

CITY OF HOLYOKE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING OF FEBRUARY 10, 2020
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2020
TIME: 6:00 PM
HOLYOKE HIGH SCHOOL DEAN CAMPUS

School Committee Vice Chair Mildred Lefebvre called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present:

Mayor Alex Morse (arriving at 6:05 p.m.), Mildred Lefebvre, Devin Sheehan, Erin Brunelle, Rosalee Tensley Williams, Rebecca Birks, Irene Feliciano-Sims, John Whelihan, Nyles Courchesne, Superintendent/Receiver Stephen Zrike, Holyoke High School Dean Campus Representative Jay-Von Perez, and Holyoke High School North Campus.

Ms. Lefebvre informed all attendees that, Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s 20, a video and audio recording was being made of the meeting and the meeting was being shown live on the City's community TV channel.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

None

STUDENT SHOWCASE - DONAHUE SCHOOL STRINGS PROGRAM

String Teacher, Adrienne Wade, was present with a group of 6-8 students from Donahue School. The group played three French folk songs, led by Jayden and Brianna. Most of the students were 1st year students and a few were 2nd year student. There are about 35 players in the G5-8 string program at Donahue School. Also present were Principal Mark Swygert and AP Tom Drohan.

Mayor Morse arrived at 6:05 p.m.

COMMUNICATIONS & REPORTS

Student Reports

Jay-Von Perez reported that the next Town Hall is planned for February 14th at Dean Campus. Shops have been alternating the running of the Town Hall and students like having that opportunity.

On Thursday there will be a parent night for tours so that parents can see Dean, and parents of 8th graders are encouraged to attend.

Ms. Brunette told Committee members that State Representative Aaron Vega visited HHSN last Friday to speak to students about political advocacy and career paths. He also spoke about food sustainability.

HHS Varsity Swim Team sent 4 members to the Western Mass Fast Chance Meet with a total of 11 qualifications.

The HHS musical, Mamma Mia, began rehearsals under the direction of Mark Todd. The show will run 4 performances in late March.

Introduction of New SEL Director, Mario Flores

Mario Flores is the new Director of Social Emotional and Behavioral Learning. The district has been looking for someone to fill this role for some time. Mr. Flores is local and has done a lot of work in urban schools. Mr. Flores' entire career has been in the area of behavioral and social emotional supports as a residential counselor, a medical case manager, and in schools, beginning his work as a behavior interventionist in the Hartford Public Schools. He will be in schools as often as possible supporting school-based staff and teams and will be involved in efforts to design positive school environments where all students can thrive.

Mr. Flores will work to implement a robust and comprehensive tiered strategy for social emotional learning and behavioral supports. He will oversee the Family and Community Engagement office, help with the district's equity work, support counselors at all schools around social emotional learning and behavioral supports.

Bryte Program - a tier 3 intensive, individualized support for students with the highest needs. This work will be done in conjunction with school administrations and families.

Behavior Interventionists - This work is done at the district level and he will be coordinating the work of these staff members as well.

The intent is to look at all of the efforts to be sure that HPS students are being supported as much as possible with the resources available.

Mr. Whelihan asked if the number of counselors is sufficient to meet the needs of students in the district.

There are twenty-seven counselors across the district, two behavioral interventionists, and eleven staff doing family engagement work. Mr. Flores is

working to get a better idea of what the district needs; more resources are always needed, but the process now is focused on auditing what is in place and determining if the current structure is the best use of staff.

Ms. Lefebvre wanted to be sure that trauma and mental health services would be across the district programs, including the Transitions Program.

Mr. Flores will be overseeing the work around crises as they occur. For example, what resources and services are needed when something tragic or traumatic happens in the community, for both students and staff.

Within the school setting he is looking at how trauma informed care will guide multi tiered systems of support. There are staff who have been trained in certain areas of trauma informed care and practice, and while there is not currently a coherent, cohesive system, that will be built-out at the tier 1 level. Staff will be getting professional development around trauma informed care, and what it looks like to be trauma informed as an individual school and as a school system.

Work is ongoing with appropriate staff to understand what a good, comprehensive child study team looks like so that data related to behavior and screenings of children in classrooms is being looked and that it informs the view of the whole child.

Dr. Zrike reminded the Committee that the Bryte program involves the hiring of four trauma counselors for the schools with the most significant trauma needs in the early grades (Morgan, Kelly, Sullivan and Lawrence.) Mr. Flores is onboarding those new counselors and the paraprofessionals working with them. Those staff members will be assigned a caseload of students in the schools to provide more intensive support for the youngest learners.

Mrs. Birks asked how long it would take to have trauma counselors in all schools. It should be a priority to have these kinds of counselors in every school and in all programs, including the Transitions Program.

Dr. Zrike said that would need to be part of the funding conversations. Not all schools will need a full time position, but there are other schools that will. HHS North and Peck do have a model that is funded through grants.

Another piece that has to be discussed around funding is more college and career counseling for high school students, which the students themselves have asked for. There are a lot of needs for adjustment and guidance counseling across the schools. Mr. Flores will provide oversight for all of the programming related to these student supports so that there will be consistency across all schools.

Mr. Flores said the goal is to provide cohesion across all of the six programs, including the two schools with grant funded programs, but programs will be nuanced based on the school communities and grade levels being served.

Holyoke High School Updates

Steve Mahoney, Lily Newman, Jake Belanger and Sheila Fallon were present to talk about student performance under the high school redesign. Also present were Mickey Buhl, Megan Harrison, Al Gates, Laure Dennis, Tony Quinones and Efrain Martinez.

- Last year was the first year of redesign implementation. Most of the work was focused on structures and systems, including 10th grade academies, freshman teams and freshman academies, a newcomer program designed to best serve newcomers and ELL students, the first freshman class on the Dean campus in the last few years was welcomed, the build-out of opportunity academy continues.
- MCAS changed significantly last year, including students taking the exam digitally rather than paper and pencil. The rigor and knowledge of skills changed as did the way student performance is categorized. What was previously proficient and advanced, were replaced by meets expectations and exceeds expectations.
- 2018-2019 showed a significant drop off between proficient advanced scores for English and math and the meets and exceeds expectations scores for English and math.

Lily Newman talked about the need for a strategy for academic improvement. Last year involved getting to know teachers, students and curriculum & instruction. It became clear that last year, and in prior years, teachers were not teaching on grade level. She said she believed that teachers had lowered the text levels and lowered the bar in the majority of classes. This year 60% of 9th graders arrived at HHS in urgent need of intervention. There is a need for strong curriculum and multi-tiered systems of support, which is true across the district.

- HHS leadership worked closely with teachers to review the highest rated curriculum for ELA and to collaboratively select SpringBoard curriculum, the College Board ELA curriculum, and it is being piloted this year.
- Work to refine curriculum for tiered interventions is underway.
- Teacher led professional development related to STAR assessment system tool is ongoing. STAR assessments occur beginning, middle and end of year to measure student progress.
- 1:1 coaching is provided for individual teachers to support implementation.
 - The impact of this work is that courses are on grade level and targeted strategies for ELs and SWDs are closing achievement disparities.
 - There was promising mid-year results on STAR, with 54% of 9th graders and 64% of 10th grade class sections showing a growth of 6 - 14 months in 5 months' time.

- Data inquiry cycles with teachers are helping them to monitor student learning during each unit and to target instructional strategies to address areas of challenge.

Sheila Fallon, 9th grade English teacher, talked about the SpringBoard curriculum from a teacher's perspective.

- Teachers worked last summer, across grade levels, to be sure there was vertical alignment for ELA.
- She has seen a significant change in the STAR data after using SpringBoard this year.
 - STAR data allows teachers across content areas and specialties to see what students have specific skills need to be worked on and the team is able to provide supports across the subjects.
 - Department specific meetings focus on STAR data to identify specific areas of weakness to address student needs.

Mayor Morse left the meeting at 6:46 p.m.

Jake Belanger, Math Department Chair talked about the math strategy plan.

- To address deficiencies and increase math proficiency at all levels for all students the following steps have been implemented:
 - Illustrative Mathematics curriculum has been adopted.
 - The math dept. professional development is teacher-led and focused on inquiry cycles that incorporate the curriculum implementation with focus on research based instructional routines.
 - Professional development partnered with and was supported by award winning educators, such as Tina Cardonne, lead writer of Illustrative Mathematics geometry curriculum, Jamil Sadiq, 2019 Mass Math Teacher of the Year, was Mr. Belanger's personal coach, Mike Flynn, a 2010 Presidential Award Winner of Excellence in Math and Science, and Dr. Chrissy Von Renesse, and her team from Westfield State University. These partners helped to align the curriculum and research based instructional routines for all students around grade level standards and expectations.
 - He works 1:1 to support the implementation of the research based instructional routines, unpacking high quality assessments, and assessing and interpreting student data.
 - Grade level math teachers in algebra 1 and geometry have common planning time that focuses aligning their implementation of curriculum and instruction and improving classroom data and culture.
 - HHS has adopted and developed common classroom norms and habits of work and learning across all math classrooms that are modeled, practiced, and reflected on routinely to help foster more independent learners.

- The math department has plans to strengthen relationships between the special education department and math department to better align grade level curriculum and instructional routines. Similar planning will occur with K-8's to begin to prepare students for math expectations prior to entering the high school.
- Based on STAR data, this work has shown that 75% of 9th grade math students have shown 1 year of growth in 5 months this school year. Sixty percent of 10th graders showed 8 months of growth, based on STAR, in 5 months this school year.

Ms. Newman talked about work in the area of science:

- New 9th grade environment science course developed
- Science supports are responsive to student needs, including Thursday school and Saturday school support.
- Teacher-led professional development and collaboration.
- 1:1 coaching for teachers on implementation.
- Strategic assessments, such as mid-terms, are used to track progress and target support.

Mrs. Birks responded to the comment made by Ms. Newman that teachers were teaching below grade level. She stressed that there are amazing teachers in the Holyoke Public Schools. She also expressed concern that the programs highlighted are not being implemented at the Dean campus. She asked what is being done for special education students.

Ms. Newman said that teachers did not know how to measure Lexile levels of the texts they were using. They now do and understand the importance of students accessing Lexile appropriate sequence and Lexile level texts. She believes that teachers appreciate having a curriculum that can be adjusted to meet student needs.

Mr. Mahoney explained that there is a special education teacher attached to each grade level to ensure accommodations are being provided in the classroom. Those teachers are also providing literacy classes that are part of a student's special services.

Mrs. Birks said she did not believe that was not the case for science and social studies.

Mr. Sheehan noted that participation rates on MCAS and ACCESS were poor overall at HHS. ACCESS participation last year was 85%, and only 21 students made progress. MCAS participation rate overall for math and ELA was about 87%, and there were issues in some of the subgroups. He asked what the plan is to increase participation and what was the participation rate for the ACCESS window that just closed.

- Mr. Mahoney told the committee that they are trying to build in greater incentives for students to attend school and take the exam.
- Students' testing behavior was evaluated.

- Ms. Newman said the ACCESS participation rate was at least 10% higher this year.
- Al Gates indicated that some of the incentives for students on the Dean Campus include gift cards raffles, special breakfasts and lunches for students.

Mr. Sheehan asked what supports are being provided for ELL and former ELL students, noting that only 2 students either made progresses or exceeded expectations in math and 1 in ELA.

- Supports include work on the ESL curriculum. English language learning classes ensure that students get to the level the need to get to. Students are taking rigorous Spanish ELA classes and ESL classes also target those reading and analysis skills.
- There is intentionality around math vocabulary, but there is more work to do.

Mr. Sheehan again noted the poor participation and encouraged more thought around incentives that students would respond to. He suggested the possibility of picking students up and bringing them to school on testing days.

Mickey Buhl, Opportunity Academy Director, talked about the increase in graduation rates and decrease in dropout rates.

- Giving students opportunities to graduate, even after they have been knocked off track in high school, has made a big difference.
- School counselors have worked to identify students who are moving towards dropping out or not graduating on time and they have built interventions for those students.
- Opportunity Academy, which includes Gateway to College at HCC, Success Center, and Lighthouse, is 100% student/family choice programming.
 - Students are able to choose whether to stay on one of the HS campuses or move into one of the other programs so that they can move their educations forward.

Meghan Harrison talked about enrollment in advanced coursework.

- Advanced coursework enrollment has nearly doubled since 2014.
- In addition to AP, dual enrollment and early college gives students an opportunity to earn high school and college credits at the same time. It also exposes students to the college experience so they can see themselves as college students.
- Students on the Dean Campus are now eligible and are participating in dual enrollment. Seventeen students, about half the senior class, are taking a dual enrollment class.
- This year 345 students are taking either a college course or an AP course.
- These programs are increasingly enrolling a population that reflects the school's demographics.

Al Gates, Dean Campus Principal talked about work on the Dean Campus.

- In 2017-2018 the total enrollment was 150 students in grades 10-12.
- In 2019-2020 the enrollment was 270 in grades 9-12, with wait lists for both 9th and 10th grades.
- For 2020-2021 the anticipated enrollment is 350 students, moving above 400 for the following year.
- Forty-five percent of all students are earning honors credit in at least one course.
- One hundred percent of ninth graders are enrolled in ethnic studies that includes both history and English.
- Fifty-three percent of seniors are in dual enrollment classes.
- Seventy-six percent of 9th graders are on track and passing all core classes.
- Sixty-three percent of grade 9 and 10 students hit the benchmark for student growth percentile on MOY STAR testing in reading and math.
- Student voice is important on both campuses and student voice at Dean drives all decisions.

Tony Quinones, Laurie Dennis and Efrain Martinez talked about work-based learning programs.

- Sixty-seven students were placed in work-based programming this year.
- There is a job shadow program that is mainly for 9th graders, which introduces students to internships.
- Eighteen students are in co-op situations this year.
- Fifteen 10th graders in the health assisting program are going out to HeadStart to begin to work on 70 of the 150 hours required for CNA training.
- Six 11th graders are going to Renaissance Health Care to begin their practicum work.
- Ten students in Culinary Arts are interning with HeadStart's Healthy Families Dinners program.
- Ten Carpentry students will begin work at Gardner with the Carpenter's Union and they will work full days with union members.

Steve Mahoney said Holyoke High School has had mixed results under the accountability system. There are some areas of strength, places where there is some improvement, yet it is below target, and there are areas of real concern. The places of concern and where students are below target are top concerns of the work underway.

Mrs. Birks commented on the amazing job Mr. Gates is doing at Dean. She does not believe he gets enough recognition for the work he does. She has talked with Dean families, students and staff and they speak very highly of Mr. Gates and the work he is doing for students and for families. That work is reflected in the students and staff. The staff at Dean is happy and they speak positively about Mr. Gates and his leadership. She thanked him for the work he is doing at the Dean Campus.

Jay-Von Perez told the Committee that Mr. Gates connects with students in a very positive way. He often lets students take control and he trusts students.

Erin Brunelle left the meeting at 8:17 p.m.

Mr. Whelihan said he'd like to see how the graduation and dropout rates for Holyoke measure up against other gateway cites and against the state averages.

Mr. Sheehan said he is a big proponent of dual enrollment for high school students. AP courses are good, but the College Board is a for-profit entity with tests that set students who have not had a very traditional high school education up for failure. He mentioned Charlotte Brunette, who will be leaving high school with 15 college credits.

He asked if there has been any planning around bringing new shop programing to Dean that would be unique to Holyoke.

- Ms. Dennis said they would need to look at the regional blueprint and labor market and balance that against student interest.
- Given the shortage related to a diverse teacher workforce, she would consider early childhood education, not for creating day care workers, but to create a pipeline to teacher education.

Mr. Courchesne said he'd like to do school tours so that he can see what's happening in the high schools now. He had experienced a decline at HHSN during his children's time there and he'd like the opportunity to see what's happening now. Counseling is so very important. Ms. Brunette shared that her counselor was out all year. Counseling is an area that the district needs to invest in.

- Agreement that there would be tours set up through Dr. Zrike for members who are interested.
- Jay-Von Perez added that the Dean Campus has a program where student ambassadors lead tours of the school. Mr. Gates said he and the students would be happy to host members on a tour.

Discussion of 2020-2021 Program of Studies

Ms. Newman explained that much of the content is similar to last year's program of studies. There are some tweaks to policies. There are some changes in the language section. World language and ESL have been combined into one department with the goal of being strategic on aligning on what it takes to teach a student a language and making sure the English language development course 1 aligns to the Spanish 1 and French 1 courses because language acquisition skills and strategies are similar across different languages.

Ms. Lefebvre expressed concern about the small number of electives available to students in the Therapeutic Intervention Program versus electives available to other students.

Superintendent / Receiver Correspondence

Food Service Newsletter

HPS in the News

NEW BUSINESS

Minutes of Meetings

Regular Meeting of November 18, 2019

Regular Meeting of December 16, 2019

MOTION: Mr. Sheehan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Collamore, to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 18, 2019 and December 16, 2019. The motion carried unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Lefebvre reminded members that there would be a joint City Council/School Committee meeting Wednesday.

Mrs. Birks reminded members about the Thursday night meeting at Holyoke High School North Campus, for families to provide input into the process to find a new receiver for HPS.

Update on Safety and Sporting Events

Dr. Zrike reported that issues at sporting events have been specifically surrounding Springfield games. There has been an elevated police presence for those games. Anyone involved in the original altercation has been disciplined. Police have followed up with adults involved in the incident. For the remaining Springfield games limited amounts of tickets have been sold both in Holyoke and in Springfield. There have been no additional issues related to sporting events to-date.

MOTION Ms. Feliciano Sims made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Birks, to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

The Regular Meeting of February 10, 2020 adjourned at 8:53 p.m.