



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

School Committee

Date: 2023-11-02

Time: 7:00 PM

Building: School - Memorial High

Location: School Library

Address: 62 Oakland Road

Session: Open Session

Purpose: Open Session

Version: Final

Attendees: **Members - Present:**

Tom Wise, Sarah McLaughlin, Shawn Brandt (remote), Erin Gaffen (remote) and Charles Robinson

Members - Not Present:

Carla Nazzaro

Others Present:

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Sarah Hardy, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Jennifer Stys, Superintendent Dr. Thomas Milaschewski and Student Emily Goodhue

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Olivia Lejeune on behalf of the chairperson.

Topics of Discussion:

A. Call to Order – Mr. Wise called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. to review the agenda.

Roll Call into session – Mr. Robinson – here, Ms. McLaughlin – here, Mr. Brandt – here, Mrs. Gaffen – here, and Mr. Wise – here

B. Public Comment

Focus on Excellence

1. Language Opportunity Coalition (LOC) Biliteracy Achievement Awards – Dr. Milaschewski provided some framework on the Biliteracy awards and introduced teachers Ms. Danja Mahoney and Mr. Derrick Ryan. It is exciting to see and hear about the students' receiving awards in these categories. Ms. Mahoney and Mr. Ryan discussed the importance of the LOC Biliteracy Pathway Awards.

2. MA Seal of Biliteracy Qualifications – Ms. Mahoney and Mr. Ryan discussed how the LOC Pathway Award leads to the next step in students qualifying for the MA Seal of Biliteracy. A list of students was provided who have earned the LOC Award in 2023-2024 and those who will become earners upon graduation in 2024. Last year, RMHS was awarded \$13,000 to implement the testing of these awards. Ms. Mahoney and Mr. Ryan thanked the district for all of the support.

Consent Agenda

1. Minutes (10-05-2023)
2. Minutes (10-19-2023)
3. RMHS Volleyball Parents Organization Donation

Warrant Reports

1. 10-19-2023
2. 10-26-2023

Mr. Wise motioned to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Mr. Robinson. Roll Call Vote – Roll Call Vote to approve the consent agenda, Mr. Robinson – yes, Mrs. McLaughlin – yes, Mrs. Gaffen – yes, Mr. Brandt – yes, and Mr. Wise – yes. The vote passed 5-0.

Reports

1. Student – Sachi Selvakumar and Emily Goodhue provided the following updates for the committee:
 - a. The Student Advisory Committee is meeting regularly with five active members and about 15-20 students working with Mr. Wise and Mrs. Callanan to bring forward areas of budgetary and policy change that can impact students at RMHS.
 - b. RMHS students attend the HBCU college fair where one student was accepted on the spot and offered a \$12,000 scholarship.
 - c. Students recently took the PSAT during the school day at RMHS.
 - d. On Nov 8th a speaker event took place called *Transitioning to College for Students with Learning Differences*.
2. Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning – Dr. Hardy discussed the importance of professional learning. On November 7th, schools will be closed and we will hold an in-service day for all staff in the district.
3. Assistant Superintendent of Student Services – Dr. Stys provided an update sharing some upcoming events which include a provider’s breakfast, a speaking session with author Phyllis Fagell on *Why Middle School Matters*, and a de-escalation training for all community members. RISE Director Ms. Kerry Wilcox will be holding a series of training for RISE families and families across the district. Finally, Dr. Stys acknowledged the great work teacher Tara Herlihy is doing with Unified Sports and paraprofessional Sherilla Lestrade and teacher Jessica Ayer as they continue to partner on Unified Buddies.
4. Superintendent – Dr. Milaschewski welcomed Ramsey Merritt who is a first-year doctoral student at Harvard University and provided some background on his prior experiences. Ramsey is serving as a leadership fellow in RPS this year.
5. Liaison/Sub-Committee
 - a. Mr. Robinson – The Charter Review Committee met, but there were no items on the agenda pertaining to the schools.
 - b. Mrs. McLaughlin – The Killam School Building Committee met on Monday to review and discuss at a high level the design firm submittals. The committee talked through the next steps and creating a project-based website to keep the community updated.
 - c. Mrs. Gaffen – No report
 - d. Mr. Brandt – No report

- e. Mr. Wise – As we are recognizing all the different teams that have had recent victories, we also want to recognize the marching band who have done very well this season. Also, the next two weekends *Something Rotten!* will be showing at the Performing Arts Center.

Public Comment – None

Mr. Wise made a motion to take item E2 Elementary & Secondary School Improvement Plan Presentations and Discussions out of order; seconded by Ms. McLaughlin.

Roll Call Vote – Roll Call Vote to approve the consent agenda, Mr. Robinson – yes, Ms. McLaughlin – yes, Mrs. Gaffen – yes, Mr. Brandt – yes, and Mr. Wise – yes. The vote passed 5-0.

E. New Business

2. Elementary & Secondary School Improvement Plan Presentation & Discussion

Dr. Milaschewski introduced the Elementary & Secondary School Improvement Plans by thanking the School Councils for their thought partnership. These are high level presentations, and each draft improvement plan can be found in the packet. We have provided a memo in the packet as well that shares the date, time, and Zoom link for each school presenting these improvement plans to their PTOs and community.

The five elementary school leaders presented the commonalities across the elementary level school improvement plans followed by each leader discussing individual school highlights. Mrs. Gallegos and Mrs. Schwartz discussed the driver behind creating small group-based instruction and fluid groupings across classrooms. A question was raised about Birch Meadow transportation funding in which Mr. Burnham discussed the cost of transportation for field trips or big events planned. Birch Meadow has made changes to make this more cost effective by shifting the time of events or fundraising.

The two middle school leaders presented the commonalities across the middle school level school improvement plans followed by each leaders discussing highlights for their individual school. A question was raised as to why Parker is providing math support for eighth grade, but not grades six or seven. Mrs. Rubino explained the team found there was room in the eighth-grade schedule to provide targeted support and being that these students head to high school next year they saw this as an important focus area. Ideally, this would be provided for every grade level, but given constraints Parker was only able to focus on eighth grade currently.

Mrs. Callanan was joined by school council members Eileen Manning and Marianne Downing to present the high school level school improvement plan. Noting that there is so much happening at the high school, the team is excited to see the Innovation Pathways continue to roll out. Mrs. Callanan was thanked for her leadership and progress being made this year. A question was raised about the lack of discussion in the improvement plan on solutions to close the gap for students underperforming. Mrs. Callanan noted this

is work we will always be working towards and until all students are achieving across the board, we know we have to make improvements.

1. Youth Risk Behavior Survey Presentation & Discussion

Dr. Stys introduced Director of the Reading Coalition for Prevention and Support Ms. Erica McNamara and briefly shared what will be covered in today's presentation on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). This presentation provides a lot of data and over the next year we will be working towards addressing the data. Ms. McNamara thanked her colleagues at the police department who have helped support this presentation and the survey partners who helped with funding, consulting, and providing school samples.

Ms. McNamara discussed the timeline process for the survey, high school and middle school sample size in terms of participation, and the different questions that were asked by the survey. Topics in which students responded to questions and provided feedback included safety, discrimination, bullying, and mental health. Protective factors and health education highlights were reviewed. As for moving forward, this is just the start and we will continue in the community ongoing dissemination, workgroups and student utilization. We do have the ability to build in 10 of our own questions. It was pointed out that in the future we could look to add in more about bullying as to dig into why students decide not to report. Community member Marianne Downing asked a question about survey results comparatively to data from 2021 as it relates to students being in school remotely vs. in person. Ms. McNamara noted there was a decline in cyber bullying and electronic bullying when looking at the data comparatively.

G. Executive Session

Mr. Wise motioned to adjourn to Executive Session and not return to open session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining on the bargaining position of the public body (Reading Teachers Association and Reading Administrative Secretaries Association) as the chair declares an open meeting will have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Reading School Committee, seconded by Mr. Robinson.

Roll Call Vote – Roll Call Vote to adjourn to Executive Session, Mr. Robinson – yes, Ms. McLaughlin – yes, Mrs. Gaffen – yes, Mr. Brandt – yes, and Mr. Wise – yes. The vote passed 5-0.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMRgwaSLUTQ>

Meeting Adjourned from regular session at approximately 9:22pm