



Mokena School District 159

Board Highlights for September 16, 2020

Communications

American Heart Association Recognition: Whitney Smyser recognized the District for raising over \$32,000 during the 2019-20 Kid's Heart Challenge Program. Ms. Smyser presented certificates to Mr. Boss, Mr. Hippleheuser, and Mrs. Neiheisel for all their efforts in organizing this event.

Auditor Presentation – Don Shaw presented the audit from Lauterbach & Amen, LLC- Auditors did not have any findings against the district and issued a clean report; total fund balance as of 6/30/20 was \$14,204,631; thanked Business Department for their hard work.

Remote Learning Update: Dr. Cohen presented his recommendations for students to return to In-Person Learning on October 5, 2020. Parents are to complete their Return to Learn request by September 21st. Discussion was had amongst Board members and Dr. Cohen and questions were answered.

BOE: Mr. Everett thanked Dr. Cohen, Administrators and Staff on their endless efforts and commented this has not been easy but it's time to get the kids back to school.

Public: Allison Steinhauser spoke to the Board of Education and shared her concerns about the possibility of students not getting back to in-person learning.

MTA: Kim Truffa announced she is stepping down as President of the MTA and introduced Katie Rodriguez and Heather Sullivan who will share the position as Co-Presidents. Mrs. Truffa also mentioned that Kim Rueth is stepping down from her position as MTA Treasurer and her replacement is Jennifer Macie. Katie Rodriguez commented that she is looking forward to working with the Board of Education and mentioned what an honor it will be to represent her peers.

MEF/PTA: Mr. Andresen spoke on behalf of MEF and PTA and commented the Fall Fling is cancelled this year due to COVID-19, however, they are always willing to accept any donations.

Action Items that were approved include:

- Previous Month Minutes
- District Bills
- Personnel – Classified – New Hire: Christy Burkhardt. Classified – Resignation: Brandon Mardonian, Takiya Hudson. Classified – Temporary: Debra Kappel. Classified – FFCRA: Amanda Archer, Laura Betourney, Elizabeth Cantore, Michelle Jaber, Michelle Klein, Rebecca Lewis-Moran, Amanda McManus, Nicole Miller, Amy Novotny, Carolyne Scanlan. Classified – Leave of Absence: Leandra Irvin. Certified – FMLA: Michael McGreal. Certified – FFCRA: Martha Kadan. Certified – Long-Term Sub: Therese Tabor, Mary Walsh-Imgruet. Certified – Change in Position/Building Location: Meghan Conway.
- Consent Agenda –Semi-Annual Review of Closed Session Minutes; Destruction of Verbatim Closed Session Minutes; Annual Administrator and Teacher Salary and Benefit Reports; Approve FY20 Audit; Shared Services Report; Approval to purchase mulch for MES Playground/Swing set areas; Approval to replace JACE on MJH Chiller; Approval to repair water pipe in bus barn.
- Approval 2020-21 Budget
- Approve Special Education Services Agreement
- Approval of the Revised Return to School Plan

Discussion: Dr. Shaw explained to the BOE that masonry work is needed at MES and MIS ; mortar between bricks are starting to fail. Tuckpointing will be placed on the October 21, 2020 agenda as an action item.

Information Reports

Superintendent – Dr. Cohen

- COVID-19 update – After three weeks of having staff back, there have been no COVID absences. Most certified staff are reporting to the schools to teach or provide services. As students began remote learning on August 31st, there were bumps as one might expect. Chromebooks experienced some slowdowns when trying to stream video. Teachers have had to adjust; many rearranging their rooms to accommodate two or three monitors, cameras, etc. The District

welcomed back approximately 50 students to MES September 8th. On September 10th, the IDPH released a revised set of guidelines for handling children with symptoms of illness in schools.

- October Board Meeting – The following items are possible agenda: Facilities/RPF updates; Galaxy Award Recognition; ROE Annual Life Safety Inspection; Summary of Grants; Tentative Levy.

Assistant Superintendent of Instruction – Dr. Wilkey

- Remote Learning Update – Many of the problems we experienced have been technology issues beyond our control, primarily in grades K-5 only due to the age of the Chromebook devices. In anticipation of live connection trouble, the instructional coaches and administration have been working with grade level teams to identify the best method of support for students, either live recorded sessions and/or pre-recorded videos to post for students to review during another time in the day if they missed or need to refer back to the live instruction.
- Curriculum Cycle Update – This year the district will implement the guided reading and independent reading components of balanced literacy while identifying resources for word study and writing. A program adoption for K-5 Social Studies will be brought to the Board during the 2021-2022 school year.

Assessment Calendar for 2020-2021 – The District has put together a tentative schedule for assessments that will be administered from both local and state level. When students return in-person, we do plan to administer the aReading and aMath to our students in grades 2-8 to identify baseline data for students.

Director of Student Services – Ms. Cirone

- Special Education Enrollment for 2020-21SY – 201 SPED students; 13 students attending LWASE programs; 6 students in out of district placement; 18 parochial students.
- In-Person Services for SPED Students – On September 8th, 48 students returned for in-person special education services at MES ranging from grades Pre-K -8th grade. Parents of 10 students elected to continue special education services remotely. All students were offered transportation and at this time, 37 students are receiving transportation.
- The age-appropriate playground, graded for students aged two through five is completed. The playground incorporates natural features and multiple avenues of vestibular stimulation for the students. The district is arranging for the playground to be surrounded by fencing.

Chief School Business Official – Dr. Shaw

- Finance Committee met on September 14th, and topics included the auditor presentation and an update on the FY21 Budget. Next month's topics will be the Levy; fees of our district compared to Lincoln-Way feeder districts; Fund 21 projects.
- Budget – A new law was implemented in regards to the Teachers Retirement System called the Gemini Project.
- Finance Report – Posted on website.
- Assistant to CSBO/HR Coordinator position has been filled.
- Fencing will be installed around the playground this fall.
- Food Service – Only 1 school day in August; delivered 63 lunches to student homes using two buses and one van.
- Transportation – Providing services: St. Mary's routes; lunches provided by the kitchen and delivered by buses; providing students with need for in-person learning transportation to and from school; transporting Early Childhood students.
- Buildings and Grounds – Completed projects include: MES & MIS crack seal, seal coat and striping of parking lots; MJH chiller repair; district-wide grass fertilizing; MJH gym floor resanding and new artwork painting; MES south gym floor resealed; MES swing set repairs; MJH & MES stage curtain replacement; MJH track repair; MES concrete removal and replacement; district-wide painting; district-wide fire marshal inspection repairs; MES and MIS roof repairs; deep cleaning of rooms, stripping and waxing of floors district-wide; wrapped duct work in MJH main hall.

Director of Technology – Mr. Smith

- Start of the Year Update: New chromebooks have not arrived but are scheduled to be shipped at the end of September. Experiencing major issues at MES where oldest devices were deployed and maxing out CPU usage during meetings causing them to be booted from meeting and devices to crash. Until newer devices come in, there is very little the district can do to remedy the situation.
- Account Setups: This has been the most difficult year to manage student/staff account rostering. Tech department set up a sync with Skyward to Google, Clever and Active Directory that runs every few hours; set up as many online systems that will communicate directly with these three secondary platforms to update rosters automatically after changes are made in Skyward.
- Direct Tech Support: Tech department received over 600 technology support tickets since student remote learning began less than 2 weeks ago. Due to time needed to moving cables/computers to accommodate teacher virtual learning set ups, parent/student issues, online support and general troubleshooting, the Tech team has been working 10 hour days and Saturdays to deal with the surge in demand.
- New firewalls have been delivered and installed; district now has 3-times the internet bandwidth than before and saving nearly \$10,000 per month on internet billing.
- E-Rate Update: MES-MIS fiber project was approved from the state, then denied from the FCC; currently working with the state E-Rate Coordinator to appeal this decision. Network cabinet upgrades are finally approved and will place the order soon.

Principal Reports - Dr. Rolinitis mentioned MJH will host Baseball/Softball Regionals on September 26th. Mr. McAtee expressed his gratitude to the MIS staff as well as Dr. Wilkey, Dr. Cohen and Mr. Smith and the Tech team on pivoting to Remote Learning with success! Mrs. Chorley thanked parents for their patience and time devoted to helping their children with Remote Learning; excited to have students back in person!

For the Good of Mokena

- Phyllis Karpola is retiring after serving 34-years as crossing guard for the Village of Mokena.

Respectfully,

Submitted on behalf of Dr. Mark A. Cohen, Superintendent