

CITY OF HOLYOKE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MONDAY, JUNE 21, 2021
TIME: 5:41 PM

CALL TO ORDER – ROLL CALL – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

School Committee Vice Chair Mildred Lefebvre called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and announced that pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 20, attendees are hereby informed that a video and audio recording is being made of the meeting and the meeting is being live-streamed and run live on the City's community TV channel.

Present: Mildred Lefebvre, Devin Sheehan Remote, Erin Brunelle Remote, Rosalee Tensley Williams Remote, Rebecca Birks Remote, John G. Whelihan remote, and Superintendent/Receiver Anthony Soto.

STUDENT SHOWCASE- Opportunity Academy

Geoffrey Schmit shared with the committee about two projects that they worked on with us in the past year through remote learning.

One of the things that we like to do with our project based learning is connect students to experts in the field and given that we were able to work a lot with people via zoom this year, which was a different addition for us, Jacob was able to work with an expert slam poet who read his poetry gave him direct feedback.

Danielle Rassone, I am the english teacher at opportunity academy and this is my eighth year with the district prior to opportunity academy we were the adult ed program.

Nicole McNeil, Math teacher for opportunity academy and this is my ninth year here.

Jacob Ortiz Rosario, New Student at OA, Shared his article that was published in the Boston Globe this winter. I was in the Slam Poetry Class, and got inspiration from being physically in school, to going behind the screen. What helped me make the transition was the opportunity academy. I was able to make connections with the teachers, especially the writing coach. Also, worked closely on that poem with Usman Hamidi who is an award-winning slam poet.

Josh fernandez, recent OA Graduate is working towards getting into an agriculture school. Particularly one of the better ones here in massachusetts and is just an incredible young graduate incredible story for us and he's going to share a little bit about a project he did in our navigation math class. Shared his scavenger hunt voyage project that was made in the winter. In navigations class and it was basically using what we learned about plotting points on a graph and adding it to a scavenger hunt for us to show that

we understood it, it was a real world experience, and relatable. It was really very hard to do at first, to understand the point slope intercept form but as time went on they were exciting. I graduated from the program, and I'm enrolling into Penn Foster for Veterinary assistant it's pretty fun so far as I'm expecting to finish that up and go to school for Horticulture and the Stockbridge School of Agriculture.

Miss Tensley Williams- Thanks the students for all their hard work.

Ms. Lefebvre is very impressed with OA, and the three different options that students have. It's very difficult for students to really progress within the general education and they need to find something more individualized. We're not leaving any student behind and we're making sure that we're giving students all the options available and making it possible for them to graduate.

Superintendent Soto commend the students for coming prepared to the meeting and wants to thank all the staff over at Opportunity Academy. This program has just been amazing and re-engaging some of our students, having the flexibility required to keep them engaged and get them to graduate we're doing amazing work over there.

Katherine, Executive Director of lighthouse, we are in a moment of celebration we had a great year despite it all. We were hybrid and then more and more and by the end, a lot of the kids were in person. Our graduation on June 10th and we graduated 11 people six of them through the Holyoke Public Schools. Katherine introduced us to Jasmine Reyes had a stellar year stellar experience with us through the opportunity academy program and we're about to launch our fellowship program in collaboration with Americorps. That is in no small measure modeled on the program that Palante has at Holyoke High. We borrowed a lot of their leadership training and inspiration from them and we're really excited to bring that to lighthouse. Jasmine is going to be our first fellow.

Jasmine Reyes, I'm a recent graduate of lighthouse and I'd like to talk about my experience there. I ended up switching my junior year. I heard about lighthouse through Palante and I made a big decision to change to help my education and better myself, and lighthouse is definitely a bigger change than Holyoke High School. Lighthouse is a family, and everybody is optimistic and supportive. A big highlight for me was definitely pushing myself more and honestly if it wasn't for anybody at Lighthouse I wouldn't be really doing this.

Ms. Birks, Jasmine you did an amazing job, speaking public is not easy.

Ms. Lefebvre is a former mom of Lighthouse. Her husband created the time capsule box where students can put memories and share with the other students that come along along the way in the coming years. Lighthouse is a special place, that is a community and a family and if it wasn't for lighthouse my daughter probably would not have graduated.

PUBLIC COMMENT- ATTACHED

COMMUNICATION AND REPORTS

- **STUDENT REPORTS - NOT PRESENT**
- **METCALF STUDENTS- NOT PRESENT, WILL BE ADDED TO THE NEXT MEETING**

SUPERINTENDENT/RECEIVER REPORTS, ANTHONY SOTO

SUMMER SCHOOL UPDATES-

We will hold 5-week Summer Programs for students in grade k-8 starting July 6th and run through August 5th, Monday through Thursday. We will offer In-person programs for all grade levels and offer remote options for Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and Generation Teach. Currently we only have 7 students registered for our remote option. We will monitor the enrollment and offer program if we see a greater need for remote programming. The locations will be:

- EN white which will house the lower elementary and Dual Language program for rising grades 1-3 .
- McMahan which will house the upper elementary program for students in rising grades 4-5 and STEM Middle School
- GenerationTeach Program for middle school students rising grades 6-8.

Our Acceleration Academy will take place the week of August 9th - 13th from 9-3 fo students in grades 3 at EN white , Students in grades 4-5 at McMahan .The Acceleration Academy will also be offered at the highschool for students in grades 9-12 from 8:30-12:30 on both the Dean Campus and Holyoke High North Campus. Currently there are 187 students enrolled in our non ESY Summer program Early Elementary (30), Dual Language (293), Upper Elementary(16), Acceleration Academy (20).

Outreach efforts included school initiatives that went out in the LIA, We've made school visits to promote and assist parents with enrollment, and flyers have been distributed to local businesses and staff are in the process of doing Cold calling to individual families.

We currently have 100% of staff hired for summer program. We are still looking to hire one nurse to run the GenerationTeach Program at STEM, three paras at EN White and one more counselor.

One of the programs we wanted to spotlight is the somos exploradores. It's a project-based learning, award-winning Jason curriculum for science. Students will get real hands-on experience, it'll be fun and the curriculum will be embedded into the summer learning. Our rising first through third graders will get to build life-size coral reef models and then our rising fourth and fifth graders will program robots and use them to find the wreckage of the titanic. We're also including academic intervention in ela and math using lexia and do the math curriculum.

The high schools will be offered at all three campuses. We have about 120 confirmed enrolled across all three campuses. (Dean, North and OA) but expect that the enrollment is going to be closer between 250 and 400 by the time we start summer school.

For the extended school year programs we're going to be having it at Donahue Lawrence and Jericho, where we normally have it the transition academy and we'll also have some drop-in therapy services for students. Currently there are enrolled at about 300 enrolled and is increasing. This program is also fully staffed at this time, and will continue to recruit staff as enrollment rises.

Ms. Lefebvre clarifies that all summer school program run from July 6th, to August 5th.

Summer Feeding Program

This was the fourth year of a five-year contract that we have with our partnership with Sodexo and we recently went through a transition of staff. Tim Viviros, the general manager, has been working very closely with the past general manager, Ashley Hall this past year and Deanna to make sure that the summer feeding program has continued and is serving the the families in Holyoke.

The food service program didn't skip a beat, once we got shut down in March of last year. We continued to open up our sites and continue to feed students. We started with just breakfast and lunch and eventually moved into breakfast, lunch, snack and dinner, all while maintaining the guidelines of COVID 19. Since april 5th, when we moved to the in person model, and worked closely with all the individual schools and made sure that food service delivery models worked for that specific school.

Lyman terrace was an area that was very hard to reach because of the construction around there we recognizes that the distance between that site and where we were serving our meals. We decided to start delivering meals via VanPool, which has been successful. When our student started in-person, students were just taking breakfast and lunch home, and we were able to work with the schools and adjust our program so that students that needed and wanted to also take a snack and a dinner home as well.

We have increase our meal participation significantly, pre-pandemic, was close to over 80% , Some schools were over 90 percent and then once the pandemic hit you could see that in October we were serving about 30,000 breakfasts and lunches and less than 20,000 dinners and snack. Since May you can see that those numbers have increased drastically 50,000 breakfast and lunch and 40,000 dinners and snacks.

At the last meeting we talked about some of the focus groups that we've had, and I want to mention that those focus groups have been very successful, and we've been able to meet with students in which their feedback has impacted a lot of change in some of the menu options that we provided. We will continue to hold those focus groups throughout the upcoming school year so that we could continually improve the program.

The summer eats program is going to have a mobile summer feeding program. Food service trucks will go to different spots in the community. We've partnered with community partners to identify some spots in the city where we could get some traction and get these services where they're needed. We will also have our regular curbside pick up for meals at Donahue School, Lawrence School and Morgan School, Monday through Friday from 11 to 1 for any school aged children.

Site information provided on slide 19.

Fall Sports

Melanie Martin, Athletic Director, This year wasn't traditional but despite the covert precautions and everything we've been able to hold four short and non-traditional seasons in the fall and then in the spring. We were also able to hold boys volleyball, baseball, softball, wrestling.

We are looking forward to a traditional season in the fall for sports. Sign ups, in person at Kelly and Stem, Through zoom with Peck and Donahue and we've dropped off packets at McMahon, Sullivan, Blessed Sacrement and Mator de la Rosa, and Holyoke Charter.

In regard to the concern around access to sporting programs now that we're on two campuses, one school. We do have a daily bus that goes from the Dean Campus to the North Campus so any Dean Students that want to participate in sports do not have that barrier of transportation. We have wrestling housed at the Dean Campus so wrestling students at the North Campus that want to participate in wrestling will be bussed as well.

Mrs. Birks, requests that some home games happen at the Dean Campus and not only at the North Campus, if we have athletes from both schools, we need to share that, for instance for basketball games.

Expressed the importance of how hosting games at Dean builds community, and gives us the opportunity to show the community to come down to Dean and see what the school's done, where they're at, how it's looking and build that sense of community up for them.

Superintendent Soto in response to Mrs. Birks, we do house wrestling at the Dean campus, and could definitely take that feedback back to our athletic team, and gain feedback from students at Dean on whether they would want sports at their school.

Melanie Martin in response to Mrs. Birks, Some concerns is the cost of busing, since we pay for busing in both directions at certain points depending on the athletes. I would have to figure out the logistics of parking and how people are getting into the gym. Where the buses are parking, and equipment that would need to be moved down to the Dean Campus sporadically for games, As far as the medical support, there is not an athletic training room, and then the equipment would all have to move down there to run games. Ms. Martin is not against it, but has to figure out how we feasibly can do this with

minimal staff, medical coverage for our practices, that are going on at the same time as our games, and then sports that would actually be feasible in the gym.

Mr. Collamore sought clarification on students having the ability to access physicals at the school.

Mel Martin in response to Mr. Collamore, students now have to go to their own doctor and get a physical. A mandate from the state to not do mass physicals. Some kids were being held out because of things that came up on their physical, that may have been approved by their own doctor. Cynthia Carbone and I work with the teen clinic, and have offered and done some physicals in school, there's walk-in clinics that we've tried to get people to go to through Holyoke Health Center and then the obviously the new pop-up clinics that kids can go to which do charge a fee and go after their insurance.

Ms. Brunelle expressed concern just thinking ahead to our strengths, and as recruitment at Dean increases in numbers hopes that we're starting to see extra kids going out for high school sports.

Suggests that with the recruitment and with the rise in enrollment, for example too many freshman, Dean starts to get their own athletics in order to alleviate some of the cuts that could potentially happen.

Seeks clarification on whether that is possible since we are technically one school or are we stuck with freshman JV and varsity as a city.

Also strongly encourages outreach to Dean students so they are aware of the athletic opportunities and aware that transportation is provided as athletics is important and a critical resource to getting kids to be successful in school.

Superintendent Soto's response to Ms. Brunelle, we would we would have to go through a similar process that we went through before the demand for athletics is so high, especially with enrollment coming up. We definitely will take a closer look, there would have to be a process that we follow with the state to make that happen.

Mel Martin's response to Ms. Brunelle, All communication is sent out with the information regarding transportation, and the equal access to the athletic programs. We do have a couple of coaches that are on the Dean and Stem campus along with principal Gates and their guidance department who help promote as well. If Dean hits its full capacity, at that point it would need to break away and have their own sports. The Dean & North campus would separate into two schools. I just want to caution that we look at this and evaluate it and make sure we're doing these in the right steps so that we don't lose any athletes in either campus. The ultimate goal is to have the the biggest percentage of kids participating on both campuses and and have it work together.

Mr. Sheehan questions if we have had any interest in fielding any new teams

Mel Martin, Response to Mr. Sheehan, I have spoken with the youth directors for girls lacrosse, unfortunately, there are only 7 students and that is not enough to fill the team. Is looking to partner with other communities or the lacross club for these students.

Panorama Survey Results

Mr. Sheehan raises concern around the access to the survey results. Access to the result were no accessible when logging in.

Jenny Malave, Data Manager, This is our sixth year using Panorama to assess our culture climate of our district. Panorama surveys our students, teachers, and staff and families. Participation rates for students and teachers/staff remained in line with past year's participation, with 65% of all students grades 3-12 participating, up 11 points from last year, and we had 79% of teachers and staff participate- the highest percentage we have seen since starting the survey. Family survey responses took a dip this year with 1018 surveys returned. We think this was caused by survey burn-out as families were asked to take a significant number of surveys related to returning to in person learning during this same time period. All questions express the percent of respondents selecting the top 2 most favorable answers.

Mr. Sheehan explains that the slides provided in the slide deck, do not show all the schools and would like the participation rates for all schools as just target the best seems to not be productive to the conversation.

Ms. Malave,

Student participation rates by school, White 94%, Gateway 71%, Lawrence 67%, Dean 37%, HHSN 73%, STEM 75%. Kelly 68%, Sullivan 71%, McMahon 92%, Metcalf 50%, Donahue 62%, Morgan 34%, Success Center 30%, Veritas 51%, and Peck 67%.

Staff Participation Rates by school, White 100%, Gateway %, Lawrence 58%, Dean 64%, HHSN 88%, STEM 200%. Kelly 93%, Sullivan 100%, McMahon 93%, Metcalf 74%, Donahue 87%, Morgan 66%, Success Center 100%, Veritas 56%, and Peck 100%.

Family Participation Rates, in number of participants

White 179, Lawrence 13, Dean 60, HHSN 47, STEM 25, Kelly 25, Sullivan 81, McMahon 61, Metcalf 109, Donahue 86, Morgan 26 Veritas 37, and Peck 50.

Ms. Lefebvre stresses the important on the availability of the breakdown by school. It isn't very helpful to not see the entire districts breakdown. Also, suggests ALL this information should be included in the packet.

Ms. Malave will put together a table for the committee with all the participation rates, and share them with the committee as well as provide access to the results.

Mr. Sheehan suggests that it would be helpful to see the full breakdown of the slides, just seeing an aggregate isn't helpful of the entire district. The only slides that were provided in the deck are similar to the ones shown in the presentation. It would be helpful to have it broken by school.

Ms. Malave explains the goal today with the presentation was to give you guys a high level overview and explain our district level action planning and reassures Mr. Sheehan the break down of results by school will be available.

Ms. Lefebvre is making a request for this topic to come back to the committee with more detailed information, as there's always issues and it is better for us to bring it forward and be transparent about it, then work together to improve it.

Dr. Curtis agrees, and informs the committee that this year we took the data and broke it down and action planned at the cabinet level, and teacher advisory group. The five high level trends that we needed to dig in and determine how to respond to as a district. This data is a very high level view and then there's the last two slides that show how we responded to the data that we have concerns about.

Ms. Lefebvre replied that if we are looking at data by school, we have our seven wards, and when we're seeing something within our ward or the schools that we represent, or all schools, these are ways we can connect with our with the residents of our wards and find out what exactly is going on and how we can help them better improve.

Explains it is not just the district leadership doing the work, we're all supposed to be working together for the community and the district.

Mrs. Birks, We are missing so much important data that I don't know how this presentation is going to be helpful at all. We need to know what the issues are and this is just highlights. We need to understand which schools are struggling, why they are struggling, where are we having staff that really aren't satisfied. We need to understand the breakdown to actually you know how to be helpful, as we only got one third of important information.

Superintendent Soto, informs the committee that the intent was not to only look into the highlights, or positives. This was a reflection of our deep into the data ourselves and when we wanted to highlight some positive and then some areas of focus for next year.

Understands that the committee wasn't more details and will be sure to come back in August and provide an update as this was not intended to hide any information.

Ms. Malave, Large increases were seen in students feeling like rules were fair and teachers being excited to teach classes (+ 15 points). Students also reported gains in feeling like most students tried hard to get good grades (+14) and having their culture and native language respected at school (+6 points). Decreases were seen in students feeling like it was possible to change their intelligence (-6 pts) and feeling that teachers made students explain answers (-9 pts).

This year, students reported big gains in having opportunities and activities that meet your interests and needs (+26). 69% of students report that teachers are excited to teach classes and 85% report native language and culture respected at school. At the same time however, we want to highlight that only 33% of students report having materials at school that have people who look like them. Areas for concern are in fields of student connectedness, with 26% of students reporting feeling connected to other students at school and 41% feeling connected to adults.

Mr. Sheehan, clarifies whether the question for 6-12 books and material at your school that look like you, is provided to in the grades 3-5 survey, and the results for that question.

Ms. Malave responds, yes, the result was lower, **21% favorable.**

Over the last 5 year, the biggest increases have been seen with students feeling like most kids are trying hard to get good grades and teachers being excited to teach classes. Additionally, student felt like they are being asked to revise work increasingly in ELA and SS. Places for growth include increasing students' ability to pay attention and not get distracted and increasing students' understanding of why working on something is important for learning. While we have seen an 11 pt gain in books and materials looking like our students at the gr 6-12 level, this is much lower than we would like it to be and we will highlight plans moving forward at the end of the presentation

Our teacher survey showed large increases in feeling that student/teacher relationships were respectful (+31 pts) and feeling like students were able to access additional support when needed (+17 pts). 65% of teachers responded that their working environment was positive (+10 from last year) and 87% reported their schools showing respect for all students' cultural beliefs and practices. Teachers reported low favorability for the current learning model (44%) and decreased satisfaction with district level PD (-12 pts)

The staff survey showed similar increases to respectful student/staff relationships (+18 pts) and positive working environment (+16 pts). 90% of staff reported their school showing respect for students' cultural beliefs and practices and 76% expressed colleagues were supportive of new initiatives (up 15 pts from last year). Areas for improvement include stagnant change in staff feeling empowered by the district to impact change and feeling like staff don't always have input into important decisions made by schools.

When we look across five years, we can see positive working environments and respectful teacher/student relationships has continued to increase. Teachers have increasingly felt that colleagues were supportive of new initiatives. Areas for growth include consistently low favorability for feeling like Central office supports the implementation of School Improvement Plans and the district empowering school teams to impact change.

Families reported small increases to feeling that schools provided books and materials that reflected family's cultural background (+4 pts) and the school embracing students and families as their own (+2

pts). 89% of families felt that schools expected all students to achieve success. Small decreases were reported in feeling like schools provided opportunities for families to learn how to support learning at home (-3 pts) and meeting or communicating via email or phone at least monthly (-2 pts).

Generally over five years, family survey results have not moved in as large of jumps as the respective student/teacher/staff surveys. Over five years, we saw 3 pt increases to families feeling that all students were expected to do well and a 4pt increase to schools embracing students and families as their own. Over this time period, there was a 1pt increase in feeling that schools were preparing children for college and career and a 2 point decrease in reporting meeting or communicating via phone or email with students' teachers at least monthly.

Ms. Lefebvre noted we didn't have the one year one slide we had the five year survey trend.

Action Planning, Dr. Curtis and cabinet members reviewed the panorama survey data and created an action plan in response to the five highest leverage trends that emerged as concerns

Student & Staff Participation:

- How can we ensure that we continue to encourage student voice at the high school level and ensure that participation is consistent year to year?
- **How do we celebrate schools that were able to get high participation rates during this time?**

Family & Community Engagement:

- What is the expectation for collecting family voices?
- **How do we push for movement among these metrics given the longstanding stagnation?**

Professional Development:

- What data do we have from exit tickets and surveys to cross reference this finding?
- **What can we do prior to the beginning of the school year to ensure professional learning is supportive and meaningful for staff?**

Culturally Responsive Teaching:

- Where is the discrepancy between high reports of respect for student/family culture and embedding culturally responsive teaching in the classroom?
- **How do we create better alignment between what is reported by students/families and teachers/staff?**

Student Connectedness:

- What supports can be put in place now to help students feel connected to their peers?
- **What actions need to be taken between now and the beginning of school to prepare for the SEL support students will need in the fall.**

Ms. Lefebvre, for the fall are families allowed to choose whether their child is remote or is everyone in person. What are we doing with Laptops and Ipads that were provided to students by the district.

Explains that we might have some families that may not have the ability to have a chromebook and maybe this was a way for the student to complete electronic work, or homework at home or for assistance on how to complete some of the work at home. Is there a possibility for families to keep it at home? What happens if a family loses a charger?

Superintendent Soto, HPS is all in-person. It is important to maintain the 1:1 model. As many of you know over 5000 devices out to students. And we will be collecting devices on the last day of school. We have communicated a process for collecting devices at the school level, so each team has a collection device team and plan to reach out families to ensure those devices are brought back to school. It is important Students that return their device will be entered into a raffle to win prizes. Student having the ability to complete work or interventions in the school next fall. We're trying to get the devices in to reimage and service them prior to the start of school. It is not the expectation that student sit in front of a chromebook all day but maybe how can we use them knowing that the student comfortability levels are much higher.

We'll work with families if that is the case, or a principal reaches out to us. If a family expresses that they want to continue through the summer, students can bring in the device, and get one reissued however, it is important that we inventory all the devices so we know what we have for the beginning of the year.

We are working on replacement costs for the devices, and accessories, and will work with families who can not afford the replacement.

Mr. Whelihan would like clarification on how the Panorama Survey were received.

Ms. Malave, all of our surveys are done electronically. Students and staff and teachers, we roster those surveys, directly based on our student information system so every student grades 3 to 12 gets a personalized email directly from panorama inviting them to take a survey and it tracks whether or not they completed it the survey. It is anonymous don't know whose answers belong to what student, but we can determine who participated additionally for students, teachers, by homeroom. Staff and teacher surveys, are share via a personalized invitation from Panorama that goes out to every staff member in our district including Central Office.

For families, in the past we have done a combination of both electronic surveys and paper surveys however, this year because of the pandemic we relied on our electronic surveys. The survey was sent via text it and email to all parents and guardians and through our facebook page on all of our social medias.

Mr. Courshene sought information on the school improvement councils in any of the schools over this past academic year, and would like to begin those again. It's one of the ways to get feedback to make

school improvements in every single school and getting the in-person feedback. We're supposed to have these required by state law in every single school.

Superintendent Soto will get back to the committee in regard to the school improvement council.

Mr. Sheehan expressed his interest in the councils, and would like an update on whether the schools met with the council during COVID as it is up to the principals to ensure this group takes place, as there was no relapse in the law during COVID.

In response to Ms. Lefebvre and the devices, is unclear of the collection of devices for maintenance, if there was a maintenance system in place during quarantine. We still have families that have relatives they can't see, we're also cutting off access to families that that could have been their only point of access not only to their their friend in class but also to the world if their families still are under quarantine for reasons. We're a district that talks about equity and we we talk about providing openness for our students and to just to collect all these devices back, just to pass them all out again seems counterproductive.

Response from Superintendent Soto

At this time there is not a plan to redistribute the devices. Every single principal in the district and a lot of teachers know that each student has a device. Pre-pandemic devices were used to do intervention work maybe small group instruction.

Mr. Sheehan has concerns that the access to educational opportunities have been taken away from students. Students can access publishers and educational providers, ke open source materials during quarantine, and now we are shutting off a world of educational opportunities for some students.

Ms. Lefebvre, asked if the devices were purchased cares act money or part of the regular budget?

Superintendent Soto the district was close to 1:1 with devices. The devices are on we're on a four-year lease cycle. Devices were purchased with Title 1, federal funding that does require you to maintain a fixed asset record. We did get the remote learning grant, purchased additional devices. As well as used general fund money in the past, now we have ESSER money which we allocated towards resources. Teachers will start their lessons plans with hopes that the students have these devices available to them, and we want to make sure they accessible to students who are in person.

Ms. Lefebvre suggests collecting devices from students in high school students that graduated, students moving to a different city or school and have the students that are continuing within our district stay with their devices. We can keep track of who already has it, and reach out to families and ask if there device is still functioning. As Devin mentioned, it's equitable and we should be the first ones out there saying make Holyoke strive and for people to look at us as as a district moving forward so maybe we just need to take that lead be bold.

Ethnic Studies

Valerie Annear, Included in the SC Packet is a memo that sent to the school community in regard to the change in ethnic studies department structure. The district recognized ethnic studies department had a director of culturally responsive teaching and pedagogy position that was created back in 2017 that was supposed to be a two to three year position because there was still development the curriculum. Now the program established course progression in grades 7-12. This restructuring is part of our ongoing work to strengthen curriculum and instruction in all content areas. Over the past two years, the CIO and academic department (namely the ELA/Humanities Director) have supported ES staff in the revision of 7th and 8th grade courses to align to the MA Social Studies/History Frameworks. The ES team has created high quality curriculum that is now our SS/history curriculum in 7th and 8th grade. Additionally, we have partnered with a consultant from Harvard who has reviewed both our ES and History curriculum. Through this audit strengths and areas of improvement were highlighted for both our ES and History course curricula. Based on this review we are in the process of redesigning our US History Courses to be revised to better align with the revised MA SS/History Frameworks as well as with our anti-racist work.

Superintendent Soto expressed his appreciation for all the the support and and all of the public comment that we received today because when people come together and advocate for students it's it's a beautiful thing.

Addresses the concern around the fear that the program is going to go away or that services were being cut from the program, and reiterates, that we did not cut any programming for any of the students, we've increased the access to those former students that expressed being worried about the program going away and expanded the same opportunities a for more students.

Notes, that we need our academics team to be involved in and and just as involved as they are in other academic departments.

In response to the teaching load, we did decide to reduce the teaching load of the department head, the person that was occupying the position expressed that for personal reasons, but agreed to come back on a consulting basis to help with this transition, some of the grant work and responsibilities that people expressed were going away. We hope this person can come to an agreement, in regard to consulting basis.

Ms. Lefebvre reiterates that both the district and some people that spoke in public comment today, as well as read the submissions. There was one part that was heard that cause her to reflect;

In the district we talk about equity and we've created these different types of task force throughout receivership we started creating all these different types of task force in order to improve something and they dwindled.

Looks at Ethnic Studies as something positive and it's bringing a lot of change and it's focused. Now the district is saying that it is going to be broken up, and has too many people taking a piece of the work versus holding accountability to one specific person to ensure that a curriculum that changes lives, changes mindsets, that can be impactful to the community. Is impressed with the work of the previous director, and its responsibilities of making connections they made, and does not want program to go down.

The department head would teach 4 class, and will still have to take on some of the task of the previous directors. We talk about wanting to listen to our students, but we're not listening to our students right now. This is a unique curriculum and we need someone qualified who is going to focus on on the expansion and support of this program.

Mrs. Birks, questions for Superintendent Soto, One of the major concerns the dept chairs have brought up was that their workload at the moment does not have a good balance of being a chair of a department and servicing their students and making sure they're doing an excellent job at both.

Expresses concern for our teachers not having a good home work life balance, the amount on their workloads, and we're losing teachers at an accelerated rate.

The feedback from staff and community members in regards to this program, teaching 5 classes while chairing the department will not be done 100% so either the kids or the department will suffer in the sence that we are not going to have the equite that we constantly rave about. Dropping the load down to 4, and giving a prep period, and teachers do not get that time for other needs, and they are working at night. If we have learned nothing from this pandemic the one thing that we need to take away is we need to value our staff and right now.

Mr. Sheehan questions for clarity, is the position right now a director position.

Superintendent Soto response, this position is a HTA position, and 10 month employee, not a licenced director position that is 12 months.

The proposal is to make this a 7 to 12 department chair, this is different than math and science and and english director position. Those other contents aren't 7 through 12. The math director covers K-12 including the 9-12 department chair.

If we are making this a elevated position, actually making it a director, 12-month position, that focuses on ethnic studies, equity, and that area of the district and leading some of this work so it's not not just a 7 to 12 program but work with other academic directors in making this a cross-curricular program that falls under the chief instructional officer. This will allow this director to coach teachers, be in classrooms, and cover all of those grade levels, and wonders if the district had conversations on how to elevate this position.

Anthony Soto responds to Mr. Sheehan, Those conversations did happen and the the context of those conversations is that culturally responsive teaching and eliminating institutional racism, being culturally responsive has to cut across all of our content areas. Ethnic studies is an important part of our equity work, but the equity work doesn't just live in the ethnic studies department.

Valerie Annear in response to Mr. Sheehan, Over the past 3 year we have coordinated with the the lead of ethnic studies currently. That individual met with me on a monthly basis or with Sue Hucul, Ela and humanities director. They meet often with the department heads at the secondary level on an ongoing basis to account for curriculum vertical alignment and we are doing the same in social studies.

We focused heavily on ethnic studies in grades 7 and 8 first and aligning those content areas with the the ethnic studies department., then aligned those courses to the massachusetts frameworks and we are in current talks regarding piloting some content at the younger grades such as sixth grade and below.

Growing the director position at the central office level doesn't make a whole lot of sense and we'd rather have more school-based instructional staff and with that concern the individuals that serve as multi-grade level department heads do have a a point person in the academic department that they check in with on a regular basis.

In consideration of the workload, the course case load for classes for other district department heads is at four or five classes. At this time we are in talks to make the ethnic studies director a department head position have even a smaller course load in the beginning in order to allow other work with the community and some of the other job duties that were described that you heard earlier today.

Ms. Lefebvre asks what will you be responsibility be of Ms. Annear.

Ms. Annear's response to Ms. Lefebvre. The current the position was never intended to be in place for long term. It was to establish the program and it had a phase-out written in it and we are beyond that time. I will continue to meet with monthly 1:1 check in to support with finance, vetting curriculum, ensuring they have what they need to teach and coordinate with school leadership, professional development, stipend work.

Ensuring that 7 and up have in all of our schools after a few schools removed those positions in lieu of other needs not intentionally against it but just trying to prioritize what the building needed at that time. Holding accountable those positions that are in place and then working with the department head and the school leadership to ensure that we're able to maintain all of the functions that were happening.

Duties that were of concern have been appropriately assigned to other staff within the High School such as Dual Enrollment now being coordinated by the advanced college and dual enrollment coordinator.

Ms. Lefebvre explains that district is now putting a lot of responsibility on different people. The meeting with the director will now be with the dept. Head after there 4 courses, and prep, along with all the other additional responsibilities.

Seeks clarification on whether other department heads do grant writing, reach out to community organizations to build partnerships, plan field trips and all of the other duties we are asking the Ethnic Studies Dept head.

Ms. Annear, grant writing is required of other department heads as well as organize field trips, that is something that falls under the description in support of school leadership does have dual enrollment coordinators that that help with that particular piece.

The current program director position held a one-teaching course load was able to spend 90 percent of the time ensuring that the programming was able to be maintained. She did an incredible job in developing it. This in no way is any indication on that individual's work.

Ms. Lefebvre shares her goal is to get out of receivership, and in order to get out of receivership we need to move our students forward by bringing change. Nobody is really doing the connection the connecting work with the community organizations that they're currently working on developing relationships with colleges.

Ms. Annear will provide updates as we move forward, and there is absolutely no doubt that we need to ensure that all of our programming is up and running and providing the highest quality education that our students deserve. We believe that more students need better quality access to it at the high school level as well that said this and that the community partnerships and the advisory boards are an amazing component to our anti-racist work but it is not the only avenue of our anti-racist and equity work.

Our number one goal is to ensure that our students are entering those classrooms in seventh and eighth grade fully literate fully reading on grade level or above being able to problem solve on grade level or above so that they can fully engage and be consumers of the curriculum that is in front of them to develop their lens to be social change agents.

Superintendent Soto will bring this discussion back to the team, and provide an update to the committee on this, and the work being done with the equity work currently being worked on with myself and Dr. Curtis.

Dr. Curtis is leading the equity work in our district . She's been doing a lot of professional development not just that cabinet but we're working with with principals this year around courageous conversations.

Dr. Curtis, we have an equity task force and that task force was really a community-based task force so and Holyoke public schools was one of the organizations on that task force so what we did this past year

is we took our experience in learning as part of that task force and said as an organization we have to strengthen the race and equity work within our own organization and so we started at the highest level the systems level with all of the chiefs and all of the principals and we created a road map. We essentially published a road map of learning for this year and we completed the full road map. We are in partnership with the organization, Great Schools Partnership that also helped us with some of the community work we had done. We're scoping out the the work for year two and year three so year two does call for the district to create a district advisory board which would include different layers of leadership.

Point of order by Mr. Sheehan.

Ms. Lefebvre, we will add this to a later meeting.

Teach Western Mass

This program is a way to attract more teachers especially teachers of color from not education backgrounds the first cohort our only cost was for residents and it was and the residents paid their own tuition the first year was school year 18-19. We had a cohort of about four residents and the fee for each resident is about four thousand dollars which was paid off of turnaround funds so that first year we ended up using some turnaround grant money to pay the sixteen thousand dollars.

Retention data we only retained 25 of that first cohort cohort 267 percent in court three 75 percent and right now as of June 14th we have 15 15 teachers in the cohort in total so far and all of this has been supported by the teacher diversification grant so in total the cost was about 423 thousand dollars this for the 1a for these four cohorts and it's all paid for on by grants grant funding the teacher diversification grant yes the first year was the turnaround grant and then the following 1920 2021 and then for next year is paid for by the teacher diversification grant

NEW BUSINESS

Fiscal year 22 school department budget, I had presented the budget at the last school committee meeting. Public hearing was available for public viewing since Wednesday and just overall.

Mr. Whelihan, Page 72 line item for SEL supports for students, was flat from from last year how are how have the resources been done for this year. There are psychologist positions in our schools and it is a coincidence that it's relatively flat we when we do lose positions we budget based on averages. Superintendent Soto, that's really to maintain the level of services on the general fund because keep in mind that the when you're looking at this financial information the majority of that is is only what's on the general fund.

We go through a collaborative budget development process with with our principals and with our department heads that manage a budget and they develop a budget from you know we give them a staff allocation and then we give them a per student allocation and this year one of the major changes we

made is that it's no longer a decision whether or not a school needs a counseling position we we eliminated that from from being a discretionary item we know that based on the number of you know the the services that are required in iep's and the fact that we know we know some of our a lot of our students had experienced trauma during the pandemic counseling supports is going to be high in the priority and we didn't want that to be a decision point on the principal.

Capital Planning looking over the schools they all need roofs, boilers, security systems the bathroom fixtures. where is our plan just to get these schools up to snuff ?

Superintendent Soto, we update this capital plan every three years so next year is we're up for a refresh we try to pick off maintenance as it comes up so towards the end of the year if we're looking if we can reallocate some resources towards some of the maintenance that you're talking about like getting you know replacing the bathroom partitions we literally we meet with the principals in the middle of the school year and we ask them what are some of the projects that you'd like to see happening in your school and they put together a list of those priorities so throughout that work we've been able to accomplish a lot and not even include it in this capital plan.

ONGOING BUSINESS

ANNOUNCEMENTS We are wishing everybody a safe and happy summer enjoy your month off

AJOURNMENT

Mildred Lefebvre yes, Devin Sheehan Remote yes, Erin Brunelle Remote yes, Rosalee Tensley Williams yes Remote, Rebecca Birks Remote yes, John G. Whelihan remote yes, and Superintendent/Receiver Anthony Soto yes.

The Regular Meeting of June 21, 2021 adjourned at approximately 9:24 p.m.