

BERLIN BOARD OF EDUCATION

May 11, 2020

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING

Attendance: Richard Aroian
Julia Dennis
Mary Ellen Maloney – Arrived at 6:03 p.m.
Jaymee Miller
Timothy Oakes
Adam Salina – Departed at 6:49 p.m.
Kari Sassu, Ph.D.
Tracy Sisti
Matthew Tencza
Student Representatives: Jenna Smalley
Ryan McGowan

Also in attendance: Superintendent of Schools Brian J. Benigni; Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Erin McGurk; Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno; Director of Pupil Personnel Services Linda Holian; Director of Human Resources Denise Parsons; Director of Literacy and Social Studies Laurie Gjerpen; and Principal of Berlin High School Eileen Eustis.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Aroian called the virtual meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by student Ryan McGowan.

II. COMMITTEE REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE TO THE BOARD

A. Report of Student Representatives

Miss Smalley thanked the Board for their decision concerning graduation. Mr. McGowan thanked the Board for their decision, moving graduation for school year 2021 to a Friday.

B. Committee Reports

Mr. Tencza reported the Finance and Operations Committee meeting was postponed to next week.

Ms. Dennis reported the Community Engagement Committee has not met since their last meeting.

Dr. Sassu reported the Curriculum Committee met prior to this evening's Board meeting and discussed Credit Recovery at the high school.

C. CREC Report

Ms. Sisti reported the Capital Region Education Council will meet on May 20, 2020.

D. Correspondence to the Board

Superintendent Benigni shared correspondence received from Rosina Marquis.

III. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS

Nothing to report.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting of April 27, 2020
- B. Monthly Budget Report – Period ending April 30, 2020

Move by Mr. Salina, seconded by Mr. Oakes, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Aroian

V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Facilities Related Updates

Director of Business Operations Jeffrey Cugno reported on the maintenance and repairs being performed on the lavatories at the elementary and middle schools.

- B. Summer Reading Program

This summer, some adjustments need to be made to the plans for summer reading. While the district will continue to partner with the Berlin-Peck Memorial Library, some of the traditional summer programs are on hold while the district anticipates further guidance regarding the easing of social distancing guidelines and when the public library may be able to re-open.

Laurie Gjerpen, Director of Literacy and Social Studies, updated the Board on the current plans for book distribution, online access, and the strategies that will be employed to continue to engage students in reading across the summer months. Board members were provided with information, outlining where the district currently is with summer.

Elementary: Students entering kindergarten through Grade 5 are encouraged to read (or be read to) for 30 minutes a day during the summer. Ms. Gjerpen reported students who do not read during the summer can take part in that “summer slide” and lose months of reading growth. To support summer reading, students will work on a summer reading plan with their librarians and classroom teachers to help them move forward and set up their summer reading plans; students will receive books to read during the summer; Berlin-Peck Memorial Library staff will give students beads for a necklace or keychain as they “read and bead” during the summer; and schools will celebrate summer reading in the fall.

McGee Middle School: At the middle school, students are expected to read at least two books this summer. To support summer reading, students will be encouraged to take part in the Teen Summer Challenge where they may earn scratch tickets at the Berlin-Peck Memorial Library; students will have the opportunity to check out e-books and audio books and curbside pickup will be available; students will be invited to participate in summer reading virtual book clubs; and students will be encouraged to continue to use social media to share what they are reading and learning during the summer.

Berlin High School: Berlin High School students are expected to read at least one book and participate in a learning experience or read at least two books. Students will complete a Google form for both summer reading and summer learning. Learning experiences may include watching a Ted Talk or visiting or participating in a virtual tour of a possible college. To support summer reading, students and staff will tweet out about reading, and during advisory in September, students will celebrate their summer reading and summer learning.

C. Credit Recovery

Assistant Superintendent Erin McGurk reported last year 21 students participated in the Credit Recovery Program and the year before 27 students participated. Students with a grade of 50 to 59 are able to do one level of Credit Recovery. Students are assigned to the course and take a pretest for each section of the course, and if they pass, the student is able to go on to the next section. Students, with a grade below a 50, take the entire course and are expected to complete all of the assignments. The district purchases seats through Odysseyware and proctors assess the student's work using a grading rubric. In a typical year, much of this is done on site, under the supervision of the proctors; however, this year, given the current distance learning situation, students will participate on-line from home. Dr. McGurk stated the Credit Recovery model is designed to give students an opportunity to bounce back from perhaps a lack of learning, a lack of effort or a loss of credit in a course due to attendance. A small fee is charged to families who participate for the cost of the proctors; however, there are waivers for students who qualify due to financial reasons.

In response to Mr. Aroians's question, is attendance taken during distance learning, Dr. McGurk stated, attendance is monitored when students log onto Schoology; however, attendance has no consequence towards credit during the fourth term as in a typical day there may be circumstances in a student's life that do not permit them to log in or participate in a live class.

In response to Mr. Tencza's question how does the pass/fail grading impact a high school student's GPA or class standing, Dr. McGurk stated grades are in place for the first three quarters and for the midterm exam. The pass with distinction, pass and fail is for the fourth quarter and will be assigned a numeric value that will reflect on the transcript and be used for class rank and other calculations.

In response to Mr. Aroian's request for clarification whether a student's grade point average (GPA) froze when distance learning began in March, Principal Eustis stated no as the idea behind equating a numeric grade to pass with distinction, pass and fail is so the GPA clock can keep running. Principal Eustis stated if the clock stops, there will be long-term effects for students as it would impact ninth graders throughout their high school career, and for juniors, who have not had an opportunity to take the SAT, the transcript is going to be important. Principal Eustis stated that, while Connecticut colleges may be in agreement to accept a pass/fail grade, colleges outside of the state may not. Principal Eustis stated a significant number of students, in their junior year, take more honor and AP classes and those courses significantly impact a student's GPA. Principal Eustis stated quarter four has been minimized and counts as 15 percent versus the breakdown for the other quarters, which was adjusted as the exam two grade was removed as well.

In response to Mr. Tencza's question, if a student fails in distance learning, does that affect their transcript, Dr. McGurk stated, the failure of the fourth quarter does not show up on a student's transcript

and has less of an impact. The failure is still equated to a numeric equivalent and is counted in the overall grade for the year.

D. Update on End-of-Year Events

Superintendent Benigni reported he met with the elementary principals and Principal Eustis today to discuss what events will traditionally take place to close out the school year, and he anticipates sharing information with the public within the next two weeks and the Board at the next Board meeting. Superintendent Benigni stated he is creating schedules to allow students to retrieve their personal items and return items to the school as well as allowing staff back into the schools to close out classrooms in a safe manner. Superintendent Benigni stated the discussion at the Administrative Council meeting last week was to allow students, other than seniors, to keep technology devices over the summer so students may continue to access online supports to avoid the “summer slide.”

Add Item to the Agenda:

Moved by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Tencza, to add an agenda item, prior to the adjournment, to hold an executive session to discuss a personnel matter.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Aroian

At 6:33 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Oakes, seconded by Mr. Tencza, to go into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter, inviting the Superintendent.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 9:0; including President Aroian

In attendance for Executive Session were Board members Aroian, Dennis, Maloney, Miller, Oakes, Salina, Sassu, Sisti and Tencza. In addition, Superintendent Benigni was present.

At 7:29 p.m., the Board returned to Open Session.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

At 7:29 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Tencza, seconded by Mr. Oakes, to adjourn.

FAVOR: ALL

MOTION CARRIED: 8:0, including President Aroian

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Dennis, Secretary, Berlin Board of Education