

UNION #28 JOINT SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

Monday, January 22, 2024

Final Minutes

Present: Jya Plavin, Julie Martel, Katelyn Mailloux-Little, Jeremy Mailloux, Becky Tew, Bethany Rose, Jess Rocheleau, Kate Woodward, Mandy Blackbird, Mark Blatchley, Nancy Slator, Members; Steven Blinder, Chair; Corrina Wcislo, Director of Student Support Services; Lindsay Rodriguez, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Caitlin Sheridan, Director of Finance and Operations; Jennifer Culkeen, Superintendent; U#28 Principals; Public Guests.

1. Meeting Called to Order by Steven at 6:31 P.M.

2. Public Hearing:

Steven requested that voting members mute themselves when not speaking and to keep their cameras on. Becky added that legally, SC members must keep their cameras on during virtual meetings.

No public members spoke.

3. Approval of the Minutes from Novemer 20, 2023:

JULIE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 20, 2023 AS PRESENTED. MANDY SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

4. Superintendent Report:

Jennifer explained that we are submitting our second three-year Student Opportunity Act Plan this year. The Leadership Team is devoting is January meeting to work on this plan, using summary data sources of student groups to identify areas of inequity in student opportunities and achievement. This will let us set one important measure to track our progress over the coming years. We'll also select evidence-based programs and outcomes from DESE to pursue for one to three focus areas.

Our Literacy Walkthroughs are continuing in January and February. The CNC Children's Closet has been visited by 80 families since last fall. We're crafting a live U#28 online handbook for all staff members. The DESE Commissioner proposed changes to district and school accountability for this year, addressing chronic absenteeism, but has been asked not to enact this proposal yet, instead investigating the complex factors that contribute to the problem and identifying what support schools may need to help keep students on track.

5. New Business:

1. Negotiation Committee - Member Selection and Vote:

Jennifer explained that just Budget and Personnel members are appointed to the Negotiation Committee per JSC bylaws. Steven invited B&P members to speak to this committee. Becky said they haven't met in several months. Steven said we'll meet several times before the Committee has work to do, so it's not critical to nominate anyone tonight.

6. Old Business:

1. Superintendent Search - Update - Next Steps:

Steven said everyone on JSC should have been apprised of an article in today's paper: we have three finalists who work in various capacities in schools regionally. Until February 16, we'll be conducting reference checks, and we must nominate a small team to visit the finalists' current places of employment to meet with personnel there, and we need to set dates for final interviews. Steven asked for volunteers to participate in visits to current job sites. Kate Woodward asked how many applications we received: Steven said we are choosing not to share that

information, protecting everything that happens in Executive Session. Jennifer recommended that the same small group conduct the site visits. Principal Sullivan of SRS would like to attend (a member of the Leadership Team usually goes along). Steven volunteered to be part of the site team. Jeremy volunteered to check references. Mark volunteered for the team as well. Steven invited members to contact him to volunteer, as a formal vote is not required to compose the team. Jennifer will ask Pam to coordinate candidate visits to the schools. Jennifer noted that last time, the Meet & Greet led into the interview. Kate asked whether any staff members would be joining the site teams, and Julie suggested it would be good to arrange some way to gather feedback from Meet & Greet participants. Jennifer will look into both items.

7. Director of Finance and Operations Report:

Caitlin reported on the 5-year bussing contract. She went over upcoming Town Meeting dates (most on Jan 31) to sign this contract with Kusmeskus, the only bidder. New Salem and Wendell have already informally approved this contract. Apart from that, we're in the thick of getting all the FY25 budgets clear, then we'll prepare for Town Meetings. Becky asked what other Towns' budget guidance is. Caitlin said only Leverett has that to her knowledge. Becky asked other SC members about how they sense what Fin Com / Select Boards will be happy or not happy with in terms of increases. Mark said in Erving, they want a flat budget apart from salary increases. All other departments he's heard of so far have complied with this. Mark explained that there's been a recent shift toward residences from businesses in property assessments, which the Town is adjusting to. Caitlin appreciated all the SC members who've been working with her on the budgets.

8. Director of Curriculum and Instruction Report - Updates:

Lindsay reported on some fresh data from each school. She reviewed the multi-tier system of support: everyone gets Tier I (sufficient for 80-90% of students), some students get Tier II interventions (5-10%), and a few get Tier III interventions, which are high intensity and assessment based (1-5%). She also reminded JSC that since we have small data sets we're looking at, grades can change overall quickly, and these assessments are not meant to highlight individual teachers. She reviewed data from each school, which showed progress, sometimes slow but steady, in supporting students where they're at across the grades. The team doing the Literacy Walkthroughs were very interested in the differences in instruction and support across the schools. Becky asked how the pandemic affected progress in literacy education. Lindsay said that the framework we're using from the state is what we're using in all of the schools to help address the learning loss.

9. Director of Student Support Services - Updates:

Corrina noted that ESP (Educational Support Professionals) and Para Professionals are interchangeable terms in her presentation. She introduced the position of Registered Behavior Technician, an ESP who has special training and certification in behavior analysis. She reviewed the requirements for obtaining and maintaining RBT certification, including coursework, assessment, and exam. Currently, we have 1 ESP ready to begin the course at EES, 2 ESPs pending passing their exam at LES, 1 ESP pending passing exam and 1 ready to begin the course at SSC, and TBD at SRS. These certifications help provide Tier III interventions to help students with self regulation.

Becky asked how this therapeutic approach is applied to students with autism; there's some talk about how it's punitive. Corrina said she was sorry to hear about that impression and invited conversations about our approach, which isn't the same as everywhere else. Katelyn asked how the need for certification is identified in each school, and then how ESPs who pursue certification are selected. Corrina: We approach Principals to suggest staff who might be interested in this naturally, since we're aiming for longevity with this support. The training emphasizes one-on-one support. Katelyn asked what incentives might be available for someone who goes through the process: There are some grant sources for extra funding that could be utilized for students with IEPs, and she welcomes any other ideas. Mandy asked who's supporting all these RBTs with their work: we're working with BCBAs from contracting agencies instead of having our own right now, which might be an option down the road. Katelyn suggested having one RBT for the Union as well as ones at each school, from a budget perspective, might not make as much sense.

10. News/Updates from Each School and Union #28:

Wendell/New Salem: Mandy said that SRS had a Winter Concert right before the holidays with Mr. Kortina that was a packed house, standing room only. The students worked extremely hard and Mr. Kortina rocked it. The PTO is planning some events coming up, including Book Bingo, to get the kids outside in these cold months.

Leverett: Jess said the PTO and 6th Grade are hosting a Snow Ball (family dance party) on Friday. We're working hard on our budget. Becky said we've been working really closely with Caitlin and Jennifer to think about our budget, going over each line to offer as comprehensive a justification as possible. Overall, we felt happy with how Jennifer and Caitlin have led this process.

Shutesbury: Bethany said things quieted down with the holiday season, but the PTO put on a Bingo for Books event that went quite well, and we had an author come in to discuss his book and the process of becoming a writer. Jennifer noted that SSC's Principal was in Seussical.

Erving: Mark said the last SC meeting was snowed out, nothing to report.

11. Future Items to Discuss:

- Next Meeting Date: March 18, 2024
- Budget & Personnel Committee - TBD

Steven thanked everyone who sat on the Superintendent Search Committee. He suggested we might need to add agenda items to the next meeting to deal with any unexpected changes in the selection process. He requested scheduling another meeting next Monday at 7 P.M. to address this. Becky noted we should begin our discussion of questions for the final interview.

12. Adjournment at 8:01

MANDY MOVED TO ADJOURN. JEREMY SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.