



Minutes from MSAA Vocational Administrators' meeting through Zoom by Karen Guenette on Feb. 5, 2021, from 9 – 10:10 a.m.

***In attendance:*** Kevin Farr (MAVA), Rich Kelly (MSAA), Karen Guenette (Bristol-Plymouth), Justin Kratz (McCann Tech), Kathy Duff (Newton), Gary Linehan (Old Colony), Mark Hollick (Assabet), Ron Driscoll (Norfolk-Aggie), Cliff Cloutier (Bay Path), Chris Laganas (Whittier Tech), Brian Spadafino (Franklin Tech), Mike Proccacini (TriCounty), Geoff Zini (Blue Hills), Siobhan Petrella (Worcester Tech), Eric Duda/Carrie Auffrey (Pathfinder), Leslie Weckesser (SERSD), Tom Browne (Monty Tech), and Jess Cook (Shawsheen).

The meeting began at 9 a.m. Discussion points included the following:

- Promotional videos for admissions/tours this year showcasing shops
- Parent-Teacher conferences and Zoom links or Google Meets set up to meet with teachers; IT Dept. can assist with this for staff; set up a time interval for each parent meeting; worked well in schools this year; some teachers created individual videos about their programs or how parents could contact them while introducing themselves and can be posted on the school's website
- Failing Students – Still a big problem in all schools across the state and discussion about students failing one or multiple classes and strategies to try to assist with these large numbers of students in all of our schools. Ideas were:
  - If pass for Tri II, then bring up failed Tri I grade to passing
  - Continue to connect with parents; begging students to catch up on assignments
  - Putting students and parents on signed contracts to take a more active approach in supporting their child with check-ins and consequences of winter, summer, or retention if current pattern continues
  - Canceled midterms, but used those days as “make-up” days (4) to catch up on assignments; identifying grade 12 students now for not being on track to graduate
  - Bringing back advisory meetings and stipends for teachers as Student Success Coaches who oversee up to 10 students for before and after school, as well as evening check-ins; trying another adult resource for them; told teachers no hard deadlines for this year; will accept and grade work as long as students are turning it in and getting it done; created a cut score for all 4 terms for this year
  - Seeing a lot of mental health and increased hospitalizations this year; students on anti-depressants; have to look at whether or not they are truly at their current grade level or not

- Academic support classes implemented who are monitored on their achievement gaps individually; started with 70 students, but down to 15 with grade changes made; worried more about current 9<sup>th</sup> graders and what level they are actually at considering out of school from March – June and this year having full remote weeks this year; used academic time for academic support classes with academic paras overseeing; designed 4 different letters and shared with the group: senior letter that stated student may not graduate, in danger of not being on track to graduate, on track for going to summer school, and look at how you've nailed it during this pandemic
- Hope the state comes forward for assistance with CD and take a look at some students who would actually be an 11 or 11.5 when looking at whether on track for graduation or not; even best students are not where they could be; pandemic is in control
- Every para assigned 10-15 students to check on and oversee them for things like: call in the morning to get up for school during academic weeks (when all are remote because all in-person for shop weeks); find out whether OK each day, are they home alone, do they have any questions about their assignments
- Seeing some improvement this year on academic weeks; Wednesdays are asynchronous for 4 hours and synchronous for 4 hours; kids are reaching out during office hours for help; offering co-taught after-school subjects and up to about 50 kids to bring their grades up and this is done through in-person instruction
- Changed 73 min. blocks (too long online) to 45 min. periods, but the rest of the time teachers are available for extra help for students; this eased teachers and kids' anxieties; brought in the remote kids who weren't being successful and teachers work individually with them; this has helped a lot; no push back from parents about shorter instruction time and actually preferred shorter online periods at home for their kids.

#### Discussion about admissions for vocational-technical schools this year:

- Monty - Doing well and interviews are all online, no tour days, still seeing strong numbers and closing admissions on March 31st and it helps that many sending districts are not in-person sessions; parents like that the voc-tech school is open every day
- McCann - Go2cte.com has helped a lot with admissions this year; the software is easy for applicants and on the school's end as well; have received 50 applicants already without pushing advertising and only on the school's website and an only take 130 freshmen
- Pathfinder - Doing OK, but started Tours Tuesday to help build applicants; take place all day, off and on during Tuesdays; parents do like school being open 5 days a week
- Franklin - Offering 5 min. intervals for tours to move about the school for 1 student and 1 parent; so far about 80 people during a 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. window and students end with a "live" interview; so far 180 applications

- Assabet - Held “live” tours on Tues., Wed., and Thurs., for groups of 4 for 7 weeks; received about 450 apps, but about 100 less than last year at this time
- B-P - Hold tours 2:30 – 3:30 for one family at a time after school, but any day of the week; have received 570 applications for 360 spots, but interviews are all online and going slow with only about half completed so far even with “evening” interviews and more will be held over the school vacation week. Still down about 100 applications compared to this time last year

#### Discussion about the state’s Pool Testing for COVID-19:

- Franklin – yes, by bus route at 2-week intervals w/students and staff (optional) for both 10 academics & 12 shop and the same for 9 & 11.
- Pathfinder – using the state program with testing at school
- Almost all schools have had their school nurses, SACs, and any health-field teachers COVID vaccinated

#### Discussion about Fall 2 Season

- Assabet, B-P, McCann, Monty – no Fall 2 season
- TriCounty, Franklin – yes
- Others will be making a decision within the next week or so

Discussion about students keeping cameras on during synchronous learning has shown to be an improvement in engagement and participation with students. Further discussion about getting all students back into school when the time comes. Even an adjustment for teachers with students back; many like remote teaching, especially if they are home, and mindset will have to change. Some students also like remote and are very successful with it and may not want to return to school in-person and keep this option open for them, especially for high attendance problems, hospitalizations, high anxiety, etc.

Discussion about relaxed school rules for this year during in-person learning; big difference for students compared to their remote days at home; try to meet kids half-way with phones, dress code, food and snacks, etc. SERSD gave an example of having all students write on a heart this month to express what they love about their school and taped to lockers and hallways and many stated how much they connect to their teachers. Staff also need some TLC this year and create ways to do some time together and team building.

Discussion about yearbooks and school photographers; Jostens and Prestige were mentioned with having good results; tough to fill the yearbook this year without the usual sports and after-school clubs, etc. All schools trying to be creative with baby photos, past sports photos when younger, etc. to submit for yearbook.

LEADERSHIP MATTERS



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