

Filed subject to approval

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING

January 11, 2022 – 7:30 p.m.

****IN-PERSON****

Helen Keller Middle School Cafeteria

Minutes

ATTENDANCE:

Board Members: Stinson, Chieda, Hicks, Parker, Wible, DeJesus

Administration: Pierson-Ugol, McKinnon, Fox-Santora, Clapp, Del Conte, Petruzzelli,

Others: three members of the public

CALL TO ORDER

J. Stinson called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES/CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: move to approve the Minutes from the 12/14/2021 Easton Board of Education Regular Meeting. (Chieda, Wible) Approved. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT

D. Barer-Is glad to see the board of education and administration thinking about the social and emotional health of the students. The pandemic has taken a toll on every child, in every grade in some way. Wants money to be allocated towards this current issue.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

J. Chieda Thanked Kim Fox-Santora for all her time outside in all kinds of whether greeting children off the bus.

D. Wible Thankful that the district and administration have been so dedicated towards keeping our children in school. She is grateful for the excellent communication and efforts across the board.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Student Academic Progress, Social Emotional Health and Extracurricular Activities

Samuels Staples Elementary School Principal, Kimberly Fox-Santora, reported that today at SSES, was the first day that no student or staff member tested positive for Covid. This has been an enormous task that has been handled on a daily basis. There is 1 full time social worker and .4 psychologist on staff. The number of students who need services pre/post pandemic are high. A clear pattern of behaviors that weren't previously seen, have been seen post pandemic. Academically, teachers, administration, and support staff meet on a cyclical basis (6-8 weeks) to evaluate students who are meeting benchmarks vs those who aren't. Intervention plans are planned around this data. The lack of small group instruction due to social distancing constraints, has been a huge challenge with intervention practices. The data "tells a story" about each individual child and drives conversations about how to help each student. Extra-curricular

activities are not a huge offering at SSES. This is partially due to budget constraints. Natures classroom will not be taking place this year.

Helen Keller Middle School Principal, Steven Clapp, reported the need of intervention services amongst students has increased at the middle school. The academic need takes place across both Math and Literacy. These students are being provided differentiated instruction, receiving extra support from teachers/support staff. Conversations with parents are happening on a regular basis. Extra tutoring support has been given to students that qualify in increasing executive functioning skills. This program has been extremely successful and the effects are being seen in classroom. Students may also “drop in” if they need help with something specific. The school counselor has dropped 3 students, partially because of this type of support. Nineteen extra-curricular activities are up and running. Students are reporting they are happy to see these programs back. This is also helping students’ social, emotional well-being. Students who are struggling with making/having friends are given support. This is an extremely important variable when looking at the success of middle school students.

Current Impacts of COVID-19 on Operations

Samuels Staples Elementary School Principal, Kimberly Fox-Santora, reported that the building is still suspended visitors, restricting clubs, utilizing different eating facilities, suspended small group instruction, and has a shortage of subs. Students home from college, Sacred Heart students, and parents have been helping with subbing but the demand is higher than SSES can staff. Staff have also been moved around to meet this need.

Helen Keller Middle School Principal, Steven Clapp, reported that the Media Center reopening has been an excellent, well used resource in the building. Revamping the center and making it more user friendly has also made it multi-purpose and it currently serves many functions. The administration is hopeful small group instruction can resume soon. There is enormous value in this type of teaching and collaboration. J. Chieda asked for a breakdown of student activities for the purpose of justifying budgeting decisions. She reiterates the Board values extra offerings for students. S. Clapp is passionate about the importance of keeping these extra-curricular running. The instructional time/schedule blocks that were severely impacted by COVID, are almost back to pre-pandemic time.

Director of Special Services, Jennifer DelConte, reported that a big change has occurred in SPED numbers. In December 2020, 76 students had IEP’s at SSES and in December 2021, 91 students have IEP’s. The Preschool program has also received an increase in referrals. The district overall has seen an increase in SPED referrals. In December 2020, there were 2 and in December 2021, there were 13. In addition to the academic need, a focus has been on supporting special education students, social and emotional needs. This has been done with extra support staff including school psychologists, social workers, and special education teachers.

Director of Finance and Operations, Scott Petruzzelli, presented budget object summary report. (Slides).

J. Parker stated the importance of outlining where the ESSER grant money is being applied for this year. Was the money designated from last year’s budget used for the Capital improvements?

Why are the encumbered dollars driving some line items from Object Summary into a negative balance?

R Hicks commented on the importance of showing the FTE's that are being paid with grant money this year.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Stephanie Pierson-Ugol, shared her board report.

J Parker asked if there would be one or two Climate Surveys. The answer was one. We would use state suggested questions as well as others from different sites.

J. Chieda asked for clarification on what set of rules/guidelines we following for Covid. J. McKinnon explained that the CDC puts forth recommendations and then the CT State Health Department interprets those guidelines. The State then puts forth guidance. The district receives the guidance and then implements/adopts them with the help of the Redding/Easton Department of Health. J. McKinnon explained the recent change made over the break and the rationale behind it. He is hopeful that these restrictions can loosen in a few weeks.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: ACCEPT EASTON LEARNING FOUNDATION GRANT TO SSES OF \$4,601 TO FUND GEORDES DECODABLE TEXTS

Motion to accept Easton Learning Foundation's Grant to SSES of \$4601 to Fund geodes Decodable Texts. (Wible, Hicks) Approved. Unanimous.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CURRENT STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND PROJECTIONS FOR 2022-2023

J. McKinnon reviewed the Student Enrollment Report of current year and projections. Enrollment projections are critical for budgeting purposes. ER9 uses Prowda software to assist in this data collection. Easton has seen an increase in enrollment numbers in 2021. It is projected that Easton will have an increase of 23 students next year. Easton's enrollment is trending slightly above state levels. A rebound in enrollment begun in 2021. Currently Easton has 893 students, Prowda projects an increase of 20-25 students. Next year's enrollment projects approximately 975 students in the district. Prowda predicts a 10-year projected growth of N=165 students. Based on this trend, in 2031 the district will have approximately 1059 students. Easton needs to plan accordingly for this increase. Discussion followed.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CURRENT STAFFING AND ANTICIPATED STAFF PROJECTIONS FOR 2022-2023

At SSES, first grade will be requesting an additional class section. Going from 5 classes to 6 classes. This is the difference of having a class size of 20 students or 16-17 students per class. SSES will also be looking to expand the Bridges program in the next year, this will also help with decreasing outplacement costs. Increasing the assistant principal's contract from 11 to 12-months, will be an additional cost.

At HKMS, an additional math para educator is needed. Based on the data presented, this is needed and well spent support (4 to 5 para educators). Currently, additional support staff is being funded via Covid funds. The funding ends this year; therefore, this position will need to be included in the budget. In addition, a behavioral technician is decreasing from 4 to 3, which will be a cost savings.

Discussion followed and will continue at the budget meeting.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Board discussion about budget process, how data/information will be presented to explain the thought process behind the projected budget.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education Regular Meeting be adjourned. (Parker, Chieda) Approved. Unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:44 p.m.

Recorded by Kim Keil