



Minutes from MSAA Vocational Administrators' meeting through Zoom by Karen Guenette on May 8, 2021, from 9 - 10 a.m.

In attendance: Mark Wood (Tantasqua), Karen Guenette (Bristol-Plymouth), Kathy Duff (Newton), Eric Duda (Pathfinder), Tom Browne (Monty Tech), Anthony Steele (BVT), Shannon Snow (Keefe Tech), Jessica Cook (Shawsheen), Justin Krantz (McCann), Mark Hollick (Assabet), Mike Parker (Old Colony), Geoff Zini (Blue Hills), Leslie Weckesser (SERSD), Rich Kelley (MSAA)

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

- Discussion about DESE's proposed admissions policy and the current public comment period; discussion about the lottery system and regulation language; vocational-technical schools all having a higher percentage of 504s and IEPs not taken into consideration or comparison to sending districts; some students cover multiple subcategories; DESE wants numbers to be more leveled.
- Discussion about interpreters and interpreter software; most schools have Portuguese and Spanish on site or services; Berkshire Language Management and Baystate Interpreters were suggested.
- Newsletter and communication software to transfer into native languages was discussed; SMORE online newsletter software was recommended for this purpose, and they offer multiple tiers; depending on the SMS, all communication emails can be uploaded into the SMORE system; easy to use and meets the DESE communication guidelines for home languages.
- Discussion about upcoming 2021 graduations and the local boards of health to approve plans and work with them on safety practices; most schools conducting some type of traditional graduation either outside on fields, campus, etc. or in large auditoriums, theaters, etc.
- Discussion about proms, semi-formal dances, senior celebrations; some smaller schools are able to conduct full proms, maybe no outside guests or multiple events for easier contact tracing; more difficult for larger schools due to 100 indoor and 150 outdoor restrictions to keep students safe; some districts still in COVID red zones or just starting to see some improvement in transmission cases within school; try not to make any promises and if things loosen up, can always add to released information; DESE made new changes last week on 4/28 so some schools already had their end-of-year plans communicated and will have to make changes per new guidelines. Some senior events are just more casual and have trivia games, ice cream sundaes, etc. Suggestion for seating for graduates can be 3' and may sit in bleachers if parents have to remain 6' apart and on the field to separate groups. Some schools have rain date options and others do not.
- Discussion and summary about House Bills #2808 and #1791; #2808 is a 3-yr. retirement incentive as essential workers that can be given age or service, but right now, not applying to teachers but the timeframe is from 3/10/20 - 12/31/20; teachers and administrators could be lobbying for that and it has some momentum going at the State House, even if not retiring soon, can be used towards retirement years when the time comes; it needs a 2/3 vote to override the Governor's veto if it gets to that point; now is the time to reach out to legislatures while this is still at the committee level; good idea to send letters now

- Discussion about the #1791 Bill and that the same thing was offered in 2000 when MTRS moved to 11% interest and give back and boosted the system.
- MSA Board of Directors is meeting with Commissioner Riley on 5/13/21 and any questions can be sent to Kathy Duff or Mark Wood. CD for Grade 10, Class of 2023 is on the list; Commissioner waived current Class of 2020, 2021, and 2022; Springfield PS have been all remote since last school year; high school diplomas shouldn't be based on passing MCAS without in-person education in all of this time (just one example) and state should be fair to all of these students based on all of the remote learning.
- Kathy stated that the proposed admissions policy doesn't impact Newton, but BESE needs to be knowledgeable about how this policy really affects vocational-technical schools; discussion about BESE's understanding about some students not pursuing their vocational careers; SERSD participating in the early college pathway with Massasoit Community College with great success in an after-school program following the 15-week college semester schedule and has shared the details of this program with DESE; great option for students and 80% demographic data hitting all of the subgroup categories. Voc-tech schools reinventing themselves over the years and have risen to the challenges; time will tell, after the comment period, what will become a regulation for admission to voc-tech schools; DESE should inquire on why students want to leave their sending districts and see if there is a way to correct that problem by using their collected data to help districts solve problems.
- Among this group of principals, no DESE waivers have been filed, except for Newton, and the waiver was denied; DESE pushing for 100% of all schools being back to full in-person learning by May 17th.
- The meeting ended at 10:17 a.m.

