

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING

Held virtually via Zoom:

<https://zoom.us/j/99935225517?pwd=aUpNUk1ha0FaTmFsNTVjRE9oWnVIUT09>

Meeting ID: 999 3522 5517 Password: 06612

Tuesday, April 20, 2021 – 7:30 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Board members: Stinson, Goldstein, Cheida, Hicks, Parker, Wible

Administration: Zachery, Harrison, Pierson Ugol, Del Conte, Fox-Santora, Kaplan

Others: 35+ Members of the public

CALL TO ORDER

J. Stinson called the Easton Board of Education Meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Approval of Minutes from the March 9, 2021 Regular Easton Board of Education Meeting (Chieda, Parker). Approved. Unanimous.

Motion: Approval Minutes from the April 8, 2021 Easton Board of Education Special Meeting with the correction of eliminating the second paragraph on pg. 2. (Parker, Randy) Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

J. Chieda recognized being 13 months into the pandemic and the immense challenges that have been faced by all. She thanked everyone for their hard work on behalf of Easton's children. J. Chieda encouraged everyone to participate in Teacher Appreciation Week in any way they can. She discussed an article regarding the conversation at the state level in regards to continuing virtual learning, possibly into next year. The article focused on the challenges with remote learning and how it isn't sustainable or an effective method of teaching. She mentioned how it is important to continue this conversation at a future meeting.

REPORTS

Superintendent: Dr. Harrison welcomed everyone back from spring break. This Thursday April 22, he is meeting with Cohort C in a town hall format meeting, looking for feedback, recommendations, and options for next year. Legislation is currently being put forth discussing whether remote learning will be an option for next year. He reported on a slight increase in Covid positive numbers, but is confident that following all protocols and mitigation measures will ultimately keep schools open. Schools are being monitored by the local health department and schools are following all recommendations given. Dr. Harrison spent time at JBHS, focusing on student learning and engagement. He plans on visiting all schools with the same focus and purpose.



Assistant Superintendent: Dr. Pierson Ugol reported feeling optimistic entering the end of the school year and hopeful the worst is behind us. The district is continuing to focus on schools and student learning. Ugol thanked HKMS leaders for meeting with her and reporting on the current middle school environment thirteen months into the pandemic. The conversations were eye opening, well received, and collaboration continues to take place regarding student achievement and performance.

Director of Finance and Operations: C. Zachary said all reports given at the previous meeting two weeks ago, still are current due to the spring recess. J. Parker asked about the shortfall in the food service part of the budget. C. Zachary identified the shortfall, explaining that all three districts will take an equal part of that number, indicating the number is a variable dependent on how many students are in the building vs how many students are out of the building. A follow up conversation will take place at the May meeting.

Director of Special Education: J. Del Conte reported that the end of the year IEP/504 transition meetings have begun. Parent meetings, teacher collaboration between teachers/schools are included in these meetings. The SPED team is also beginning to look at projected caseloads, services, and needs for the following school year. ESY programs and student goals are also being worked on. J. Del Conte explained that although SPED numbers have held steady, numbers only tell part of the story. Looking at the intensity of caseloads and number of services per caseloads is also important.

SSES Report: K. Fox-Santora reported that currently at SSES, 34 students are in Cohort C, compared to 51 students last month. The fourth-grade class of 23 students, currently has all students in person which caused a shift to be necessary in room assignments. The extended day room and vacant art room on the second floor have been utilized to meet this need. SSES welcomed 5 new students, and had 3 withdrawals. She also provided an update to Kindergarten registrations for next year: 68 registration packets were picked up, 32 have been returned, and the administration is anticipating 81 incoming kindergarten students. The most recent minimum day was used for the following school years placement and class distribution. Smarter Balance Assessment begins the following day, in grades 3-5. K. Fox-Santora anticipates the enrollment in Cohort C to drop in size, but not to be at zero based on conversations she has had with parents. She recommended two spots for open choice enrollment. In the past, they have been able to report additional open choice slots as allows.

HKMS: S. Kaplan reported that a group of students worked together outside of HKMS, on the Cyber Patriot Competition, and received first place in the State of CT, highlighting the achievement of these students. A school supply drive was held to benefit the Curial School in Bridgeport. The goal was 70 pounds of supplies donated, she reported 205 pounds have been collected as of date. An event was held for incoming 6th grade students for the 21-22 school year, focusing on helping them become familiar with HKMS and assist in a smooth transition to middle school, in the midst of a challenging time. S. Kaplan also reported the ILA/Math specialist of HKMS held a parent workshop

S. Kaplan & A. Mohr presented findings of the NWEA Assessment, which is a national assessment normally held in June. HKMS administered the NWEA assessment early in order to analyze the results and put effective practices in place to help meet the needs of the students. The following trends were noted: in ILA there was an increase in the number of students scoring at or below the 49th percentile across all grades, indicating a need for targeted Tier II and Tier III intervention. In math, 6th grader scores had the biggest shift, while 7th and 8th grade remained fairly consistent. The middle school schedule will be adjusted as of April 26th, to allow for 201 minutes of academic instruction per day.

J. Parker stated a lot of information was presented and requested a copy of the NWEA reports be distributed to board members so they can take a closer look at it. R. Hicks suggested that in his take-away of the results, it seemed to state that the Easton school district was "worse off" than the rest of the country, but he wanted to have his interpretation clarified. S. Pierson Ugol stated that JRMS results were better and worse than Easton results and each category should be looked at individually and the overall results are dependent on many different variables. Reiterating that this test is normally administered in June, having it given now to students would allow the district to get a jump start on meeting the needs of our students.

J. Chieda commented that it is imperative to focus on our district now and the students that we have now. Comparing districts is hard, due to many different variables. Rather than only focusing on the gaps that the data shows, address how to remedy the deficiencies.

S. Kaplan continued to explain that Monday April 26 will be the start of the new schedule. R. Hicks asked if the schedule is not going back to pre-Covid normal, then an explanation as to why should be provided. He reiterated the importance of in-person student learning. A. Mohr explained a combination of Power School software challenges, creating new schedules, ensuring IEP instructional times/needs are being met, scheduling issues and making these all align is difficult to do in a short time frame. Continued conversation followed.

Board Committee Reports: none.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION FOR NON-RENEWALS

J. Stinson explained the position that will not be renewed the following year is that of a long-term sub. Dr. Harrison commented that this is not reflective of performance, but that said employee was on a 1-year contract.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education determine that the contracts of employment for the following teachers be terminated effective June 30, 2021 due to reduction in force: Sara Tenke (Parker, Hicks). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: EASTON EDUCATOR AND EASTON ADMINISTRATOR ASSOCIATION PROPOSED VERIP AGREEMENT

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education approve and direct the chair to sign a voluntary incentive plan agreement, in draft form, to be offered to members of the Easton Education Association (Parker, Hicks). Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: SUMMER PROGRAMMING

J. Stinson explained the board was hopeful to have the final negotiations back from the teacher's union in regards to the summer program, but these have not been received. S. Pierson Ugol added that good conversations have been taking place behind the scenes in regards to summer. She is hopeful to have the programming and details for parents within the next week.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: RECONCILIATION OF APPROVED BUDGET

J. Stinson reiterated the constructive conversations that have taken place in regards to the budget and thanked everyone involved in that process. R. Harrison reported no changes which could result in

releasing additional funds (except those that may come from the VERIP). The budget reductions have remained the same as the last time the board met. Proposed reductions come from the following categories: Zoom, Miscellaneous PD, Summer Curriculum Work, Student Activities Fund, PE Para, Curriculum Work, and Contractual Breakage. Grant money can be used to offset approximately 69K from the above cuts. The board members stated that the PE paraprofessional position would be the first item to be added back if funds break in a different direction.

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education accept changes made by Dr. Harrison and C. Zachary and approve the budget reconciliation in the amount of \$17,561,143.43 (Parker, Hicks). Approved. Unanimous.

J. Chieda asked if it is possible to make changes to add reductions that are presented today back into the budget based on additional funds/grants the board receives. C. Zachary confirmed that yes, it is possible as long as the board agrees and gets to the approved budgeted number.

PUBLIC COMMENT

A. Bonoff, Gregory Farm Road, thought the NWEA scores parents received were reflective of both Easton & Redding results. She would like clarification on that. She is happy the HKMS schedule is being changed to include more instructional time. She asked for the public to be able to view the PowerPoint stacks that were presented in tonight's meeting. She also commented that she hopes the curriculum is not being watered down for students at the top-tier level. In addition, inflexibility of programming software is not an excuse for not returning to a pre-Covid schedule and shouldn't be a barrier to making a change.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education Regular meeting to be adjourned. (Hicks, Chieda). Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:04 p.m.

Submitted by Gretchen Goldstein
Secretary, Easton Board of Education

Recorded by Kim Keil