



The Helena Public Schools educate, engage, and empower each student to maximize his or her individual potential with the knowledge, skills and character essential to being a responsible citizen and life-long learner.

Board of Trustees Work Session

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

C.R. Anderson Middle School and via Microsoft Teams

Tour at 3:30 p.m. / Meeting at 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE: Present unless otherwise noted

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair
Siobhan Hathhorn, Board Vice Chair
Terry Beaver, Trustee
John McEwen, Trustee
Sarah Sullivan, Trustee
Jennifer McKee, Trustee
Libby Goldes, Trustee
Jennifer Walsh, Board Member

Janelle Michelson, Business Services Admin.
Dr Tyler Ream, Superintendent
Gary Meyers, Director of Educational Technology
Principal Thennis, CR Anderson Middle School
Assistant Principal Jones, CR Anderson Middle School
Assistant Principal Chandler, CR Anderson Middle School
Various Staff Members from C R Anderson Middle School

I. TOUR OF C.R. ANDERSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

II. CALL TO ORDER/ PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Luke Muszkiewicz called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. REVIEW OF AGENDA

No Change

IV. PRESENTATION

Principal Thennis:

He is grateful for the opportunity to work with the people he does. They have worked well together through the tough things. He applauds his 2 assistant principals. Each year they start with annual goals. His number one is always relationships.

Establishing and cultivating relationships with students is always number one. After that, essential instruction and essential standards are next. This is what they want to see from students and then a roadmap to help them achieve that. The last main goal is to do the best they can. He believes everyone has done their best this year. He encourages the staff to remind themselves that they are not perfect and give themselves a break. It is important to know what you want but also knowing how to get there together. It is important to be true and create loyalty and trust. They use problem solving teams to figure things out. This includes a Teacher Leadership team, an RTI team, a PLC team, an MBI team and a Staff Activity team. Each has a specific purpose and ultimately help them to be a better school.

Assistant Principal Jones:

C.R. Anderson is one of the largest middle schools in Montana. From the teacher perspective, they have common prep periods to collaborate and communicate about students and to monitor progress and create interventions. They provide direct services to some kids and this helps build relationships. From the student perspective, they have a chance to feel that they are part of a smaller learning community and can create relationships with their own team of teachers. They can connect with common classmates and have a personalized feel.

Principal Thennis:

Goal number 2: The RTI, PLC and Teacher Leadership teams are directly involved with this goal of developing essential instruction based on essential standards. They have done a lot of problem solving and they have had a great impact. Adjustments have had to be made as they went.

Assistant Principal Chandler

They have learned a lot of new technology related things through the last year. One of the new things was Microsoft Forms to gather data and send out links to everyone involved. One teacher can communicate about a struggling student to everyone involved in that kid's day. Another survey sent out was asking for feedback from parents. Kids are using several different platforms. They could find out about the home day workload struggles, and the different platforms being used. They also asked kids questions. Kids told them they were very confused about all the different

assignments and different platforms. They took that feedback and tried to make things easier for everyone. The feedback told them that kids were struggling on their remote days. They opened the cafeteria and started doing a block of time for kids on their remote learning days. They now have 90 kids using this option.

Mr. Korizek, PE:

This year they have moved to pass/fail and that helped to have a greater emphasis on activity. Under the circumstances, it helped benefit the students and it is something they may look at in the future. This year they are not dressing out for PE. One of the benefits, is less fighting in the locker rooms. The locker rooms are not built for modesty and that has been a positive thing this year. It also helps because the time to dress out takes away from actual class time. This is picking up almost 15 minutes a day of class time. That is almost a whole extra day a week in time.

Erin Hunt:

The first thing they did was moving the agenda for the week to TEAMS vs email. The other thing they did, in conjunction with Helena Middle school, was to host 2 live parents' events through TEAMS for tech stuff and tech support. The follow up was on the curriculum programs. They were able to walk parents through everything. Another online meeting is planned to walk parents through the Phasing Up plan.

Principal Thennis:

All of these adjustments are driven by the RTI information that they got. There were also concerns about the grading.

Lauren Miller & Kim Cohn, English:

This committee joined a book study. They looked at the number of F's. There are 15 fixes for grading from the book. They picked a couple. One of those is to not include late work in the final grade. That does not mean they are not penalized, but it means they are involved in the process. Its more student centered, and they know what their grades mean. They use common assessments that are standards based. Another fix from the book is to not include 0's in the grade. It is a big shift in thinking. When you include 0's you are not actually grading what they know. You are grading the behavior of not turning in the work. The grades should reflect the level the child is at.

Principal Thennis:

There are lots of ways to assess student learning. Grades do not always reflect where they are at. They want to measure whether kids are learning what they wanted them to learn. They are in the process of surveying the staff. There is an opportunity to work on the grading. There is also opportunity in whether scores will be reduced in late work.

Erin Hunt:

In August they met and decided that they would have schoolwide literacy standards. Being able to read and being able to summarize are the important parts. They used iReady assessments to monitor those standards. They are seeing growth in the standards. iReady has the ability to use the shorter assessments as well as the longer ones.

Principal Thennis:

The English/Language Arts Department has identified central understandings at each grade level. They have aligned them vertically. Each set of standards has a common assessment.

Going back to the goal of establishing and cultivating relationships with students, they have put some systems in place.

Mark McCauley, Counselor:

When the year was started, they brought up the idea of how to get referrals to them in a more proficient manner. They are using a simple Microsoft Form. Teachers can quickly fill out the info on the student and what their concern is. It comes to the counselor in an email that opens in an excel document with the data. They can then decide how to best manage it. Most of the time parents are very supportive when they must be called. This has led to a lot of interventions. They may be able to adjust their schedule, or assign them a para, etc. and it keep the kids on their radar. There is also a form on the webpage that parents and students can use to refer as well.

Christi Williams, Social Studies:

Early on they were trying to decide what to do on Wednesdays. One of the things that came out of that was a check in survey. They ask questions about anxiety level, or happiness overall in addition to other questions. It has made the students feel like they are cared for. When a student puts that they are high on the anxiety level, that can go to the counselor. There is also a place for more details. There was one student writing things in messages about being worthless, etc. and she started connection more with that student. He was told in 4th grade that he was annoying his teacher with his questions and she was able to work with him after that. He was eventually picked as a Star student and it was a shift for him. Another student told her that they had to put their dog down and they were able to talk about it.

Lizzi McClure, Nicole Busby and Ashlee Mihelish:

They are working with the kids who are staying after school. They have had to be creative in connecting with kids. They have started inviting kids to stay after school. Its extra time with the kids to work on school and to connect with them. Last week, she had a student in class who is tougher and who is failing most of the classes. She invited him to stay after several times and last week he did. In that time, he talked

about how hard school is at home and he was very honest. He was feeling a lot of anxiety. She was able to connect and help him with a few assignments. And he went home and did some work at home. Another teacher had a student who was failing all classes and mom was mainly Spanish speaking so not able to help a lot. She started inviting him to come. He started after school sessions 2nd quarter and now he has worked up to being one of the top of the class. Last quarter he was a Star student. It was a win for him. Everyone is welcome to come to the after-school times. The purpose is to build relationships. That then helps with the academics. They mix fun with work. They get to talk to kids and get to know them. A few months ago, a student called on a Friday and she missed the call. She texted back and asked if everything was ok. The student was having a panic attack and could not move. She was in her room and could not leave. So, she contacted the teacher.

Assistant Principal Jones:

MBI is Montana Behavioral Initiative. The purpose is to develop and maintain essential behavioral standards contributing to a safe and orderly environment. There are 18 staff members involved and they meet every 3 weeks. They promote universal expectations. Cooperative Respectful Achievers. They use positive recognitions systems in the form of Shout Outs. They draw from the Shout Out box for prizes. Post cards also go out. They also have Star Students. They find it important to recognize the positive behavior.

Principal Thennis:

Rolling start was effective. Posting all the assignments in one place has been positive. No lockers have also been a great thing. Transitions have been staggered. Having the different grades pass at different times has been good.

Assistant Principal Chandler:

They have been using data from the social emotional surveys. They have made phone calls home and have offered extra support. They early transitioned a few of the kids back before the others. They used Microsoft Forms to find out who would be coming back and who would stay DLI. 76-80 % of the kids will be in person. 12% will be DLI and the other are undecided.

Assistant Principal Jones:

He goes over the block schedule plan for the rest of the year. It is done this a way for safety even though it is challenging academically. They have been using instructional coaches and meeting with each section of teachers to help with the teaching aspect. It is not permeant and will be adjusted. They have measured hallways and will place seats there for lunch to keep them socially distanced.

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair: The presentation was so inspiring. Everyone is working harder to teach and support through this. The school has suffered a student

loss recently and he is thankful that they have been able to work with kids in all aspects.

Trustee Beaver:

Q: He asks if they still teach the advanced computer math program? **A:** The answer is no. The teacher who did it was passionate about it. They have had to adjust but it is a loss.

Q: He questions the smaller kids having to wear the heavy backpacks in the absence of lockers as maybe not a positive thing.

Trustee Sullivan: Her kids have gone through the school and their individual needs were all met. She likes that they work so hard to help them become so responsible. What they are running is a full-service institution with mental health included. What they do is moving and powerful. The legislature needs to help, and the schools need more tax money. The schools are doing so much that they are not recognized for.

Trustee Hathhorn: She echoes the other trustees in their comments. She is impressed by the data information for the staff. She likes that it helps with the social and emotional needs for the wellbeing of the kids. She is happy to hear that iReady is being used and it is helpful.

Trustee McEwen: He would assume it to be standard practice to all give grades the same way. Is it a good thing or not that teachers can decide how grades are given?

A: Grading was done differently in years past. There are still components to grading that have lasted decades. Extra credit, etc. are included. Nationwide, grading needs true reflective examination. Some want to teach responsibility and their grading reflects that. But it is important to grade on knowledge. Grading should reflect where they are in the standards. But that vision has to be shared with others.

Q: PLC vertical alignment. Please explain.

A: Those are abbreviations. It is the simplest form of what is wanted, and they are attached to an assessment. They use common lit to track if students are meeting the standards.

Trustee Goldes: She is thankful for the presentation. Her children attended C R Anderson. It was heartwarming to hear the connections the teachers are making with the kids. The teachers always rise to the occasion. She was interested to hear in the change in grading. She is glad to hear that things like handwriting are not part of their social studies grade. How are elective classes effected by the block scheduling?

A: There are not as many electives offered anymore due to budgets. The electives now are only down to a couple mandatory ones. This is a time for students to start making choices and having options, so they are hopeful to add them back in again in the future.

Trustee McKee: She is thankful for the work they are all doing. Her kids are at the age and they are at HMS. Their lives are complex at that age and it is nice that the staff meets them where they are.

Trustee Walsh: She has kids at C R Anderson currently. She is happy to hear that students are still progressing and that they are taking care of the social emotion piece as well.

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair: He is not an educator, but his wife is and of all the things they have talked about, grading philosophies are where they differed the most. He sees the importance of separating behavior away from mastery in the grading system. He is glad to see they are committed to have that discussion and try to figure these things out. He is glad to see they are using this time to evaluate and not give up.

Q: Is it C.R. Anderson or CR Anderson? **A:** C.R. Anderson is the more widely used.

V. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

None

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Items for Action

1. Approval of Resolution of Intent to Increase Non-voted Levies – Elementary District

Janelle explains that statute requires that public be notified if they increase non levy revenues in specific funds. Estimates for next year's budgets are a 3% increase in transportation, a decrease in tuition budget, and an increase in adult education. The school reserve fund is the most difficult. Trustees have these calculations. \$0.61 is the impact on a \$100,000.00 house.

Motion: Motion to approve made by Trustee Sullivan. Second by Trustee Hathorn.

Public Comment: None

Board Comment: None

Vote: 8-0. Motion carries.

2. Approval of Resolution of Intent to Increase Non-voted Levies – High School District

Motion: Motion to approve made by Trustee McEwen. Second by Trustee Beaver.

Public Comment: None

Board Comment: None

Vote: 8-0. Motion carries.

3. Call for Annual Election – Elementary District

You must call for an election because there are 2 open spots on the Board. You must call for it 70 days in advance which is today. Janelle recommends that the general fund levy

be included. You can cancel later if needed. The Superintendent agrees. The county wants them to provide valid language by March 25th.

Motion: Motion to call for the election as recommended made by Trustee McEwen. Second by Trustee McKee.

Public Comment: None

Board Comment: None

Vote: 8-0. Motion carries.

4. Call for Annual Election – High School District

Motion: Motion to call for the election as recommended made by Trustee Sullivan. Second by Trustee Hathhorn.

Public Comment: None

Board Comment: None

Vote: 8-0. Motion carries.

VII. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Dr Tyler Ream: Quick legislative update. 200+ bills heard in the next 8 days. They are still learning regarding ANB and how that will impact funds provided. They will follow that in crafting the budget going into next year. A couple of bills that we flagged are HB 279 that revises the tax credit scholarship in the education programs. The bill would change that from 150 to 200,000 each year. HB 329 has to do with special needs students. Any family can receive reimbursement for services outside of the public school system. Also 3.5 million in funds were exhausted last year. They have expended all fund associated with ESSER 1 and they are now into ESSER 2. They have not received the funds yet but there will be roughly 5 million dollars. There is some discussion as to whether there will be an ESSER 3 in the future at approx. 6.5 million in the future. They will hopefully not spend through ESSER 2 this school year.

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair: He thanks him and his team for keeping track of all the legislation and giving that info to Board members. He also agrees with his comments on the ESSER funds. They cannot be spent however they want. They are for pandemic related items.

VIII. BOARD COMMENT

Trustee Hathhorn: Luke put out info on CSCT and it is an important part of the schools. There is a form put out if anyone is interested to make sure they do not go without that service.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Next Board Work Session: Tuesday, March 23, 2021, at Jefferson Elementary School

Respectfully Submitted,

Luke Muszkiewicz, Chair

Gretchen George, Recording Secretary Date