

MENDON-UPTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

School Committee Meeting

Nipmuc High School, Professional Development Room

Monday, October 18, 2021

Committee Present:

Sean Nicholson, Vikki Ludwigson, Phil DeZutter, Dorothy Scally, Erick Brown, Dorothy Scally

Administration Present:

Maureen Cohen, Interim Superintendent of Schools

Cheryl Kirkpatrick, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Schools

Jay Byer, Business/Finance

Jen D'Angelo, Director of Student Support Services

Janice Gallagher, Principal, Clough Elementary School

Jennifer Mannion, Principal, Miscoe Hill Middle School

Wendy Bell, Principal, Memorial Elementary School

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Phil DeZutter.

Pledge of Alliance was recited

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approval of the Agenda

MOTION: On a motion of Sean Nicholson, seconded by Vikki Ludwigson, to approve the agenda.

VOTED: Unanimously approved

Approval of the Open Session Minutes from October 4, 2021

MOTION: On a motion of Dorothy Scally, seconded by Sean Nicholson, to approve Open Session minutes from October 4, 2021

VOTED: Unanimously approved

II. CHAIRPERSON COMMENTS - NA

III. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

It was asked to move the Comments to end of agenda due to questions that may be answered during the meeting.

Approval of Amending Agenda to move Community Comments to after New Business on the Agenda

MOTION: On a motion of Sean Nicholson, seconded by Dorothy Scally, to move Community Comments to after New Business on the agenda.

VOTED: Unanimously approved

IV. STUDENT'S COMMENTS

Miscoe Hill Middle School: Mindfulness and Self Care in Action

Students Juliana and Tori were present with Mrs. Higgins to inform the School Committee members on Mindfulness and Self Care in Action elective at Miscoe Hill Middle School. Highlights of the presentation follows:

- Description of what the elective course entails

- Important at this point due to stress for students
- Activity – breathe bubble; video shown
- Strategies include meditation walking, art journaling, and others
- Sensory kit- students showed what is in the box to assist them in being calm; blindfolded taste testing where students only focused on tasting and not everything around
- Sample Journal prompts include tv show/movies makes you laugh, advice to middle school self, and four hours of daylight or darkness
- Class is all year for 2 or 3 days per week depending on schedule

Phil DeZutter thanked parents for the refreshments for the School Committee.

V. INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS

School District Events

Tomorrow night, the nursing team has put together a virtual roundtable webinar for parents/guardians, students and community members at 6:30pm. In addition to our nurses, guest doctors will be present to answer questions about vaccines. The links were sent out to members of our community in our district newsletters.

MURSD will be hosting a COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic for Miscoe and Nipmuc students on Friday, October 22 (during the school day). The second vaccination will be held on November 12, 2021.

Blackstone Valley Superintendent Consortium-Promising Practices Recognition-Molly Walsh

Dr. Cohen introduced Molly Walsh to recognize her outstanding work for her creative adaptation with students playing ukulele. Dr. Cohen's goal is to share the good work among on the Blackstone Valley schools. Ms. Walsh commented it was a great ceremony on October 1st. Presentations included how educators inspire students during COVID. Ms. Walsh discussed how she needed a new way to teach music during COVID. Students learned music and were enthusiastic about buying their own ukulele. She thanked everyone who assisted her.

Strategic Action Steps Update

Dr. Cohen outlined the following actions by the district in regards to strategic plans:

- District is off and running with the beginning of the year assessments in iReady, Thrively, and Panorama.
- By the end of this month, district will launch an audit of MTSS practices through a survey to staff in Panorama.
- An implementation plan for SEL modules in Thrively has been developed for the year.
- Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain book study was launched at DLT to begin preparations for the district book study, which begins in November.
- Departmental budget updates are scheduled for future School Committee meetings.
- Teaching and learning highlights have been added to School Committee meetings, and are also included in the district newsletters.

Questions about how assessments on where kids are due to the pandemic. More information is coming. Dr. Cohen is looking to do the assessment around the time it was done last year in order to have more accurate data.

VI. ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS

Student Support Services Department Update-Jennifer D'Angelo

Jen D'Angelo, Director of Student Support Services presented an update on the program. Highlights include the following:

Approximately 415 students receiving services across our 4 schools

Elementary Level: H.P Clough - 62 students in grades K-4, 25 students in Integrated PK program

Memorial: 79 students in grades K-4, 30 students in Integrated PK program, two sub-separate programs

Miscoe Hill: 160 students in grades 5-8; One sub-separate program; Small group ELA and math courses

Nipmuc: 112 students in grades 8-12; Two sub-separate programs; 28 students receiving services through programs outside of the district

Technology Enhancements include:

- Pearson DAL - Digital Assessment Library which provides virtual assessments and scoring, reduces time for manual tasks and provides wider range of assessment tools
- Docusign - Electronic Signature Software which provides efficient delivery of time sensitive documents, electronic record provides tracking and access and minimizes timely & costly traditional mailings

Reallocation of Resources allowed for addition of district staff to provide assessment and instruction. Additions include:

- School Psychologist - Elementary Level;
- School Psychologist - Middle/High School Level;
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) – District.
- Investing in specialized training of our staff include Lindamood-Bell and Orton Gillingham programs.
- Assistive Technology Consultant has been contracted to meet with teachers to assist with technology a couple times per month.
- Addition of Tier 3 Support with Brookline Center for Community Health includes School-based short-term, intensive assistance to students with dedicated space at both Miscoe & Nipmuc. Four Key Components for clinical Support, Academic Coordination, Family Engagement & Support and Care Coordination. Adjustment counselors are in place to support this program.

IDEA Federal Targeted SPED Program Improvement Grant allows district to strengthen assessments and use data & technology to support student performance

- Increased assessment capacity
- Provided additional supports through contracted services
- Purchased external keyboards
- Conducted a program evaluation of our STAR programs

Early Childhood Targeted SPED Program Improvement Grant for World of Wonders PK Curriculum

- Classroom Resource kit for each elementary school
- Access to digital resources
- Aligns with K-4 Wonders Curriculum

Pictures were shown with the students using these programs

Doug Flutie Jr Grant includes April 2021 recipients of the Allison Keller Education Technology Grant. The \$2725 allowed District to purchase Edmark Reading Program and Boardmaker

Program Evaluation – STAR program
Applied Behavior Institute (ABI)

- Provide districts with support and services
- Program review ensures we are meeting the needs of each learner
- Evaluation methodology included:
 - Data analysis of IEPs
 - Structured interviews
 - Observations
 - Record Review

STAR programming takes place at Memorial, Miscoe and Nipmuc

- Serves students who require a significantly modified curriculum and programming
- Vertically aligned PK - Post-Secondary program based on a foundation of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) principles
- Primarily substantially separate with inclusive opportunities within the life of the school as much as possible

STAR Program Compliments:

- Dedicated and professional staff with expertise in their disciplines
- Allocation of resources that are responsive to student needs
- Use of ABA methodologies that adhere to best practices for individuals with autism:
 - Breaking down skills
 - Using systems of shaping
 - Functional approach to behavior interventions
 - Data collection procedures
 - Full -day programing

Evaluation Summary:

STAR Program Recommendations and (**action plans**):

- Develop a clear written program description to drive all programming (**In Progress**)
- Formal parent training to further the growth of positive skills (**Schedule will be shared by November 1st**)
- One full-time Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) (**Completed**)
- New and consistent program formats including: (**In Progress**)
 - Data sheets
 - Behavior Support Plan (BSP)
 - Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)
- Grouping students based on need during discrete trial work (**Currently implementing**)
- Create and implement a program assessment tool completed annually (**In Progress**)
- ABA Tech training (**In Progress**)
- Standardized transition checklists to facilitate movement (**In Progress**)

Next Steps for Special Ed and Civil Rights:

- Tiered Focused Monitoring
 - Self-Assessment (completed)
 - On-site visit (December 2021)
 - Exit Meeting (December 2021)
 - Draft Report (February 2022)
 - Written Report of Findings (March 2022)
- Continue our work on the ABI recommendations
- Specialized Services Review
- Consistency of IEP Language & Process across the district

Sean Nicholson noted parents are interested in this report. Report came in at the end of the year and Ms. D'Angelo wanted to ensure Dr. Cohen and the School Committee members had the opportunity to view the report first. Ms. D'Angelo will be introducing this to the parents.

Phil DeZutter asked about services being consistent across the district where it can be disconnected among the different levels. It was noted there are team chairs at each building are working together to develop a consistent language across the district since it is currently different. For example, 'reading' has different term/language at each level.

Grant is being applied for to revisit co-teaching at all levels so it is not just a term for 'inclusion'.

Phil DeZutter asked if we have the staff needed to deliver the services. It was noted there was a high contracted services budget. These monies were moved to operational budget in order to hire staff to deliver the services needed daily and not just a couple of hours a week. It has been difficult to hire staff due to the demand. Program is looking to be proactive by training current staff to assist.

More discussion followed on staffing, procedures and how the program can be improved and communicated with the parents.

Trained staff for Tier 1 for all children to identify needed intervention. District cannot wait until the students need Tier 3 for support. This year with new teachers, there is training to ensure staff tier 1 and tier 2 interventions are in place in order to determine if it is a disability or instructional issue. Phil DeZutter noted a lot has occurred but communication with parents is key.

Jen D'Angelo discussed the basic rights program will be held on November 16th. Jen will also be introducing coffee hours with team chairs over the next couple of months for parents to attend and ask questions.

It was noted it is needed to clarify roles in order to deliver student services. Jen stated there is one mom who is supporting CPAC and trying to get the information out. School Committee members volunteered to assist with attending meetings. There is a Facebook page and a newsletter goes out to families receiving services.

Members expressed thanks for the presentation.

VII. SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Budget Subcommittee

Sean Nicholson stated the subcommittee met on October 5. Goals and the structure for year were determined. Subcommittee is looking to have Multi Board meetings to understand what the Towns capabilities are; how to make the decision-making process clear on where the revenue will be for the upcoming fiscal year; and looking for more communication and feedback.

Policy Subcommittee

Vikki Ludwigson stated a schedule was set for the year to review policies. Old policies were reviewed that needed to be updated to clarify roles of certain positions for minor changes on certain policies. 2 other policies will also be looked at more closely. Vikki also stated the subcommittee is looking at a new policy on memorials to clarify policy if/when a staff or students dies.

Superintendent Search Subcommittee

Vikki Ludwigson stated the subcommittee met to review the setup of focus groups. Letters have been distributed community wide regarding the focus groups on October 24 and November 3. There is an online survey available. Also, the members discussed what the make up of the Search Committee should be. Lastly, dates for the training workshop for participants and interviews were discussed and will be reviewed with NEDSEC.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Memorial Elementary School Outdoor Classroom Project-Memorial PTO

Victoria Wilkinson, fundraiser with Memorial PTO presented the Outdoor classroom at Memorial project. Ms. Wilkinson commented the Spring fundraiser raised over \$30k to build outside classrooms. She had a map of Memorial School outdoor area. Ms. Wilkinson noted some of the funds have been spent to put 4 large tables in location 'A'. They have enhanced this area with plantings and umbrellas. The funds will also be used to put a concrete pad in order to make the tables accessible.

Ms. Wilkinson noted Location 'B' is already accessible. They would like to extend existing sidewalk and place a concrete pad. There is also the opportunity to build a 16' x 20' pavilion. The PTO is not asking for additional funds. They are planning to have another fundraiser if more funds are needed.

Approval of the Outdoor Learning Spaces at Memorial School

MOTION: On a motion of Erick Brown, seconded by Vikki Ludwigson, to approve the outdoor learning spaces at Memorial School

VOTED: Unanimously approved

Multiboard Meeting Planning

Meeting is October 25. It was asked what would members like to discuss. Focus of meeting is to get Town officials and School Committee together to work on budget and establish more communications.

Sean Nicholson stated the relationship between both towns has not been great when discussing budgets. He is looking to expand the relationship to include how the district is providing an important benefit for the communities. He encourages community members to participate.

It was discussed to communicate the strategy of the school. It is not just taking the tax money but to explain what the district is achieving to show the school is giving back. An idea to set up other meetings with presentations about certain aspect of the budget.

Begin the conversation on what the Towns can provide to plan the budget process and how do 'we' work together. Sean Nicholson noted the district is fulfilling an essential function at a good value. The value is increasing in each community due to the services of the school district.

Dr. Cohen noted community members have given her feedback for a better relationship this year. Expectations is to establish strategies at the beginning of budget cycle.

IX. COMMUNITY COMMENTS (cont'd from earlier agenda item)

Shelley Cook – asked questions regarding if staff members supporting the program were consulted for the Student Services report. It was noted a different company was used for the study/report since a previously used company did not have experience with ABA and instruction. This area was identified before the pandemic. Company

will be doing training and assist with implementation and the plan will be shared when finalized.

Elicia from Upton 'caretaker' of CPAC. Expressed the challenge on finding other parents who can contribute to CPAC to assist with establishing a board, policies and other functions to get things moving forward. MendonUptonCPAC@gmail.com for anyone interested.

Gina from Upton for MURSD parents' group. Comments on communication and transparency and info on CPAC should be updated on website. Looking for more communication from Admin and teachers and a centralized resource. Dr. Cohen commented updating the website is part of the strategic plan to improve communications. District will be looking for input from stakeholders.

Deb from Mendon. Thank you for the CPAC information and the need to improve communication and maybe an agenda item on School Committee members.

X. Other Matters Not Anticipated by The Committee Within 48 Hours of the Posted Meeting

XI. CORRESPONDENCE

XII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- School Improvement Plans

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: On motion of Phil DeZutter, seconded Vikki Ludwigson by to adjourn
VOTED: Unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 9:18 p.m.
Minutes by Kelly McElreath