

September 23, 2020

Minutes of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board

A meeting of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board was held at 6:00 P.M. at the Parthum School's auditorium with the following members present: Honorable Dan Rivera, Mayor of Lawrence, Julia Silverio, Lawrence City Councilor and local business owner, Jessica Andors, Executive Director for Lawrence Community Works, Patricia Mariano, Lawrence School Committee Member and Acting Chairman Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Associate Commission for statewide support DESE. Absent: Dr. Noemi Custodia-Lora, VP of NECC Lawrence Campus.

Also present was Superintendent Cynthia Paris, and Joan Milone, Recording Secretary for this meeting.

The Acting Chair, Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, called the meeting to order at 6:03 P.M, and held the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Participation

Johanna Rodriguez, 49 Orchard Street – She addressed the Members on the regulated accommodations for teachers and the lack of teacher support from the district. In turn, the teachers have found support in each other.

Natalie Ryan, 9 Waban Street, Haverhill – She addressed the Members on 1) the lack of teacher retention by the district. Teachers without professional status, are more vulnerable to fight the receivership and is intentionally driving teachers out; 2) the students don't matter; students deserve a healthy community, to learn from teachers w/o a mask, feel supported and valued. The teachers have bonded together; they are using their voices for the district to listen.

Superintendent's Report

Reopening Plan Update - Superintendent Paris opened by noting that she and the LTU President have visited classrooms. Teachers are in the classrooms and students appear excited and engaged.

Facilities – CBI consultants have completed the 1st Phase of the ventilation assessment for seven buildings. The pending report should become available in early October for review. Meanwhile, windows, screens, fans and Plexiglas shields are being installed.

Nutritional Services - Additional meal sites have been added to distribute food to students and hours have been adjusted. She will provide the number of meals being provided.

Communications – Information has been shared with families through multiple Spanish television networks and Spanish radio stations.

The Superintendent provided the process in reviewing the accommodation requests and noted that there have been 569 staff accommodation requests – 341 have been approved, 36 denied and 192 pending (170 are LTU, Para and Clerical staff and remaining 22 is of non-union staff). The members requested additional information of the approval, denial and appeal process.

Ms. Andors requested feedback at a later date on the teaching and learning experience based on the teacher being in the classroom vs. at home. Another concern was the anticipated teachers to return to teach the high need students who will be in the classroom. The Superintendent explained that this will be determined when families provide their decision for their student.

Ventura Rodriguez noted his appreciation that the LTU and the district approved an MOU that was ratified by the Union that included detailed information for teacher accommodations.

Superintendent Paris continued with providing detailed attendance/enrollment (remotely learning) since school's opening (averaging between 79% - 91%). There are students currently living out of state that are currently enrolled, students who need to attend daycare due to parents' employment, students who now need to work to provide for family and students who have moved now with new addresses and/or phone numbers. The members noted their concern in the number of students not attending remotely. Superintendent Paris stated that the teachers are doing an exceptional job finding their student; she will ask them for information on the students who have not logged on. The members agreed that the whole community needs to become involved to assist the students and district. Mayor Rivera worries that the State funding may be affected by the number of students not attending remotely; he believes there is a gap and the members requested the exact numbers not percentages. Ventura Rodriguez noted he and the Board would like to support and be part of the community to assist the students and district. Mayor Rivera added that he has Covid funds that would pay staff to assist in supporting these students in the community. Jess Andors will add the district's three top issues on the next nonprofits' community agenda. Patricia Mariano suggested that the students who need to work be offered work after school so they can attend their classes.

Report of the Chair

2019/2020 Superintendent's Evaluation Update – Ventura Rodriguez provided the past steps and the steps to be taken to complete the Superintendent Evaluation for this past school year along with and the Superintendents Goals through a PowerPoint presentation. The Superintendent will submit an EOY Summary to the Board, the Acting Chair will then send a template to each member to complete and provide back to the Chair, which he will compile into a Summative Evaluation Report for the Board's vote. He requested the Board to provide what information they request to implement their individual evaluations. The Board noted that the Covid pandemic has influenced the Superintendent's Goals. Chair Rodriguez explained that the template will have areas for additional comments to reflect the context. Julia Silverio suggested the template to include the original goals/goals accomplished/goals not met due to Covid/circumstances with areas for comments. Dr. Rodriguez noted that reviewing the Goals she presented in June, the Superintendent has met many of her goals. In reviewing her Goals, Superintendent Paris commented that she would like closure in order to work towards new goals based on the reopening plan. Dr. Rodriguez asked the Board to provide the Superintendent with their requests in time for the next meeting and requested the Superintendent to be prepared at the next meeting to provide an update.

Other

Upon the recommendation of the Chair, motion was made by Mayor Dan Rivera, seconded by Julia Silverio, it was

VOTED: To approve the September 9, 2020 minutes as submitted.

The Vote: Yes – Jessica Andors
Absent – Noemi Custodia Lora
Yes – Patricia Mariano
Yes – Mayor Dan Rivera
Yes – Julia Silverio
Yes – Ventura Rodriguez

Jessica Andors requested that the following standing items of discussion at each meeting:

1. Update on accommodations requested/denied/pending
2. Update on high needs – how many students will be attending/how many teachers (matching teacher to student)
3. Facilities update
4. Attendance update
5. Breakdown of missing 1200 students; strategies to address these missing students

Ms. Andors clarified that the discussion of the Draft Opening Plan on August 5 did not explicitly state that teachers were mandated to teach from their classrooms. At the August 12 meeting, the Reopening Plan did include this specific wording, which she missed. She requested that any explicit changes made in future Drafts the administration present the differences.

Julia Silverio asked the LTU President to provide information on the approved agreement/she did not speak. She also asked the Superintendent and Chair to attend a Safety meeting held at City Hall. Dr. Rodriguez agreed that he would attend.

Upon the recommendation of the Chair, motion was made by Mayor Dan Rivera, seconded by Jessica Andors, it was

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 7:45 P.M.

The Vote: Yes – Jessica Andors
Absent – Noemi Custodia Lora
Yes – Patricia Mariano
Yes – Mayor Dan Rivera
Yes – Julia Silverio
Yes – Ventura Rodriguez

Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Acting Chair