



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, April 27, 2021

Helena High School and via Zoom

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

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE: Present unless otherwise noted

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

Dr Tyler Ream, Superintendent
Janelle Michelson, Business Services Admin.
Gary Myers, Director of Educational Technology
Barb Ridgeway, Chief of Staff
Stacy Collette, Human Resource Director
Steve Thennis, Principal of Helena High School

I. TOUR OF HELENA HIGH 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 starts by thanking everyone who works in the building for all their extra hard work over the last year. He moves to their mission which is to provide a strong foundation for life-long learning by nurturing, challenging, and guiding all students toward their maximum academic, aesthetic, physical, social and emotional potential. He wants to underline the word *all* to make sure the school is all inclusive. They started the year with 1209 students. 18% are minority. 12% students with disabilities. 35% free and reduced lunch. 87% graduation rate. 201 DLI kids. There are 85 instructional staff, 93 certified staff and 23 support staff. There is a severe shortage of substitute teachers. Teachers would cover by giving up their prep periods, etc. They only had to shut down for a short period.

They do a good job with their transition of incoming freshman. They have Junior and Senior dual credit offerings. They have AP distinction, and their ACT performance is high.

For the Freshman, they are doing home visits, and have student mentors helping transition during the first week. Their MTSS (Multi-Tier Support Systems) are how they do business. They offer Academic supports and Behavioral supports. They give teachers the opportunity to meet all the needs of students. There are positive incentives offered. They have developed a discipline plan. They have a model to help students perform better through the MBI committee. There are 35-40 members associated with this. The National Honor Society Peer Tutoring has taken off this year. Parents were needing help in the DLI setting. Teachers were so busy, so they chose to use their school leaders. They have 15 of those students helping the DLI kids. There are also 14 Honor Society kids working in the after-school program. 2 X 10 Staff Mentors is a research-based practice of making connections. They have identified 130 kids as being at risk and paired them with mentor teachers. The After School program is run 5 hours a week and has 139 kids registered. They come in Tues/Thurs after school to get general help. They can also get one on one help after 3:30. There are also language tutors who can help with some of the language barriers. There is also a credit recovery program.

Junior and Senior students have the opportunity to get dual credits with the colleges. Students are able to leave high school with college credits. The AP opportunities are separate. Kids competing for scholarships get an edge because of these programs. The Montana Comprehensive Learning Grant has provided two instructional coaches. The framework needed an overhaul. They focused on the disadvantaged kids and how to support them. They are using data from benchmarks and monitoring. They instituted focus groups. They looked at PDSA Cycles. They had a target and looked at what they were hitting and what they weren't. The cycles helped know how they will implement and focus on one standard with a group of kids and watch their

progression. They used the Freshman academies to pilot that. The Home Visit project was started 2 years ago. It takes a lot of time. Asking for teachers to do this during the summer unpaid is tough. With the pandemic it was a bit different. They drove around and welcomed freshman with goodies and yard signs. They revamped when they went from 2 to 4 in person days. They did the link leaders with those DLI kids who were coming back. Instructional coaches work with the willing. They help teachers work on a goal to better their teaching. They also put on a lot of professional development during preps or PLC time.

Q: Are the home visits targeted? A: No. Not supposed to target. A student is a student no matter what, so it's important to connect with all.

The CIC is the Continuous Improvement Cycle. It involves School Leadership teams, PLC teams, Instructional Coaches and the District Leadership team. BEST is the breakdown of good instruction. B is Begin Strong, E is Engage Everyone, S is Skills and Strategies and T is Takeaways. Then they monitor what staff are doing to follow through. Bell Ringers are things to start the instruction right away. They ask teachers to be at the door to greet kids and have an agenda ready. They watch one another teach and connect through strategies.

Grading has had to be changed during the pandemic. Kids weren't engaging and the failure rate started going through the roof. iReady data didn't make sense. Kids were failing classes but showing proficiency. Ken O'Connor is a grading guru all over the world. They emailed him and he met with them. Ken said to create a culture of learning and not a culture of grading. Grading is primarily an exercise in professional judgement, not just a numerical, mechanical exercise so grades are determined, and not calculated. Effective grading and assessment practices result in grades that are accurate. They did a book study and then sent out a survey to staff. Those resulted in the fixes that would not include student behavior, effort or participation in the grade. They would also not give extra points for extra credit. The grade would be strictly on what the student knew or worked hard to achieve. Don't include zeros in grades especially when they come from missing work. An Incomplete as opposed to a Fail with give the opportunity for the student to do the work.

Math Credit Recovery results have been really fantastic. They looked at the difference between ACT scores and actual class grades. Homework practices were looked at first. They decided that homework should be less of the grade. They found it important for kids to be able to retake tests. They wanted them to understand what they were doing before moving on to something else. There was the opportunity to reteach things if needed. The majority of kids did better on the second test. They broke down what needed to be learned and looked at which parts the failing students were not passing. They only retook the area of the class that they were not understanding.

There is now a district wide effort to check the overall social and emotional wellness of the kids during the pandemic. There are a series of questions kids are surveyed on and only 4 students opted out. This was one tool to determine how kids are doing. 70% were doing well. 22% elevated and 8% extremely elevated. They are working to support kids. What was also concerning to see were the kids who were 4.0 and very involved but were maybe internalizing.

There is data to show that not all learning was lost this year. Kids are still learning and they are resilient. The area that took a big hit was the AP scores. Tests were online and didn't work very well.

After graduation, projections show 64% plan to go to a 4-year college, 8% to a 2-year college, 8% to the military, 6% directly to the work force and 14% to other (church mission, certificate program, apprenticeships, etc.)

iReady showed progressive results in reading and math. ACT data just came in and average scores are good. It was not a "lost year". Everyone worked very hard and everyone learned something. Other areas of focus will center around what not to offer now that the new East Helena School is open. He also speaks on the success of students and their achievements as well as the teachers. There will be 23 valedictorians. There is a place for everyone.

Luke Muszkiewicz, Board Chair says the work sessions are a highlight as it helps them really understand how the schools are functioning. He appreciates all the hard work that goes in to the presentation and the whole school year. They did a great job on the tour showing how everyone are making things work.

Trustee Sullivan says it seems that Helena High declining offerings could maybe work with Capital High for those things. The problem is that more class is missed to travel back and forth. They are looking at a model of maybe offering some things every other year.

Trustee Beaver says when he was there it was simply about teaching and learning. But things change and today modifications are being made because of assessments and he was never able to see that. The change is great for kids and for teachers. Modified methods are creating more success than 20 years ago.

Trustee McEwan thanks the staff.

Trustee Goldes thanks the staff at Helena High. It has been a momentous year and there have been challenges. Added to that the enrollment is falling and it has created challenges. She thanks them for working so hard to meet the needs of the students. She asks what the Board can do for them.

V. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

None

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Items for Action

1. High School General Fund Budget Amendment Proclamation

Janelle Mickelson presents a proclamation for a budget amendment in the high school general fund. East Helena tuition money can be accessed with this amendment. Q: Is this done every year? A: This is the second year. Q: If they were to meet elsewhere for the next meeting is that still, ok? A: Should be ok as long as it's noticed in the regular agenda. Q: Also, one trustee name needs to be changed. It still names a trustee from last year. A: That will be changed.

Motion: Trustee Sullivan makes a motion to approve. Trustee Hathhorn seconds the motion.

Public Comment: None

Board Comment: None

Vote: 8-0. Motion Carries

B. Items for Consent

1. Consideration of the 02.23.2021 Board of Trustees Work Session Minutes

2. Consideration of the 03.23.2021 Board of Trustees Work Session Minutes

Motion: Trustee McEwen makes a motion to approve. Trustee Hathhorn seconds the motion.

Public Comment: None

Board Comment: None

Vote: 8-0. Motion Carries

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,

Luke Muszkiewicz, Chair

Gretchen George, Recording Secretary Date