

October 2020 Superintendent's Report

Highlight of the Month: I continue to be impressed by the positive response of our students to the additional safety precautions that were put in place by COVID-19. An experience that brought a needed smile to an otherwise stressful day was the interaction I witnessed between our nurse, Mrs. Roto, and a primary grade student. The student was experiencing trouble keeping his mask on because the elastics had stretched. After several attempts to fit him with a mask, Mrs. Roto commented: "you just don't have enough ear."

I would also like to thank the staff for their immediate response to our emergency closing in response to a heating issue on Tuesday, September 22. Due to their rapid response, our students experienced a positive and productive remote learning day.

Facilities:

Building Committee Update:

The Building Committee met on September 24 to review the status of the project. The radiators for grade K are expected to be installed on Monday, October 5. There is a punch list of final tasks that needs to be done by EMCOR before payment is made. There is also some additional electrical work that needs to be done that will be paid for out of the current BOE budget.

Collaboration and Communication:

The Reopening Committee met on October 1 to discuss the status of our reopening as well as the move to early release Mondays. Overall feedback received was positive. The committee will meet again in November. Carole McCombe has been keeping the families updated through emails, letters and postings on the web page. Staff meetings keep all informed and involved in changes as we move forward. In the spirit of continued cooperation and collaboration, we entered into an agreement with the ETA as to the beginning and ending time of the teacher workday. A copy of the MOU is included in your packet.

Finance:

We continue to monitor the use of our funds since, due to COVID some unplanned expenditures have been needed. As we move into budget season, I suggest that the BOE consider scheduling a meeting (without numbers) to discuss the direction they would like the administration to take when preparing next year's budget in light of the COVID pandemic and any impact on the Eastford community.

Most of the comments included in this report are connected to the agenda items:

X. Unfinished Business

A. Approval of Policy 5131.911, Bullying Prevention and Intervention and the Safe School Climate Plan

This policy includes the Safe School Climate Plan that all districts are required to have. This plan includes a section that identifies the long-term goal and specific targets that the school will be addressing as part of its plan for continuous improvement of school climate. Each year a survey is administered to assess the status of our school climate. Last year, due to the closure for the COVID pandemic, we did not administer the survey.

C. Approval of Policy 5152, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972: Prohibition of Sexual Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

Once approved, this policy will be posted on the website with the accompanying required training materials. The administrative team and the school counselor participated in three hours of intensive training. All staff participated in a shorter version of the mandated training as part of the beginning of the year professional development program.

XI. New Business

A. 2021 Board of Education Meeting Dates

You may want to consider a different day for the November meeting as November 11 is typically included in the school calendar as a school holiday.

B. Approval of COVID-19 Policy, C16 Use of Face Coverings in School, revisions

This policy includes a very specific revision regarding the wearing of masks for children over three years of age.

C. Approval of School Safety & Security Plan for submission to the State

Although the BOE is not officially required to approve the School Safety and Security Plan, I feel it is important that you are aware of the document and approve its submission to the State by November 1. A copy of the plan, once completed, will be available for BOE review. Due to the nature of the contents of the plan, this plan is not publicly posted. However, if the BOE wishes to review the plan as a group, they may do so by scheduling an Executive Session for this purpose.

D. Approve submission of the OPM Grant and waivers for purchasing equipment related to this grant

As you know we received an OPM grant in the amount of \$67,800. Although we did not receive all of the requested monies for salaries, we did receive the entire requested amount for the purchase of health and safety related expenditures. We are in the process of completing this grant, the due date for which was extended to October 7. We have included requests that allow us to purchase/be reimbursed for equipment that provides for social distancing, minor upgrades to our HVAC system, provision of an isolation room, a structure and some equipment to support the use of the outdoors. We are required to spend out this grant by the end of December. I am asking that the BOE approve submission of the grant as well as a waiver for any policy restrictions on purchasing materials that would prevent us from spending out these dollars by the end of December.

E. Adoption of the 2020-21 flexibilities option for teacher evaluation

On behalf of the BOE, with mutual agreement of the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee, we agreed to the Flexibilities option as an amendment to our existing evaluation plan for the school year 2020-21. Information regarding these flexibilities are included in your packet. The emphasis on Social and Emotional Learning is consistent with our long-term plan for improvement of the overall school climate as well as addressing the needs of our students during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

F. Ratification of the ETA Contract

As part of your packet, you have both a red-line and final copy version of the ETA contract for the 2021-22 through 2023-24 school years. This agreement was mutually agreed upon by the BOE and ETA negotiations teams. The agreement has been ratified by the ETA. Once approved by the BOE, we must forward a copy to the Town. The Town does have the right to reject the contract. Such a vote would force us into arbitration.

G. Approval of updated 2020-21 EES School Calendar

We are asking that the BOE approve an adjustment to the school calendar that includes early release days on Mondays from October 19- December 21. This reflects a movement from four days of in-person instruction to four and a half days of in-person instruction. This move will allow us to continue to provide for both the students learning at home as well as the students learning at school. If conditions develop that cause a need to move away from this plan, you will be notified. Otherwise, we will review the plan in December. As part of this discussion, the administration will provide thoughts as to protocols and procedures for both short- and long-term emergency closing days.

XIII. Financial Reports

At this time there are no requests for transfers. After the approval of the OPM grant funds by the State, we will be able to provide further information as to how dollars already spent for targeted expenses will be reimbursed.