

RSU 54/MSAD 54
Educational Policy/Program Committee
MINUTES
September 21, 2021
6:00 PM
Skowhegan Area High School –Cafeteria

Committee Attendance: Sarah Bunker - **Chair**, Karen Smith - **Vice Chair**, Goff French, Amy Rouse, Lynda Quinn

Also Present: Erica Thompson, Bruce Mochamer, Zach Longyear, Jon Moody, Mark Hatch

1. Reorganization

The Committee met and elected Sarah Bunker as Chair and Karen Smith as Vice Chair of the Committee. The Committee set the number for a quorum to 5.

2. K for ME - Mark Hatch

Mark Hatch discussed the implementation of Maine’s state model Kindergarten curriculum, K for Me, at Canaan Elementary, North Elementary and Mill Stream Elementary Schools.

3. Bullying Policy JICK/E1-E4

The committee discussed policy JICK; no changes were made to the current policy. The committee discussed the definition of bullying and how the building administration uses the policy, reports and the flowchart to investigate and follow up on reports of bullying. Bruce Mochamer and Zach Longyear shared how they approach investigations and how they follow up with restorative practices, guidance support, and disciplinary action. They also shared how they build relationships and conduct proactive activities like the annual presentation done with SAHS students entitled, “We Don’t Talk That Way Here.”

4. District Affirmative Action Plan

The Committee discussed the current district Affirmative Action Plan. They reviewed the role of the affirmative action officers and the professional development that was conducted with all staff at the start of the year. No changes were made to the current plan.

5. Use of Physical Restraint and Seclusion JKAA/JKAA-R

The Committee discussed recent changes to law that require adjustments to current policy JKAA/JKAA-R. Erica Thompson, spoke with the committee and explained that the new law redefined physical restraint and seclusion and the result of the change will be an increase in reports of “restraint” in MSAD 54 schools. Restraint and seclusion is only used when absolutely necessary to ensure the safety of students and staff.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board adopt revised versions of Policy JKAA/JKAA-R as written.

6. Update on Remote Learning Plan- Mark Hatch

Mark updated the Committee on remote learning district wide. Remote learning started the week of September 20th. Remote learning is a term used to describe students who are remote-only learners. The district currently has 33 students working remotely. Remote teachers and administrators worked with students and their families to get them started in the program. The district is providing federally funded internet hotspots for families that need them.

7. School Calendar Discussion – Jon Moody

Mr. Moody shared the impact that COVIC-19 has had on district staff this year. The district is facing a shortage in bussing, custodial and other support staff positions. Teachers, educational technicians, and school-based staff have faced incredible challenges with dramatically increased COVID-19 case numbers in the district. Several staff have resigned. Staff are reporting high stress and the need for additional time to support students, especially students who have been forced to quarantine from school. The district has several open teaching and educational technician positions.

The committee discussed the impact that CDC guidelines have had on school, including quarantine. Mr. Moody shared that school districts are required to follow Maine CDC Quarantine protocols, which sometimes differ from the federal guidelines. The district is doing everything possible to limit the impact of quarantine on students. Although the district mask requirement has resulted in over 75% less students having to quarantine as a result of in-school exposure this year vs. last, there have been many more cases and many more quarantines as a result of outside of school exposure.

Mr. Moody explained that although the district cannot add a significant number of workshop days this year (as was done last year), he feels it is

absolutely necessary to add one or two days this fall. He requested the committee support the addition of two workshop days, one on October 8th and a second to be determined by the board. These two additional days would replace previously scheduled student days. He asked that the committee recommend to the board that they draft a letter to the Commissioner of Education requesting that two additional workshop days be allowed.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board send a letter to the Department of Education requesting to adjust the district calendar, replacing two student days with district workshop days, for the purpose of providing staff time to plan, learn, and collaborate around providing instruction and resources to students on quarantine.