

Town of Canton
Canton School Committee Minutes of the Meeting of August 12, 2021
Canton High School Distance Learning Lab

Members of the public were also able to view a live stream of the meeting via
<http://cantoncommunitytv.org/>

- A. Call to Order: The School Committee meeting is called to order at 6:01 p.m. Motion to go into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to preparations for negotiations with non-union personnel, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Schools, is made by Kendall O'Halloran. Seconded by Chuck Rae. It was voted by roll call 4-0 at 6:02 p.m.

Kristian Merenda yea
Nichola Gallagher yea
Chuck Rae yea
Kendall O'Halloran yea
Maureen Moran arrived at 6:07 p.m.

- B. Open Session: Chair Merenda called the meeting to order at 7:21 p.m. She informed the meeting that she was pleased to welcome Derek Folan as Interim Assistant Superintendent, who officially assumed the role as of July 30, 2021.

Present are
Kristian Merenda
Nichola Gallagher
Maureen Moran (completed minutes for this meeting)
Chuck Rae
Kendall O'Halloran

Also Present
Derek Folan, Interim Assistant Superintendent
Stephen Marshall, Director of Finance and Operations
Public
Press
Staff

C. Interim Superintendent's Report

Highlights

Summer School: Supported by state grant funding, CPS offered three Summer Scholars programs to families this year at JFK (for elementary-age students in CPS), GMS and CHS. Summer Scholars at JFK had 51 students enrolled in grades K-5. Thanks to the following: JFK teacher Erin Proctor who spearheaded this program, along with the following staff members who participated. Nursing Staff: Irene Keefe and Bailey Hewitt Kindergarten (rising first grade): Kim Willett, teacher and Maria Walsh, EA First Grade (rising 2nd Grade): Michelle Vernet, teacher and Cheryl Kelliher, EA Second Grade (rising 3rd Grade): Jenny Weston, teacher and Cyndie Kalamvokis, EA Third Grade (rising 4th grade): Brittany Campo, teacher and Erika Kamezaki, EA Fourth/Fifth Grade (rising 5th and 6th grade): Rebecca Eckler, teacher and Jessica Corrielus, EA. A special thank you to JFK custodians Richie Burke, Mark Wedge and Andrew Foley. Overall, the Elementary Summer Scholars was a huge success and well received by parents and guardians. We conducted surveys of students, staff and families to receive feedback about the experience. Director of Teaching and Learning Deb Rooney shared a staff survey and a parent/guardian survey. Although there was a smaller response rate, 87% of parents/guardians felt their child benefited academically from the program and 100% felt they benefited socially. 50% felt that the schedule of the program was appropriate. Most comments asked for a longer day and more weeks.

GMS Summer Scholars Program: Run by GMS teacher Deb Shaw, the program featured a 4-week Project-Based Learning unit called "challenges". They read 2 books, "Freak the Mighty" and "Soul Surfer". Both books' main characters had challenges they had to overcome. Students also used these books for their summer reading. Students also worked on math stations and did 2 research projects. One project was on different types of disabilities and the second project was to create a prosthetic arm that could pick up a piece of paper and drop it in a trash can. The culminating project was to create a video on how to make a prosthetic arm out of recyclable materials and this video will be posted to YouTube. Thirty-two (32) students participated in the GMS program with 4 teachers and 2 educational assistants per day. At times, there were 2 classrooms running, and other times there were 4-5 classes running, depending on what the students were working on.

CHS Summer Scholars Program: The CHS Summer Scholars Program was run by Rebecca Ashley and had a total of 19 students participate in English and Social Studies classes. 13 students took an Educere course with supervision by Tom MacDonald. Some of these students took 2 courses. The courses were: Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Pre-calculus, Biology, Spanish, French. There were 15 students who took the Social Studies course with Mike Eromin for half the day, then took English with Rebecca Hahn for the second half of the day. Rebecca and Mike worked together to provide work that met both SS and Eng standards so that the students could earn

credit for either course for their work. Four additional students took English but did not do the Social Studies course. They took an Educere course instead for the second half of the day. Special thanks to CHS Administrative Assistant Marsha Armando and Guidance Administrative Assistant Anne Murray who helped tremendously throughout the four weeks. We are looking forward to enhancing Canton Summer Scholars and offering it in the coming year through the available grant funding.

Canton Academy: This year's Canton Academy surpassed 600 kids and that doesn't include the average of 20 kids per week that took advantage of our extended day program till 3 PM. This year we had several new teachers and classes. There were ice cream trucks, a petting zoo visit the kids, and pizza Thursdays. Canton Academy has a philosophy of not turning anyone away due to financial constraints. Many students were able to enjoy all that Canton Academy has to offer while making new friends. Canton Academy staff genuinely care about their students and do whatever they can to make CA a memorable experience.

Curriculum and Math Review: Curriculum work projects this summer included the revision of a CHS US History 2 course to align with Massachusetts State Social Studies Standards and to include the civic action project. Educators revised and updated 12th grade history electives as well. GMS history teachers worked to develop the 8th grade civics course to include the civic action project for grade 8.

Additionally, a group of PreK-12 teachers and administrators met for three days in July and will resume their work for two additional days next week to begin the process of reviewing the CPS math program. This work began with a review of state standards and where they are taught in each grade and course, a review of MCAS data, and some work around course alignment. Next week's work will focus on continuing to develop a vision for math instruction in Canton and identify important action steps. This information will be shared with all math teachers as a precursor to more school year focus, which will include a review of programming to update materials, particularly in grades K-8, and to identify the next steps.

The Return of Camps: Many local organizations and traditional summer experiences have returned to our campuses over the summer. Kids Camp, which involved hundreds of our students as either participants or counselors, had an amazing week at GMS. Canton Soccer School completed its 27th camp with hundreds of participants, while students had opportunities to participate in football, volleyball, and field hockey camps as well. Robotics Camp is up and running this week, and Band Camp kicks off next week.

Updates

SC Workshop: The School Committee held a Strategic Planning workshop on July 9. The workshop, facilitated by MASC representative Dorothy Presser, served as an opportunity for

Central Office administrators to work collaboratively with the School Committee to set target areas for District Goals.

MSBA Update: Representative William Galvin and Senator Walter Timilty have supported and endorsed the GMS Massachusetts School Building Association (MSBA) Statement of Interest application. Rep. Galvin and Sen. Timilty sent an Endorsement Letter to the MSBA on behalf of CPS. The ultimate goal, if accepted into the program, is to build a new Galvin Middle School with state and local funding support. Rep. Galvin has a special connection with the GMS, as William H. Galvin is his great uncle -- his grandfather's brother. William H. Galvin served as an Assistant Principal, Principal, and Superintendent in the Canton Public Schools.

Indicators of Excellence

Canton Alliance Against Substance Abuse (CAASA): A Celebration of Life: CAASA is holding its 5th annual Celebration of Life event on Tuesday, August 31 @ 7:00 at the Canton Senior Center to commemorate the "International Overdose Awareness Day." It's always a powerful and impactful ceremony. All are welcome to attend.

MusicCounts! Donation: Donated by MusicCounts, three big xylophones are being installed at Luce, Hansen, and JFK. The JFK and Luce xylophone installations are in progress. The Hansen is already installed and is located in the back playground. The Pre-k has a tone post that also is installed in the new grassy area. Thank you to MusicCounts for this donation. Thanks also to Catherine Eckersley and the CPS Custodial staff for their work to ensure the proper installation of this new equipment.

Important Dates and Events

August 20 School Committee Workshop, Rodman Administration Building, 12:00 pm

August 24 and 25 New Educator Orientation, CHS Library

August 27 Substitute Orientation, CHS Library

August 30 All staff report to work

August 30 Hansen Open House, Kindergarten, Grade 1 and New Students, 6:00 pm

August 30 JFK Open House, Kindergarten & Grade 1, 5:00 pm

August 31 Luce Open House, Kindergarten and Grade 1, 5:00 pm

Sept. 1 1st Day of School, Grades 1-12

Sept. 2 School Committee Meeting, Canton High School, DLL, 7:00 pm

Sept. 6 No School, Labor Day

Sept. 7 No School, Rosh Hashanah

Sept. 8 First Day of School, Kindergarten

D. Unfinished Business

1. Section B Policy Review: Chair Merenda, Mr. Folan, and Ms. O'Halloran presented policies for a second read. In response to Ms. Moran's request at the July 8, 2021 meeting that the pronouns he/she/they and his/her/theirs be used, Mr. Folan reached out to the CPS Student Services attorney and checked with the National Equity Project, which supports the use of he/she/they and his/hers/theirs. Chair Merenda recommended that going forward, the three pronouns be used in policies and school handbooks, rather than trying to apply retroactively. Policy BDFA – School Councils was held for a third read because of a question as to whether School Improvement Plans (SIPs) were reviewed and approved by the School Committee or the Superintendent.

With the exception of Policy BDFA , School Councils, the following policies were approved:

- BBBC - School Committee Member Resignation
- BBDC - Appointment Committee Officials C.
- BDD - School Committee Superintendent Relationship
- BDG - School Attorney
- BEDB - Agenda Format
- BGF - Suspension of Policies
- BHC - School Committee-Staff Communications

Motion to approve policies BBC, BDC, BDD, BDG, BEDB, BGF, BHC:

Nichola Gallagher

Second: Chuck Rae

Vote: 5-0

E. Public Comment

Chair Merenda opened the public comment portion by stating that during the 2020-2021 school year, public comment had been moved later in the meeting to allow the public to hear presentations and have context for questions asked or comments made. It's the chair's discretion to move public comment to an earlier time in the agenda. Tonight, public comment is being moved up because of the face-covering discussion. Comments would be offered either in person at the meeting or remotely via Zoom. Given the heavy agenda, Chair Merenda stated that a five-minute limit would be placed on each speaker.

Steve Mayer stated that he has elementary-age children and that he is concerned that mask wearing is detrimental to the youngest learners in the district. He said that it was time to learn to live with COVID, and he urged those present to unmask the district's children. Mr. Mayer asked whether it was time to question whether good intentions are doing more harm than good. He

referred to Canton's focus on increased ventilation in schools, as well as the state's high vaccination rate. He was concerned about the negative impact of attending school in masks, the sharp increase in obesity and mental health issues during the pandemic, lost learning time, the controversy over masks mitigating the spread of COVID, and the impact of carbon dioxide because of masks.

Jeffrey Sussman stated that schools need to be safe places to learn and that the Delta variant is more transmissible and more contagious. He asked the School Committee to require universal masking and universal vaccination for school faculty and staff. He supported layered mitigation strategies, including lunch and snacks outside; pool testing; air filtration; and remote education. He would send his written remarks to the School Committee via email.

Moneesha Narula-Isaac stated that she is a local pediatrician and that in her experience, kids have gotten used to masks, including kids with severe autism and who are nonverbal. She said that clear masks have become more acceptable because they allow kids to read lips. She is not seeing elevated carbon dioxide levels because of masks, and said masks are highly effective.

Chair Merenda said that commenters are welcome to submit comments via email. All correspondence received via email is shared with the entire committee and the Superintendent and is part of the public record.

F. New Business

1. COVID Update and Preparation Plans: Mr. Folan updated committee members as to the challenges presented by the resurgence of COVID and the presence of the Delta variant. The state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is requiring students to be in school five days a week. He outlined the mitigation strategies the district will continue to employ, including air purifiers in each classroom; open windows; quarterly air quality checks; ventilation upgrades; use of tents for lunches, performing arts and mask breaks; and the return of the COVID dashboard for the district. He stated that the district doesn't want anything to interfere with the continuity of learning. Enhanced cleaning protocols will continue, as will bus protocols and ensuring that vaccines are accessible to the school community.

Nurse Leader Lauren Pushard informed the Committee that mitigation strategies would include rapid testing, pool testing that used saliva rather than nasal swabs, and "test and stay" for school exposure. Rather than quarantine, a student would test at the same time each day for five days.

Mr. Folan said that DESE wasn't requiring social distancing in schools, although CPS

would attempt to distance whenever possible. No remote learning option would be available and waitlists exist for the state's two online schools. The state is pushing districts to provide as many mitigation elements as possible.

Chair Merenda stated she was proud of how aggressive Canton has been in upgrading its HVAC systems and implementing mitigation strategies.

Ms. Gallagher asked whether "test and stay" required parental approval, which Mr. Folan said it did. She also questioned what would happen if a cluster of cases occurred within a class. Mr. Folan said that DESE had not yet issued guidance.

Members questioned whether clear masks would be of use in schools and if students might fall through the cracks if speech and language issues are "missed" because of mask use. Early Childhood Coordinator Donna Kilday said that with clear masks and outside activities, the time students spent masked in class would be monitored. Director of Student Services Dianna Mullen said that last year, some students struggled with masks, but were more comfortable by the end of the year.

Mr. Folan informed the committee that vaccination rates for Canton students age 16-19 are 80 percent; for students age 12-15, 50 percent. Canton's vaccination rate is 60 percent. He doesn't have the vaccination rate for teachers.

2. Face Covering Policy Review, EBCFA: Mr. Folan reminded the Committee that the face covering policy went through several iterations during the 2020-2021 school year. He stated that on July 30, 2021, DESE announced that the decision as to whether to require masks in school would be made at the local level. The Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) has recommended the wearing of masks at all levels in school. CPS physician Dr. Muse believes in the use of masks to prevent the spread of the Delta variant. Mr. Folan acknowledged that no one wants to wear masks and recommended that the school year begins with universal masking in grades k-12, to provide the healthiest environment for students.

Members asked how other School Committees are handling masking in their districts; cited increased opportunities for students to unmask outside; stated concerns that a "Plan B" in the form of remote schooling doesn't exist; and said that Governor Baker should be making the decision as to masking in schools, rather than placing School Committees in this position of being between a rock and a hard place.

Mr. Rae said that parents should make the decision about masking on behalf of their

children and that he didn't support the policy.

Move to approve the policy EBCFA and revisit at the Oct.7 School Committee meeting: Nichola Gallagher

Second: Maureen Moran

Vote: 4-1

Kristian Merenda	yea
Nichola Gallagher	yea
Maureen Moran	yea
Chuck Rae	nay
Kendall O'Halloran	yea

Chair Merenda, Mr. Folan and Ms. O'Halloran presented the following policies for a first read. Mr. Folan informed the Committee that updated language aligned with the law and had been vetted through district counsel. The Committee could pursue a second read at the Sept. 2, 2021 meeting.

- A. AC - Nondiscrimination
- B. ACA - Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex
- C. ACE - Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap
- D. JIFCB - Bullying Prevention

Move to wave the second read of the above policies: Nichola Gallagher

Second: Maureen Moran

Vote: 5-0

Move to approve the policies as written: Maureen Moran

Second: Nichola Gallagher

Vote: 5-0

4 Handbook and District Appendix Review: Mr. Folan, central office staff, and Principals presented the 2021-2022 school handbooks and district appendix for review.

For the Rodman Early Childhood Center handbook, the only change suggested by the Committee involved the update of personnel listed at the school because of a departure.

Mr. David Brauning presented the three elementary handbooks. He said Principals focused on aligning the three handbooks, including schoolwide expectations; supporting positive school cultures; and articulating the goals of allowing students to make mistakes, as well as proactively giving students what they need, whether support or differentiated services.

Chair Merenda commended the effort to more closely align the elementary handbooks in content; sought clarification around the goals and time expectations for student homework; and recognized the intentional use of excellence in the handbook and the goal of high expectations for all students. Ms. Gallagher recognized the growing collaboration among the three elementary principals. Ms. Moran sought clarity about handbook additions, including the term “restorative practices,” an explanation of the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), and how children who need enrichment, rather than support, will be accommodated during elementary Intervention/What I Need blocks.

Mr. Jim Spillane presented the GMS handbook. He cited a discussion of the seven-day schedule, an update to language clarifying criteria for the President’s Award, and handbook language that has been adjusted to align with the CHS dress code and the CHS code of conduct. Mr. Spillane also stated that GMS has brought in restorative conferences and mediation, in addition to the disciplinary process and the process of responding to behavioral infractions.

Members discussed the GMS approach of allowing tests and assignments to be retaken, thereby reducing anxiety among students and allowing for greater learning opportunities; how late assignments are handed; whether each classroom should be outfitted with a place students could store their phones while in the class; and the idea of launching a Junior National Honor Society at GMS.

Mr. Jeffrey Sperling said that the CHS handbook included updated language around parent/guardian; the dress code; the addition of “practitioner” to doctor and dentist in the document to validate mental health appointments as doctor and dentist appointments are; the code of conduct, and the fact that Dr. Fitzgerald has taken the complete restorative justice course at Suffolk University.

Mr. Rae asked for examples of the restorative approach in the classroom. Ms. Moran recommended the School Committee bring Canton High’s graduation requirements in line with MassCORE for the incoming CHS class of 2025.

Under the district appendix, Ms. Moran recommended that the district include a policy around Chromebook and iPad use, loss, damage and replacement. Mr. Folan informed the committee that he and Julie Shore, Director of Technology, would be coming before the committee in September with such a policy.

Move to approve the school handbooks and district appendix as written: Nichola Gallagher

Second: Chuck Rae

Vote: 5-0

Kristian Merenda	yea
Nichola Gallagher	yea
Maureen Moran	yea
Chuck Rae	yea
Kendall O'Halloran	yea

At 10:45 p.m. Chair Merenda, noting the late hour and Committee bylaws that require that School Committee meetings end at 11 p.m., asked Mr. Folan to prioritize the agenda items that remained, specifically which needed action prior to the opening of school on Sept. 1.

G. Director of Finance and Operations Report: Mr. Marshall informed the committee that three ARPA requests have been submitted to the Select Board: premium pay for each district employee who worked between March 2020 and June 2021; money toward HVAC unit ventilators at the Hansen; and funding for the bleachers and press box at Memorial Field.

He told Committee members that plans were underway to solicit feedback via a survey from the community concerning the allocation of ESSER III funds. The application is due in October.

F. Routine Matters/ Subcommittee Reports: Mr. Folan required a School Committee vote to serve as the TEC representative.

Motion to approve Interim Superintendent Folan as the District's TEC representative: Maureen Moran

Second: Nichola Gallagher

Vote 5-0

Kristian Merenda	yea
Nichola Gallagher	yea
Maureen Moran	yea
Chuck Rae	yea
Kendall O'Halloran	yea

G. Tabled Agenda Items:

1. District Goal and Action Plans: At 10:55 p.m., Mr. Folan recommended that the principals be allowed to work on district goals on a conceptual level, specifically for individual School Improvement Plans, despite the fact the evening's meeting didn't allow for a full presentation of the district goals. The School Committee's Aug. 20, 2021 workshop would allow committee members to delve deeper into the district goals. Chair

Merenda explained that this document was meant to be draft, and a full presentation is still needed and that SIPs would be held up unless the School Committee allowed principals to move ahead and work on SIPs at this time.

2. Interim Assistant Superintendent Appointment

3. Consent Agenda

- A. Regular Session Minutes: July 8, 2021, July 16, 2021, Workshop Minutes of July 16, 2021, July 21, 2021,
- B. Executive Session Minutes: July 8, 2021. July 16, 2021
- C. Warrants: August 6, 2021, and August 13, 2021

H. Future Business: The School Committee will participate in a training/workshop on August 20, 2021 @ 12:00 pm at the Rodman Administration Building, Room 28. The next School Committee meeting is Sept. 2, 2021 in the CHS DLL.

I. Adjournment: Nichola Gallagher made a motion to adjourn at 11:05 p.m., seconded by Chuck Rae. It was voted by roll call, 5-0.

Kristian Merenda yea

Nichola Gallagher yea

Maureen Moran yea

Chuck Rae yea

Kendall O'Halloran yea