

F.O.I. Compliance – Subject to BOE approval at a future meeting

REGION 4 BOARD OF EDUCATION

Date: May 06, 2021

Regular Meeting – REMOTE MEETING held

(To view a recording of this meeting, please visit our website www.reg4.k12.ct.us and select “Remote Meeting Recordings” under the BOARD OF EDUCATION Heading)

Attendance:	<u>Region 4 BOE</u>		<u>Administration:</u>		<u>Other:</u>
(√ = attended)	Kate Sandmann	√	Brian White	√	Libby Capp Student Rep√
	John Stack	√	Sarah Smalley	√	Henry McPherson Student Rep √
	Lori Ann Clymas	√	Bob Grissom	√	Matthew Ritter, esq. √
	Jane Cavanaugh	√			
	Rick Daniels	√	Michael Barile	√	
	Lon Seidman	√	Matt Espinosa	√	
	Jennifer Clark	√			
	Rob Bibbiani	√			
	Vacancy				

Call To Order and Verbal Roll Call: 7:00 p.m. by Chair Sandmann

Items / Discussion

Chair Sandmann opened the floor for nominations to fill the vacancy of the Board office of Treasurer for the unexpired term of office (until the first meeting after Nov. election day).

Jennifer Clark nominated John Stack for the BOE position of Treasurer. Lori Ann Clymas seconded the motion.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to appoint John Stack as Treasurer for the unexpired term of office. _

Public Comment – No comments were made

Consent Agenda

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously **VOTED** to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes from Budget Workshop III on March 02, 2021; the regular meeting of March 04, 2021; the public hearing and special meeting of April 05, 2021; and the accounts payable report.

VRHS Senior Student Representatives Report

Libby Cap and Henry McPherson shared VRHS updates on a variety of topics, including the following: Spirit Week will be held next week with an outside, socially distanced pep rally and all students in the school are very excited for it; there will be a Juniors vs. Seniors kickball game to raise money for Bikes for Kids; the school atmosphere is wonderful and inviting with many students happy to be back in person; Senior Prom is May 14th at Saint Clements Castle in Portland and will be adhering to a COVID safe plan; VRHS graduation will be outside and in person with final details still to be determined; Acceptance Day was Saturday, May 1st and students wore shirts of their college choice on Monday, May 3rd; and an update regarding AP and IB exams.

The Board thanked Libby and Henry for all of their reports to the Board and the wonderful job they did in their service as BOE Student Representatives.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Brian White informed the Board that at the end of his report, Attorney Matt Ritter is here to walk the Board through the steps between now and the anticipated November referendum regarding the JWMS Security Project. But, before that Superintendent White shared a brief update on the following items:

He shared the certified results (verified with each Town Clerk) of the May 04, 2021 referendum on the Region 4 2021-22 budget, which passed with a total count of 289 Yes to 140 No. Individual Town certified results were as follows:

Chester: 113 YES / 49 NO

Deep River: 57 YES / 65 NO

Essex: 119 YES / 26 NO

Superintendent White thanked the Board for their engagement to develop a responsible budget, through a transparent process, that meets the needs of our students and the Region 4 schools.

We have seen a steady increase in students returning to our Region 4 schools with continual uptick since after the April break. Last week's percentage of in person learners for JWMS was 84% and 65% for VRHS. The numbers continue to increase each week.

Superintendent White shared some of the end of year events and traditions planned for JWMS and VRHS.

Executive Order 7B is set to expire after May 20th. That means that we will now need to move back to in-person meetings after that date. This includes the upcoming meetings for the Chester BOE (May 27th) SD & Joint (on June 3rd), with more information to follow.

Our appointed Assistant Superintendent, Sarah Brzozowy, has started her transition for her July 1st entry into the districts. She has had the opportunity to tour all school buildings and the central office, as well as meet with each of our principals throughout the spring.

We have engaged district-wide committees regarding Academic Intervention and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in anticipation of needs in the fall

Based on the most recent communication from the State we are currently moving forward with a set of planning assumptions based on full in person learning effective the first day of school. Additionally we also anticipate being able to offer all after school activities at both JW and Valley beginning in the fall.

Superintendent White shared a reminder that the following groups are up for negotiations:

Cafeteria – 1 year push contract expires June 30, 2021

R4 Secretaries & Nurses – 1 year push contract expires June 30, 2021

Paraeducators - 1 year push contract expires June 30, 2021

R4 Custodians – expires June 30, 2021

Net Techs et al. – expires June 30, 2021

Teachers – expires after June 30, 2022

He shared an update on the Region 4 Schools energy audit that was started prior to the pandemic. Administration has reached out to the vendor and let them know that upon learning that the scale of the recommendations, and the fact that those recommendations are now almost 2 years old, and possibly out of date, we will not be moving forward to engage their services. However, Superintendent White said what he does anticipate is working with the Board in the future, as we begin to evaluate the overall conditions of Region 4 facilities, to continue to take a look at opportunities to improve infrastructure and improve efficiency.

In closing, Superintendent White shared that in looking ahead to fall 2021 he is very excited to set the agenda and work that we'll be talking about with teachers, staff and the boards as we look forward to the fall and beyond, including multi-year goals and strategic planning, which was previously sidelined due to the pandemic. He is excited to come back to the work in the near future, and share more in the months ahead.

The Board had a chance to ask questions.

Superintendent White introduced Matt Ritter, Esq. who is back with the Board this evening to walk them through the required and appropriate process for further informing our communities about the proposed JWMS Security Project, between now and the anticipated November referendum.

Attorney Ritter shared the schedule, which is driven by state statute process. The District Meeting will be held by the end of August, and must be before Labor Day in order to meet deadlines to have the referendum language wrapped up 60 days before referendum at a regular election on November 2nd.

Once the Board votes after the District Meeting to set a referendum date, then the non-advocacy period begins and no district funds may be used to advocate for the project. The minute the board votes to set the referendum date the non-advocacy period begins. Attorney Ritter explained in detail, and answered questions from the Board, regarding what would or wouldn't be allowed during the non-advocacy period.

Attorney Ritter also discussed options for determining the language of the referendum question and the pros and cons of the different options.

Finance Office Report

Finance Director Bob Grissom reviewed enclosures #5 Current Year to Date Financial Status Report; #6 Cafeteria Fund Update; and #7 Medical Reserve Tracking.

Mr. Grissom also shared an update on ESSER Funds; Grants in general; and the status of the R4 Long Range Athletics Facilities Planning Committee which meets again on May 12th for the purpose of finalizing a presentation regarding their recommendations which is scheduled to be made to the Region 4 Board at their next regular BOE meeting scheduled for September 2nd.

There was time for Board discussion and questions.

Principals Reports

Matt Espinosa – JWMS Principal

Principal Espinosa shared end of year updates and highlights with the Board.

Mike Barile – VRHS Principal

Principal Barile shared end of year updates and highlights with the Board.

He also shared a presentation with the Board regarding Valley's NEASC 5 Year Assessment (see attached).

Other Items:

Mr. Grissom shared a summary of the bids received in response to the Real Estate RFP which closed on May 4th. Two bids were received and neither were disqualified by their submission packet. He shared and reviewed the fee schedule submitted by each bidder as part of their proposal. There was time for Board discussion and questions.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously VOTED to direct the Superintendent

to proceed with Berkshire Hathaway per their submitted proposal, for a 6 month term commencing as soon as possible.

Superintendent White asked Mr. Grissom to share an update regarding the status of the capital reserve deficit. Superintendent White shared that the update will include discussion of some items noticed recently while entering last year's audit correction entries. Mr. Grissom has been able to examine these items in depth, and discuss it further with our auditors prior to his update this evening.

Mr. Grissom shared that it was discovered that there were two journal entries made for the capital reserve fund, that were in fact duplications of a transfer stemming from the same Board action. Upon correction of this duplication, the current capital reserve deficit balance now stands at \$129,962.

It was also noted that if the Board decides to appropriate some of this year's 2020-21 unexpended funds in the amount of \$111,637 to further reduce the capital deficit (which would be the maximum additional amount allowed by statute) it would bring the capital reserve fund deficit amount down to \$18,325.

There was time for board discussion and questions. It was noted that it was a positive that this issue was discovered as part of the comprehensive audit process. There was also discussion regarding what current and future internal control processes moving forward will be put into place to facilitate finding potential issues such as these in a more timely manner and reducing the sole reliance on the outside audit process.

Tonight's agenda item for the possible vote to transfer unexpended 2020-21 funds to address the capital fund deficit was postponed until June 3rd, at the end of the Joint BOE meeting. On that date the R4 Board will remain in session for R4 only business, at which time they will be able to vote on the amount of unexpended funds to apply to the capital reserve deficit as well as the specific accounts from which the unexpended 2020-21 funds will be transferred and applied to reduce the capital reserve deficit.

On motion duly made and seconded the Board **VOTED** to move into Executive Session at 9:33 p.m. for a personnel matter - for the Superintendent to present his year-in-review self-assessment.

The Board returned from Executive Session at 9:58 p.m.

There were no committee reports

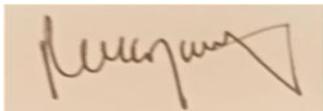
Public Comment: no comments were made

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

- Joint BOE Meeting Thursday, June 03, 2021 @ 7:00 p.m (R4 will stay in session for R4 Board action)
- Region 4 BOE Special meeting in August (TBD) for the purpose of scheduling a District Meeting regarding the proposed JWMS Security Project
- Region 4 BOE Regular Meeting September 02, 2021
- Presentation of recommendations by the R4 Long Range Athletics Facilities Planning Task Force (Sept.)

ADJOURNMENT: On motion duly made and seconded, the Board unanimously **VOTED** to adjourn at 9:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



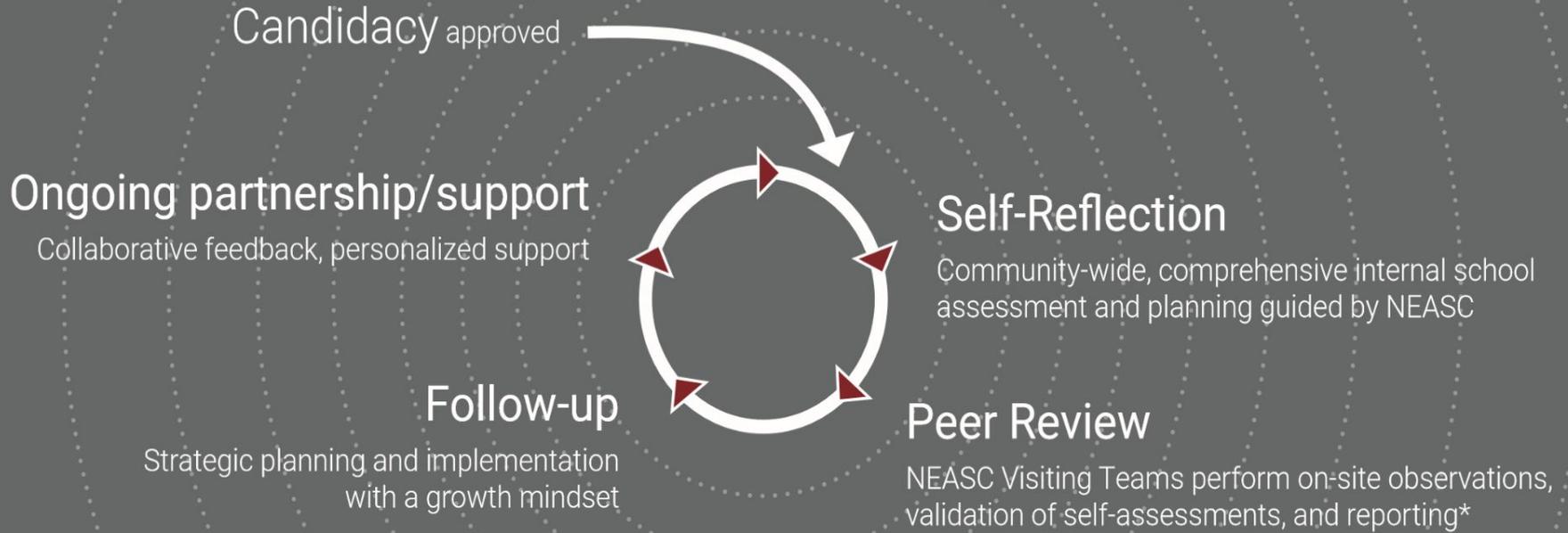
Rick Daniels, Secretary – Regional District #4 Board of Education

Valley Regional High School

Committed to Excellence

NEASC
5 Year Report

The NEASC Accreditation Cycle



- Ongoing Cycle of Accreditation
- Accreditation is not a single event, but rather an ongoing process of school improvement



Continued Accreditation

Following receipt of the NEASC Visiting Team's report, we must:

- Design and implement short- and long-range plans for improvement and growth.
- Submit regular follow-up reports which are monitored by a commission of elected peers and overseen by a professional staff to ensure that goals and recommended institutional improvement can be accomplished.
 - 2 Year Report - Submitted and Approved 3 years ago
 - 5 Year Report - Submitted in March of this year

When completing the reports, we must respond to each of the 5 standards of NEASC by indicating the status of each goal by noting: **COMPLETED, IN PROGRESS, PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE, NO ACTION, OR REJECTED.**



NEASC STANDARDS

Standard 1 - LEARNING CULTURE

Standard 2 - STUDENT LEARNING

Standard 3 - PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

Standard 4 - LEARNING SUPPORT

Standard 5 - LEARNING RESOURCES



Standard 1 - Learning Culture

Describe the process used to revise the school's core values, beliefs about learning, and 21st century learning expectations.

COMPLETED

- Utilized an inclusive process to revise our school's core values, beliefs about learning, and our 21st century learning expectations.
- Faculty and staff were involved in the process through faculty meetings and department planning time.
- Parents were updated through the principal's weekly emails and input was gathered through quarterly parent council meetings.
- Regular feedback was solicited from students through our student leadership council. Ultimately, a full faculty vote was held to confirm adoption of the new learning expectations.
- New expectations were posted in each classroom and prominent places around the school.



Standard 2 - Student Learning

Provide an update on the status of revising curriculum with a common school-wide format aligned explicitly to the school's learning expectations

IN PROGRESS

- Each department regularly reviews curriculum content and standards.
- Curriculum time is provided during the school year with release time and over the summer with curriculum hours.
- Utilize a common curriculum template is used in some departments, though not all courses are in the common format.
- Departments meet at least twice a year with our assistant superintendent to discuss curriculum needs and updates.
- Each content area includes Critical and Creative problem solving within the curriculum.



Standard 3 - Professional Practices

Provide professional development activities to ensure that all teachers have the skills to strategically differentiate for all learners

IN PROGRESS

- Utilize new technologies which assist our teachers in meeting the diversified needs of all our learners.
- Engage staff in training on these technologies as well as teacher led sessions in faculty meetings.
- Staff development on differentiation has included training on dyslexia and other differentiation strategies.
- Paraprofessionals have participated in PD on having high expectations for students.
- Planned professional development includes reworking lessons to be more in line with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies.
- Our focus on differentiation will continue as we continually challenge ourselves to meet the diversified needs of our students and support them, particularly our high needs students and their families.
- Differentiation will be especially important due to the gaps in learning caused by the COVID-19



Standard 4 - Learning Support

Describe the status of implementation of a formal process to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations based on specific and measurable criteria for success

IN PROGRESS

- Developed and implemented school-wide rubric for critical and creative problem solving, one of our expectations in our vision of the graduate. We are working to develop rubrics for the other expectations.
- Each subject area has created critical and creative problem solving assessments into their courses and curriculum.
- Trained teachers by offering multiple professional development sessions on how to assess student learning in this area.
- Each teacher sets a goal which aligned with critical and creative problem solving.
- In PowerSchool, we developed standards that were linked to each course. Students were graded using these standards. Parents and students could see standards progress.
- Next level of this work will be incorporating these standards into a hybrid report card.



Standard 5 - Learning Resources

Describe the progress made increasing heterogeneity to ensure the equitable and inclusive access to challenging academic experiences for all students

IN PROGRESS

- While implementing the IB programme, we made sure that the programme was inclusive to all students.
- Students can override a teacher's level recommendation to enroll in the level of their choosing.
- Reduced a level in our leveled courses, going from Levels 1, 2, and 3 to only levels 1 and 2 only (in addition to college level courses).
- Closely monitor student achievement, attendances, and SEL data by holding scheduled meetings with administration, counseling, and other supports staff on a weekly basis.
- Intervene with students who are struggling to make adequate progress by offering Academic Skills, a guided work course, spread among a variety of subject teachers.
- Developed and implemented a therapeutic program allows students with significant mental health needs to access the general education curriculum.

Thank You