

UNION #28 JOINT SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE
Monday, November 19, 2018
Final Minutes

Present: Jen Malcolm-Brown, Beth Erviti, Brian Guerin, Anna Wetherby, Jenn Eichorn, Carl Seppala, Bethany Seeger, Carla Halpern, Dan Hayes, Members; Lauren Thomas-Paquin, Chair; Prudence Marsh, Director of Student Support Services; Bruce Turner, Director of Finance and Operations; Jennifer Haggerty, Superintendent; Public Guests

1. Meeting Called to Order by Dan at 7:08 P.M.

2. Reorganization of the Committee – Vice-Chair:

CARLA NOMINATED DAN FOR VICE-CHAIR OF U#28 JSC. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

3. Public Hearings: None

4. Approval of the Minutes from September 17, 2018:

Carl offered an emendation.

DAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 17, 2018 AS EMENDED. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.

5. Budget and Personnel Committee:

Bethany reported that the committee primarily discussed the budget, but many details of their discussion dovetails with later agenda items, so they'll just be integrated with those discussions.

6. Superintendent Report:

Jennifer introduced Annie Foley-Ruiz, our Director of Learning Design. Annie reported on her initiatives for the Union, apart from the work she does to organize the Professional Development Days. One project is coordinating support for ELL students, including translation services and staff development. Another is developing a Learning Design Integration Team, consisting of twenty U#28 teachers and support staff, which will meet multiple times throughout the school year to engage in research, observation, and reflection in order to eventually bring the principles of UDL to scale in every U#28 classrooms.

JSC had questions for Annie. Carla asked what language backgrounds ELL students currently have: Spanish, Moldovan, Farsi. Dan asked for clarification of which staff are on the Integration Team: it includes technology, speech pathology, and ELA professionals among others so far. Lauren asked for more details about the goals of the UDL initiative in the Union: it's to develop UDL leaders within the schools who can be resources for other teachers and staff who want to integrate principles of UDL with what they already do.

Jennifer went on to discuss Alternative Structured Learning Day Programs (a.k.a. E-Learning, Blizzard Bags, etc.), which provide alternative learning activities online for students that can be completed at home in the event of a weather cancellation. We're developing a pilot of these in accordance with DESE guidelines, including depth of engagement with learning materials / quality of learning activities and so forth. Snow Days are always a challenge, and these programs might be part of the answer. Carla noted that this has been in place in Mahar already, and it's fine if students have Internet access, but if they don't (and many of our U#28 students don't have ready access at home), this alternative can be a barrier to learning instead. On the other hand, this can be helpful in curtailing the extra Snow Days at the end of the school year. Beth wondered about the extent of parental involvement in these programs; surely some would be required to make this work? Jennifer offered an anecdote to the effect that a student with online work was able to do some independently, but this is one of the aspects that we'd be tracking in the pilot. Lauren added that this has been adopted at Mohawk as well, and students have up to five days after the online day to seek additional help from their teachers; it's not fair to put the burden of support entirely on the family's shoulders. Dan asked Jennifer if this is a topic that comes up at her Superintendent roundtables: yes, some

other Superintendents share their experiences with considering or implementing it. Jen asked about the variety of activities: Jennifer responded that they're varied and can and do include paper-based work.

Jennifer went on to describe a program she's going through that focuses on increasing support for underrepresented student groups, including ethnic minorities and LGBTQ students. There's a fair amount of group work, and she has a project related to the Union that she'll be working on throughout.

Jennifer sat on a panel about the New Superintendents Induction Program at the recent MASC conference; it was an enlivening experience, and Dan added that Jennifer did an awesome job. Finally, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education is looking at various aspects of funding, including rural school aid and changes to Circuit Breaker funds, so there's a raft of proposals we can support that could improve our schools' financial situations.

Dan noted that educational collaboratives, including CES, are looking at ways of supporting schools in order to help address issues of social justice. He also talked about what he learned about virtual academies run by collaboratives to help students who can't attend a regular school; these could provide rich learning opportunities for students in rural areas.

7. Director of Finance and Operations Report:

1. FY20 Union #28 Budget: Bruce distributed the latest budget draft. He's soon to take a class to get recertified in public procurement. He discussed recent changes, including salary line increases for non-contract U#28 staff; Jennifer noted that the steps have been a part of these jobs for a long time. We've begun the process of going through boxes of old records to purge what we can. The budget for this project mainly pays for consulting on records retention and actual sorting through the records. We're requesting an increase in the Director of Learning Design position from a .6 to a .8 to reflect the additional projects being undertaken. The data evaluation work has been rolled into this position as well, and we've decreased the line for the data evaluation specialist to 0 but left the line in, to reflect that this is a necessary position we hope to be able to fund in the future.

Bethany voiced concern about the growth trend in the U#28 budget over the past few years, something like 8% a year or so. How can we keep supporting that? It doesn't seem sustainable. Brian agreed about the sticker shock, but it seems that most of the increases are contractual raises and COLAs. How do you get around those? Bruce noted that 85% of the budget or more is salary; there aren't many other kinds of expenses (mainly computers). Jennifer added that we're trying to maintain our compliance so that we don't get cited if we're reviewed by the state. We have a very lean staff, with many people taking on multiple roles.

Jen asked whether the ELL support was an unfunded mandate: yes. Prudy added that there's a funding source we don't qualify for there because we don't have nearly enough students. Annie said there are barriers to delivering ELL services efficiently as well (students from different grades can't be helped at the same time, nor students from different schools, etc.).

Dan said it's critical to look at positions: there are other districts where positions are combined. Jennifer said that we've been reviewing positions all along; we did this last year with the Student Support Services Coordinator, for example. Dan stressed the need for advocacy on several fronts: developing an action plan for the district, working with legislators, pushing back against charter school expansions, etc. Jennifer added that one position that appears in our budget now was previously grant funded, so the position was there (as well as the necessary work done through that position), but it didn't show up in the budget.

Dan wondered whether there were a way we could utilize technical positions in the schools to do data analysis? Jennifer said they teach as well as provide technical support, and Bruce added their time is so tied up in working with school computers that there isn't any room for extra data work. He thinks we do a good job of controlling our costs, but there are these mandates we have to meet. He invited JSC to take the budget home, look it over carefully, and bring questions to the next meeting. JSC discussed when the next meeting would have to be in order to approve the budget: it has to come before mid-January. JSC agreed to hold a one-item meeting focused on the budget in December instead of the scheduled B&P meeting.

8. Union #28 Policy SubCommittee:

Lauren offered a list of twenty or so policies that we don't have but should. Jennifer offered to meet with the SubCommittee (i.e., Lauren) to write these policies for JSC's consideration.

9. News/Updates from Each School and Union #28

Wendell / New Salem: Carla reported that SRS has made capital improvements and we had a fundraiser to pay for Nature's Classroom (a Monster Dash and baked potato bar). Classes have taken field trips to orchards. We've also gotten Rural Aid of \$21,000 this year.

Leverett: Bethany reported the Harvest Festival was lovely; it includes a run that rewards participants with a free homework pass. We also had Mountain Day during which students go on hikes all around the Valley and learn about the land. The Read-A-Thon is tomorrow. LES is a Level 3 school because we don't have enough students taking the test. But it seems students are doing well this year.

Shutesbury: Jen reported that we have two new teachers who are settling in. The PTO is restructuring itself to qualify as a fundraising body. Lauren added that SES is now one of the top 52 schools in the state according to MCAS scores, and we've achieved this without sacrificing what makes us special (to wit, added Jennifer: focusing on the whole child). The Fun Run was a big success.

Erving: Brian reported that the EES Principal has announced his retirement at the end of this year, a sad eventuality for students, staff, and parents. EES is getting \$4,000 of Rural Aid. Writing and rehearsals for the All-School Play are starting soon. Jennifer filled in as a substitute Principal last week; that was fun. We had parent conferences last week as well.

10. Future Items to Discuss:

- a. Next Meeting Date: Monday, January 14, 2019, 7:00 p.m. at Shutesbury Elementary School
- b. Budget & Personnel Committee: Monday, December 10, 2018, 6:00 p.m. at U#28 Central Office

11. Adjournment:

DAN MOVED TO ADJOURN. JEN SECONDED. UNANIMOUS.