

Manchester Essex Regional School District

School Committee Meeting Minutes November 2, 2021

Virtual Meeting via WebEx

Members Present: Sarah Wolf, Chair, Theresa Whitman, Matt Harrington, Kate Koch-Sundquist, Chris Reed, Erick Bourke, and Ken Warnock.

Members Not Present:

Staff Present: Pam Beaudoin, Superintendent, Avi Urbas, Director of Finance & Operations, Jennifer Roberts, Essex Elementary Principal, John Willis, Memorial Elementary Principal, Gail Hunter, Secretary

A. Call to Order: Ms. Wolf called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

B. Business Meeting Open Session

1) Public Comment

Ms. Wolf opened the meeting with a welcome to everyone who is joining us tonight and to 1623 Studios for recording the meeting and posting it for us. We will begin with public comment. She took a moment to remind everyone that this is an opportunity for comment, not debate.

As our policy states: "A School Committee Meeting is a meeting of a government body at which members of the body deliberate over public business. We welcome the attendance of members of the school district community to view your School Committee as it conducts its regular business meeting, but these meetings are not designed to be an opportunity for dialogue."

Please know that while we will not be immediately responding to your comments or answering questions, we are listening and paying attention to your concerns. During the meeting we will be focusing on items that are listed on our posted agenda.

If you would like to make a comment, please put your name and address in the chat. Please do not make other comments in the chat. We allot 20 minutes total for public comment, and we ask each person to limit their comments to 3 minutes. Ms. Wolf will time comments and ring a bell after 2 ½ minutes. After public comment is over, the chat function will be turned off to allow the Board to devote their full attention to the meeting.

There was no public comment this evening.

2) Chair's Report

Ms. Wolf stated she had met with the Student Advisory Group and especially enjoyed her time with them because it was pajama day. Ms. Wolf encouraged everyone to mark December 15, 2021 on their calendars for the first Budget Hearing.

3) Consent Agenda

- Acceptance of Warrants – 1014 and 1060
- Minutes – September 18, 2021 and October 5, 2021

Mr. Bourke moved to approve the consent agenda; Mr. Warnock seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

4) Sub-Committee Reports

- Elementary Facilities/MSCC (Theresa Whitman/Chris Reed) No Report

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the School Building Committee will continue to meet through the end of the year and asked Ms. Whitman and Mr. Reed to join the Building Committee at their next meeting. Mr. Urbas indicated the Memorial School Building project is in Phase III which includes all external grounds, driveway, parking, and landscaping. The project is working its way through a punch list and will be completing soon.

- Finance Committee (Matt Harrington/Theresa Whitman)

Ms. Whitman stated the Memorial School project remains on time and under budget. Ms. Whitman stated Essex has proposed starting a fund in anticipation of fluctuations in the apportionment formula and proposed the District put “skin in the game”. Superintendent Beaudoin and Mr. Urbas pointed out that the use of MERSD reserve funds brings down the operating budget and is the District “skin”. Superintendent Beaudoin and Mr. Urbas discussed the intricacies of the budget process and how the process works.

- Policy Committee (Eric Bourke/ Kare Koch-Sundquist) No Report

Ms. Wolf noted there had been meetings around starting the planning and negotiating process with negotiations starting soon.

- Negotiations Team (Sarah Wolf/Ken Warnock) No Report

5) Superintendent’s Report

- Festive October – School Spirit – the spirit around all the buildings was high and everyone appeared happy to be back in school. Student activities are back in full swing, and Playoff Season starts this week.
- October Open Houses – are completed. The teacher presentations were well presented and an excellent representation of their work. Overall, the open houses were well attended.
- Parent Conferences & HS PD today – high school teachers worked on School Improvement Plan and Vision of the Graduate.
- Strategic Planning – School Councils beginning work on School Improvement Plans aligned to District Level Strategic Plan and District is mapping DIP goals/timelines/deliverables.

Covid Management

- DESE Masking Mandate Extended to 1/15/22

- Numbers remain low
- Reporting
 - Post Weekly Report – Updated Wednesday Afternoon
 - Email communication in cases of outbreaks (ex. Class/Team)
 - Testing Program Available if Needed
 - Year To Date Student Positive 9, Staff Positive 2

Ms. Wolf added she would like to thank the communities for doing a great job supporting the District around COVID.

6) Continued Business

- SEPAC Update – No report
- State of the School Presentations – Assessment Data
 - **Jennifer Roberts – Essex Elementary School**

Principal Roberts stated the goal of her presentation is to look at the impact of Interrupted Learning at EES.

She will present: Anecdotal Staff Input (Survey, Counseling Data, MCAS scores from spring 2021, and Aimsweb plus Benchmark Assessment data from fall 2021.

Initially she will focus on all of the positives as demonstrated from EES data. Focus on the challenges the school faces based on EES data and plans to address these challenges.

Positives

- Everyday Math assessments indicate grade level proficiency at many grades.
- Upper grades most students are reading at or above grade level.
- Many teachers report students look similar to other years.
- Most teachers report socially competent students who are able to work independently.
- Students are excited to learn.
- They love discussing books and engaging in active learning.
- They are very happy to be in school.

Positive MCAS News

Grade 3 ELA – 2018 54% meeting or exceeding expectations, 2019 53% meeting or exceeding expectations and 2021 54% meeting or exceeding expectations

Grade 4 ELA – 2018 51% meeting or exceeding expectations, 2019 61% meeting or exceeding expectations and 2021 60% meeting or exceeding expectations

Grade 5 ELA – 2018 61% meeting or exceeding expectations, 2019 56% meeting or exceeding expectations and 2021 53% meeting or exceeding expectations

Grade 4 Math – 2018 57% meeting or exceeding expectations, 2019 58% meeting or exceeding expectations and 2021 55% meeting or exceeding expectations

Summary of Positive MCAS Data:

- EES is above State average in all subject areas

- Grades 3 and 5 improves in ELA. (Current grades 4 and 6)
- No students not meeting expectations in grade 3 ELA
- Grade 3 ELA improves 9% this year, while overall State average decreased
- Grade 5 ELA improves 3% this year, while overall State average decreased
- Grade 5 Math decreased by 2%, while the trend across the State showed overall decrease by 16%

Positive Data from the New Aimsweb Plus Assessment

- Students in grade 3-5 do not seem to be impacted by the disruption in school based on current date.
- Less than 20% of students in grades 2-5 need intervention in reading.
- Less than 20% of students in grades 3-5 need intervention in math
- Just over 20% of students in grade 2 require math intervention.

What Challenges is Essex Elementary facing and how are we planning to address the challenges.

Challenges staff have reported:

- Focus on our primary students
- Took longer this year to acclimate primary students to the routines of school
- Low stamina and very tired students in the latter part of the day
- Social interactions have appeared to be impacted a bit. Staff reports social immaturity in regard to peer interactions and ability to sustain independent work. However, that already appears to be improving.

How are we addressing these challenges?

- Primary teachers have adjusted the pace of their day
- Teachers have spent more time throughout the day teaching class/school routines
- Staff are modeling appropriate social interactions for students
- Teachers are doing more direct instruction with social skills
- EES is rebooting RULER, RTI, and SEL groups
- Primary teachers are providing play opportunities for students and hands on activities.

Counseling Data

- Currently the School Adjustment Counselor has a caseload of over 40 students
- Experienced teachers and in some cases, parents refer to counselor
- The focus seems to be on students with anxiety, trauma symptoms, and depression.

How is EES address this increase?

- Restructuring our resources. School Psychologist continues to evaluate students and share reports to IEP meetings, and she is increasing the number of small social emotional groups that she sees each week.
- School Psychologist and Counselor are collaborating to support our student population
- Staff is rebooting RULER this year with ongoing professional development to support this work

- Teachers are using classroom time to address social needs in the moment and provide direct instruction to support all students.

The Good News

- Our students are happy to be in school, even those who need additional support
- The culture is positive, and students are heard laughing throughout the building
- Being back in school appears to be helping everyone and the tone in the building is great.
- Additionally, we have had very few discipline office referrals.

Summary of Challenge Areas from MCAS data

- Grades 3 and 4 (current grades 4 and 5) have shown decrease in Math MCAS scores, which follows trend across the State

How are we addressing this?

- Looking at item analysis of these assessments to provide targeted instruction
- After school Study Skills/MCAS remediation is being offered for targeted students and will address specific areas of need
- WIN RTI groups this year will focus on math in grades 4 and 5
- As part of the Teacher Evaluation Cycle, Grade 4-5 Teachers' Student Learning goals focus on improving math computation

What Does Aimsweb Plus show us?

- Kindergarten Students: 14 of 36 students are high need in reading, 6 of 36 are moderate need in reading. On each of the math measures approximately 12 of 36 students are at risk.
- First Grade Students: 17 of 40 students are high need in reading, 10 of 40 are moderate need in reading, 6 or 39 are high need in math and 13 of 29 are moderate need in math.

How is this being addressed?

- Provide Title One small group literacy support with targeted students grades K and 1
- Resume full day data meetings (3X per year) to review data with staff and determine targeted needs for each class/student and develop Tier plan
- Strategically reallocate Reading TAS to focus on Tier 1 push in support
- Deploy Reading Specialists to provide explicit interventions in K-1 to cover the gaps (per science of reading)
- Use diagnostic assessments in grades K-2 to provide targeted Tier 1 approach to phonics instruction
- As part of the teacher evaluation cycle, grades K-1 teachers' Professional goals focus on shifting their practice to integrate new learning from the science of reading.
- Set targeted goals for students and monitor progress closely
- Common Planning meeting time will be used to review progress monitor data and discuss instructional practices to support achievement.
- Focus Professional Development on the Science of Reading in conjunction with our new literacy curriculum.

Good News

- We have so much to be thankful for
- We are back together, and teachers are engaging all students
- The culture at EES is as positive as ever!
- We have plans to address anything we face and face it together. We are problem solvers and collaborators
- Principal Roberts concluded by stating she is grateful for the staff, students, and families.

- **John Willis – Manchester Memorial School**

MMES Fall 2021 – State of the School

Agenda – General Observations and Anecdotal School Culture (Staff Survey Date), Academic Performance, MCAS Performance Comparison, Aimsweb Plus Results (at-risk readers)

General Observations – Strong Academic Performance, Social-emotional (self-control, behavior) and Impact greater in younger grades

Anecdotal School Culture

- Students, staff, and families are very proud of their new school
- Students and staff are very excited to be together in school
- Staff are inspired by our new teaching spaces to be innovative

Data from Staff Survey – Things we are working on

- Maturity – working in groups, age-appropriate play, physical space/boundaries, and independence
- Executive functioning – organizing, maintaining focus on task at hand, stamina
- Managing anxiety

Things our students are bringing with them each day

- They are HAPPY to be in school and together with teachers and peers!
- Students enjoy and are comfortable sharing FEELINGS during SEL work
- Students are EXCITED to learn in-person
- Academically STRONG
- Students seem more ADAPTABLE and FLEXIBLE
- CONFIDENT with technology

Climate Culture Actions

- Increased SEL Focus: RULER, Second Step Grade-level lessons, and Grade-level “Fireside chats”
- Staff Actions/Supports – Be the reason someone smiles today and positive vibes only
- Staff Appreciation – pay it forward and Monday shout outs
- Staff Voice – Monthly formal RULER mood meter check-ins and monthly grade-level meetings.

Academics: MCAS 2019 v. 2021

- Grade 3 ELA – 2019 77% meeting or exceeding expectations and 2021 73% meeting or exceeding expectations
- Grade 4 ELA – 2019 83% meeting or exceeding expectations and 2021 83% meeting or exceeding expectations
- Grade 5 ELA – 2019 75% meeting or exceeding expectations and 2021 78% meeting or exceeding expectations
- Grade 3 Math – 2019 66% meeting or exceeding expectations, and 2021 59% meeting or exceeding expectations
- Grade 4 Math – 2019 80% meeting or exceeding expectations and 2021 76% meeting or exceeding expectations
- Grade 5 Math – 2019 59% meeting or exceeding expectations and 2021 66% meeting or exceeding expectations

ELA Areas for Growth – Areas for improvement MMES performed at or below State average in:

- G3: Identifying the Thoughts of the speaker of a poem (-1)
- G3: Identifying a description of a character's Feelings based on the details in a story (-8)
- G3: Identify the Meaning of the title of a poem (-!!)
- G3: Sequence events based on information from an article (-12)
- G4: Determine how a picture contributes to the Understanding of a story (-2)
- G4: Determine what is **Suggested** about a character based on information in the story (-5)
- G5: Identify a description of an individual and choose EVIDENCE from the passage that best supports that description (0)

ELA Actions – Two Categories

- High-level thinking (thoughts, feelings, meanings) – SEL and Finding supporting evidence in the text.

Actions –

- Increased SEL work – RULER and Second Step
- Increase Exposure to poetry/stories that promote high-level analysis of thoughts, feelings, and meanings
- PD Focus: The Science of Reading K-5

Math Areas for Growth – Areas for improvement (individual question level) MMES performed at or below State average in:

- G3: Choose the pair of multiplication/division equations that are both true (-4)
- G4: None
- G5: Determine which triangle meets specified criteria based on the given side lengths of each triangle (0)
- G5: Solve a real-world problem by converting milli-liters to liters (-1)
- G5: Determine which expression with parentheses has an equivalent value if the parentheses are removed (-4)
- G5: Divide a decimal to hundredths by a whole number (-23)

Math Actions – Multi-step, higher-level, analytical problem solving

- Supplement individual enrichment efforts with whole-class collaborative, multi-step problem solving projects – Project Rooms!
- Provide additional opportunities for students to communicate (Math Talk) about solutions to complex problems
- Investigate the ELA/MATH differential – time on learning, curriculum, etc.

Mr. Willis concluded by thanking the students, staff, parents, supportive MERSD School Committee and the Community.

The Committee thanked the Principals for their presentations. Ms. Koch-Sundquist asked that regional equity across schools be maintained and what additional information was needed? Ms. Whitman expressed a similar idea and asked about vertical alignment. Superintendent Beaudoin indicated that there was more to come around restructuring options and the deployment of resources.

- FY23 Budget Timeline

November 16, 2021 School Committee – Initial FY23 Budget Discussion

December 7, 2021 School Committee – Presentation of Tentative Budget

December 15, 2021 Public Hearing

January 11, 2022 – Budget Discussion

January 25, 2022 – 2nd Public Hearing

February 1, 2022 – Adoption of FY23 Budget

7) School Committee Comment – There was no additional School Committee Comment this evening.

8) Adjourn

Mr. Warnock moved to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Bourke seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

WebEx call-In information available at <http://www/mersd.org/domain/818>

MERSD Mission Statement

Education all students, instilling a passion for life-long learning and encouraging local and global citizenship.