

**Merrimack School Board Meeting
Merrimack School District, SAU #26
Tuesday, October 19, 2020**

Present: Chair Guagliumi, 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.

1. 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.

2. Public Comments

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.

There was no public participation.

3. Update on Progress and Next Steps Regarding Standards-Based Report Card (SBRC) Initiative

Superintendent McLaughlin mentioned the District had begun discussions regarding a standards-based report card approximately five years prior. He said when any policy had been in place for a significant amount of time it made sense to review it, adding that the educator evaluation system had been in place for over thirty years before the policy was revisited.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio stated the proposed standards-based report card (SBRC) initiative was being presented to the School Board, it would then be presented to staff, would be moved to a reporting period of trimesters, and would also have parent feedback.

Ms. Kimberly Yarlott, Principal, Reeds Ferry Elementary School, addressed the Board and said the committee consisted of representatives of teachers, special education teachers, unified arts teachers, assistant principals, principals, directors, and language arts coordinators.

Ms. Yarlott read aloud from the purpose statement as follows: “the purpose of this report card is to communicate with parents/guardians and students regarding the achievement of specific standards-based learning goals. It identifies students’ levels of progress, relevant to those goals, areas of strengths, and areas where additional time and effort are needed.”

Ms. Michelle Romein, Principal, James Mastricola Elementary School, addressed the Board and said the standards-based report cards would be sent out three times per year.

Trimester One: End of November/Early December (December 11, 2020)

Trimester Two: End of February/Early March (March 11, 2021)

Trimester Three: Mid-June (June 4, 2021)

Ms. Romein said the plan was still to hold two structured parent/teacher conferences during the year. She also said the committee chose to develop a more general report card for grade 1 through grade 6. Ms. Romein pointed out that the kindergarten level had a different report card due to the age of the children.

Ms. Romein shared that each grade level would have its own parent guide as well as its own teacher guide.

Ms. Romein provided an example of a reporting standard and the variety of other skills a child needed to know which would allow the teacher to report progress in that area.

Example:

Computes with Accuracy – (Reporting Standard)

CCSS (College and Career Readiness Standard) Math Content 1.OA.A.1

Use addition and subtraction with 20 to solve word problems involving situations of adding to, taking from, putting together, taking apart, and comparing, with unknowns in all positions, e.g., by using objects, drawings, and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problem.

Ms. Julie DeLuca, Principal, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School, addressed the Board and said there were national standards and competencies that were created by CASEL (Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning). She added that the reporting standards included self-awareness, self-management.

Ms. Marsha McGill, Principal, James Mastricola Upper Elementary School, stated the teachers identified central learning competencies for each trimester and would look at evidence and data to then report to parents. She said there three performance indicators:

1. Beginning: The student is beginning to make progress toward meeting the expectation for this trimester.
2. Developing: The student is not yet meeting the expectation for this trimester.
3. Meetings: The student is meeting the expectation for this trimester.

Ms. McGill added that teacher comments were also included as an integral part of the report card.

Ms. Yarlott said there were end of year benchmark goals for students and the idea was to have benchmark goals at the end of each trimester.

Superintendent McLaughlin pointed out that the Merrimack School District continued with trying to come up with innovative ideas despite the pandemic.

Board Member Rothhaus expressed some concern regarding moving the reporting periods from a quarterly basis to a trimester basis.

Board Member Schneider commented that he felt it was important to remind everyone that the proposed standards-based report card only applied to students in grades kindergarten through grade six.

4. COVID-19 Update – Merrimack Middle School

Superintendent McLaughlin expressed how badly he felt that the middle school had to go to fully remote for a two-week time period and said he realized how difficult it was on families.

Superintendent McLaughlin said the community really wanted to be able to return to some type of normal operations and that was what the District did at the beginning of the year. He added, however, that choice had consequences since there was some in-school learning during a pandemic.

Superintendent McLaughlin mentioned he had received a few emails which suggested the District did not value education if they were willing to close their schools. He said he was not sure how to respond to a statement like that other than to say it was just wrong. Further, he said the District had a responsibility to take care of their student's health and safety, particularly if they were aware of potential danger.

Superintendent McLaughlin explained he received information that a general service provider, who had been in contact with both cohorts, A and B, tested positive for COVID-19 on late Saturday afternoon and he immediately began conversations with Mr. Caragher, Principal, Merrimack Middle School, Ms. D'Amour, Assistant Principal, Ms. Davenport, School Nurse, and the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NHDHHS).

Superintendent McLaughlin stated that class schedules would include links for students to log into their classes and direct instruction would occur during the scheduled Zoom times. He added that special education services would continue during the two-week period of remote learning.

Superintendent McLaughlin said based on the experience with COVID in the spring with full classes of remote students, knowing there would be a limited amount of time with

students in the fall due to the hybrid model, they elected to focus their direct instruction time on just those students who were physically in front of them. He said they tried to learn from the experience and opted to have the hybrid students have direct contact with their teachers on their “live” days. (Both A and B cohorts would receive live instruction for two days per week.)

Superintendent McLaughlin stated that the identities of those teachers/staff members testing positive for COVID-19 were protected under the HIPPA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability) Act and the FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy) Act protected the identities of the students.

5. Guaranteed Maximum Rate for Health and Dental Insurance for 2021 - 2022

Assistant Superintendent for Business Shevenell commented the District had always been given a guaranteed maximum rate in the fall of each year that they used to build the budget. He said the guaranteed maximum rate for 2021 – 2022 was 9.3% but there was 2.5% leftover from the previous year so it would feel more like 4.0%.

6. Introduction of District System of Care Coordinator and Discussion of Current and Future Initiatives

Ms. Fern Seiden, System of Care and Learning Support Coordinator, addressed the Board by saying mental health and social and emotional well-being were very important.

Ms. Seiden commented that the System of Care and Learning Support Committee’s (SOCAL) goal was to develop a trauma-informed, integrated, multi-tiered, system of care that developed their capacity as educators to address the social emotional mental health concerns that were barriers to learning and achievement as well as to increase the resiliency of all students.

Ms. Seiden said their model to understand social and emotional learning was to build competencies within the five large areas of CASEL (Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning).

Ms. Seiden stated the current goal of the committee was to focus on three areas; refine, respond, and sustain the things they already had.

Ms. Seiden shared there were systems in place at each school to provide check-ins with students, professional development was provided to all staff regarding social and emotional learning, relationship building, and trauma-informed teaching based on the work of the SEL Taskforce.

Ms. Seiden stated the United States had a major mental health crisis and the Coronavirus only exacerbated the problem and she felt the community could make a difference by working together.

7. Update on Considerations Concerning October 30th Re-evaluation of Current Schooling Model Due to COVID-19

Superintendent McLaughlin commented the decision process lay on two separate but related phenomena, one had to do with hard facts and data. He pointed out there was currently a rise in COVID-19 cases with Merrimack having the highest rate of infection, excluding Manchester and Nashua.

Superintendent McLaughlin added that the community needed to decide whether or not it was ready to adapt to the necessary changes that were inevitable if they continued with the current school model or increased it. He added he would provide an update on the topic on Wednesday, October 28th.

8. NHSBA: Consideration of Authoring Resolutions

Chair Guagliumi commented the item was on the agenda because if the School Board were so inclined there was a window of opportunity to submit proposed language for a resolution to be considered by the delegate assembly in January.

9. First Reading of Revised Policy

- **School Volunteer Policy (IJOC)**

The District recognizes the valuable contributions made to the school programs by the volunteer assistance of parents and other citizens. The Superintendent is responsible for developing and implementing procedures for the selection and utilization of volunteers. The Superintendent may also develop such additional training requirements as he/she deems appropriate for volunteers and may establish such health and medical screening criteria and standards as he/she deems appropriate for volunteers. School district employees who desire the assistance of a volunteer should request a volunteer through proper administrative channels.

Guests

A guest is an invitee of the District for the purpose of a single presentation or occasional event. Guests shall always be accompanied by staff while in a school building. No guest shall be permitted to be alone with a student or students during the school day or any school activity.

Guests shall only be admitted in schools in accordance with the building visitor procedures. Any guest who presents a risk to student health or safety shall be considered a trespasser and shall be required to vacate the school premises.

Procedure for School Volunteers

All school volunteers will be required to undergo a background investigation and a criminal records check. "School Volunteer" means any volunteer who provides a service to the District without pay or any form of compensation, and includes, but is not

limited to, the following: (*here and after titled volunteer*)

1. Comes in direct contact with students, meeting regularly without the direct supervision of a Merrimack School District employee;
2. Volunteers who will be involved in extended overnight trips;
3. Any other volunteer so designated by the Superintendent or his/her designee;

All school volunteers are subject to the provisions of Policy GBCD - Background Investigation and Criminal Records Check. No individual shall be considered a volunteer unless they have been approved to serve as a volunteer by a school district administrator.

School Volunteer Application and Selection

Persons wishing to volunteer at the District must complete a *Volunteer Application*, describing their skills, interests, and availability. Also, the volunteer shall fill out a *Confidentiality of Student/Employee Information Agreement*. Such forms will be made available at the school/district website or upon request at the school or district office.

Every school volunteer must complete the Merrimack School District's two Risk Management courses through Primex (*or other training identified by the Superintendent*) titled: *Anti-Bullying for Schools K-12* and *Understanding Sexual Harassment*. Volunteer applicants must share their certificates of completion of both of these courses with the Principal's office before their application can be accepted. Volunteer selection will be made based on the qualifications and availability of the volunteer. They shall be assigned only to those teachers who have requested volunteer assistance. Staff should request volunteers through administrative channels for selected activities and as resource persons.

Volunteer assignments shall be made by the school administrator or designee.

Volunteers will be notified yearly of their responsible supervisor.

Volunteers shall be provided appropriate training at the building level consistent with their tasks and existing district standards. This training shall be developed under the leadership of the Principal. Exceptions would be district-wide programs established by the administration whereby general volunteer programs would be defined.

Volunteers serve at the pleasure of the District's administrators and shall reflect and model the character traits and moral conduct that are expected of the District's staff and shall comply with all applicable laws, regulations and District policies, including but not limited to, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, Pupil Safety, and Violence Prevention Act.

A volunteer may be asked to terminate his/her services when circumstances, in the judgement of the administrator, necessitate termination. Any volunteer who is insubordinate, incompetent, presents a risk to student health or safety, fails to act in a

manner consistent with the Code of Conduct and Ethics for educators, engages in any criminal conduct, engages in any discriminatory conduct, or fails to meet the expectations of their volunteer position or the applicable policies of the District may be dismissed. The decision of the school administrator shall be final and there shall be no appeal.

School Volunteer Duties

Selected volunteers will serve in the capacity of assistants and will not be assigned to roles that require specific professional training. Instructional services shall be rendered only under the supervision of certified staff.

All volunteers will sign a confidentiality agreement and shall refrain from discussing the performance or actions of a student except with the student's teacher, counselor, principal, or other school district personnel who has a legitimate educational purpose for discussing such information. The confidentiality agreement is included as Appendix IJOC-R.

Volunteers will refer to their immediate supervisor or other designated employee for any concern(s) which may arise, whether of an instructional, medical, or operational nature.

The District will incur the cost of the fingerprinting requirements for school volunteers. No volunteer will be considered a "school volunteer" until the completion and return of the criminal records check and all required coursework/training. The Superintendent may waive this requirement under special circumstances and to the extent permitted by law.

No New Liability

Nothing in this policy or any procedure shall be interpreted to create any new liability or obligation on the part of the District.

Nothing in this policy or any procedure shall be interpreted to create any new liability or obligation on the part of the District.

Legal References:

RSA 189:13-A, School Employee and Volunteer Criminal History Records Check

Appendix: IJOC-R

1st Reading: October 19, 2020

2nd Reading:

Adoption:

Vice Chair Barnes suggested adding the acronym FERPA after the words Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Board Member Rothhaus asked if the background check for volunteers was done on a yearly basis. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Fabrizio replied it was a continual service but if there was a break for over a year another background check would be required.

Board Member Rothhaus suggested the School Board could request a criminal record check at any time if there were any concerns. She also suggested the volunteer should have to disclose if there were any pending investigations against them.

10. Consent Agenda

- Educator Nomination

Ms. Laura Piccolo, Language Arts Coordinator, James Mastricola Elementary School

Board Member Schneider moved (Vice Chair Barnes) to approve the consent agenda as presented.

The motion passed 5 – 0 – 0.

11. Other

- **Correspondence**

Vice Chair Barnes stated she was contacted by a high school parent who had concerns with the number of students who were quarantined and added the parent assumed that was the number of actual cases. Vice Chair Barnes shared that she discussed the quarantine procedure with the parent.

Vice Chair Barnes also shared she received communication from a parent of a student in the elementary school who was looking for a class for parents in math so they could be of more assistance to their children learning from home.

Board Member Schneider commented he received correspondence from a parent regarding the budget for athletics as well as the surplus.

Board Member Hardy stated she received a message from a middle school parent surrounding the temporary closure of the middle school and what the educational impact would be.

- **Comments**

Board Member Rothhaus commented that the Merrimack Public Library would provide free flu vaccinations on November 30th from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

12. New Business

There was no new business to report.

13. Committee Reports

Vice Chair Barnes commented that the Professional Development Committee had met and reviewed certification plans and reviewed what the deadline for professional development plans should be. She also commented they discussed offering training for staff and parents on the Canvas learning portal.

Vice Chair Barnes stated Parks and Recreation would hold their Halloween event and noted it was by ticket-only and was sold out with a maximum capacity of 300 people and would be held outdoors.

Board Member Schneider shared that there had been a Budget Committee meeting to discuss the process to replace the open position and letters of interest were being accepted by the Chair through the following Friday. He said candidates would be interviewed and a new member would be selected at the next Budget Committee meeting for the duration of the election year.

Board Member Schneider added the Budget Committee discussed upcoming training as well as a report providing the end-of-year summary.

Chair Guagliumi noted for the record that Board Member Schneider would be the primary liaison to the Budget Committee and Board Member Hardy would be the secondary.

14. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Vice Chair Barnes read aloud from an email which was received from Mr. Joe Savitch, 3 Fairway Drive as follows:

I am writing to comment on the topic of item #7. First, I understand that the announcement will be on October 30th. Even with the news coming this weekend about the middle school, I hope the Board is considering expanding in-person options. That aside, whatever the decision, parents need time to plan. Can there be some assurance from the Board that even if the decision is to reduce in-person options there will be a grace period before any final decisions are made? There is a lot of anxiety around COVID and the uncertainty of what comes next is a lot. The general vibe from the Board is that in-person school will not last much longer. Even if that is not true, it's the feeling many parents are getting. All I am asking is for the ability to plan and transition. I would also request that if we go fully remote that the option be left open to return to in-person at a later time.

At 10:18 p.m. Board Member Schneider made a motion (seconded by Board Member Rothhaus) to adjourn.

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