



Wisconsin Rapids Board of Education
Educational Services Committee

510 Peach Street · Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494 · (715) 424-6701

MINUTES

Katie Bielski-Medina, Chairperson
John Benbow, Jr.
Troy Bier
Larry Davis
Sandra Hett
John Krings, President
Julie Timm

April 3, 2023

LOCATION: Board of Education, 510 Peach Street, Wisconsin Rapids, WI
Conference Room A/B

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: John Benbow, Katie Bielski-Medina, Troy Bier, Sandra Hett, John Krings

BOARD MEMBERS EXCUSED: Larry Davis, Julie Timm

OTHERS PRESENT: Ed Allison, Barb Bondioli, Craig Broeren, Roxanne Filtz, Steve Hepp, Teri Thomas,
Aaron Nelson, Jennifer Wilhorn

- I. Chairperson Katie Medina called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
- II. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- III. Public Comment - none
- IV. Actionable Items
 - A. First Reading of Board Policy 321 – School Calendar, Board Policy 723.1 – Emergency School Closings, Board Policy 723.1 Rule – Emergency School Closing Procedures

Roxanne Filtz, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, presented recommended changes to Board Policy 321 – School Calendar, Board Policy 723.1 – Emergency School Closings, and Board Policy 723.1 Rule – Emergency School Closing Procedures for first reading as a follow-up to information presented to the Board in February 2023. The policies are being updated to address continuity of instruction on days interrupted by school closure for reasons such as inclement weather or health or safety concerns such as a communicable disease outbreak, a credible threat to safety, damage to a building, or a utility failure. Several innovative instructional design practices have been implemented since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and significant investments have been made in technology and digital infrastructure, instructional software and curriculum resources, and staff professional development to provide options and opportunity for students to continue learning during days of school closure. With the high number of inclement weather days causing a need for school closure during the 2022-23 school year, it has been beneficial to pivot to remote learning days using innovative instructional design practices as allowed by and in conjunction with guidance provided by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The proposed policies outline student and staff member expectations for remote learning days.

Superintendent Broeren stated that during the 2018-19 school year, multiple inclement weather days caused a similar amount of closed days which resulted in school schedules having to be modified to add a number of instructional minutes to each day and more time added at the end of the school year to meet the requirements set out in state statute. While these scheduling modifications were not received well, there are few viable solutions to make up required time especially when the closed days occur closer to spring. Consideration must also be given to the fact that the 8 days of closure in 2022-23 all occurred within the second trimester. Having this many days interrupt a single trimester can be problematic in itself if continuity in instruction is interrupted that frequently. The option to continue instruction through remote learning has helped to ensure curriculum continues to be covered and students are learning. The administration recognizes and acknowledges that remote learning days are not the same experience as a regular school day, and it would always be preferable to have students learning in person.

Committee members took the opportunity to ask questions about how course time and awarding of credit relates to minutes of instruction, the attendance tracking methods utilized, and discussed the benefits of fulfilling the instructional minute requirements without extending the school year while ensuring that students do not miss out on curriculum needing to be covered in a particular trimester. Ms. Filtz made mention that the District utilizes the *School Closure Learning Continuity Readiness Rubric* which is a resource provided by the Wisconsin Digital Learning Collaborative to evaluate its readiness in implementing innovative instructional design practices.

ES-1 Motion by Larry Davis, seconded by Troy Bier to approve of Board Policies 321 – School Calendar, 723.1 – Emergency School Closings, and 723.1 Rule – Emergency School Closing Procedures for first reading. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Start College Now (SCN) and Early College Credit Program (ECCP) Applications

Ms. Filtz presented six student application requests to take seven courses through the Start College Now program at Mid-State Technical College during the fall of 2023, and three student applications to take one course each through the Early College Credit Program during the fall of 2023.

ES-2 Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Sandra Hett to approve of the approval of six applications to participate in seven requested courses at Mid-State Technical College through the Start College Now program in the fall, 2023-24 school year, and three applications to participate in one requested course in the Early College Credit Program in the fall, 2023-24 school year. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Gaggle Therapy for 2023-2024

Ms. Filtz explained that since the start of the 2021-2022 school year, WRPS has maintained a contract with Gaggle Therapy to address the local counselor shortage. Gaggle Therapy provides secure video platform-based mental health and support services to students, facilitated by licensed therapists and counselors who are experienced in working with children and teenagers. With parental consent, students participate in 45-minute weekly video therapy sessions. Sessions can take place during or outside of school hours depending on student needs and their availability. All FERPA and HIPAA guidelines are adhered to, and there are no costs for families or parents, as WRPS pays a retainer fee. The original retainer fee was based on 1% of the District's student population. As the usage and cost per session have increased, the retainer fee has also increased from \$43,960 in the 2021-2022 school year to \$55,040 in the 2022-2023 school year, and it is projected to be \$72,864 for the 2023-2024 school year. The service is refundable or can be carried forward to the next year if unused.

Since the start of the 2021-2022 school year, 116 students have utilized the service for a total of 584 sessions, while 130 sessions were marked as "no-shows." If approved, ESSER funds will continue to be used to fund this service.

Committee members raised questions around how "no shows" are handled, how much follow-up happens with students missing their sessions, and questioned how many sessions can be missed before the service is discontinued.

ES-3 Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by John Krings to approve of continuing the District's partnership with Gaggle Therapy during the 2023-2024 school year at a cost of \$72,864.00 to be funded through the ESSER III grant. Motion carried unanimously.

V. Updates

A. Families and Schools Together (FAST) Program

Jennifer Wilhorn, Assistant Director of Curriculum & Instruction, was joined by staff members Teri Thomas and Barb Bondioli to provide an overview of the Families and Schools Together (FAST) program which was implemented at Pitsch Early Learning Center and Washington Elementary School in 2022-23, and has just completed one cycle. FAST is an internationally acclaimed parent engagement program shown to help children succeed at school by building stronger, more supportive relationships at home. Built on evidence-based practices and rigorously tested, FAST empowers parents to become more effective family leaders, connects families to schools, and creates a community engaged in children's well-being and education. FAST activities are designed to strengthen family bonds, empower parents, increase positive communication and improve the child's overall academic performance and emotional functioning. In a FAST cycle, families meet for eight weeks. The weekly sessions follow a prescribed format of activities whose effectiveness have been demonstrated through research. FAST sessions are led by a team that empowers parents and connects families to school and community. This team includes one parent partner, school staff, and two community partners. Ms. Thomas and Ms. Bondioli described specific initiatives which occurred at Pitsch and Washington during the recent 8-week session that was held. Positive feedback was shared by the participants, and great connections were made to strengthen families.

Committee members asked questions about the process for choosing families to become involved, how connections get bridged back into the school through groups like Parent Teacher Organizations to help these families stay involved, and the measurement of program impact or success.

B. Educator Effectiveness Grant

Ms. Filtz explained that the District learned that the application for the 2022-2023 Educator Effectiveness (EE) Grant has been approved for funding in the amount of \$32,240 for the period of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. The grant dollars are used exclusively to pay for the costs associated with the Educator Effectiveness model which supports educators and promotes improved teaching strategies to increase student learning for all students.

C. Peer Review and Mentor Grant

Ms. Filtz provided an update on plans to once again apply for the Peer Review and Mentor Grant. This grant involves a consortium with Port Edwards School district to provide a comprehensive "New Colleague Program" which provides orientation sessions, monthly seminars, a mentor, and other support systems to make the adjustment for new colleagues

a successful one. Past grant funds received have helped to defray some of the costs of the program, and the District is again applying for the maximum \$25,000.00 amount for 2023-24.

D. ECHY Innovations Grant

Ms. Filtz presented information concerning the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (ECHY) Innovations Grant, which is a three-year grant provided by the United States Department of Education and awarded through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). This is a competitive and discretionary grant to employ innovative practices to support students who qualify as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act. McKinney-Vento legislation ensures that all children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence receive access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a preschool education, as provided to other children and youth. The Innovations Grant focuses on innovative practices and is not intended to focus on compliance-related topics (such as basic training for all staff, transportation, creating district posters/ materials, etc.). The District will be submitting a grant application by the deadline of April 11, 2023, asking for \$40,000 yearly over the next three years. The focus of the application will be on increasing academic outcomes for students experiencing homelessness.

E. Student Travel

Ms. Filtz explained that Lincoln High School's DECA Program has twenty-five competitors moving on to the International Career Development Conference (ICDC), and six students attending the conference in the THRIVE Leadership Academy due to the chapter's membership, community service, and promotional campaigns. Two students, Paige Gunderson and Emily Hartjes, were elected to Wisconsin DECA's State Officer Team. Ronald Rasmussen, Principal of Lincoln, was recognized with a Friend of DECA award and will accompany the students to the conference. In all, thirty-one students, three advisors, and one administrator will travel to Orlando, Florida on April 20-26, 2023. Participants raised funds throughout the school year and seek out sponsorships as a means to pay for this trip.

VI. Consent Agenda Items

ES-1 Approval of Board Policies for First Reading

ES-2 Approval of Start College Now and Early College Credit Program Applications

ES-3 Approval of Gaggle Therapy Services for the 2023-24 School Year

VII. Future Agenda Items/Information Requests

The Committee reviewed the following future agenda items:

- Agenda Planners (May)
- District Professional Development Plan (May)
- 6-12 Physical Education Curriculum Maps (May)
- 6-12 Physical Education Acquisition (May)
- 6-12 Social Emotional Learning Framework Purchase (May)
- Library and Technology Plan (May)
- 9-12 Science Curriculum Maps (June)
- 9-12 Science Acquisition (June)
- 6-12 Health Curriculum Maps (June)
- K-12 Health Acquisition (June)
- Pupil Academic Standards (July)
- Achievement Gap Reduction Report (July)

Chairperson Katie Medina adjourned the meeting at 6:44 p.m.