

MENDON-UPTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

School Committee Meeting

Nipmuc High School, Professional Development Room

Monday, January 24, 2022

Committee Present:

Sean Nicholson (remote), Dorothy Scally, Erick Brown, Kerry Laurence, Phil DeZutter, Vikki Ludwigson, Kerry Laurence (remote)

Administration Present:

Maureen Cohen, Superintendent of Schools

Cheryl Kirkpatrick, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Schools

Jay Byer, Business/Finance

Jennifer D'Angelo, Director of Student Support Services

John Clements, Co-Principal, Nipmuc Regional High School

Mary Anne Moran, Co-Principal, Nipmuc Regional High School

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Phil DeZutter.

Pledge of Alliance was recited

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approval of the Agenda

MOTION: On a motion of Dorothy Scally, seconded by Vikki Ludwigson, to approve the amended agenda.

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes

Erick Martin, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Dorothy Scally, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

Approval of the Open Session Minutes from January 10, 2022

MOTION: On a motion of Dorothy Scally, seconded by Vikki Ludwigson, to approve Open Session minutes from January 10, 2022

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes

Erick Martin, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Dorothy Scally, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

II. CHAIRPERSON COMMENTS - NA

III. COMMUNITY COMMENTS - NA

IV. STUDENT'S COMMENTS

Diya updated the School Committee that this Wednesday are the DECA district competitions. Nipmuc will compete in marketing and business events. On March 8, Nipmuc will sponsor a showplace for incoming freshman to visit Nipmuc. Today is the end of term 2

Michel shared Spanish Exchange program is seeking students who are interested in participating the exchange program for school year 2022-2023. This is where students visit Spain and stay at host home and then a student comes here from Spain and will stay in host homes. Also, tomorrow evening is Jazz Night. This is will be workshop program for the musicians to work with local musicians on their improvisation. At the end of the program, there will be a performance with the local musicians and the students.

V. INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS AND ADMINISTRATOR COMMENTS

Superintendent Draft Goals

Superintendent Evaluation Subcommittee met last week. Changes to the goals were made based on feedback from that meeting.

Dr. Cohen commented there is a district alignment of goals based on the strategic plan

3 Main Goals:

- **Improve communication** and positive engagement with Mendon-Upton families and community members through open and frequent communication, partnering with community members, and developing new methods for communicating about budgetary priorities and celebrating authentic learning.
- Develop and improve **multi-tiered systems of support** to ensure equitable access to meaningful, grade-appropriate learning through increasing staff understanding of inclusive practices, application of Tier 1 supports, and effective use of student data to inform instruction.
- **Reconnect with our students** through a strengths-based approach where students are known well, celebrated, nurtured, and have a sense of belonging and social-emotional curriculum is integrated PK-12.
- **Design authentic learning experiences** that integrate Portrait of a Learner competencies and engage students in deeper learning.

Continuous Improvement Cycle to include self-assessment, analysis, goal setting and plan development, implementation of the plan, formative assessment/evaluation with summative evaluation

Professional Practice goal #1:

Develop skills in strategy development, data analysis, communications, board relations, budget development, equity, and instructional leadership by actively engaging in the first year of the M.A.S.S. New Superintendent Induction Program, as well as the AASA Aspiring Superintendent's Blended Learning Academy, and MASS/MASC Workshops.

Student Learning goal #2:

By the end of the year, 75% of the students in grade K-8 will meet grade level expectations in ELA and Math as measured by the iReady diagnostic system.

District Improvement Goal – Communication #3

By the end of the year, a communication plan will be developed and implemented to improve the frequency and clarity of district communications.

District Improvement Goal – SEL #4

By the end of the year, a system will be in place to help teachers to reconnect with our students through established SEL curriculum modules, professional development in culturally responsive practices, and student SEL data.

Superintendent Rubric Indicators Directly Related to Goals

Standard I: Instructional Leadership: The education leader promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff by cultivating a shared vision that makes powerful teaching and learning the central focus of schooling.

- I-B: Instruction (Goals 2 and 4)
- I-E: Data Informed Decision Making (Goals 1-4)

Standard II: Management and Operations: Promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff by ensuring a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment, using resources to implement appropriate curriculum, staffing, and scheduling.

- II-D: Laws, Ethics, and Policies (Goal 1)
- II-E: Fiscal Systems (Goal 1)

Standard III: Family and Community Engagement: Promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff through effective partnerships with families, community organizations, and other stakeholders that support the mission of the school and district.

- III-A: Engagement (Goal 2)
- III-C: Communication (Goal 2)

Standard IV: Professional Culture: Promotes success for all students by nurturing and sustaining a school culture of reflective practice, high expectations, and continuous learning for staff.

- IV-B: Culturally Proficient Practices (Goals 3 and 4)
- IV-C: Communications (Goal 2)
- IV-D: Continuous Learning (Goals 1-4)

Sean Nicholson commented the Superintendent Evaluation Subcommittee discussed these goals in-depth at their last meeting. It was noted the goals will be evaluated at the end of school year in May/June.

Approval to Approve the Superintendent Goals.

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

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes

Erick Martin, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Kerry Laurence, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

Dorothy Scally, yes

Health Update of Testing Protocols--Leslie McInnis, School Nurse Leader

Dr. Cohen thanked Leslie for her amazing work. She works hard with the nursing team to keep updated. Leslie and Dr. Cohen attended a recent DESE presentation on testing. The School Committee was given a brief overview to School Committee.

Schools are safe

- Last fall, DESE initiated Test and Stay to keep close contacts in school using repeated daily testing.
- We know how much work this was, and how much strain school health staff in particular have been under as they try to keep up with contact tracing and repeated daily testing.
- Four and a half months later, with hundreds of thousands of results from across the state, more than 98% of those tests have been negative. We know it is overwhelmingly safe to keep students where they thrive – in school.

Secondary Transmission is low

- It's also helpful to look at nationwide data related to Test and Stay to examine the extent to which secondary transmission (i.e., transmission to close contacts) is occurring in schools.
- The evidence from California and Illinois cited by the CDC in their Test to Stay guidance noted secondary transmission rates of only 0.7-1.5%.¹
- Test positivity rates in Test and Stay indicate that individuals identified as close contacts in school are very unlikely to contract or spread COVID-19.

Changes in other New England States

Other states, like Connecticut and Vermont, have recently transitioned from individualized contact tracing to the use of at-home tests and focusing school health efforts on symptomatic testing.

New COVID Testing Options to Optimize In-Person Learning

- Districts and schools participating in symptomatic and/or pooled testing may choose to continue those testing strategies and discontinue contact tracing and Test and Stay.
- Using their professional discretion, school health professionals may determine if specific situations warrant contact tracing.
- As an additional resource, districts and schools that elect to make this change will be provided with rapid antigen at-home tests for all participating staff and students that can be used on a weekly basis.

Updates to the program?

- Districts and schools participating in symptomatic and/or pooled testing may choose to continue those testing strategies and discontinue contact tracing and Test and Stay.
- Using their professional discretion, school health professionals may determine if specific situations warrant contact tracing.
- As an additional resource, districts and schools that elect to make this change will be provided with rapid antigen at-home tests for all participating staff and students that can be used on a weekly basis.

Additional Information Regarding At-Home Antigen Tests

How to Switch to New Program

- Districts and schools can elect to switch to the updated testing program between January 21, 2022 and April 1, 2022 by responding to the brief district/school survey.
- Districts that respond by January 21 will begin receiving tests for staff during the week of January 24 and tests for students during the week of January 31. Dr. Cohen completed the survey on behalf of MURSD on January 20.

How Will the At-Home Antigen Test Program Work?

- Districts and schools that select the updated testing program will receive at-home antigen tests for all staff members who choose to participate and all students whose parents/guardians signify interest in participating by completing a brief opt-in form.
- Schools and districts can distribute at-home tests to all participating staff and students regardless of vaccination status.
- The tests will be shipped to the district for internal distribution, and they are packaged in kits containing two tests per kit.

Kit Distribution and Use

- At-home antigen test provided: iHealth

- Participating staff and students will receive one kit every two weeks so that they can test themselves weekly.
- Districts and schools should **maximize the utility of the at-home tests** by determining which day of the week they recommend participating staff and students take the tests.
 - MURSD will request that staff who opt-in administer their test weekly on Sunday
 - Students will be asked to take their test weekly on Thursday. If appropriate, the test can be self-administered under parent/guardian supervision.

Results:

- When an individual tests positive on an at-home antigen test, they will be asked to inform their school of the positive result.
- Schools will not be required to report the results of at-home tests to DPH, but districts and schools will continue to include positive at-home tests in their weekly testing reports to DESE.

Discontinuing Individualized Contact Tracing:

- Districts and schools that select the new testing program will discontinue individualized contact tracing.
- As such, for these districts and schools, there is no longer the expectation that close contacts will be identified, and therefore, any potential in-school contacts do not need to quarantine. Instead, schools should shift their focus to monitoring symptomatic individuals.
- DESE and DPH will soon update the “Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios” guidance to reflect these changes.
- DESE will also provide school districts with an FAQ on this new testing program.

SC members asked follow up questions in regards to some of the protocols. Leslie stated if a person had COVID, they are exempt from testing for 90 days.

Grant Award and PD Day Summary - Dr. Cheryl Kirkpatrick, Interim Assistant Superintendent

Dr. Kirkpatrick announced the district was awarded the Acceleration Academies Grant Award in the amount of \$102, 660. This grant will be used to provide targeted curriculum to identified students who were most impacted by the pandemic and need extra help with the resources within the district. Grant offers generous stipends to staff to host these academies. The academies will be held during the Feb and April vacation and Grades 3-10 target. Program will be smaller in February and focus on High and Middle school students. A fuller program for grades 3 and 4 will be held in April. Dr. Kirkpatrick is estimating 240 students.

Dr. Kirkpatrick also updated the School Committee on the great PD Day on January 14. She feels this assisted the staff by giving smaller doses of learning at the end of the day. There are small programs at each of the program to look at the data and trends. Staff is able to drill down to the student level. At the Middle School, there was a behavior support program. A consultant was brought in to help with the training. At the High School, there was a program on the signs of suicide.

VI. SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Phil DeZutter commented the next Budget Subcommittee meeting is next Monday, January 31. Vikki Ludwigson stated the Policy Subcommittee will be meeting on February 7.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

First Review of District Calendar 2022-2023 Draft

The School Committee received the first draft of 2022-2023 school calendar. Dr. Cohen noted there still need to meet with teachers on another 1/2 PD. They are discussing a 1/2 PD on November 8 due to State Election but this will cause 3 half days in one week. It was also noted June 19th was added as a holiday and there is only one school committee meeting in September due to Jewish holiday. She asked for additional comments from the members and the final calendar to be approved on February 7. It was asked to change the date to Indigenous People's Day vs Columbus Day. Phil DeZutter asked why we have Good Friday off since there are no other religious holidays on calendar. It was determined to change Good Friday to early release day.

Nipmuc Field Trip Request

Emily Ayers, Nipmuc HS Chemistry Teacher is requesting a field trip approval for a STEM-based field trip to Belize for February 2023. Ms. Ayers stated there is a possibility of needing a school day for travel. She is working with EF Tours about cancelations – offering 100% until May of 2022 and COVID liability protection will be included in the price. This trip is organized with Department heads to have chaperones (1 to 6 ratio). Trip offers Nipmuc students to experience more STEM (biology, chemistry) associated experiences as well as cultural. This is also an option for an accredited program where staff and students can get credit with an independent college credit. Price is \$4,350. Minimum of 12 students needed for the trip and it is open to current freshman-junior students.

Approval of the Belize STEM Based Field Trip in February 2023

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Dorothy Scally, to approve the Belize STEM Based Field Trip in February 2023.

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes

Erick Martin, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Dorothy Scally, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

Kerry Laurence, yes

Student Support Services Budget Presentation - Jennifer D'Angelo, Director of Student Support Services

Ms. D'Angelo presented the Student Support Services budget to the School Committee. She stated the quote of the department: Inclusive educators believe in valuing student differences and supporting their learning needs to the greatest extent possible.

Staffing:

Administrative

- Director of Student Support Services (1)

Instructional Staff

- Special Education Teachers (21)
- Speech Language Pathologists/Assistants (7)
- Occupational Therapists/Assistants (4)
- Physical Therapists/Assistants (2)
- School Psychologists (3)
- Reading Specialist (3)
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst (2)
- Team Chairperson (3)

Least Restrictive Environment in the Continuum of Services

- Full and Partial Inclusion
 - Skill-based instruction within the general education classroom
- Small Group Specialized Instruction
 - Skill-based instruction outside of the general education classroom
- Substantially Separate
 - Specialized program outside of the general education classroom
- Day Program
 - Intensive programming outside of the district (public, private or collaborative)
- Residential Program

Highlights:

1. Addition of two School Psychologists and one Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)
2. Update to the PK curriculum aligned with our K-4 curriculum
3. Engagement opportunities and workshops to enhance parent partnerships
4. Return to School Services at Miscoe Hill and Nipmuc

Grants:

- IDEA Federal Targeted SPED Program Improvement Grant
 - \$15,388 Assessments, Contracted Services, Supplies, Program Review
- Early Childhood Targeted SPED Program Improvement Grant
 - \$1,875 PK World of Wonders Curriculum
- Doug Flutie Jr. Foundation for Autism - Allison Keller Education Technology Grant
 - \$2,725 Edmark Reading Program and Boardmaker
- American Rescue Plan (ARP) — Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
 - \$121,340 Contracted Services, Staff training, Parent Workshops, Curriculum Materials.
- American Rescue Plan (ARP) Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA) Early Childhood Grant
 - \$10,796 Parent Workshops, Staff Training

Return on Investments

1. Return to School Services
2. Specialized training
 - a. Lindamood Bell
 - b. Orton Gillingham
3. Assistive Technology Consultant

Pearson Digital Assessment Library

- Access to over 40 assessments and screeners
- Electronic scoring software
- Flat, annual fee
 - Docusign Electronic Signature Software
- Secure and efficient delivery
- Increased response time
- Automatic tracking and reminders

STRENGTHS

Staff expertise and experience

Parent collaboration

Programming to meet the needs of diverse learners

OPPORTUNITIES

Improve how we deliver specialized instruction

Increase collaboration with community partners

WEAKNESSES

Outdated practices and procedures
Inconsistency across the district

THREATS

Lack of funding could result in loss of staff, program cuts
Increase in costs due to unanticipated variables

Investment Requests:

Request for level services to continue providing the supports and services necessary for all students to successfully access meaningful learning opportunities.

Future Planning

- Implement new skill-based courses
 - Executive Functioning
 - Literacy
 - Transitions
- Explore the use of Powerschool for Special Education records
- Review specialized programming

Phil DeZutter asked about the participation rate with parents. Jen commented there is an increase of participation and reminders have been sent out to families to attend programs. There has been a request for virtual or recording of programs. However, Jen commented leaders like for in person meetings for a better experience but options are being explored.

It was commented the adjustment counselors' cost is in guidance. There are 414 students covered by this budget. 33 students out of district at the beginning of the year and as of today there are 24 students.

Discussion of SPED transportation. It was noted the budget is \$9M out of the \$34M total budget.

Jen was able to report the latest report for tiered monitoring was received and it showed the district is in full compliance. Jen thanked everyone for their assistance and cooperation with the report.

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

IX. CORRESPONDENCE

X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- School Budget Presentations--Elementary and Middle School

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: On motion of Phil DeZutter, seconded by Vikki Laurence to adjourn

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes

Erick Martin, yes

Vikki Ludwigson, yes

Kerry Laurence, yes

Phil DeZutter, yes

Dorothy Scally, yes

Meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.
Minutes by Kelly McElreath