

Center School Council Meeting Minutes October 21, 2020 – Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present: Jane DeGrenier, Principal; John Galluzzo, Parent; Laura Louko, Parent; April Sheridan, Parent; Courtney Folsom, Teacher Representative; Mark Lancaster, Teacher Representative; Lori McKenna, Teacher Representative; Peggy Linn, Teacher Representative; Russ Wilson, Assistant Principal, Ex-officio; Donna Hillary, Vice Principal, ex-officio.

Mr. Wilson called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

Minutes

Mr. Wilson stated that the June 17, 2020 minutes would be sent after the meeting, to be accepted at the November meeting.

Open Comment

Mr. Wilson asked the open question, “How is school going for families this fall?” Ms. Louko said she felt it was going great, that she has been happy about the process from the start. She also stated that her third grader is enjoying the learning process and feels safe. Ms. Sheridan agreed, loves the structure of the current format with check-ins but also plenty of paper-to-pencil work. Mr. Galluzzo stated that his son gets on Zooms early so he doesn’t miss anything.

Re-entry Plan Update

Mr. Wilson stated that as a district and with a memorandum of agreement in place with the teachers union the schools are approaching an evaluation period to determine how well things are going. The status quo will hold for a little bit, at least. A second evaluation period will follow in December. He then asked “are parents noticing anything different between spring and fall? Do you feel like education is moving forward?” Ms. Louko said it felt like “night and day.” It felt in the spring like nobody wanted to move forward, but that now her child is learning new things and doing bonus work. She feels that the in-person work is impacting, and that there is no burnout. The Wednesday half day works well. Ms. Sheridan said that the teachers’ partnerships with parents have been excellent, and that communication has been fantastic. Mr. Galluzzo stated that his son would learn a new skill and then between check-ins would be excited to show them off.

Mr. Wilson asked about the social-emotional aspect of the learning process. Mr. Galluzzo said it has truly come to the fore with his son, who is showing signs of deep depression and worry over the coming election, COVID and more. He feels that kids are internalizing a lot right now. Ms. Louko said that the in-person binding is very important, that COVID is definitely in the back of kids’ minds, that it’s still a very real fear for kids. She asked whether or not there are dividers in the hallways, as she has been hearing a lot about them, and that they’re helping the kids feel safe. Principal DeGrenier said that that was the goal, that such guidelines would be established early on, that they would be clear but not scary in any way. The children learned the routines very quickly, she said. She also said that there would be an upcoming read of a book called *What Color Am I Today?* that talks about the virus in a humorous, but appropriate way, and that there will be an art project that will be done along with it. She also stated that students have been quick to presuppose that every individual who is absent from school has COVID, and that the school will work with kids to dispel such assumptions.

Principal DeGrenier asked whether or not parents felt there was enough school work assigned, as she had heard whispers in the community to that effect. Ms. Louko said she had heard it as well, but

completely disagreed. She suggested more education for parents might be ideal. Mr. Galluzzo felt it might be a matter of perspective. A parent may not understand an hour break, but that if lunch and recess were factored in, it might make more sense. Ms. Louko added that parents should understand that elementary school students don't work from 8-3:30, that they have several breaks throughout the day. Principal DeGrenier stated that that information will be added into schedules on the Monday packets, so that teachers might better understand the work rate balance better.

Inclusive Schools Week

The school will be doing a schoolwide read this year for Inclusive Schools Week, and due to the current learning format the school will be keeping it simple this year.

Reentry Committee

Principal DeGrenier stated that it would be good to reconvene the committee. Mr. Galluzzo said that it would be right on schedule, as we had said we should wait a month and then get back together.

Principal DeGrenier said that teachers had been in school for 34 days and students 24 (9 or 10 in-person and 12-15 remote).

New Business

Ms. Sheridan said that there seemed to be confusion with the state's color scheme (e.g., Hanover being in the "Red" zone) and the fact that it doesn't affect schools. Principal DeGrenier stated that the town has a dashboard for cases. Quarantines and other numbers in relation to the community, but that there is no hard and fast guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education at this time. There has been no internal spread right now. The schools are very safe places and hopefully will remain so, and the town of Hanover has a history of coming together in times of emergency. Ms. Louko asked whether or not there was a plan in place if the school has to go fully remote, to which Principal DeGrenier replied that yes, there is a plan. If it happens, it will happen quickly. Teachers are prepared, and as the plans are available to all, parents can be prepared as well. Ms. Louko said that she felt it was coming, and that she feels reassured.

Principal DeGrenier said that with kids quarantining, teachers have said that they need quarantine info quickly in order to send packets home to kids quickly and effectively. Ms. McKenna said that teachers have rare breaks during which they can pull together materials, typically don't have materials 14 days out and have no transition times between the varying portions of the day; when they're not teaching directly, they're jumping online. Ms. Sheridan said she hoped parents could be patient. Ms. Louko also hoped they understood that teachers don't have Wednesdays off, that parents need to understand that teachers are planning, meeting, etc. on those days.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be November 17 and topics will include MCAS testing, more discussion on reentry, etc.

The meeting adjourned at 3:51 p.m.