

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Merrimack Town Hall – Matthew Thornton Room
March 16, 2020**

Present: Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Guagliumi, and Board Member Nunez. Also in attendance were Superintendent McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio, Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell, and Student Representative Johanna Koroma.

Participated via Telephone

Board Member Schneider
Board Member Schoenfeld

Chair Barnes commented pursuant to RSA-91-A:2 all parties must contemporaneously be able to hear and speak to each other. The meeting should be audible to the public, all person's present must be identified, and all votes must be taken by a roll call vote.

Board Member Schneider participated from his residence in Merrimack, was alone and not in the presence of other persons.

Board Member Schoenfeld participated from her residence in Merrimack, was alone and not in the presence of other persons.

1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

3. Update on School District's Response to the Coronavirus

Superintendent McLaughlin stated all schools in all school districts in the state and around the country were facing something they had never faced before and it required a level of planning and engagement that they had never done before.

Superintendent McLaughlin expressed a little bit of frustration with the Department of Education (DOE) due to mixed messages. He said one message stated not to congregate in groups larger than ten and yet they currently had direction from the Department of Education (DOE) that teachers should report to school the following day to plan for preparations for remote learning. He said he wanted to make it clear that it was a directive from the Department of Education and the Governor and not an individual Superintendent's decision.

Superintendent McLaughlin stated that the district leaders met with the building leaders to put finishing touches on the plan for remote learning. He also stated the custodial staff had worked in each building to ensure the schools were cleaned and sanitized.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio stated the district had to provide educational opportunities for students per Commissioner Edelblut's address.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio said they would use printed learning packets for grades pre-K through grade 6 or analog education. He said each day the teachers would post the daily schedule and teach 30 minutes of reading, 30 minutes of writing, 30 minutes of mathematics, 10 minutes of social and emotional curriculum, and two times per week they would teach 30 minutes of science, and 30 minutes of social studies. Additionally, he also said each day 30 minutes of unified arts would be taught.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio said students in grade 7 through grade 12 would utilize PowerSchool. He said parents who had questions regarding technology could contact Ms. Nancy Rose, Director of Technology & Library Media at 603-424-6203. He said there would be 30 minutes dedicated to each of the subject areas including the core content area classes such as unified arts, world language, health, and physical education.

Concerning assessing and monitoring the work, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio said teachers would plan materials that would include assignments and opportunities for students to show what they had learned. He said the district had done a lot of work around Universal Design for Learning Program (UDL) and students could show what they knew in different ways.

Superintendent McLaughlin stated if the teachers were in the buildings they would adhere to distancing and the district was doing what they could to ensure the safety of the buildings.

Ms. Heather Barker, Director of Student Services, addressed the School Board and explained how they planned to address the needs of the students who had disabilities while adhering to the new rules and regulations surrounding COVID-19. She said the New Hampshire Department of Education, regarding the education of students with disabilities during the extended period of remote learning wanted school districts to consider the following:

Students with IEP's (Individualized Education Plan) had three options or a combination of the three options.

- A. Remote learning.
- B. School teams could have small cohorts of students in groups of no more than one to five who came into the school for direct instruction or direct services.
- C. If option A was not available or appropriate for a specific student or B was not available, then school districts would be able to provide compensatory education at a later date.

Ms. Barker stated the Merrimack School District would make its best effort to support all children during the closure and work to maintain skills for students.

Vice Chair Guagliumi asked how the district would handle students who were on free or reduced lunch. Superintendent McLaughlin replied there was some conflicting information that came from state and federal agencies regarding that but at present, there was no action for the School Board to take. He further said the state was aware they needed to come up with an answer and he would share information with the public as soon as he received it.

Vice Chair Guagliumi asked if Ms. Barker's presentation could be placed on the website with a disclaimer that things were rapidly changing and would be updated.

Board Member Nunez asked if the district had received any phone calls from people who were in need of free or reduced lunches and if so, had they been able to provide anything to them. Superintendent McLaughlin replied as far as he was aware there were no phone calls regarding that. Board Member Nunez commented she felt it was important for their needs to be met.

Superintendent McLaughlin said he had walked a fine line in the light of the Coronavirus regarding the compassion side of it versus the business side of it. He further said the distribution of food in a public school environment was trickier than it might seem because there were guidelines regarding the numbers of vegetables, etc. and it was all subsidized because there was federal support for the programs.

He said the district could not make ad hoc decisions regarding what was giving or how it was distributed, but likewise, if the community chose to provide food to folks the district could work with the community and facilitate. He noted, however, that it could not be under the auspice of the school district.

Superintendent McLaughlin commented if the school district were not prevented from going their own way the School Board would be asked to authorize a certain amount of funds dedicated to providing free meals once or twice per day from the general fund. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell said a transfer could be done from the general fund to the food service fund in support of the effort. Superintendent McLaughlin added the reason it wasn't brought to the School Board at the present meeting was because they did not know if they could even ask the Board to even take it under consideration.

Board Member Nunez commented that she felt if need be they could share what the constrictions and restraints were with the community and try to rally support because she felt there were a lot of people in Merrimack who felt very strongly that no child should go hungry. Superintendent McLaughlin replied they could absolutely do that when and if it became necessary.

Chair Barnes pointed out there was a community-wide committee that was addressing the Coronavirus which included town government, police, fire, and school. Superintendent McLaughlin replied there was a COVID-19 Task Force which was led by Police Chief Roy.

Board Member Schneider suggested that Superintendent McLaughlin contact the Town of Londonderry because he heard they were not only providing free and reduced lunches on a drive-up basis but were also selling lunches to people who needed a lunch. Superintendent McLaughlin commented things were different from district to district but said he would contact the Town of Londonderry for inquiry purposes. He added that comparisons with other school districts were difficult at present.

Superintendent McLaughlin pointed out, for the record, schools had been put between a rock and hard place because the Governor and the Commissioner of Education **told them** in no uncertain terms that teachers were to report to work and that they were to commence remote instruction. He continued by saying people could not currently sit in a restaurant and there was some illogic, however, it was the situation they were in. He said currently teachers were paid and the expectation was that they do the work for which they were paid under unusual circumstances. Superintendent McLaughlin added there was no way to deliver remote instruction with teachers from home and if the state was concerned about that fact they would have to provide greater clarity.

Superintendent McLaughlin said all that could be currently done was to make sure that teachers were provided with opportunities to be in safe spaces which they had done by eliminating students, sanitized facilities, and were allowed to use any technology capabilities available to correspond and collaborate with partners in order to accomplish that goal.

The School Board collectively thanked Superintendent McLaughlin, the administrative team, and the teachers for all of their hard work in dealing with the unprecedented situation.

Superintendent McLaughlin said what was delivered to students in the classroom was not going to be replicated in the remote learning environment.

Chair Barnes asked how the current situation affected the required 180-days of instruction. Superintendent McLaughlin replied if they did due diligence in providing learning opportunities from now through April 3, 2020 then all of those days would count towards the 180 days. He further stated if the schools remained closed past April 4th it may be a different reality.

Chair Barnes asked how the situation would affect the SAT's which were scheduled for March 25th. Superintendent McLaughlin replied he did not have the answer to that question but would relay the information as soon as he received it.

4. Presentation of the 2020 – 2021 School District Calendar

Superintendent McLaughlin stated he contacted the Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association (MESSA) and the Merrimack Teachers Association (MTA) Professional to weigh in with their preferences. He also said a survey was sent out to the community for their input.

Superintendent McLaughlin mentioned for the past few years the district had August Academy which consisted of three days of professional development training before the start of school.

Superintendent McLaughlin said the proposed 2020-2021 school calendar is a bit different than previous years. Tuesday, September 8, 2020 is New Hampshire State Primary Election Day. After consultation with the Town Moderator, it was decided not to begin school on that day. Tuesday, November 3, 2020 is a General Election Day, another no school day. He also mentioned that Labor Day was particularly late in September.

Superintendent McLaughlin explained Monday, August 31st would be a teacher preparation day, Tuesday, September 1st would be a staff meeting day, and Wednesday, September 2nd would be the first day of school. He noted having the first day of school begin on September 2nd aligned with the parent survey results and the teachers' preference.

Superintendent McLaughlin noted no school on Labor Day, September 7th and no school on September 8th due to NH Primary Election Day. He proposed Tuesday, September 8th be a teacher workshop day. He explained it was the preference of the community not to have school on October 12th in observance of Columbus Day. Further, he said Tuesday, November 3rd was the General Election and suggested Monday, November 2nd and Tuesday, November 3rd be teacher workshop days. He pointed out that November 11th, Veteran's Day was a federally mandated holiday.

Superintendent McLaughlin noted no school Wednesday, November 23rd through Friday, November 25th in observance of Thanksgiving. He also noted holiday recess Thursday, December 24th through Friday January 1st. School would be closed on Monday, January 18 in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Superintendent McLaughlin noted February vacation would be February 22nd through 26th and it would not coincide with Massachusetts school vacation week. He noted April vacation would be April 26 through 30. There would be no school on Monday, May 31st in observance of Memorial Day, another federally mandated holiday.

Superintendent McLaughlin said the proposed last day of school would be June 18th with five days allowed in the following week for make-up days.

Chair Barnes stated the School Board was in agreement with the 2020 – 2021 school calendar as presented by Superintendent McLaughlin.

5. Merrimack High School Graduation Date

Superintendent McLaughlin stated that Ms. Sharon Putney, Principal of Merrimack High School, requested to set the graduation date for June 13, 2020. He said he wished he could say with all certainty that would remain the date, he could not. He further said if the school district resumed classes on April 3rd that very well may have been the case but if it did not then it would have to be a much bigger conversation but assured, he would keep everyone posted.

6. Approval of March 2, 2020, School Board Minutes

Vice Chair Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to approve the minutes from the March 2, 2020, meeting as presented.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Board Member Nunez, Vice Chair Guagliumi, 5
Board Member Schoenfeld, Board Member Schneider,
and Chair Barnes

Nay: 0

The motion passed 5-0-0 by a roll call vote.

7. Other

a) Correspondence

Chair Barnes stated she received correspondence from a parent having difficulty accessing PowerSchool. Chair Barnes put the parent in touch with the appropriate administration at the high school for assistance.

Chair Barnes said she received a question regarding the coronavirus and how it related to field trips. She directed that person to the District's coronavirus web page which was **sau26.org/coronavirus**.

Chair Barnes received an email asking if the school district was missing a bench. A bench was found at Wildcat Falls and the person thought it might belong to the school district.

Lastly, Chair Barnes said she received a question regarding the athletic budget. Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell provided that person with an answer.

b) Comments

There were no comments.

8. New Business

There was no new business.

9. Committee Reports

Chair Barnes reported the Professional Development Committee met on March 12th. The committee processed requests for reimbursements, continuing graduate credits, and addressed a couple of appeals for reimbursements.

Chair Barnes pointed out the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting was canceled. Information and updates would be posted on the Parks & Recreation's website.

10. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Ms. Lori Peters, 7 Newton Street, addressed the School Board and said she was a teacher in a different town and recognized going to remote learning was very difficult, however, she said she was disappointed with the way the district was handling the free meals. She said surrounding districts had stepped up and were providing meals regardless of waivers and were providing them to all students.

11. Manifest

The Board signed the manifest.

At 9:20 p.m. Vice Chair Guagliumi moved (seconded by Board Member Nunez) to go into non-public session.

A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea:	Board Member Nunez, Vice Chair Guagliumi, Board Member Schoenfeld, Board Member Schneider, and Chair Barnes	5
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Nay:		0
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The motion passed 5-0-0 by a roll call