

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Tuesday, September 8, 2020**

Due to the state of emergency declared by Governor Sununu regarding the COVID-19 outbreak, and the subsequent Emergency Order #12, Chair Guagliumi determined that the physical presence of a quorum within the time required for School Board action was not reasonably practical, and therefore, the members of the School Board participated remotely.

Present: Chair Guagliumi, Vice Chair Barnes, Board Members Schneider, and Rothhaus. Also present were Superintendent McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio, and Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell.

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

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

Chair Guagliumi led the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Public Participation Guidelines for Remote Meetings

Chair Guagliumi stated public comments could be sent to publiccomment@sau26.org or by going to sau26.org where a meeting link was provided. She said all comments would be read and written into the record but noted the name and address of the speaker had to be provided.

Mr. Wolfram von Schoen, 4 Conservation Drive, addressed the Board and said he felt remote students were not given the same participation opportunities for Honors and AP (Advanced Placement) classes.

2. School Board Member Resignation

Chair Guagliumi announced that Board Member Brandi Nunez had resigned her position on Thursday, September 3rd due to a personal situation that resulted in a need for her to move out-of-the-area.

Chair Guagliumi stated anybody interested in filling the open position should send her a letter of interest via e-mail.

3. Review and Approval of the Document Entitled “General Assurances, Requirements, and Definitions for Participation in Federal Programs”

Superintendent McLaughlin commented that every year the School District applied for and received federal funds which were intended to supplement (not supplant) the programs offered.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

4. Memorandum of Agreement between the School Board and the Merrimack Teacher’s Association, and the Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association Concerning Sick Leave

Superintendent McLaughlin commented the above memorandum of agreement temporarily waived the provisions in in both contracts and allow individuals under the two collective bargaining units who were on approved leave for FFCRA (Families First Coronavirus Response) Act to be able to use accrued sick time for childcare needs. He said it was a benefit to both the District and its employees. He also said the memorandum of agreements put the District in compliance with the Federal CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act.

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) to accept the memorandum of agreement between the Merrimack Teacher’s Association (MTA) and the Merrimack School Board as presented.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) to accept the memorandum of agreement between the Merrimack School District and the Merrimack Educational Support Staff Association (MESSA) as presented.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

5. Update on School Lunch Plans for Fall 2020

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell stated that lunch would be served at each school Monday through Thursday, however, he further stated that students would pick up their lunches in the cafeteria and return to their classrooms to eat. He added that lunch would be available to students on the days they learned remotely, pointing out there was a form on the homepage of the District’s website which parents needed to fill out to pre-order the lunches.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell noted that the state had extended the free lunch program until December 31st or until the funds ran out, whichever came first. He added that the School District would be reimbursed \$3.50 per meal.

Superintendent McLaughlin was clear in stating that the lunch program would continue as usual after the depletion of funds at the state level.

6. Additional Clarification Concerning Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors Course Offerings at Merrimack High School

Ms. Sharon Putney, Principal, Merrimack High School, addressed the Board and pointed out there was only one honors-level class that they would not be able to offer to those students who were learning remotely.

Superintendent McLaughlin stated teacher certification impacted and limited in some cases what options were available.

Ms. Putney explained that just because a teacher taught in one particular content area, such as science, it did not mean they were necessarily certified to teach all science courses. (i.e. - life science, and earth science)

7. First Reading of Indoor Air Quality Policy (EBBD)

Superintendent McLaughlin read aloud the first reading of the Indoor Quality Policy as summarized below:

In order to ensure that all school buildings have adequate indoor air quality, the Board directs the Superintendent to address methods of minimizing or eliminating emissions from buses, cars, delivery vehicles, and other motorized vehicles. The Superintendent may delegate the implementation of these methods to building principals. The Board encourages the Superintendent to utilize methods and recommendations established by various State agencies.

In addition to addressing methods eliminating emissions, building principals are directed to annually investigate air quality in their respective school buildings using a checklist provided by the New Hampshire Department of Education.

In support of this policy, the Superintendent is authorized to establish regulations and/or administrative rules necessary to implement anti-idling and clear air measures aimed at improving indoor air quality.

Legal References:

RSA 200:11-a, Investigation of Air Quality

RSA 200:48, Air Quality in Schools
NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed. 306.04(a)(24), Air Quality in School Buildings
NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section 306.07(a)(4), School Facilities
1st Reading: September 8, 2020
2nd Reading:
Adoption:

8. Approval of August 19, 2020, School Board Minutes

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) to approve the minutes from the August 19, 2020, School Board meeting as presented.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

9. Consent Agenda

Vice Chair Barnes moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to table the Temporary Emergency Policy: Travel Guidance for Students and Staff and address it at the next Board meeting.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

- **Educator Resignation**

Ms. Crystalyn Shea, Special Education Teacher, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

- **Educator Nomination**

Ms. Michelle Ettelson, Social Studies Teacher, Merrimack High School

- **Approval of Policy – Communicable and Infectious Diseases (EBCG)**

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

10. Other

- **Correspondence**

There was no correspondence.

- **Comments**

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio commented the educational staff had been working to develop their plans for the beginning of school over the past six days and he commended them for all of the efforts.

11. New Business

Chair Guagliumi stated as they went forward to appointing a new School Board member they would also look at committee assignments.

12. Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

13. Public Comments on Agenda Items

From: Wolfram von Schoen

Sent: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 8:00 PM

To: SAU26 School Board Public Comment <PublicComment@sau26.org>

Subject: Public comment 9/8/2020 SB meeting

Good evening,

Thank you for trying to deal with the challenges of COVID-19. I certainly appreciate they are many and ever-changing.

That being said, I need to express my dissatisfaction with how this school year started out. The following are first-hand experiences:

Both of my high-schoolers have decided on their own to attend school remotely; due to health challenges at home.

Our junior had signed up for an interdisciplinary History and English honors course, which, as a side note, had a summer project going on that she was never informed about until she asked guidance about a confirmation that she was enrolled in this course around the third week of August. Already a problematic start.

A week before school started, the District sent an email containing the below statements. Our family was not approached about this change directly, we had to decipher the ramifications from the one of many very wordy and lengthy emails the

District tends to send. Thankfully, this email from Mrs. Putney was short and concise so we had a chance to catch this critical change.

Friday, August 28, 2020 [From Mrs. Sharon Putney]

Hello MHS Remote Students and Parents/Guardians,

This communication is to provide you with:

- *Additional Information regarding interdisciplinary courses contained in the list submitted to you on 8/25 that wasn't fully explained.*
- *Additional Courses which have been added to the list of remote courses we are now able to offer our remote students this year.*
- *Opportunities for students to access honors level and other courses through VLACS and Virtual High School (VHS).*

The remote course list, which I emailed students and parents on 8/25 should have included information regarding students who had pre-enrolled in our two interdisciplinary courses. This includes the 9th grade World Civilizations Honors course and the 11th grade, The American Experience course.

For both courses, we have separated out the Social Studies and English components, scheduling students into the Honors Social Studies and Honors English classes. Ninth-grade students will be scheduled for Honors English and Honors World Studies. Eleventh-grade students will be scheduled for Honors English and Honors US History.

The following is a continuation of Mr. von Schoen's September 8, 2020 8:00 p.m. email.

When talking to other parents, we realized that there were multiple remote high school students that were denied participating in honors or AP courses and that they would have to switch to the hybrid model to attend – the deadline to switch was also running out, this close to the start of the school year.

Effectively this created a two tier, unequal education system in Merrimack and unfair disadvantage for remote students, which was unknown to parents and students at the time they were to choose between remote and hybrid attendance.

The suggested alternatives of VLACS and other online schools to complement the honors course cancelled (for remote students only) were no longer taking additional students.

She was then put into honors English and social studies classes without having been in a position to have done the summer projects or having access to any of the material prior to the beginning of classes which is an extreme disadvantage for honors courses. This was further driving her stress and anxiety and she decided to not take honors because she did not want to start behind.

Effectively our student was denied access to an honors course and is now falling behind in her educational achievements, affecting her chances to enroll in colleges of her choice.

The question is what happens if in October everything goes back to normal and those classes would be offered for those remote students. They should be able to take those classes so it just seems a waste that they should not be able to participate somehow now. Otherwise the case can be made for discrimination because some students still might not be physically going to school because of health issues and now they are being penalized and discriminated against.

It should have been made clear early in the decision process for remote or hybrid attendance that there would be impacts on honors courses, so students would have been in a position to make choices for other schools like VLACS etc. (which we did, but not for the honors class we thought she was enrolled in).

The spring model was not great, but so far was way superior to our current experience, that's just as simple as it is. My niece is a high schooler in Pennsylvania, and somehow they had remote lectures and engaged classes back in spring and even more so today. I'm very disappointed that Merrimack couldn't meet that standard.

Thanks for listening.

Wolfram von Schoen
4 Conservation Drive
Merrimack, NH 03054

At 8:30 p.m. Vice Chair Barnes made a motion (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) to adjourn.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0 by a roll call vote.