, Vice Chairperson
Caryn D. Vernon, District Treasurer
Tara L. Larkin, District Secretary
Sarah E. Williams, Member
Keri Gaudette, Member
Tammy A. Lemieux, Member
Jack R. Keefe, Member

Also in attendance were Jason DeFalco, EdD, Superintendent of Schools, Matthew J. Ehrenworth, Assistant Superintendent of Schools and Karen Young, Lead Nurse.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Gaudette and unanimously voted to approve Consent Agenda A which includes Minutes of Meeting of September 24, 2020 and Warrants.

Regional Agreement update Sara Williams -

Last Saturday they had the Millville Special Town meeting and it was nearly unanimous in affirming the Regional Agreement. Blackstone set its date for their Special Town meeting on Saturday, November 14th @ 10:00 a.m. at the high school.

Dr. DeFalco negotiated with Unit A for adjustments to their contract.. He is asking the Committee to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with Unit A.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Larkin and unanimously voted to approve the recent Memorandum of Understanding with Unit A.

Dr. DeFalco thanks the team that helped to get this done. They spent many hours on this. He thanks the Unit A leadership.

Mrs. Lemieux - the district is responsible to carry it out - are we in good shape with this to comply with Section C?

Mr. Ehrenworth stated as of right now we are in very good shape and have what we need to comply with Section C.

The work on the HVAC system has been a priority. Maximum circulation of fresh air is happening. The HVAC duct work at HS is still in progress. All air quality tests done came back good.

Karen Young stated the nurses distribute the masks and gloves and the custodians distribute the cleaning supplies.

All members approved the MOA with Unit A.

Title IV stipend -

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Vinacco, seconded by Mrs. Lemieux and unanimously voted to approve Title IV 504 Coordinator stipend positions in the District.

Dr. DeFalco - they want the clinical side of the staff to take on the work. \$35 per hour for time outside of the school day. It is about 2 hours to take a process from start to finish per case. Dr. Laporte is the District Coordinator and they can go to her if need be. The stipend is per coordinator.

All Committee members are in favor of the 504 coordinator positions.

Superintendent Goals -

Dr. DeFalco thanked Mrs. Vinacco for her support and energy on his goals.

What, how, the whole child and community for improved outcomes for students are the four areas they will continue to focus on for his goals.

Last year they did a pilot on the new MA Super Evaluation System.

They will not be focused on 36 indicators and look at key points where he needs to put his focus.

What makes the most sense at this current time and where they want to move toward.

Instructional Leadership - Student Engagement and Meeting Diversity.

Management and Operations - Ensuring Social emotional well being and health and safety of staff and students.

Family and Community - student and family support - they continue to shift and adjust as they go. Can't get too comfortable in one area because things are always changing.

Professional Culture - regardless of the situation we are in we must stay committed to high standards. He needs to be sure they are navigating safely and effectively this year. A significantly collaborative effort with many different groups.

He will send these goals out to everyone tomorrow and post it on the website as well.

District Improvement Goal Curriculum and Instruction - Implementation of our new literacy program. Great to see staff and students interacting with our new literacy program. The staff are using the platform and the materials. Big thank you to the Committee and staff.

Mathematics is up for curriculum renewal this year. You will see something different than you saw with Science and Literacy. With Math we are looking at an approach that could span between 18 months - 2 years. There are limitations that will be put on the program they want to use. We have a core program in place. They are doing a full audit and self study. Get a deep and broad sense of what they are using of the resources that they already have. This will be done using the John Hopkins study in the spring.

They will have a K-12 Math curriculum review Committee for this. By the end of next year they should have a program or stick with what they have and supplement it. He wants to get the review committee in front of the School Committee more often.

Mrs Reggio - there is a tremendous amount of work and effort that goes into this. It is helpful to see the process in action.

Instruction- the work they continued last year is picked up on the work with Focus Schools. They are taking a large document and looking at what the 2 or 3 things they need to focus on are in each area. Also develop the P.D. that needs to go along with this. Teachers sitting together and looking at students work through a certain lens and what they should do or keep doing to get the results they want to get. We deliver a product to students and set certain expectations but they must analyze the student work to be sure they are getting the product they need to get.

Equity - Remains a frequently discussed topic from students to faculty to parents. They have set tight goals around this. They have made 2 commitments. Make time to discuss equity at all leadership meetings. They need to hold each other accountable when discussing topics that are not necessarily comfortable to talk about. Continue to challenge our thinking. This is not looked at on a side issue. See it as an opportunity to build a sense of empathy and perspective.

He understands that it can cause tension and discomfort but he feels they need to lean into it.

They will be doing training to put supports in place for all of us. We want to provide an equitable opportunity for all of our children.

Fiscal Management - FY22 budget preparation timeline has been laid out already.

Need a goal for FY21 budget cycle. It has been a wildcard. They had to reopen with all of the provisions they needed and look at Covid relief state grants. Mr. Ehrenworth has been focused and put together a document to give all a deep sense of where we are with our FY21 budget.

The State may need to take broad and deep cuts to close the revenue gap.

Student Learning Goal - looks different this year and anchored with Stars. They could not do a student learning goal and evaluation last spring because it was anchored in MCAS.

Feels strongly that if we are doing the work right he still needs a student learning goal for the school system. It is the work measured by Stars. At the end of the school year the Committee can take a look at the results and decide where to move the needle on learning.

Mrs. Lemieux - she appreciates the approach that is described today. She is a firm believer that what we are doing is good stuff. We do not necessarily have to get a new program because the other one is considered old. When you use a curriculum consistently with fidelity it is just a tweak and an addition that can be used with fidelity that helps students learn instead of starting from scratch. Examine the strengths and weaknesses of our current program.

Mrs. Reggio - there is a lot just put out there and given the shift change and adjustments we may need to do she is concerned there is too much on Dr. DeFalco's plate.

Mrs. Vinacco said that Dr. DeFalco's professional practice goal encompasses the entire year.

Dr. DeFalco stated that the mid year data should be here somewhere in January or February and move the mid-cycle back by one month.

Everyone will be taking Stars remotely.

Book study - The Committee read and studied White Fragility this summer. They have already had in depth conversations around this book.

Mrs. Vinacco - stated all students means all students. All students are included in the student learning goal.

Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Larkin, seconded by Mrs. Lemieux and unanimously voted to approve the Superintendent goals as reviewed.

Dr. DeFalco - **grades 4 and 5 hybrid**. Needed work on remote days. They reset the program and they will be assigning a homeroom and will be live streaming. When students are home on remote days they will be zooming into the actual classroom. It will be the full school day.

They are working on the infrastructures for this program. It will start on October 19th.

They are looking at the models they have, getting feedback and fixing it if necessary.

Mrs. Reggio stated each student will be assigned to a class with a teacher whether they are in person or at home. The delay in starting is so that teachers can get practice and get ready so when they start on the 19th your student will have his or her teacher and parents can reach out to them regarding subjects for that grade level.

Mrs. Gaudette - there is talk that one virtual 7th grade science class is being taught by one teacher on that day with 40 or 50 students.

Dr. DeFalco spoke with Ms. Curt and there is no virtual classroom that has close to 50 kids. He will get a specific number on how many are in this classroom. There are 2 teachers assigned to the virtual space due to larger numbers. He is not sure if there is a bottleneck in this classroom and will find out if this is the case.

Mrs. Reggio stated that when the kids are in school they will be in smaller groups and when remote the 2 sections will be together. It should be 32 when they are remote. They are not doing labs when remote. They did speak on the two would come to one on remote.

Mrs. Lemieux feels it should be brought out in the other classes if this is the case. If it's not happening anywhere else then it should be fixable. She feels that 40 people in one meeting is difficult regardless of the fact that there may not be 50 people in this remote class.

Dr. DeFalco doesn't know if it is the grade 7 and 8 split team.

Mrs. Gaudette's daughter is in the class. There is always a teacher and one other staff member in the class. This teacher only does remote. She has 7th and 8th grade. She feels the chat questions are being answered.

Health and Safety - Karen Young Lead Nurse

People are following protocols. They have addressed social distancing at the high school. There have been 126 students and staff that have been dismissed or absent for Covid reasons which include being symptomatic, close contact, travel or a sibling of a symptomatic student. The grade with the largest number of students absent is Kindergarten. Typically testing is taking 1-3 days to get the results back. We have one positive case in the system only. The positive case had no school contact within 48 hours of being tested.

Mrs. Reggio clearly states they will never release if someone tested positive for Covid and asks that rumors not get generated. She asks for kindness, patience and consideration that they are telling them what they legally can tell them.

Mrs. Vinacco - Is there easier access for students and staff to get tested?

Mrs. Young recommends contacting your healthcare provider and they will arrange testing. They can also go to Urgent Care, Walgreens or CVS. There does not seem to be a big lag time between when the symptoms arise and when they are tested.

Mr. Ehrenworth

CoronaVirus update on finances -

There were funds released during the summer and we received \$142,000 from a grant to spend.

Planning and running return and recovery team - \$30,000

Preparation Materials - \$82,000

Continued activities of staff and maintaining services and employment - \$20,000

School leadership resources - \$10,000

Remote learning technology - awarded \$80,000 for this grant. Took \$14,000 for the hot spots they ordered and distributed. \$66,000 allocated to chrome book leases. Looking to go 1 to 1 but with this they can support the one to one initiative and expand it also. K-12 have access to the devices in their home. They wrote for this grant and were awarded it.

\$225 per student grant from Coronavirus relief fund. How to get kids back safely through hybrid or remote model. Took additional faculty. They have 18 assistant teachers through a grant and can spend \$178,000 on them. Total grant is for \$383,000. One additional counselor at this point for \$31,500. One additional nurse for each building for \$75,000. It is also funding having the lead nurse and replacing her high school position while she is lead nurse. \$31,890. Part time custodians during peak hours \$31,680. SRO's added to the budget \$10,080. Boys and Girls Club rental to use their space at \$24,000 for the year.

We are nowhere near expending all of the funds just yet and through the next few months these numbers will change.

The money it will cost to start school and continue this pattern of instruction through December 30th.

What happens after this?

What are the costs they need to continue and maintain the hybrid model? Identified a number of areas they could have savings.

They have ELA curriculum budgeted for and allocated FY20 funds for this. They have savings from this. They are receiving \$100,000 from the Towns to support the assistant teacher positions.

There have been a minimum of savings with respect to faculty turnover. Leadership development savings also. Holding off on Assistant Principal position at the Complex. They can save \$562,000 from these areas that could offset the cost of running this program for the duration of the school year.

Many of these positions are paid by the days they work.

There are some savings in the sub lines for teaching at almost \$40,000.

Mrs. Young stated there are less numbers in the nurse's office but they are busy with making phone calls to families and medication distribution, etc. The LPN's are helping out at the Boys and Girls Club. There needs to be someone with the students in the medical waiting room.

Mrs. Reggio stated that you need to isolate the nurses given the different situations. They need to be ready and available in each school. You can't be two places at one time.

The SRO officers have been extremely helpful with the kids and making them feel more comfortable returning to the District. Patterns have been established and Mr. Ehrenworth doesn't feel they need as many for the remainder of the school year.

Dr. DeFalco stated the response from our Towns has been remarkable. Chief Landry was at the MES school helping out.

A mom in Blackstone called Dr. DeFalco concerned about the paving problem. There were 2 officers there the next morning helping out. Folks have pulled together to make sure we can get this done. The Board of Health walked through the buildings. The response from the Community has been good.

Mrs. Lemieux asked if they could possibly begin charging for students to go to the Boys and Girls club on their remote days. She feels that having to take the funds away from something else for the student body as a whole is something she does not want to do.

Dr. DeFalco feels that the families have been incredibly grateful to have the school district providing the Boys and Girls club offering. He wants to stick with the model they have. Does not want them to be financially strapped due to having to pay a fee. The cost for the space at Boys and Girls club is for the year. It will be paid by December but covers through June 2021. They do not need to cut from another line to do this. If families are interested please contact his office. They are currently going through the waitlist to fill available spots.

General Revenues - running smoothly and coming in as expected from the State level. Started drawing down our grants. We still have yet to identify Circuit Breaker and Regional Transportation reimbursement. The amounts have not been released yet. They are expecting this to happen shortly. Hoping to see a state budget earlier than January. Keeping our fingers crossed.

Mrs. Lemieux asked if we received all of our chromebooks that we have leased.
Mr. Ehrenworth said that they have.

Expenditures

On budget for everything but will see spots that there are large numbers in the current available balance line. These numbers in respect to staffing will change. We are in the process of hiring and filling permanent positions.

Mrs. Reggio - are we at some point going to look at reducing the fee that families pay for Extra Curricular Activities?
Mr. Ehrenworth said yes they will.

Some custodial numbers may change if FEMA gives us funds.

Personnel Report is in their packets.

Facilities Report

HVAC - concern for everyone regarding our return. He wanted to show that Districtwide all HVAC have been worked on. Everything is in normal range for air quality assessment. Duct work cleaning has been done in all buildings. It has been started at the High School but not yet completed. He does not know if the ducts have ever been cleaned before. This was a much needed thing.

MES new tank - There were delays discussed at other meetings due to a paperwork error. The design team had certain designs approved and contractors did not have the exact design. They are back on track. Tank is currently in the ground. All anchors are in the process of being anchored into the tank. Anticipating the ground work and getting back in order should be done by the end of October. Aesthetic work will take longer. It may not make sense to plant grass in the Fall. Two, one thousand gallon tanks will be in place above ground. They want to have temporary heat in place.

Capital Planning Project - things going along. We have been back in touch with the design company that the initial reports are complete. They want to get the reports to the Administration and the School Committee to see what we want to do. They will then determine next steps and they should be at a School Committee meeting in December.

Mrs. Reggio - Capital Planning committee deadline is November 4th for next year.
Mr. Ehrenworth is going to reach out to the design team to see if there are high priority areas. He will discuss it with Dr. DeFalco and bring to the Committee where they want to go. They want it on the Capital Planning Committee's agenda now.

School Committee Forum

Mrs. Vinacco -she wants to decrease anxiety and thinks they could have had more information in communication last night. She feels the building involved should be a part of that letter.

Mrs. Lemieux - does the State have guidance on this? Also said thank you to all working in our District. There are bumps in the road and we have been transparent in all of this. We are at a point where people are nit picking smaller things. We have to be thankful to all persons working together to keep our kids in school and focus on teaching and learning.

Mrs. Reggio - there is a form letter on this. Maybe go back to the State and ask what to do when there are multiple buildings. The commitment to go above and beyond is extraordinary. Hopes that all have stamina to continue this. Everyone needs social emotional wellness and find some normal in the abnormal. We are in this for the long haul.

Mrs. Gaudette - Does a letter go out to the community if it is a fully remote person?

Dr. DeFalco - does not feel that they would necessarily be made aware of this.

Mrs. Young - She spoke to a doctor's office and they had high praise for us bringing back K-3 full time. People are recognizing what we are doing here.

October 22nd will be an in person workshop and will not have a public forum. It is for them to regroup at the Middle School at 6:00 p.m. They will review their protocols.


Motion: It was moved by Mrs. Lemieux, seconded by Mrs. Vinacco and unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Monique F. Simard
Recording Secretary

ATTEST:


Tara L. Larkin, District Secretary