

Tuesday, August 25, 2020

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TEACHING & LEARNING COMMITTEE OF THE BRIDGEPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION, held August 25, 2020, at Park City Magnet School, 1526 Chopsey Hill Road, and by video conference, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. Present were members Chair Joseph Sokolovic, Joseph Lombard and Sybil Allen. Board members Albert Benejan and Bobbi Brown were in attendance. Board member John Weldon joined the meeting subsequently as noted.

Supt. Michael J. Testani was present.

Ms. Allen moved to approved the committee's minutes of May 28, 2020. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved.

The next agenda item was a discussion of in-person learning.

Supt. Testani noted the meeting was being held in a classroom and he pointed out some of the safety features that will be in place when school reopens on September 8. He described how the teacher would interact with students participating online.

In response to a question, Mr. Testani said on a day like today with extreme heat schools without air conditioning would probably have to cancel classes for the day. He said teachers would be on duty in the morning to assist with students entering schools. He said students would be

encouraged to be open and honest about needing a break with their masks. He said going back to school would be challenging for some students who have not been in school for six months.

Mr. Weldon joined the meeting.

Supt. Testani said Yale has provided a ten-session workshop free to all Connecticut educators, which has been noticed districtwide.

Carrie Rasmanuskas, the district's social-emotional learning coordinator, said social-emotional learning professional development opportunities were provided during the summer; staff members have attended full five-day training for restorative practices; and there was recently on-board training for new hires in the district in restorative practices and RULER.

Ms Rasmanuskas said there are RULER resources online for students and parents and staff training for adverse childhood experiences.

Herminio Planas, executive director of elementary education, said this year there is a new math program for Grades 6 to 8 called Into Math. He said it includes a softcover book and a lot of online resources. A new testing component is totally aligned with Common Core. He said iReady is used for Grades pre-K to 2.

Mr. Planas said a large grant has been received for Grades 3 to 5 to buy the instructional component from Greg Tang, which is totally aligned with Common Core.

Mr. Planas said the entire curriculum for pre-K to 8 was updated during the summer. He described the virtual manipulatives that will be used.

Dr. Selena Morgan, executive director of elementary education, discussed the science program. Grades K to 5 will use HMHCo. She said she has spoken with Mr. Henry, the new science director, about establishing a routine for science with four priorities.

Dr. Morgan said iQuest will be used in Grades 6 to 8. There was summer training for the interactive digital editions, which will be valuable if the district has to go to total remote learning. She said Mr. Henry is working on getting the interactive digital edition of iQuest for high school physics and chemistry. She said the most important thing to be established are habits of mind and routines with students.

Dr. Morgan said she has urged all teachers to register with Donors Choose for science bundles.

Supt. Testani said in good weather physical education teachers are going to be encouraged to bring classes outdoors. He said on days with poor weather there will be instruction in the classroom around health and wellness.

The superintendent said the goal is to use individualized packets for students when engaged in art class, so they're not sharing materials. He said he has spoken to Alicia Robinson and those materials have been ordered. He said CDC guidelines would be followed for choir and band. He said the swim program is temporarily paused.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said donations had been received so students would not have to share musical instruments.

Supt. Testani said for carts for meals will be brought to children in classrooms, although schedules will allow some grade levels to go to the cafeteria. He said the goal is to get kids out of the classroom, moving around, so they're not stationary in a classroom all day.

Dr. Melissa Jenkins, executive director of early childhood, said in Grades K to 6 program called Reading Wonders has been adopted by the board. It is both digital and print. Children will be able to write on the program on tablets. Children in upper grades will be able to develop keyboard skills and respond to text through typing.

Dr. Jenkins said Teachers in Grades K-8 will be supported by professional development in Teams to make sure instruction is interactive.

Dr. Jenkins said a digital program called World of Wonders for pre-K is being looked at for potential purchase.

Dr. Jenkins said high school teachers worked on revising curriculum this summer, which will support the diversity of children in the community and a project-based learning approach. She said we are working to be as student-centered as possible. She added Ms. Rasmanuskas will be working with ELA middle school teachers to amplify social-emotional themes in the curriculum.

In response to a question, Dr, Jenkins said DIBELS is a one-to-one assessment so teachers will use Plexiglas and

schedule appointments with families for children on remote learning.

Supt. Testani said just because we do not have a history/social studies director it doesn't mean the teachers aren't working hard to implement the curriculum. He said it had been about nine years since there was a director and it would be valuable to have a person even for on a part-time basis for a short period of time, so that is being looked at. He said candidates might include retirees or teacher-leaders in the district.

Mr. Lombard thanked Mr. Sokolovic for arranging the presentation.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said students on remote learning can directly message teachers privately. He said the intent is to set up the classroom cameras to capture the front of the classroom and the whole white board, so children at home will not be able to see the other children. He said teachers have the ability to move around the room while being social distance. He said teachers can decide about where to move based on their comfort level. He said students on remote who are not behaving appropriately can be muted by the teacher so the class is not disrupted.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said students could leave items in their desks in the classrooms. He said parents are going to be limited in their access to schools. They will be allowed to make appointments if they need to come to the building.

Jeff Postolowski, director of ITS, said there will be a virtual white board that both children in the class and viewing

remotely will see. They will be able to see what the teacher virtually writes on the white board.

The superintendent said the remote learning plan had been enhanced since the spring.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said parents will all get a copy of the remote learning expectations, which is on the district's website.

The superintendent said all IEPs stopped on the day school closed down, but now it is expected that the district will fulfill the goals and objectives of all students with IEPs. There is an October 1st deadline for assessments.

In response to a question, Supt. Testani said the goal is to seamlessly transition into all-remote learning if in-person learning is cancelled in the case of a spike. He said he was concerned about the ability of primary grade students to interact remotely.

Mr. Sokolovic passed out some wipes to have those in attendance wipe down the desks they used.

Mr. Lombard moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sokolovic and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John McLeod

*Approved by the committee on October 20, 2020*