

**Federated Home and School Association
Meeting Minutes
March 4, 2021**

Welcome: March Meeting

Kelly Buchsbaum welcomed everyone to the meeting at 9:17am via Zoom.

In attendance:

Kelly Buchsbaum (Federated President), Colleen Tansey (Federated 1st VP), Amy Gill (Federated 2nd VP), Valerie Auyeung (Federated Secretary/Treasurer), Kathy Marshall (Federated Member-at-Large), Dr. Gorman (Interim Superintendent), Mike Lembo (BOE), Juliane Cho (GW), Christine Malloy (Travell), Jimmy Judge (Orchard), Todd Rothman (Orchard), Francesca Parker (Somerville), Sarah Traband (Somerville), Ashley Minetti (Ridge), Kelly Ashford (Hawes), Elena Croy (RED), Paul McCarthy (REF), Mayumi Harada (BF), Mary Micale (RHS), Jamie England (LSHSA), Lauren Dunleavy (Willard), Carol Waldman (BF).

Special guest: Stacie Poelstra, Assistant Superintendent

February minutes approved.

Superintendent's Update:

Dr. Tom Gorman, Acting Superintendent

- Discussed K-1 initiative; will try to move more kids in school depending on trend for positive cases and if things go well with K-1 initiative
 - Kelly B: Are you aware that a group of parents started a FB group called Ridgewood Parents United to support getting kids back into schools for more days?
 - Dr. Gorman: Some school districts are not even open yet. State and Presidential plea to open all schools is referring to schools who have not opened as all; kids need to be safe in schools
 - If state moves to yellow zone, then we may be able to increase numbers of students in school, but NJ is still in the orange.
 - Teachers can now get vaccine if supplies available which may help
 - Ashley M: Is it possible for HSAs to fundraise for filters or plexiglass to get more kids back in school?
 - Dr. Gorman: Schools already have barriers and are ready to be installed but 6 feet rule still needs to be followed. Some classrooms will not accommodate this with larger class sizes. Even though 6 feet is a guideline, it is something that should not be violated unless absolutely necessary.
 - Stacie P: If there is a positive case and 6 feet guideline not followed, the class and possibly the school is shut down. This may result in schools opening and closing more frequently.

- Christine M: If there is an outbreak, is the class or the entire school quarantined?
 - Dr. Gorman: Depends on the situation of who was exposed by the positive case. If there is any doubt, then a conservative approach has to be taken. Overall, due to following 6 feet guideline, we have not had to shut down as often.
 - Christine: Perhaps consider treating HS and elementary schools differently
- Mary M: Aware of FB group as well. When at risk level orange, 6 feet is not a guideline but a rule. People need to be aware of this. Not aware that plexiglass is available---may be helpful for community to know there is a plan in place if we move to yellow. Questions have been asked regarding quarantine time after travel---will it remain at 14 days with travel out of state?
 - Dr. Gorman: Follow NJ DOH guidelines; travel guidelines updated yesterday for RPS. If exposure, need to stay out for 14 days as per NJ DOH guidelines. Cannot follow what other states and countries are doing. Cannot compare RPS to other districts since we are a larger district than other towns. Some school districts who have been opened 5 days a week have also had to close more frequently than RPS.
 - Plan A: Bring kids back every day for 4 hours a day and return home for lunch and virtual afternoon
 - Plan B: Bring kids back every day full day. Issue is that some classes will have kids that are only 2 feet apart
 - 38% of parents have opted for remote option---about 2000 people; there is the same number of parents who quietly are not in agreement with FB group (asking for a full return)
- Todd R: There is increasing evidence that transmission is not through schools. Consider asking parents if they are willing to take the risk of decreasing to 3 feet and accept the risk. Wouldn't only the 4 kids sitting around the positive case have to be quarantined, not the entire class?
 - Dr. Gorman: If kids are 3 feet but one kid who is positive gets up to talk to others, then more kids would be exposed than just those sitting around positive case
- Todd: If going to yellow, would that change the 6 feet rule or would district have to wait for guidance from governor?
 - Dr. Gorman: Need to have yellow for a few weeks before making change

- Todd R: Does RPS follow the color risk level for the region or the town?
 - Dr. Gorman: Have to follow regional because exposure can be high in surrounding towns. GW would have been closed down last week if we were less than 6 feet.
- Ashley M: Some parents are willing to help teachers get vaccine. Is there going to be a vaccine center in Ridgewood just for teachers?
 - Dr. Gorman: Supply chain is still an issue. The state stopped supplying the local districts and moved to only the county level. Town health dept had to pull back appts. Originally 900 teachers would have received vaccines but supplies were pulled back. Governor has made 75+ a priority as well.
- Kathy M: FB page said that Secaucus superintendent was able to obtain J&J vaccine for all teachers.
 - Dr. Gorman: There may be political connections in some towns but will discuss at county superintendent meeting

Board of Education Update:

Mike Lembo, BOE President

- BOE and administration are trying to get kids back to school as soon as possible
 - Local Health dept can shut down Ridgewood schools immediately if guidelines not followed or increase in cases
 - RPS is actually ahead of other districts in getting kids into school
- Preliminary look at budget on Monday
- Discussing later start times but focus is on getting all kids back to school first
- Superintendent search nearing the end; will hope to make an announcement soon. When candidate identified, contract needs to be approved by county and state. (Meeting minutes note: Dr. Tom Gorman was announced as Superintendent later in the day, March 4 at 3:15 PM.)

Guest speaker: Stacie Poelstra, Assistant Superintendent

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiative update

- Strategic Plan with action plans created for each area of focus
 - **Culture:** Create a culture that embraces passion and perseverance while fostering spirit of empathy that develops socially and emotionally resilient learners
 - **Administrative actions:** Eid, Lunar New Year, and Diwali added as holidays this year
 - District reading “White Fragility” and “Caste”
 - **Professional development**---working with 3CP contract group; attended 4 sessions and training on cultural competence; involved 70 people

- Will be broken down to smaller groups of 15 staff to try to involve more staff and determine actionable next steps; first meeting will be on March 16, followed by meetings in April and May
- In year 3, there will be teacher leadership projects. Examples - including books with incidental diversity in classroom library audit; books about finding commonality amongst diverse characters; changing music curriculum; enhancing English language learners
- Professional development goal for English language arts program
 - **Curriculum development:**
 - Individual school DEI committees implementing initiatives at schools eg. Travell
 - NJSLS changes also have to be made this summer in many areas of the curriculum
 - Live virtual author visit for all elementary schools with Cheryl Wills to increase awareness of DEI

Nominating Committee report: Colleen Tansey, Jamie England, Juliane Cho

- Next year's officer slate – proposed Federated HSA Executive Board:
 - President: Mary Micale
 - 1st VP: Amy Gill
 - 2nd VP: Todd Rothman
 - Treasurer/Secretary: Valerie Auyeung
 - Member-at-Large: Amy Biersdorf
 - May 6th meeting---both incoming and outgoing Federated HSA board will be in attendance

President's Update:

Kelly Buchsbaum, President

- Super Science Saturday is this Saturday
- Kuiken Brothers to donate all the posts for the Hope Posts for the schools in exchange for a GroupSpot ad
- Mascot picture of mascots from the schools to be taken possibly next week after most of the snow has melted

Vice President's Report:

Colleen Tansey, 1st Vice President

Amy Gill, 2nd Vice President

- Wizards game will be cancelled for the spring; will secure dates for next year; notice will go out soon
- Crossing guard: TD gift card and include a treat; will distribute in-person

Treasurer's Report:

Valerie Auyeung, Secretary/Treasurer

- No new updates

Member-at-Large Report:

Kathy Marshall, Member-at-Large and Mark Kossick (GroupSpot)

- GroupSpot doing well; will need to discuss possibility of renewing contract

Open discussion:

- Ruby Bridges as virtual author visit---\$15,000 divided between elementary schools would be \$2,500 per school to be scheduled in May (Meeting minutes note: Further research on March 4 determined that Ruby Bridges author visits are not \$15k – they are individual schools-based, either \$1,500 or \$2,500.)
 - Sarah T: For grade 2-5 with 2 sessions per school, 1 hour long. It would be more of a Q&A session
 - Christine M: will discuss with executive board; work with author to expand to beyond Q&A session and include other activities
 - Ashley M: Can book be sold and have signing to offset cost of author visit?
 - Todd R: Is it possible to combine schools to 1 zoom? Orchard librarian to work with other schools
 - Jimmy J: Cheryl Wills author visit was great. Books may have more impact than having a 1 day virtual visit
 - Lauren D: Willard Principal may offset some of the costs.
 - Ashley M: May not be a priority at this time for many families during the pandemic at such high cost
 - Kelly B: Federated will speak with author's publicist to try to negotiate costs (see minutes note above)
 - Mary M: Consider including middle and high schools to decrease the cost if principals at those schools agree
- 5th Grade graduation:
 - Christine M: Would Rocking Horse Ranch be a possibility for all the schools? Travell is trying to get decreased costs by having all kids involved. Usually Travell goes to Philly.
 - Kelly B: If one parent has to accompany each child, be careful about any children getting excluded if a parent cannot attend.
 - Christine M: Looking into renting a tent and having an event outside possibly at Graydon; may need to hold over more than 1 day
 - Todd R: Parents can organize an event that does not involve the school
 - Kathy: In order to have any event at BOE property, principals would need to discuss with Dr. Gorman. Parent-organized events can be exclusionary to some families; goal of HSA members should be to try to include all families

- Kelly B: Reminder that RHS does lawn signs for graduation; other schools can do banners or door signs; also use the term “promotion ceremony” for elementary and middle schools instead of “graduation”
- Ashley: Request to have “rules” in writing
- Kelly A: Considering Graydon for 5th grade event; Hawes had drive-by clapout last year
- Kelly B: Will coordinate with Amy and Colleen to put together document with what schools are doing for 5th and 8th grade promotions
- Mary M: Be prepared to pivot no matter what is planned
- Fundraising tips
 - Ashley M and Lauren D: Ridge and Willard raised \$4K with Bingo night--appreciates advice and suggestions from Todd R who did this event at Orchard with much success also.

Meeting adjourned at 11:14 AM

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 8, 2021 at 9:15 am—via Zoom or Education Center, 49 Cottage Place, 3rd floor

Respectfully submitted by Valerie Auyeung, Secretary/Treasurer