

September 10, 2021

BEARCAT BOARD STORY

Educating for Excellence....the Bearcat Way!



IT'S ALWAYS EXCITING TO BE A BEARCAT!

The Gasconade County R-1 School Board met Thursday, September 9, 2021 for a regular meeting and an executive session. The meeting took place in the Central Office.

The meeting began with amending the agenda to move the Health Department presentation to the beginning of the meeting. The Board, and others in attendance, heard from Greg Lara, Administrator for the Gasconade County Health Department. Mr. Lara responded to questions submitted and shared that the COVID-19 cases are continuing to rise in our county. He stated that the virus is considered highly transmissible and at the highest level of concern by the CDC; that level has caused the need for the stringent quarantine requirements. The health department is legally required to mitigate and slow the virus and their mitigation strategies of vaccines and quarantines, as well as best practice protocols such as social distancing, masking, and staying home when ill, will be beneficial in that effort. He encouraged continuation of these best practices. He also shared that at this time, Gasconade County has a 43% vaccination rate. Although the Gasconade County Health Department doesn't have a timeframe for the CDC quarantine requirements to end, they will continue to monitor the situation and adjust their mitigation strategies as needed. Mr. Lara commended the close working relationship the health department has with the district and thanked us for all our efforts as we notify parents and manage the student quarantines.

Dr. Neill shared that this month's Board Norm focus was on communications and the continued efforts on transparency and maintaining open communication channels with our community. The Board reviewed a presentation "Meet the New Bearcats" which highlighted our new faculty for the 2021-2022 school term. We are excited to welcome them to our team! In addition, the Board reviewed the building reports, with a short discussion on the inclusion of NEE standards into our teacher focus for this year.

The Board listened to the MSBA September Board Report where they discussed MAP Assessments and the suspension of the testing comparison from the prior year due to the COVID-19 interruption of in-

person learning. State wide assessment data will be issued this month, with individual school data available at a later date. In addition, MSBA has identified more mental and emotional issues with staff and students as the pandemic continues; this will be a continued area of focus as we enter this school term.

As part of Dr. Lause's Associate Superintendent report, she praised the bus drivers and other transportation personnel in the district for all their efforts to welcome our students and keep them safe. Their efforts and positive attitude is much appreciated.

Dr. Neill stated that our facilities projects continue, with new curb bumpers installed and reviewing our HVAC systems for replacements as many are near the end of their usefulness. In addition, Dr. Neill shared the ESSER III, which focuses on our Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services plan, will be reviewed monthly at the board meeting and re-approved every 30 days. Changes will be highlighted in New Business.

The Board discussed the Walking Trail proposal that was first brought to the Board last spring by the Messmer & Eitmann Foundation. The Board reviewed an outline of the walking trail location, part of which is behind the high school, and discussed positive and negatives of implementation. The Board approved Dr. Neill to reach out to the Messmer & Eitmann Foundation for more details regarding the proposal; this will allow the Board to further evaluate if it would be appropriate for our district.

Dr. Neill shared with the Board that we have one new bus scheduled for delivery in November. In addition, he is recommending improving our bus fleet, which will include adding two new busses this year and then replacing a bus every other year, with the goal of a full fleet upgrade by the year 2030. This year's expense, can be reduced by \$22,500 per bus if we are approved for a grant offered from Volkswagen. The Board was comfortable with Dr. Neill exploring the possibility of adding an additional bus this fiscal year.

In New Business, the Board approved the COVID-19 leave proposal, offering up to two week's pay for staff that are quarantined due to a school exposure. The Board also heard about how the schools are re-evaluating the way students work together to be more cognizant of social distancing and other COVID protocols with the goal of reducing quarantines within the district. The last item on new business discussed the Gasconade County Hazard Mitigation Plan which focuses on our district's safety plan should we have a natural disaster.

In Old Business, the Board approved the consent agenda and the meeting was adjourned. In Executive Session, the Board approved the hiring of two new substitutes.

The next regularly scheduled Board Meeting is Thursday, October 14th at 6:00 p.m. in the Central Office.

Upcoming events:

- Fall Sport are in full swing – see the schedules on our athletics page
- Homecoming – September 24th
- 66th Annual Hermann Invitational Volleyball – September 27 – 30th
- Washington 8th Grade Girls Basketball Tournament – September 27 – 30th
- No School – Professional Development Day – September 27th
- Bearcat Brigade at the Washington Marching Festival – October 2nd

