

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Tuesday, October 5, 2020**

**6:00 P.M. – Non-Public Session per RSA 91-A:3 (a) (b) (c)
Merrimack High School Main Office Conference Room**

- **Student Welfare**

7:00 P.M. – Public Session

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

Excused: Chair Guagliumi

Vice Chair Barnes welcomed the newest member to the School Board, Ms. Jenna Hardy, who was filling in for the remainder of Ms. Brandi Nunez's term until the April election.

1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

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

Vice Chair Barnes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Comments

Vice Chair Barnes 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.

was no public participation.

3. Update on Remote Education Academy for Learning (REAL)

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio introduced Mr. Bill Morris in his new role as Coordinator of Remote Education Academy for Learning (REAL). He said the position was created as a result of requests from school principals.

Mr. Bill Morris said he would initially meet with each school and each administrative team remotely on a bi-weekly basis to support students and teachers. He said he would also begin working as a liaison between families and the schools regarding the challenges they were having.

Mr. Morris stated as the year progressed, the goal was to make sure that remote learning met the needs of the students and was of a quality education that was comparable to their counterparts while learning in-school.

Mr. Morris commented schools would be supported in meeting the needs of remote students and families by targeted contact and problem-solving. He added the District had contracted, with demonstrated success, with outside vendors to provide a series of online workshops that focused on such topics as flipping the classroom, strategies to create a connected classroom community, guided reading, and Envision Math online tools.

Mr. Morris said as they looked to the future the hope was to provide Merrimack families with options for schooling.

Superintendent McLaughlin stated one of the things the administration had learned was that as difficult as remote learning was for a lot of students it had proven to some to be immensely helpful for a variety of reasons. He said in light of that they realized there would always be a cohort of students who would prefer online learning and they were exploring the possibility of expanding remote learning opportunities.

Superintendent McLaughlin expressed his appreciation to Mr. Morris for taking on the new opportunity and challenge.

Board Member Schneider asked if there were any possibility that remote learning and hybrid learning could be blended. Mr. Morris replied they were just at the beginning stages and added the entire process would be a lot easier if they did not have to worry about the health of the students and staff.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio stated they were currently in the research and development stage and they were looking at data to help guide the future.

Ms. Hardy asked how much teachers were actually communicating with the students who were learning remotely. Mr. Morris replied every classroom in grade kindergarten through grade 6 had a class meeting built into their schedule and the middle school and high school had an advisory component built into it.

4. Status of School and District Operations Relative to COVID-19 Impacts

Superintendent McLaughlin commented currently there were six active COVID cases in the District among the students. He said students and staff had been extremely helpful by

wearing masks and the contact tracing process. He also said, however, 170 students were currently quarantining due to the active cases.

Superintendent McLaughlin pointed out the only way to keep operations running was to adhere to the requirements of quarantining. He added those students were being supported.

Additionally, Superintendent McLaughlin stated there were not any confirmed cases of in-school transmission and so far between the mask policy, and the illness and travel policy had been instrumental in preventing in-school transmission. He said the Governor wanted 100% of remote Districts to bring students back into schools. He said for the moment, the model that was in place was what he felt they could sustain.

Superintendent McLaughlin pointed out the District had sent out surveys to families and staff which asked what their preferences were in terms of resuming school, hybrid or remote. He added that appropriate training occurred after the results of the survey were reviewed.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented that sanitizing efforts were ongoing and the evening custodians worked Monday through Thursday from 3:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.; adding that two day-custodians were available on the first shift.

Board Member Schneider asked how the District was prepared for going 100% remote learning. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio replied they put students in the four groups (A, B, C, & D) by design precisely for the reason of going fully remote. He added the system was designed to meet the student's needs and have the opportunity to connect with their teachers.

5. Technology Status Report: Reflections and Projections

Ms. Nancy Rose, Director of Library Technology and Library Media Services addressed by providing an update on the adoption of Canvas. She said they were currently in a hybrid environment in terms of what they were using for learning management. She added the District licensed Canvas as part of the New Hampshire State cohort kindergarten through grade 12.

Ms. Rose said they had recently started working with a course designer from Canvas who was assisting and providing them with tips. She added they were looking into online training for students, teachers, and parents.

Board Member Rothhaus commented while Canvas was very exciting there were a lot of growing pains associated with its implementation.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio commended all of the teachers with the work they did around Essential Learning Competencies because that was

the tool that would allow them to have the consistency and parity across all of the grade levels.

Ms. Hardy encouraged communication with parents so they would then be able to assist their children. Ms. Rose replied communications would be sent out as each classroom transitioned to Canvas but it would not be all at once. She noted questions and support could be accessed at support@sau26.org or via reaching out to the teachers.

Regarding the current impacts of COVID, Ms. Rose shared that more devices were needed in homes but that 200 refurbished Chromebooks shipped the previous week. She said they presently had 1,040 requests for devices which were more than they were expecting. She said an additional 400 devices were expected by the end of fall.

Ms. Rose said Title funds, Trust Funds, and funds from the CARES Act were used to pay for some of the technology. She also said they were able to purchase some Windows laptops for students to support the technical education and graphic arts classes at the high school. She added they used money from her department's operational budget to purchase laptops for staff.

Ms. Rose stated that they implemented GoGuardian which was a content filtering program that was on devices in school and the content filtering was based on the user account for devices sent home. She said they obtain a three-year license and added they used Title IV funds to obtain additional content available online.

Looking towards the future, Ms. Rose noted they would need to renew some of the software packages and prepare for increased demands on technology when the students returned to in-school learning. She said they presently had 1:1 devices and did not feel they needed to stay that way. She added they needed to think through what ramifications might occur as a result of sending so much technology home with students.

Ms. Rose commented the District had done quite a bit with infrastructure over the past five-plus years on an incremental basis across the buildings. She said there was a "Hodgepodge" of updates across the buildings and they needed to look at that going forward. She mentioned the following projects that needed to be done:

- James Mastricola Upper Elementary School – switches and cabling work.
- Review of wireless vendors.
- More aggressive review/replacement of routers and switches to ensure uptime and adjust to increase loads.

Board Member Schneider commented he felt the challenge was to teach remote and in-person at the same time and said as they went into the budget planning season they needed to figure out what was in front of them with regard to the increased demand for technology. Ms. Rose replied that privacy was a concern.

Board Member Rothhaus asked if everyone in Merrimack School District had access to the internet. Ms. Rose replied they did not but they licensed some “hotspots” the previous spring. She added it was an ongoing challenge.

Vice Chair Barnes commented she felt they needed to be proactive when it came to cycling technology and they needed to discuss it often.

Board Member Hardy commented she felt it would be a good idea to see how other District’s handled selling the devices to the students and what the insurance looked like.

6. Introduction of Curriculum, Instruction, Technology Integration, Technology Systems, Assessment, and Data Committee (District CIT)

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio explained the discussion began approximately six years prior. He said the former committee, PERC (Program and Evaluation Committee) had served its purpose quite well but technology was currently such a big part of learning. He added given that the Merrimack School District established the Curriculum, Instruction, Technology Integration Technology Systems, Assessment, Data Committee (District CIT).

He said the committee would be composed of sixteen members:

- Assistant Superintendent
- Director of Technology and Library Media
- Two Administrators (one from the elementary level and one from the secondary level)
- Language Arts Coordinator or Department Head
- Special Education Coordinator
- Science Representative
- Social Studies Representative
- Librarian
- Digital Learning Specialist
- Support Staff Representative
- Parent
- Student
- School Board Representative
- Ad hoc member invited as relevant

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio said the committee would meet once per month to develop a vetting system, and review issues related to curriculum development.

Ms. Hardy suggested having two parents sit on the committee, perhaps one from the elementary level and one from the secondary level.

7. Remote Learning Impacts on School Cancellations due to Inclement Weather

Superintendent McLaughlin commented that one of the revelations realized was remote instruction could occur while school was not formally in session. He said there were a lot of scenarios that needed to be explored and discussed but they were ready, as a District, to experiment with not having “snow days.” He added the goal was to get it in front of the School Board and go from there.

Board Member Schneider stated he was in favor of not having “snow days” but noted power outages needed to be taken into consideration.

Board Member Rothhaus commented it would have to be a coordinated effort between the subject areas in order for it to be successful.

Vice Chair Barnes suggested that they ask the power company how many families did not have power on any given snow day. Further, Vice Chair Barnes said she felt they could provide more meaningful educational than the blizzard bag.

Board Member Hardy said most storms were known ahead of time and teachers could create a contingency plan for those who lost power.

8. Implications of Travel on School and Work Attendance

Superintendent McLaughlin said when the School Board approved the policy it was intended to follow the state universal guidelines and provide policy support to manage the school system so they could reduce if not eliminate the possibility of bringing in a contagion.

Superintendent McLaughlin added with the holidays approaching he wanted to ensure the people understood the policy. He said if a person traveled that person was required to quarantine with support and questions should be directed to a teacher or an administrator.

9. School Board Committee Assignments

Vice Chair Barnes stated that each of the Board members had a copy of the 2020 – 2021 School Board Committee assignments and questions should be directed to Chair Guagliumi.

10. Approval of Minutes

- **August 31, 2020**

Board Member Rothhaus moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes from the August 31, 2020, School Board meeting as presented.

The motion passed 3 – 0 – 1. (Abstained – Board Member Hardy)

- **September 8, 2020**

Board Member Rothhaus moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes from the September 8, 2020, School Board meeting as presented.

The motion passed 3 – 0 – 1. (Abstained – Board Member Hardy)

- **September 21, 2020**

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) to approve the minutes from the September 21, 2020, School Board meeting as presented.

The motion passed 3 – 0 – 1. (Abstained – Board Member Hardy)

- **September 28, 2020**

Board Member Rothhaus moved (seconded by Board Member Schneider) to approve the minutes from the September 28, 2020, School Board meeting as presented.

The motion passed 3 – 0 – 1. (Abstained – Board Member Hardy)

11. Consent Agenda

- **Approval of Indoor Air Quality Policy (EBBD)**

Board Member Schneider moved (seconded by Board Member Hardy) to approve the consent agenda as presented.

The motion passed 4 – 0 – 0.

12. Other

- **Correspondence**

Vice Chair Barnes stated the School Board received an email from a parent who was also a teacher in another District regarding the remote learning experience. She said while the email contained a lot of feedback there were no actionable items and she would forward it to administration.

Board Member Schneider commented he received an email from a constituent regarding how the School Board filled the open School Board position.

- **Comments**

There were no comments.

13. New Business

There was no new business.

14. Committee Reports

Board Member Schneider shared that SERESC (Southeastern Regional Educational Service Center) met on a monthly basis and they were currently evaluating how they were reacting to the remote delivery of their services. He said they were in frequent contact with Ms. Heather Barker to understand what worked in Merrimack and they had a very good relationship with the District.

Board Member Schneider also stated SERESC (Southeastern Regional Educational Service Center) was undertaking a long-term planning strategy and may reach out to the District for input.

Vice Chair Barnes commented that she participated in the New Hampshire School Board's Association Board of Director's meeting as well as the Executive Board the previous week. She said there were four new Board members and they currently had membership across the state.

Vice Chair Barnes stated she would be remotely testifying the following Wednesday at the Joint Education Committee for New Hampshire regarding future planning surrounding COVID.

15. Public Comments on Agenda Items

There were no public comments.

At 9:23 p.m. Board Member Rothhaus made a motion (seconded by Board Member Hardy) to adjourn.

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