

Tawas Area Schools
Special Board of Education Meeting
January 25, 2021

A special meeting of the Tawas Area Board of Education was called to order by President Klenow at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, January 25, 2021, through Google Meets or a teleconferencing method.

Mrs. Klenow led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Present: Ulman, Butzin, Edmonds, Lentz, Bruning and Klenow
Absent: None
Tardy: VanderVeen

Mrs. Ulman informed the board that she was attending virtually from Florida. Mr. VanderVeen had technical issues but joined the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Administrators Present: Klinger, Mochty, Danek, Suttle, Bolen

PUBLIC COMMENTS – INFORMATION AND PROPOSALS

Mrs. Klenow asked if there were any public comments on agenda or non-agenda items. There were no comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Ulman, support by Bruning to approve the minutes of January 11, 2021 as presented. There were no additions or corrections. Motion carried unanimously.

RECEIPT OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Klinger said we received a letter of resignation from Clara Bolen educational assistant Jana Hedglin. Mrs. Hedglin's resignation will be effective January 29th. Motion by Ulman, support by Butzin to accept Jana Hedglin's letter of resignation. Motion carried unanimously.

RECOMMENDATIONS & REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Klinger said interviews were held last week in search of a new Spanish teacher. Two candidates were interviewed, and a second interview was conducted with the top candidate. Mrs. Sarah Stein is being recommended for hire to fill this position. Sarah is a Tawas graduate. She has a K-12 Spanish certification and has experience teaching World Language Curriculum K-12. She is also well-versed in the technology being used throughout the district. Motion by Ulman, support by Bruning to hire Sarah Stein as a Spanish teacher for Tawas Area Schools. A roll call vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

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Mr. Klinger said at the January 11th meeting the board heard a parent concern regarding the grade point multiplier that was approved several years ago. The board wanted to discuss the process to learn how the multiplier may impact students who choose various paths throughout their high school career. He said Mrs. Studley, Mrs. Barringer and Mrs. Mochty are attending tonight's meeting to provide different scenarios showing how the multiplier might impact a student's grade point average. Mrs. Studley provided the board sample course plans for students that would follow the AP and dual enrollment route, along with those that might choose the Early Middle College

(EMC) path. She said the state allows a student to take up to 10 dual enrollment courses while they are in high school, unless they participate in an Early Middle College program, in which case they could possibly attend more. She provided the board a class rank report, without names, showing the senior class student's unweighted and weighted grade point average, and a copy of the top 10 student's transcripts showing the courses they had taken to get there. Mrs. Ulman asked if there are more multiplier courses offered through the EMC program than through the AP and dual enrollment program. Mrs. Studley said last year there were 11 offerings through the EMC and 10 through AP and dual enrollment, but it can vary from year to year. Some AP courses may not be offered every year based on student demand. Mrs. Klenow asked if students are informed that taking more "multiplier" courses could enhance their grade point average. Mrs. Studley said that information is shared with students when they are planning their high school course path. Mrs. Ulman asked if the rigor is higher in the EMC program than the dual enrollment courses. Mrs. Studley said she thinks it depends on the goals each student sets for their career and what they are trying to achieve. Mrs. Lentz said she is concerned that we are applying the multiplier to classes that are not taught by our staff and that we are not considering students that wish to follow a fine arts career path because there wouldn't be room in their schedule to take multiplier classes. Mrs. Ulman said she was part of the conversation when the multiplier was first discussed a few years back. She said the intent was to increase rigor, especially for the seniors that might have been taking lighter classes. The goal was to be sure our students were well prepared for college or career when they graduated. She said it might be a good time to review the multiplier again, to see how other districts apply it and how they might handle it for students with a fine arts career focus. Mrs. Klenow said she was also involved in this discussion a few years back and said there were other districts using the multiplier at that time. She said she would like administration to reach out to other districts to see how they include fine arts students in this scenario so they are also able to participate in multiplier classes without missing out on the fine arts classes they need in high school. Mr. Butzin said the multiplier was explained to him and his family before his daughter started high school and he was able to have his questions answered. Mrs. Edmonds asked if students taking dual enrollment classes each semester have the opportunity to earn more multiplier credits than students taking AP courses in the district. Mrs. Mochty said no, students can earn multiplier credits for each semester, whether it is a year-long AP class, or a semester-long dual enrollment class. She added that it is possible to take a dual enrollment class if there is a certain AP class not being offered that semester or that year. She said any "gap" or non-required class could be filled in with dual enrollment and/or AP classes. She said each student is different and they need to make their own individual choices and be focused on what is important to them regarding their career path. She said there are several other AP courses through the College Board that could be offered including a Music Theory class if there were enough students interested and a teacher was available to teach the class. Mrs. Bruning asked how much information is provided to students before 9th grade on the multiplier, or when it is provided. Mrs. Mochty said it is discussed at orientation in August each year and was repeated with each class that it would go into effect with the class of 2021. Mrs. Ulman said it seems possible that our master schedule could change for a student between 9th and 12th grade based on class demand, which could affect them being able to complete the plan they started, where the EMC offerings seem quite consistent from year to year. Mrs. Studley said the EMC courses could change a bit each year but are usually quite constant based on staffing. Mrs. Lentz asked if it would be difficult to determine what the current senior's GPA is without the multiplier applied. Mrs. Studley said the unweighted GPA's are listed on the sheet provided to the board so they already have that information available. Mr. VanderVeen said one of his children was the class valedictorian and was very heavy in the arts. He took as many AP courses as he could and he believes we should be emphasizing rigor in our course offerings. He feels we should apply some sort of weight to rigorous courses, however we define that. Mrs. Ulman said she feels more information needs to be gathered before a decision is

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made on this either way. Mrs. Lentz said we should look at the current seniors to see if the weighted GPA would affect who the valedictorian and salutatorian are. Mrs. Edmonds said it seems that the multiplier was applied equally to both AP and dual enrollment/EMC classes. Mrs. Klenow said this item will be put back on the March agenda to be discussed at that time.

Mr. Klinger said our COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan created this past summer provided families flexibility when determining whether they wanted their children to attend through the virtual or face to face method. Families were allowed to change their option with a 48-hour notice. However, many families have changed their method of instruction several times. These frequent changes have caused challenges for staff to maintain accurate pupil accounting records. At this time, administration is asking the board to consider amending the plan and to ask families to make a marking period commitment to their choice. Families would have a window of time at the beginning of the current and the next marking period to change their platform, and then their child would continue with that choice until the end of the nine-week period. We would still allow for special circumstances like medical issues and quarantining requirements for switching in the middle of the marking period. Mrs. Ulman asked how this new information would be communicated with families. Mr. Klinger said we would use all of our communication tools including school messenger, our Facebook page and website. We would still allow a fair opportunity for families to make that decision for this marking period even though we are now starting the second week of the new marking period. Mr. Klinger is thinking probably a week would be fair for families to reconsider their option and inform the district if they wish to change. Mrs. Edmonds asked if we were to be moved back to Phase 3 by the state to a virtual method if parents would be given the opportunity to change when we went back to face-to-face learning. Mr. Klinger said they hadn't thought about that specific scenario but the thinking is that students would return to the method they were following before a mandatory change was made. Motion by Ulman, support by VanderVeen to approve the COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan modification as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger said for the past several years the FICA taxability of the 3% healthcare contributions that districts make to the retirement system, on behalf of its employees, has been in question. The Office of Retirement Services ("ORS") has been working with the IRS to get an official ruling on this taxability. Recently, ORS has indicated that it is in position to get a favorable ruling that these contributions are exempt from both federal and FICA taxes. ORS has indicated that they are working with the IRS to implement a "closing agreement" and are asking districts if they would like to sign on to the agreement. Once the IRS issues their closing agreement, the treatment any district takes with the 3% will have to conform to what the IRS' decision says regardless of whether a district signs on to the closing agreement or not. Our understanding is that the IRS will have this closing agreement cover the taxability treatment through either 2025 or 2026. By being part of the closing agreement districts will have some "coverage" should the IRS change its position and try to collect from districts not included in the agreement. In addition, ORS will be covering the \$3,000 filing fee so there is no expense to districts to be part of the closing agreement. A signed power of attorney is required by any district that wants to participate. We have had numerous conversations with our auditor and legal counsel. Unfortunately, they cannot make a recommendation one way or another due to the lack of information. Both our auditor and legal counsel understand we have to make a Board decision by February 5th. We have done our due diligence in trying to gather information to make an informed decision and at this time, recommend the Board of Education authorize the Superintendent to sign the Power of Attorney to participate in the closing agreement with the IRS. Mrs. Huitema said we have been paying FICA tax on the 3% since this began in 2013 but it appears that the IRS is now willing to allow it to be exempt

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from FICA tax. She said there could possibly be refunds of some of this money but there would be paperwork required to do that. Motion by Lentz, support by VanderVeen to authorize the superintendent to sign the Power of Attorney and Declaration of Representative Form 2848 as discussed. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Ulman, support by Bruning to take a short recess at 8:17 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by VanderVeen, support by Edmonds to begin a goals workshop at 8:27 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Klinger referenced the documents he provided in the board packet that included strategic goal ideas, how to establish “SMART” goals, and the Board Self-Evaluation Tool. Mr. Klinger began by reading through the different areas that were found from a template that he used. Questions about relationship building were asked regarding depression and suicide support. Mr. Klinger informed the Board of past assemblies including Yellow Ribbon and Mrs. Sarah Russo-Gorman’s Be Kind presentation. He also mentioned that middle school groups are being established to support peer relationships, and all three buildings have their wellness Wednesday information being shared out. A question was asked of Mr. Klinger about our MiCIP Team and if they have established any goals that the Board should consider. Mr. Klinger explained that a recent training was canceled because of the ice day, and was rescheduled for Friday, January 22nd. He also shared that the team had surface level conversations about the three focus areas being systemic, academic, and social and emotional. He went on to explain that the team is comfortable with the academic piece because teachers naturally use data to adjust curriculum and that establishing academic goals in the near future should be relatively easy. He also stated that the social/emotional component has been discussed and is very important and that this will also be a focal point. The superintendent’s evaluation rubric was also mentioned having required communication pieces, and that past conversations about stakeholder surveys were important. Mr. Klinger stated that the administration has sent out a recent survey, and they are looking at the feedback. He mentioned this is an important part of the MiCIP process, and will be done on a regular basis to collect feedback. The discussion then moved to the process of goal setting and the steps needed to complete the process. References were made based on board member research about needing seven bullet points and a strategic summary. Board members expressed that staff feedback is important when establishing goals. The board members also spent time discussing and clarifying that goal setting at the board level is different from goals established within the superintendent’s evaluation. The goals within the superintendent’s evaluation are for poor, or minimally effective overall outcomes that the board would like to see the superintendent improve on. The discussion also led to the superintendent’s merit goal also being a separate process from the goal setting process, and that Mr. Klinger should be provided time to respond to any goals that are established for him in the future. At this point, Mr. Klinger mentioned that he learned on Friday, January 22nd about Dr. Rodney Green from MASB. He shared that Dr. Green has been spoken highly of by other superintendents, and that he could contact MASB and see if Dr. Green would be available to support our goal setting process. The board agreed that this support would be appreciated and to contact Dr. Green and inquire if he would be available on March 22nd at 7:00 p.m.

Motion by Ulman, support by Bruning to adjourn at 9:10 p.m.