



The Helena Public Schools educate, engage, and empower each student to maximize his or her individual potential with the knowledge, skills and character essential to being a responsible citizen and life-long learner.

Board of Trustees – Work Session

Tuesday, September 22, 2020

MINUTES - APPROVED

ATTENDEES

Luke Muszkiewicz, Chair	Tyler Ream, Superintendent	Lolita Carter
Siobhan Hathhorn, Vice Chair	Josh McKay, Assistant Superintendent	Erika McMillan
Terry Beaver, Trustee	Barb Ridgeway, Chief of Staff	Nicole Evans
Libby Goldes, Trustee	Janelle Mickelson, Business Services Administrator	Chelsea Mazurek-Pierce
John McEwen, Trustee	Pat Boles, Technology Administrator	Jane Shawn
Jennifer McKee, Trustee	Gary Myers, Education Technology Coordinator	Howard Derosier
Sarah Sullivan, Trustee		Kim Beatty
Jennifer Walsh, Trustee	Lisa Lowney, Kessler Principal	Casarah Green
	Trish Klock, Bryant Principal	Britany Hoover
	Lona Carter, Jefferson Principal	Rhett Buckland
	Nick Radley, Four Georgians Principal	Sarah VanStry
	Erin Maxwell, Ray Bjork Principal	Jamie Bright
	Brian Cummings, Jim Darcy Principal	Amy Pfister
		Jennifer Schaefer
		Nicky Twitchell
		Jessica Pickens
		Jessica Wester

I. CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

After a tour of Kessler Elementary School, Board Chair, Luke Muszkiewicz called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

II. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No changes were requested to the meeting agenda.

III. SCHOOL PRESENTATION

Kessler Principal, Lisa Lowney, described Kessler's culture as family, community, children, and education.

Ms. Lowney provided the board with an overview of the 37 classified and certified staff at the school. This included 11 classroom teachers, one resource teacher, .6 PE and music teachers, a librarian, a .6-.8 speech therapist, a full-time counselor, a .5 psychologist, a .2 nurse, nine classified staff, a CSCT program, a sign language interpreter, a secretary, two custodians, one SACC person, and one principal. Kessler Elementary has eight para-educators.

Ms. Lowney provided an overview of the students, though a more accurate count would be available after the October pull date. Kessler has 47 DLI students and one DLI teacher, who teaches Grades 3-5. Grade K-2 DLI students are distributed among Central, Four Georgians, and Rossiter. There are 29 Kessler students received SPED services, 32 students receive speech services, and 5 students are involved in the gifted and talented program. Ms. Lowney provided information on student attendance and transportation.

Ms. Lowney addressed Kessler's WIN (What I Need) groups and the Instructional Framework, which was developed last fall based on Deb Hunsaker's Intervention Flowchart Training. A systematic screening for behavior disorders was scheduled for October.

Ms. Lowney provided STAR reading and math data from fall, 2019. She added iReady results from this fall would help Kessler educators determine the level of instructional intervention individual students would need.

Ms. Lowney told the board Kessler School is an MBI (Montana Behavioral Institute) school and educators are trained in Pax. She provided data on incidents by area of school and by grade.

Ms. Lowney provided an overview of the Kessler activities and clubs, along with community and family support programs.

Mr. Muszkiewicz voice his appreciation to Ms. Lowney for hosting the first work session of the school year.

Mr. Beaver asked why a greater number of students moved from B Days to A Days. Ms. Lowney replied her prerequisite was if students did not have siblings in other schools and the change worked best for the family, she allowed a switch. Mr. Beaver asked if that was a consistent practice across the district. Mr. McKay replied they were being handled on an individual basis, and accommodations for families was likely.

Ms. Sullivan asked for feedback on the hybrid model. Ms. Lowney replied the staff has really come together. They started with operations training, progressed to school-specific planning, and then establish and executed the rolling start. She added it has been very challenging but seeing kids

back in the building was great. Ms. Sullivan referenced the systemic behavioral screening and asked for additional details. Ms. Lowney requested Jim Darcy Principal, Brian Cummings, provided the details. Mr. Cummings provided the board with background information on how the screening process was established. The screening took place within the classroom environment – not an interview – to identify internalizers and externalizers. Once those individuals were identified, school educators and administrators worked on a tiered system of approach to look for interventions in a confidential, supportive manner. Ms. Sullivan asked if more speech therapists were still needed. Ms. Lowney replied the elementary schools worked to be flexible to develop the best schedule of support. She added she couldn't speak on behalf of the entire district, but it had been her experience that more speech therapists were always needed.

Ms. Hathorn asked for feedback on the effectiveness of smaller classroom sizes provided by the hybrid model. Ms. Lowney replied there were some benefits to the smaller classes, but teachers were teaching five days of work within two days. Ms. Hathorn referenced the STAR math scores and asked what made the school so successful. Ms. Lowney replied the incredible teachers and the use of Math Expressions, which provided an effective pacing and instruction model.

Ms. McKee voiced her appreciation to the Kessler staff for their involvement in the success of each student.

Mr. McEwen asked Ms. Lowney to walk through the MTSS Integration chart. Ms. Lowney detailed the chart for trustees. Mr. McEwen asked for examples of negative behaviors. Ms. Lowney answered a larger behavior would be physical contact. She added it was important to note they looked at processing through the behavior and supporting different choices next time.

Mr. Muszkiewicz referenced the safety and security upgrades and acknowledged District Facilities Director, Kalli Kind, and her team for their work.

IV. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Kim Beatty requested the board schedule a special meeting make the action to allow additional spectators at school-sponsored sporting events and to open schools five days a week.

Howard Derosier voiced his concerns with the effectiveness of digital learning.

Nicole Twitchell read the email she sent to the District Superintendent and the County Superintendent regarding printing assignments from Teams and requested packets be printed out for students.

The Board of Trustees recessed at 5:20pm. The meeting was called back to order at 5:29pm.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. ITEMS FOR CONSENT

Mr. McEwen moved to approve the items for consent. Ms. Sullivan seconded the motion. There was neither public comment nor board comment. The items for consent passed unanimously.

B. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Dr. Ream presented a draft Metrics-Based Phasing Protocol for trustees' consideration. The metrics included county- and state-wide health indicators. Protocols were developed by looking at metrics-based plans from other communities and the Harvard Global Health Institute.

Dr. Ream provided examples from the Bozeman Public Schools and Yellowstone County Health and discussed how they compare to the Helena School District's draft plan. He told the committee the phasing decisions utilized three consecutive weeks of data and included a range which must be met for each phase. He then outlined the draft protocol for phase decision timing based on primary and secondary indicators. Options to be considered with the phasing protocol were phasing specific grades at different times or increasing the days/hours for students with designated need. He cautioned that Phase I is the only in-school phase that allows for masking and social distancing.

Dr. Ream asked for questions and feedback on the protocol. Mr. Muszkiewicz thanked Dr. Ream for the data, framework, and collaboration with community health leaders.

Mr. McEwen asked if the county health department was making decisions in conjunction with neighboring counties. Dr. Ream replied there was a multi-county command team that met weekly. He added the district paid attention to neighboring counties via the Lewis & Clark County.

Ms. McKee voiced her appreciation for the complicated structure of Phase I and requested the district properly consider to the difficulty of shifting phases too soon.

Ms. Hathorn asked if there had been enough time to master Phase I. Dr. Ream replied there had not based on feedback he had received. He added they were trying to establish if Phase I was a viable model or if the metrics needed to be redone. He added the logistics of the plan had improved each week of the school year. Ms. Hathorn asked the amount of lead time a school would need to restructure schedules if a different phase was determined. Dr. Ream replied scheduling would be significant because they couldn't anticipate if parents would choose DLI as an alternative. Ms. Hathorn asked if consideration had been given to changing the school year. Dr. Ream replied that the logistical steps would need to be determined for that option.

Mr. Beaver voiced his appreciation for the plan.

Ms. Sullivan supported the model since it included the “how” and “why” behind the decisions. Dr. Ream replying he was appreciative of local health partners’ time they have spent working with him.

Mr. Muszkiewicz voiced his concerns on the transition processes of phasing up or down. He asked how the district was in that process. Dr. Ream replied the district phased once – from summer to Phase I, and it took several weeks to prepare. He added the protocol was the first step in the process. The next step would be to structure and discuss logistics with principals. Mr. Muszkiewicz applauded Dr. Ream’s holistic approach to the protocol.

VI. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

There was no Superintendent’s Report.

VII. BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Muszkiewicz voiced his appreciation to the support staff for setting up the hybrid meeting and allowing the community to engage in a way that worked best for them.

Mr. Muszkiewicz provided the board with an update on the search firm candidates, which included a tentative meeting on October 1 to view presentations from potential firms.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55pm.