



Minutes from MSAA Vocational Administrators' meeting through Zoom by Karen Guenette on Nov. 6, 2020, from 9 – 10:15 a.m.

In attendance: Rich Kelly (MSAA), Mark Wood (Tantasqua), Karen Guenette (Bristol-Plymouth), Justin Kratz (McCann Tech), Kathy Duff (Newton), Mike Parker & Gary Linehan (Old Colony), Joe Bianca (Smith Aggie), William Terranova (CCT), Tom Browne (Monty Tech), Anthony Steele (BVT), Alan Gates (Dean/Holyoke), Shannon Snow (Keefe Tech), Mike Procaccini (TriCounty), Cliff Cloutier (Bay Path), Gary Linehan and Carrie Auffrey (Pathfinder).

Meeting began at 9 a.m., and Mark opened the meeting and welcomed all vocational administrators. Discussion points include the following:

Discussion regarding open house and tours: Dean held tech tours for 1 grade level on 1 day a week; each grade level had a video and visits with schools with reps for a panel Q&A. Keefe did all virtual with logins and videos for parents to attend online sessions and successful; Smith did a traditional tour day with 15 shops and extended 4 hours to 8 hours from 9:30 – 5:30 on a Sunday with a lot of volunteers and staff support. Families signed up for tours and conducted 105 tours, including Spanish-speaking ones. B-P kept Oct. 17th virtual open house with sending out approx. 4,000 post cards, yard signs, and street banners for invitation for video welcome tours for each shop and 3-hour Zoom meets for all shops, academics, guidance, and admins available for Q&A, but not very well attended on a Saturday from noon-3 p.m.

Discussion about bus transportation and windows open on nice days, but closed on colder days and contacting bus companies to continue with that safety guideline by DESE.

Discussion about Cohort C and decisions on how students are put into that cohort. Look at attendance, IEPs, 504s, guidance counselors completing forms to move students in/out of this cohort.

Report on all learning models in place:

- BVT – 25% hybrid all shop
- Blue Hills – 25% all shop
- TriCounty – 50% all shop
- OC – 50% all shop
- Smith – 50% shop, 5% Sped
- Keefe – all remote only high needs in-person
- B-P – 50% shop, 50% academic
- McCann – 25% shop, 5% Sped
- Monty Tech – 50% shop, 50% academic
- CCT – 50% shop, next week- 50% academic, 5% Sped; starting a 2-tier busing system

Pathfinder – 50% academic, 100% shop

Newton – all remote, CTE next week, all high needs in-person

Tantasqua – 50% by alphabet in both academic & shop 49% cohort of ELLs & Sped

Issues we are all having since opening with all of our various plans:

BVT – not only looking at high needs and Sped situations, but having 8 times the number of failures whether all in or all out; already running about 50% from higher than anything in the past.

McCann – six students already dropping out this year; never before had this many kids drop out of school; discussions around have 55 as a failure grade, regardless of actual failure average; teachers trying their best and kids are struggling with these models; must lower some of the expectations from what was happening in the past with a different start to this school year; teachers using their past curriculum, but may need to take a look at why kids are struggling and not able to complete the level of rigor in the past; bringing struggling, disconnected, and borderline students into the school to be overseen throughout the day and given more structure and support.

TriCounty – bringing back failing students first for academic side.

CCT – starting the tiered school day and got approval from DESE; shop side from 8 am – 1 pm and academic side from 9 am – 3 pm; trimester works out well with ending at the Dec. school break giving more time to adjust; each trimester weighs 33% and giving kids a chance to redeem grades if failing trimester 1 with a 20, but pass trimester 2, then trimester 1 grade changes to a 50 and a good motivator to pass for the year.

Keefe – MCAS subject areas told to back off a bit and rewrite curriculum to teach for the times and see changes that are made in a positive way. This isn't a business as usual year and kids are very overwhelmed.

B-P – Kids held more accountable with in for hybrid academics and hybrid shop, but still about 300 failures in one or more subjects when progress reports went out; some discussion like McCann & CCT about having a failing grade be a certain number so kids don't feel the rest of the year is lost for them and give up; offering virtual homework help sign-up club from Mon – Thurs 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. for all core subjects with a student Google form sign-up sheet; paying hourly rate to teachers to do this from home, and started 10/26 with about 20 kids each night, but more need to take advantage of this. Wondering if they are tired of being on their Chromebooks after 5.5 hours on their 3 remote learning days and not more kids signing up?

Blue Hills – identified 40 kids, 10 per grade for 2 days also on academic cycle for 6-10 classes

Smith – teaching academic and 2-3 check-ins and interaction with low engagement students and student assistant team the looks at groups and divide to come for academic weeks. Bringing back grade 9, but high needs first. Out of a total of 535 students in academics, approx. 70 kids in this category; all teachers are teaching their in-person and remote students with 4 hours of synchronous Zoom.

McCann – many teachers are out on medical; other schools also confirmed teachers out on medical and teaching remote only.

Discussion about contact tracing and quarantine situations:

Blue Hills – 80 were out at one time for full remote; contact tracing; boards of health from sending districts give different information for the same situation; wondering if quarantined for full cohorts

Monty Tech – Culinary, Health full cohorts sent home for 14 days and new CDC guidelines of 15 min. cumulatively when students moving about in shops, sharing tools, walking past each other, etc. throughout the day warrants everyone to quarantine. At one time, almost 100 people out; cafeteria & buses assigned seats for other situations for contact tracing, notification to nurse, etc.

B-P – Carpentry, same situation as Monty Tech, school nurse contacted DESE and students and staff were contacted by state contact tracing, including students that sat in front/back, sides, and diagonal on the bus.

All - High anxiety with staff; union issues are constant, seem to be looking for things to go wrong; air flow tests and taking random samples often; teachers more comfortable with live remote teaching, trying to help and support teachers, vocational finding this very hard without remote only students not having tools, machines, supplies and many challenges and not an easy situation; continue to encourage and support.

DESE survey due today; very frustrating for synchronous definition and hard when teaching every class online and live; seems accusatory and most teachers are not meeting a 6-hour day under this definition; DESE said full remote OK based on the state metrics, but when districts moved to this learning model after 3 weeks of being in the red zones, now going to change the metrics to get students back to school and want kids in front of teachers. Lots of pressure from media, parents, Governor, and Beacon Hill and stated this on his Zoom meeting this week.

DESE regarding MCAS; all agree lots of details need to be worked out before the Jan. test window, especially for fully remote learners; bus transportation issues on getting majority of 11th graders to schools, not prepared enough for testing, etc. Commissioner must start with federal for waiver, then 2 levels at the state, who all support MCAS testing and funding tied to this testing. He does not have the authority or the power to make these decisions; point made that the federal government mandates the testing, but the state mandates the CD for graduation; Kathy encouraged sharing these challenges with DESE to help support the recently sent MCAS position statement to DESE from MSAA. Students can opt out of the January test; lots of pressure being felt about MCAS for this year.

Snow days vs. remote learning days discussion took place. Most schools are going to call remote learning days rather than a snow day this year and not end the school year with make-up days. Tantasqua shared that last Friday 7” of snow fell in the Fiskdale area, and 3 districts went with remote learning days and others called a snow day. Superintendent’s discretion determines this call, and Monty Tech shared that they will be using remote days in place of snow days this year.

Sports discussion took place. Most schools cancelled fall sports and going into discussions about winter sports and swimming would be starting soon outside of the Mayflower League which is starting in Jan. and some schools still only 25% capacity; Supts met yesterday and leaning towards cancelling winter sports; some schools using gymnasiums as cafeterias at this time; many schools represented are in the Mayflower League and no formal decisions made yet; one school had students holding captain's practices on their own and students had to quarantine.

Flu shots and physicals for new freshmen students or students who owe physicals are not a priority for any school administrators right now.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

LEADERSHIP MATTERS



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