

November 12, 2020

Minutes of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board

A virtual meeting of the Lawrence Alliance for Education Board was held at 6:00 P.M. 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, Dr. Noemi Custodia-Lora, VP of NECC Lawrence Campus and Acting Chairman Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Associate Commission for statewide support DESE.

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 6:00 P.M, and held the Pledge of Allegiance. He explained that the meeting was rescheduled from last week to tonight based on the District's plan.

Superintendent's Report

- Remote Teaching and Learning Highlights - Superintendent Paris opened her report in presenting an 8-minute video with samples of remote learning across the grades within the district. Superintendent Paris thanked everyone who participated in the video.

Jessica Andors joined the meeting at 6:06 P.M.

Assessment and Benchmarking – Kristyn Sullivan provided an overview of the role of assessment in remote learning and instructional recovery. She explained the process through a PowerPoint, which included: How it is used to inform instruction, which motivates students, supports self-assessment and closes gaps and fosters growth.

Noemi Custodia Lora joined the meeting at 6:12 P.M.

There are different type of assessment: In-class (formative assessments) and online adaptive assessments (NWEA, ANET). Professional learning is provided to teachers for ANET & NWEA instruction. Data Wise Project. The Harvard Graduate School's program, Data Wise supports educators through a leadership institute to drive continuous improvement for teaching and learning for all students.

Patricia Mariano requested comparison data from last fall with this fall. Ms. Sullivan noted the extenuating process testing remotely and could provide this when students are back to the in-person instruction. Mary Twomey noted that the MAP growth can be used to research further back to assist with the needs for students. Ms. Mariano suggested focusing

on one school's data versus the whole district. Mary Twomey and Kristyn Sullivan responded to questions from the members pertaining to the process and progress through these assessments. Dr. Rodriguez suggested the Board be provided a bigger picture of trends, themes or patterns to assist in how to support the teachers. He requested an interactive report be provided to the Board without students' names. Julia Silverio requested a response as to why one school in the district is not using the NWEA assessment.

- Attendance Update – Superintendent Paris provided the attendance percentage rate for week 5 through week 8 for this year versus last year, which showed a 4-5% lower attendance this year. Mayor Rivera voiced concern in the rates based on total enrollment. The Superintendent will provide these numbers. Superintendent noted that the document is specifically attendance; it does not reflect a student's participation. Superintendent explained that teachers keep track of student's participation by different systems; each school designs initiatives for attendance (can provide examples). Mayor Rivera requested examples of the school-based supports. The members voiced their concern in gathering the data/examples for students' participation, engagement and progress. Jessica Andors questioned DESE's support in providing resources to the district(s) in need (housing, childcare, etc.) and suggested these concerns be brought before the State level. Dr. Rodriguez asked if Lawrence Public Schools' resources sufficient to assist with attendance and family engagement. Superintendent Paris reiterated that COVID has implemented an extra layer to the related issues and every family is unique. Julia Silverio noted that at the last meeting, she requested a report on why the students were not in attendance. The Superintendent will provide information based on the teachers' notes.

Denise Snyder responded to Julia Silverio and informed the members that the decrease in 8th grade enrollment was due to students transferring to either the Greater Lawrence Technical School or Central Catholic High School and the PreK-K enrollments decreased due to families' discern not to enroll based on COVID.

- COVID-19 Interim Policy Pandemic-Related, Out of District Access to Learning – Denise Snyder explained the policy is a temporary policy to extend access to learning in the LPS for out of district students. Due to COVID circumstances, families have made temporary living accommodations for their family/children. The policy is to provide temporary relief for families in need of this flexibility and reduce academic issues that relate to this situation. There is a contract that families complete agreeing to this temporary process confirming to return to educating their child with the LPS once it returns to full-time classroom instruction. She asked for their approval based on the urgency of the situation to implement the policy on November 16, 2020. Ms. Snyder responded to questions of the Board for clarification.

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

VOTED: To approve the policy as presented.

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

Jessica Andors questioned her previous request for information on high needs students. Superintendent Paris will provide a summary at the next meeting.

Julio Silverio requested that the Recording Secretary provide a list of the requests made during the meeting to the Superintendent for discussion at the next meeting.

Report of the Chair

There will be an Executive Session at the conclusion of this meeting to discuss the Superintendent's compensation for this current school year. The Superintendent' Evaluation will be part of the public meeting.

- Budget Subcommittee – The members are Patricia Mariano, Julia Silverio, Mayor Rivera and himself. Other Board members are welcome to attend.
- Superintendent's Evaluation – Dr. Rodriguez provided an overview of the evaluation's process and of the compiled evaluations from the Board members. The Board recognized the important contributions and leadership that Superintendent Paris has provided over the year; her overall rating - Proficient. Dr. Rodriguez asked for the members' approval.

The members questioned why the discussion was taking place in public versus in Executive Session. Dr. Rodriguez explained that the Evaluation is to be discussed in public. Based on the questions of the Board, Dr. Rodriguez suggested a 5-minute recess to get legal determination.

Upon the motion made by Mayor Rivera, seconded by Julia Silverio, it was

VOTED: To recess for 5 minutes at 8:10 P.M.

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

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

VOTED: To come out of recess at 8:26 P.M.

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

Dr. Rodriguez confirmed based on legal counsel that the Evaluation is discussed publicly.

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

VOTED: To accept the Superintendent's Evaluation for discussion.

Julia Silverio noted that she had two areas of concern that she sees is in the need for improvement - - family and community engagement and professional culture.

Mayor Rivera noted that the evaluations findings represent his findings. But taking into account the gas situation, pre COVID, loss of CEO, CFO and change of high school leadership; an exceed expectations should have been determined.

Patricia Mariano asked the members to revisit their role as the Receiver – to oversee students' performance; the role is to focus on curriculum and instruction and instructional leadership. Based on this comment, she requests that C&I is a standing item on the LAE meeting agendas. Superintendent Paris has shown her leadership through day-to-day operations with the many challenges.

Noemi Custodia Lora – The Receivership needs to understand what priorities need to be handled by the Superintendent, but the Board should be provided district information so both the Board and the Superintendent can work together.

Jessica Andors – Superintendent has done an amazing job on management and daily operations based on the City's crises. She as a bilingual leader is committed to increasing bilingual/bicultural teachers in the district. The district has improved family engagement over the past few years, but more priority and resources needs to be placed to improve even more.

Ventura Rodriguez added that the year has been challenging in which the Superintendent and team worked hard to support the students and staff. He reminded the members to reach out to the Superintendent for more individual discussions (before or after meetings for clarification).

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

- Other

Minutes – October 21, 2020 – Regular LAE

Upon the recommendation of the Chair, motion made by Patricia Mariano, seconded by J Jessica Andors, it was

Jessica Andors requested on top of Page 3 to change the name from Jessica Andors to Julia Silverio. Julia Silverio noted the request she made on these minutes still needs to be provided: a breakdown of the positions effected by waivers.

VOTED: To approve the October 21, 2020 LAE minutes as approved with the friendly amendments.

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

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

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 8:45 P.M.

Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Acting Chair