

## **JSSVPA – February 16, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

**Board Attendees:** Robin Stone, Beth Ottsen, Bridget Pennise, Eleanor Hussman, Nora Jewett, Joe Guarino, Valerie Gaines, Stephanie Joyce, Amy Hannus, Sarah Halack, Janet Scholl, Hillary Kallop, Meredith Sullivan, Kathy Ambrosino, Amy Hannus

**Regular Attendees:** Betsy Kilroy, Anne Wortel, Stephanie Helfand, Carrie de la Cruz

**1. January 12, 2022 Meeting Minutes:** Robin motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Beth and Joe. Minutes were approved.

### **2. Principal/Superintendent's Report (Student Services and Mask Metrics)**

#### **1. Student Services (Dr. Carrie de la Cruz):**

Carrie delivered a presentation to the Board on February 14th, to outline student services. This is the 3rd presentation in a series, whereby Stephanie delivered a presentation regarding MTSS, at the beginning of the year, and Marty delivered another regarding SEL in December. All of these presentations are available on the website. The intent was to clarify what student services is, which is not just support for 504 or IEP or students with disabilities. There is currently a lot of variability and misconceptions on how student services are accessed. Carrie will be giving the Second Cup of Coffee on Thursday, February 17th, on this topic, and she encouraged everyone to attend. She is trying to implement more consistent and systemic processes and procedures within student services. As there has been a lot of resource turn over in this area, Carrie outlined that she is currently in the information gathering stage, especially around the parent group, regarding how to access and how to get support.

At this point, Carrie opened the floor to questions:

**Q#1: Are there rules as to how the teachers can communicate to parents, around needing support. How much of an open book is it, between teachers and parents??**

Response (Carrie): We never want a parent to feel they have to get extra tutoring, for their child to be successful. It is the school's role to get them the support they need to be successful. If a student is not making the progress, we want to support them through the MTSS. First step is the problem solving team. The goal is that the school will identify the concern, and be able to address inside the school, without requiring outside resources.

**Q#2: What is the problem solving team?**

Response (Stephanie): Every week, Stephanie meets with the grade level teams to discuss all student success and growth. This is part of our Universal Screener process. Based on class feedback and screener evidence, plans are put in place as to what is happening in the classroom. This can be related to a variety of domains, including SEL, academic, and behavioral. If a variety of strategies have been tried and have not been successful, then the parents will be contacted to further discuss and partner. If student is identified for programming outside of the classroom (ie: intervention with another resource), parents are officially notified. This is Tier 1 or 2 support.

**Q3#: Is before/after school help going to be returning, for students to utilize?**

Response (Stephanie): Not to provide tutoring, but just to give some extra help. Any student should be able to go to their teacher on any clarification and getting instruction from teachers. Due to COVID, we have not been able to host drop-in support session. At this point, we do not know what this will look like, moving forward.

**Q#4: Who can recommend a Neuropsych test?**

Response (Stephanie and Carrie) Schools need to be actively seeking students who may require special education services, through screening and problem solving. The administration realizes that teachers may have contacted parents in the past, but this should not be occurring going forward. This direction was set with previous administrations. At our next Institute Day (Feb. 18th), teachers will tell administration how they have been communicating with parents on the student services processes, and how they have been engaging families. With this data collected, a Q&A will be established to help teachers with responding to situations, parent

requests, etc, with consistency. With Neuropsych testing, in the very rare circumstance that the school would need an outside evaluation, then the school would be pay for this service. This would only be in the situation of a very complex situation. We can also utilize True North, before going to outside resources. True North (formerly NSSED) is an education cooperative<sup>804</sup> that provides special education related services, coaching and consultation to 18 member districts.

At no point, would we be able to use an outside Neuropsych, only, for the purposes of getting an IEP. The information will absolutely be used, but the school is required to complete our own evaluation. A diagnosis from a Neuropsych will be more DSM5 (medical based) vs the internal school evaluation, which has 13 eligibility categories (ex: specific learning disabilities, speech and language, etc). A student could have an outside diagnosis of motor coordination disorder, for example, from an outside evaluation. In order for this to reach inside the school to be eligible for special education, it must be impacting their ability to access the general education curriculum. This isn't to say that the child is not being affected by the disorder, but it may not be impacting their school day. An outside evaluation doesn't also necessarily mean an IEP. Commonly, it means that a student could be eligible under section 504.

An accommodation might be that a student understands the concepts being taught, but struggles with Executive Function to organize all my materials. An accommodation could look like this student would meet with a resource, on a regular basis, to help organize their materials. There is no instructional goal, but you do need support. No modification to curriculum  
An IEP, provides additional layer of support with specialized instruction. At any time, parents can also reach out to request an evaluation to move their child from a 504 to an IEP. Open dialogue continues.

We are here and have a strong commitment to meet the students where they are, and want to partner with parents. Outside tutoring is always your option, but the intent of the school is to support in house.

Anxiety and stress support are a big ask from the parent community. Families need support in this area, but the school can't take on all social work needs for families. We can provide resource suggestions for this and we are working on establishing clear boundaries in this area, as they have not always existed in the past.

A google form is going to be sent out to teachers and staff whereby they can submit a variety of questions surrounding this area, so that a consolidated Q&A can be developed. A similar survey will be sent out to

the parent community. Please direct any questions you have to Carrie de la Cruz.

Our vision moving forward, is to get to a point in our learning environment and teaching instructions that it's naturally designed to meet the needs of learners - academically, SEL, behavior inherent, in how we address SEL.

## **2. Mask Metrics: (Dr. Stephanie Helfand)**

On February 15, JCAR (Joint Committee on Administrative Rules) prohibited the extension of mask mandates for schools. Currently, we do not have legal authority to mandate masks, until the next update, potentially on Feb. 17th. Since Jan 27th, COVID updates have been received every 2 weeks. We are trying to be very mindful of not going back and forth with our community. Some schools sent emails out to their parent community, some sent out robo calls last night announcing mask optional. Sears is trying to be mindful, as we have families who are coming to school under our current guidelines and need time to adjust. If we are no longer legally able to implement the mask policy, we need to give families time to prepare, as we have students who have developed a mask dependency. The school is looking for a ramp up time, that we can give all our families time to prepare. Kate Donegan is currently on a call with counsel to discuss next steps so, at this time, we are not prepared to give an update on our mask metrics, as the landscape has changed. Stephanie opened it to questions, and is happy to answer what she is able to, at this time, given the changing situation.

**Q#1: Based on the JCAR ruling from yesterday, are we not in violation of the law? Can't the District be sued for still keeping the students in masks?**

Response: We did not make a ruling or announcement. Technically, anyone can come into the school building without a mask, we cannot deny them an education. The school house is asking for a favor, just for a week, so that we can work it out with our families, as this is a significant change for them.

**Q#2: You have just announced this in front of 20 people, and it's in the news. Shouldn't a communication go out to the entire school community today?**

Response: We have not made an official decision, we need more time. But this has been in the news.

**Q#3: You have acknowledged that some students have an unhealthy attachment to masks. Don't you think that means this needs to end ASAP?**

Response: We are asking for time to work with these families.

**Q#4: We assume these families have been already identified. Why are you waiting to move forward with a decision?**

Response: they may need an adjustment to their 504, for example. We're asking for some grace, while we discuss with counsel. If students are reporting back to parents, that there is mask pressure from teachers, then Stephanie is asking to be contacted direct. The school house cannot respond in a specific way, when a specific incident is not identified. If we receive general feedback, we can only respond in a general way.

**Q#5: Is there zero tolerance for mask pressure from the teachers? The teacher's stance was very clear from Monday's Board meeting (pro mask).**

Response: Bullying from teachers, in any form, should not be happening. The school house needs specifics to make specific changes. If this is occurring, Stephanie cannot stop it if she does not have specific information. Stephanie will deliver the explicit message that teachers pressuring students, regarding their mask choice, will not be tolerated. Again, any specific incidents need to be reported to Stephanie. Stephanie indicated teachers are in alignment with the administration and KEA moving forward. When the mask optional comes to finalization, clear messaging will be that each person will have their own choice and we will support everyone (students, teachers, administration) in their own individual decision. The teacher's stance at the Board meeting was that they stood with the Governor's decision, at that moment, which is where we were then. Since then, the situation has changed and Stephanie reinforced that they are aligned with the administration – 'we know this is a fluid and flexible decision and we have been advised by counsel to be in support of the current orders'. KEA, administration and the Board are all aligned.

When masks are lifted, most of the COVID protocols will be lifted too. We cannot contact trace, in a mask-less environment.

### **3. President's Report (Robin):**

**a) Support of the 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Play:** the 8th grade play costs \$15,000 to put on and fundraising has been hampered slightly, with Covid restrictions. They are still trying to do the candy sales, which is a good fundraiser. As requested from Mr. Gordon's proposal, Robin motioned to approve the requested \$4,000. Seconded by Joe and Amy. Motion approved.

**b) Green Roof Project:** is part of the school expansion project. The school was going to pay for it, but we've been informed they cannot cover the full cost. Construction cost will be covered by the school, but not the expense of the actual cost of the plants. The school wondered if the PVA could contribute \$105,000, to cover this cost. The roof would be used as an outdoor classroom. This would have to come out of the Panther Park money (returned Village House funds). There is also a Live Wall being planned that will cost approximately \$30,000. That might be better suited to fundraising during the Benefit.

Questions raised: How often will students get to use the space (given our weather)? Can some of the woodshop classes at school, contribute to some of this installation? Is LEED certification dependent on these initiatives? Robin will get more information and details on how the two spaces will be used (Live Wall and Green Roof), who is bidding and what is the breakdown of proposed costing.

**4. Treasurer (Valerie):** Regarding the Benefit, Valerie spoke with Hilary to set up a separate account/email for these funds. That is a fairly easy solution, but we need to find a cost- effective solution for setting up a credit card option. Valerie is testing options to use PayPal, as this seems to have the lowest fee.

**5. VP of Sub Committee (Beth):** Everything is good with sub committees:

a) Skate exchange - availability list is on newsletter, if anyone needs skates  
b) Enrichment: very few field trips have occurred, due to COVID restrictions. Summary: 4th grade went to Halocost museum; 3<sup>rd</sup> grade hasn't had anything or any trips planned, going forward. Kindergarten: just went to the nature center ; JK-1<sup>st</sup>: is having an in school performance on March 10<sup>th</sup> ; 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> are having an in school pottery day; 7<sup>th</sup> has an architectural boat tour in May; and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade are going to Springfield, for a day each. No overnight trips are being scheduled, due to staffing issues.

**6. Benefit (Hillary):** We are well down the path! WCC, band, auctioneer are all booked.

Ticket price, in 2018, was \$195/ticket

Current estimated cost breakdown (assuming 250 attendees):

- Band, auctioneer and décor: \$60/ per head
- Food \$72/head
- Alcohol \$60/per head

These costs are assuming that we pay for all, and no sponsorships. At \$195/ticket, we just break even. Given rising costs, we approved to move to \$250/ ticket.

Fundraising activities:

The appeal letter is going out to entire town, minus Sears parents. This is a pure money ask for non Sears families (500-600 families)

We have 15 sign-up parties confirmed. We are missing boy/dad events - golf round, limo to a ball game, etc. Please consider donating.

Raffle baskets are being put together

Live auction items: Costa Rica trip, principal for a day have been confirmed and now we're looking for a ski house donation. Please look to the link in the JSSPVA for suggestions of what donations we are still looking for.

Teacher participation: now that contract is signed, we will move ahead with asking for support

These fundraising efforts will be added in, once totals are known.

## **7. VP of Inclusion (Joe):**

Polar plunge is February 23, with 35 kids signed up and 3 teachers to be dunked. \$8370 has been raised, thus far. One more day of ticket sales to dunk a teacher. Still looking for volunteers -

Day of – there will be a gourmet bake sale, hot cocoa bar and we'll continue to sell raffle tickets for teacher dunking. A tug of war over 2 sets of pools, will also be taking place. Pep squad is going to perform, and Joey will be making an appearance! Special Olympics determined minimum donation to participate, which is \$100.

Common Threads – had a great turn out at the last session, using the 4 Cornerstones. Next time, we'd like to find a time during the day to group the kids to talk, rather than after school, to get a better turn out.

### **8. Staff Appreciation:**

Katie put together boxed lunch for last week's teachers conference day. Valentine treats were delivered on February 14<sup>th</sup> to the lounge. Staff appreciation week is coming up in March – please look for sign-up to help out.

**9. VP Green (Julia):** Julia was missing, but Robin will forward the update.

### **10. VP of Community Relations: (Jen):**

Board approved next phase of construction at the school house  
Park District - spring and summer camp registration is now open  
The Village – have begun to speak about improving Kenilworth Beach. The Village will be reaching out to the community, to survey feedback.  
Girl Scouts - scamper was a wonderful success  
DEB - parent coffees have been successful, next one in March. Watch for updates in Sears to Home and JSSPVA newsletters. Feb. 22nd is next DEB meetings, at 7pm, if anyone would like to attend or become more involved, please look to the DEB website  
FAN - continues to have programs that you can register for, and watch at a later date, if you are unable to attend.  
Alliance – Community screenings of Chasing Childhood.

**11. Nominating (Bridget):** update on nominating. We have a fully slated Executive Board and are now working on calls for Sub committees. Spring break is the goal to have full Board slate to approve. If you'd like to participate, please let Bridget know.

**12. Booster: (Amy):** currently supporting Polar Plunge and hosting pep squad clinic this Thursday, to get ready for Polar.  
In Spring, planning on opening more pep squad clinics. Sign-ups coming shortly. All ages.  
Working on recess: survey has been built to send to kids for feedback on what they would like to see. The challenge still remains as to who will manage and provide oversight. Administration is working on this. Spirit wear is still available!!

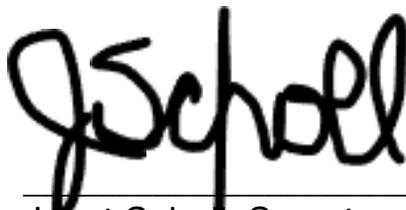
**13. Adjourn:** Robin motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Sarah and Beth. Motion to adjourn approved.

NEXT MEETING: March 16th, @ 8:20am at Kenilworth Assembly Hall

Respectfully submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Stone', written above a horizontal line.

Robin Stone, President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Scholl', written above a horizontal line.

Janet Scholl, Secretary