

EAST STROUDSBURG AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
EDUCATION PROGRAMS & RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MEETING
January 13, 2021 -- 7:00 P.M.
VIDEO CONFERENCE
(ZOOM) MINUTES

- I. **The Chairperson**, Dr. Damary Bonilla, called the Education Programs & Resources Committee Meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance, Secretary Jessica Barlotta called for the roll.
- II. **Board Committee Members Present:** Dr. Damary Bonilla, Rebecca Bear, Sharone Glasco, and Debbie Kulick.
- III. **Other Board Members Present:** George Andrews, Larry Dymond, Richard Schlameuss
- IV. **School Personnel Present:** Renee Stevens, Brian Baddick, Heather Piperato, Barry Krammes, Cynthia Pellington, William Vitulli, William Riker, Jessica Barlotta, Tabitha Bradley, Trenee Lurry, and Phillip Kerzner.
- V. **Members of the Public Present:** Keleisha Phillip-Stringer, and Jennifer Floyd

Other: Kristine Roddick, King Spry

VI. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE: Motion was made by Sharone Glasco to approve the agenda for January 13, 2021. Motion was seconded by Debbie Kulick and carried unanimously 4-0.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE: Motion was made by Rebecca Bear to approve the minutes from the December 9, 2021 meeting. Motion was seconded by Debbie Kulick and carried unanimously 4-0.

VIII. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- a. Attorney, Kristine Roddick - King-Spry representative, services review

Mr. Vitulli handed the meeting over to Mr. Baddick. Mr. Baddick went on to explain that litigation, in the area of education, is a focal point. We do a lot with teachers, administrators, and staff, but we have to look at how we handle with filings and claims when they come forth. We have previously used King Spry and Mr. Baddick is suggesting they rejoin us. They are endorsed and recommended by our insurance carrier. Mr. Baddick then introduced Ms. Roddick to present the services offered by their organization. Attorney Roddick is the managing partner of Kings Spry. She also chairs the special education department. East Stroudsburg Area School District was one of the very first school districts she began work with over 20 years ago. She grew up in Monroe County as a lawyer. She was Judge Chaz Locke's second law clerk, approximately 20 years ago. At that time, she worked with Tom Jonas who had represented the district for many years. King Spry has 25 attorneys. They have six attorneys that are of counsel, and have approximately 30 support staff. They are a full service law firm, and in addition to representing school districts, they have a domestic relations department the trust and State Department and insurance defense litigation department complex litigation department. Their largest

department is actually the education department and they have approximately 16 attorneys in that department, a smaller component of the education department is the special education department. They currently have five attorneys handling special education, three of the five attorneys handle both special education, and regular education and that's by design. Many years ago special education was very much compartmentalized. Now with inclusion and all the things that that are existing to help special needs children, there is a lot of overlap so they feel that they serve their clients better when they are knowledgeable in special education, but also in general in the realm of pupil services, there's discipline aspects, there are potential issues with regards to whether or not the district has to provide services if the student is on a home education program, etc. They also have a one full time special education paralegal. With regards to the attorneys that they have, one attorney and Special Ed Department is a former English teacher. Another attorney in the Special Education Department was a former psychologist, so they feel that they bring a lot of credibility when they're sitting around the IEP team table or consulting with the teachers because they know what it's like to be on the front lines. They provided a proposal to the district that goes into great detail regarding the breadth of the services that they do provide. Their services can be summarized in three categories. Firstly, is consulting services. The goal with those services is to put the district in a defensible position. If due process claims are filed, the district will be in a position to tell King Spry to defend the decisions of the district. With consulting services, it may include reviewing IEPs and reviewing reevaluation reports to ensure that they're in compliance with the law and defensible in front of a hearing officer or court. It could be providing answers to questions. For example, four o'clock on a Friday afternoon a student might engage in a discipline violation, and the district needs some answers very quickly. The district can call King Spry and they would be happy to guide us through the situation. It could include a review of our special education policies. King Spry is performing a special education audit for one of their clients in another district. They are going through their files randomly and looking for systemic issues that they can try and fix and moving forward to make their programs more appropriate and more defensible. That's the consulting aspect of their representations. It could be case specific or it could be general to the Special Education Services at the district. The second piece or major component of what they do for their clients is litigation. They have all litigated numerous cases in front of ODR hearing officers, and they have gone all the way up to the Third Circuit with some of their cases. They also are involved in the Pennsylvania Department of Education compliance complaints. That's not necessarily litigation, but it is an opportunity for PDE to come in and complete an investigation regarding the procedures and order corrective action. When they are talking also about special education, it's not just the IDEA, but also Section 504. The last piece or category of their services is professional development. The laws and regulations regarding special education are constantly changing. There are guidelines that are constantly changing and hearing officer decisions that are constantly evolving. The best way for the district to be in a good position is for the frontlines: teachers, administrators, and principals to be knowledgeable with the current state of the law. They can then take that knowledge and apply it to our policies and our procedures. They do a lot of in-service trainings and professional development that can be done via webinar or in person. They also share and provide non-charged services. They have things called School of Bullets. If there's a hot topic or new statute or new case that comes down the pike, they try and educate their clients about it. They also started a recent collaborative effort, which are called their Ed Law Talks which are once a month on a Thursday afternoon, and a group of their attorneys, as well as school board members and school administrators, get together and basically share ideas and brainstorm. There's been a lot of topics and sharing obviously with COVID and the new normal and everyone trying to navigate this unusual and unprecedented situation. There is also a lot of added on benefits that they try to provide to their clients, because their goal is service. So their goal is to provide the district with what they need in order to operate the district, and to operate it well and to educate the students well. Dr. Bonilla thanked Attorney Roddick for her thorough and clear presentation. Dr. Bonilla thinks it's important for not just the board, and the committee, but also for the community and our educators who are present to understand the various services. Attorney Roddick just explained everything in a very practical and user friendly way and she appreciates the explanations. Dr. Bonilla knows the firm because she sits on the IU board as the representative for the district so she knows the work that King Spry does. She expressed that she is glad that Attorney Roddick was here talking with us and knows that they are really good at what they do, and the explanation was great. She asked if any of the education committee members have a question or a

comment that you share at this time? The following questions were asked:

Rebecca Bear asked if we are replacing the current firm? Mr. Baddick responded that one of our current firm's attorneys retired as of the new year. We also will continue with our service with our current firm. We are looking to replace the retirement with King Spry in there. We will we will have a dual firm partnership as we had in the past. Right now we are down one attorney with the retirement so again the goal the objective is to continue our defensibility and bring King Spry back into the defensibility plan. Rebecca Bear also went on to say she was looking at the services they offer, like the trainings. She asked if that is going to replace trainings that we're currently using like for our Trauma Informed Training that we do for our special education and our regular education, or is this just going to supplement it? Whatever our needs are, they can develop and put together any kind of training program that we need. We are training right now in legal defensibility training on all those topics such as Trauma Informed and DEI, so we are already including that legal piece in all of those with administration and with our teaching staff. Since we have done all these trainings, we will look to King Spry to continue to add to those pieces also. They will be a supplement to what we currently have to make it better. Attorney Roddick added that they develop the trainings based upon a school district needs. So for example: One district needed King Spry to come in and train every regular education teacher about their role in the special education process. Including how to provide good input, how to raise any concerns regarding implementations of the IEP and regular education classroom, as well as what a special education due process hearing looks like to give them a good context, good perspective, and good understanding of their role in the process. For another district, they provided an overview of the special education process to school board members. That board had a number of new school board members and they wanted to educate them on special education, because it is one of the most numerous lawsuits and claims that are filed against school districts so that particular district felt that that would was an important training for that particular board. They are not coming in to replace any current services that the district likes or exists. But if there is something that the district needs that those other entities or agencies can't provide, they are happy to do that for us.

Rebecca Bear asked about hearing Attorney Roddick say that they audit current procedures and if she could elaborate on what that looks like or how they do it?

It was by request for a particular district, who had a number of different changes in administration and they wanted to look for the systemic issues that were arising, or resulting in litigation being filed against the elementary component of the particular district and the secondary component of the particular district. They asked for them to provide King Spry with 10 random Special Education files from the elementary center and the secondary center. King Spry created a checklist of all of the key components for the files, with regards to having the appropriate documents and having the IEP goals be defensible, such as did they contain baselines. They also looked at if there was discipline for this particular student, were they following the appropriate procedures for a manifestation determination and following the Chapter 12 requirements. They are still in the process of completing that audit, but from that they are going to be able to look and see, of those files, where there are consistently gaps or problems. Then they are going to work with the district on how they can fix that. That may include coming in and providing training to case managers on how to draft defensible IEP goals. It may be creating a manual, such as a Section 504 manual that has forms that teachers, case managers, or guidance counselors can use moving forward for the 504 process. She could not answer what the end result is going to be because they are still in the process of analyzing the data. The goal is to see where their holes are and try and plug them up systemically.

Debbie Kulick asked if she heard Attorney Roddick discuss the other side of special education meaning gifted students as well, to have guidance for that?

Attorney Roddick went on to explain that when she was defining special education it consists of Section 504 and IDEA, which are federal civil rights statutes, but gifted education is a creature of state law. It is only by Pennsylvania law for gifted which is not a federal issue but they do also provide consultative services and litigation on gifted issues. Those cases aren't brought as frequently as IDEA and Section 504 but they do get the occasional gifted case. They are also well versed in Chapter 16 requirements.

b. ESACA evaluating alternative LMS offerings –

Miss. Stevens started by thanking the committee for their time and thanked Dr. Vitulli for allowing her to share with the committee where they are at in terms of the ESACA committee. One of the very first things Dr. Vitulli tasked Miss. Stevens and her team was the review of different and alternate LMS platforms. With Miss. Stevens not knowing as much about virtual learning, she leaned on her team and they established, two parallel teams, one as the K-5 level and one at the 6-12 level. Those teams consist of ESACA coaches and current ESACA teachers who have offered to help out. They are working on compiling surveys. Currently, they are working on compiling a survey for the students, the parents, and the teachers to get a feel for what it is they like about the programs, what things they find to be beneficial, and what things they really wish could be expanded upon. The ESACA committee is actively collecting that data so they can make informed decisions moving forward. They recognize that the K-5 system and 6-12 may have some different needs and different concerns and different likes in terms of educational model and so that's why they split the survey into K-5 and 6-12, but they are really running parallel with each other. The other thing that the team is really looking at includes what the neighboring districts are using in terms of learning management systems, looking at what kinds of platforms are available to our district globally, what has things that would be really neat to implement in ESACA, and what part of Edgenuity is really working and what are some of our non-negotiables in terms of if we change we don't want to lose this. They are really working hard to come up with those reforms and to identify some other platforms that they should take a look at. Dr. Vitulli and Miss. Stevens have previewed two new companies, two new platforms, and they both have different options and different things for them to take a look at, but definitely more work needs to be done in terms of if either one of these are a good fit for the district. Some additional things they are you actively considering are: Would they need to consider a different instructional model at ESACA for K-5 versus 6-12 and potentially different LMS platforms for each grouping of grades.

Dr. Vitulli added to Miss. Stevens information. Dr. Vitulli and Miss. Stevens have had meetings with two companies, which have included getting an initial brief overview from the company, as well as allowing them to ask questions encompassing the non-negotiables. They have learned a lot about the companies and she will most likely be moving them forward to work with the rest of the team and review it much more in depth. Dr. Vitulli pointed out that he wanted to bring to light that he thinks she's done a fantastic job and he loves the way that she's reached out to not only her team, but the students and parents and teachers of the current cyber program and pulled in their viewpoints. She's doing a wonderful job. It was a big shift for her, but she's really taken it on, without any hesitation so he would like to recognize her for that. Dr. Bonilla thanked her as well and asked if there were any questions from the Committee?

Rebecca Bear asked if there are a lot of programs besides Edgenuity that do the cyber type programs that we're looking for?

Miss. Steven answered that she would guess in the neighborhood of 10 to 12, that could potentially meet ESACA's needs. There are some that look perfect on the website but upon questioning, are not a platform that could work for our district or our ESACA program. On the surface, around 10 to 12 look like they could work but probably even fewer than that, maybe five or six that could potentially work for us.

Sharone asked what other technologies are Miss. Stevens looking at?

Miss. Stevens said that the morning of the meeting, Dr. Vitulli and Miss. Stevens met with Pearson Connexus. Previous to that, they met with Edmentum. They have also reached out to a platform called K12. They are still waiting to hear back from their rep but the team of teachers seem to think that they could be positive for them to hear from.

Sharone followed up with asking what are their goals towards identifying the right platform?

Miss. Stevens responded that Dr. Vitulli and her spoke about that topic that morning, and neither one of them would like to rush it. They really want to take their time and make a good informed decision. That may mean that they identify something for K-5 before they identify it for 6-12, and that they implement these things a little more slowly. The idea that they would gather all the data, review the programs, make an informed decision, learn about the new programs, and then implement them for September at a K-12 level, would be quite the undertaking, even if it is eight months of time, it is a lot of tasks to accomplish. Dr. Vitulli and her really want to make an informed decision, so they are not really in a hurry.

c. Cyber Teacher - Building relationships and the connections to virtual participation –

For this, Dr. Vitulli introduced Mrs. Pellington. She is currently a Lehman teacher teaching sixth grade ELA in ESACA. She heads up the Lehman English department and also heads up the National Junior Honor Society. She has been in the area for 29 years and had four children go through the East Stroudsburg Area School District. She has gone on to complete both college and post graduate degrees. Dr. Vitulli is very excited to have her speak a little bit about the efforts that she's putting in to connect with her students, and the great results that she's getting.

Mrs. Pellington thanked everyone for allowing her to speak. She knows this year has been a change for all and for teachers and students, it has been a big change. So for her, she has been a brick and mortar teacher for 16 years and going through the years, she has been Schedule-B teacher for ESACA. She has helped do different things along the way. But this year it's her true pleasure to be able to be a full time ESACA teacher. She expressed how wonderful it has been for her. She feels that she has had more pleasure and enjoyment in teaching this year than she has in many years. She wanted to give some ideas of some of the things that she is doing. She wanted to share the non-traditional things that she has added to help the students and connect with the students. One of them was a young writers contest that she has held twice, where she has had students participate, after their regular classes, writing, and then they send in their submissions for the contest. She had one girl that was very dark and did not like to come, never turned her camera on, and now she is coming all the time and she is coming to Mrs. Pellington's office hours. She's gained confidence and she's emailing Mrs. Pellington every day. The contest was through the UK, so Mrs. Pellington is not really expecting her to win, but it has been an overall win just in what the student has gained in her experience. Mrs. Pellington also started a knitting club. Some of the kids wanted to learn how to knit and Mrs. Pellington did not know how to knit so she taught herself how to knit with them. She had one young lady that really wanted to join and lived in Bushkill also. Mrs. Pellington hung a bag out of her mailbox and put some knitting needles and some yarn in it and the student's father stopped by and picked up the bag. This young lady wasn't coming to our class meets but with the extra effort Mrs. Pellington put in, the student now feels connected and is showing up for classes and she's doing better. She participated in the writing contest then. She has grown in confidence and is making connections with other kids that she wasn't before she felt isolated. Two days a week, Mrs. Pellington holds a book club where they sit and read together and talk about it. The students don't even really realize that they're learning while Mrs. Pellington is asking them questions. Asking them about the symbolism, or something about the main character or how did something make them feel: They don't even realize that they are learning something along the way so they enjoy it. That was one of the best days ever for Mrs. Pellington doing the book club, and then her power went out. She kept on trying to get back on and ended up telling the group to stay on and keep on reading. When she finally got back on about 15 minutes later, the kids were sitting there reading and talking about the book and they were so inspired and they were so proud of themselves that it warmed her heart. She went on to say that at the beginning of class, she always greets the students and asks them how they're doing. She has had an experience where her aunt died of COVID so she is very careful with the students and care about what is going on with them. A few weeks ago, the students were all excited and wanted to talk about an App Club so they asked if they could create one. Mrs. Pellington agreed and they are starting an App Club, which they will be doing one day a week. They want to experiment with apps that draw because she has a lot of really artistic kids. Through this club, they will look into apps that allow them to draw, not only for themselves independently, but also for school projects. Mrs. Pellington is also the advisor for the National Junior honor society at Lehman, and part of that is always having service projects. So this year, some of the ESACA kids are in the group. They have gone above and beyond. After class in the afternoons, they are spending a lot of extra time creating read-alouds for the elementary school students. They will then have a Google Classroom or website up hopefully after the January 26th meeting for this. They have picked out themes for the month and then they're creating these read-alouds and it's helping them learn. It's helping them present and talk in front of people, which is something that's hard for most to do. They are having a great time with that and she is inspired by their dedication. She will share that classroom as soon as they are done with it so the committee can see how well they're doing. Hopefully in the spring they are going to start a mindfulness journey through journaling and meditation. Mrs. Pellington just got done taking some courses and some professional development on that. She has a practice of doing yoga which the students know and are interested in it. There have been many

opportunities to add new things in for the kids. She has so many students, but this year, she has had the opportunity to be able to connect with them in ways that she has not been able to in the past. She proceeded to thank all of committee for allowing her the opportunity to teach the way she has this year, because it's been a wonderful experience for her also. She also has four children that have gone through and graduated from East Stroudsburg North. All of them had a wonderful education through East Stroudsburg which she appreciates and she has appreciated the dedicated teachers that they had. She knows that parents are having difficulty in some aspects, moving into the virtual world. She spent an hour on the phone the day of the meeting with a parent that did not know what to do so she is planning to have a one on one meet with that student every single day so they know that he's doing okay to get caught up. She made the point that there are so many ways that teachers can help and add to the students' experience. Mrs. Pellington looks forward to finding out if we change platforms. She went on to thank the Committee for allowing her to talk and allowing her the experience to help the students and the parents.

Dr. Bonilla went on to thank her for her dedication to our students to our families and what Dr. Bonilla got out of her experiences was that she was really meeting students where they are. Which is something that they have talked a lot about on this committee from our very first meeting. They have talked about meeting students where they are and not just helping students that are identified as having the need for additional support but really all of the students because there might be underlying situations that they need support with. This need may be especially important particularly during this time of crisis so it sounds like Mrs. Pellington has enjoyed being challenged and is really an asset and the Committee is grateful for her leadership and support for our students. She went on to ask members of the committee to share any comments or ask any questions that they might have.

Sharone Glasco had just a couple of comments. She thinks one of the things that she does that's very important is, what Sharone calls, a check in and checkup. So the check in is really their feelings like, how are you feeling you know what's going on. The checkup is really about what are some of your barriers or opportunities so that Sharone makes her laundry list and knows who to get back to and helps them put out those fires. She thinks it is so important to just stay in touch. What Sharone is hearing from Mrs. Pellington is her creativity, because it's not that our students can't do the work, it's not that our students don't know the technology, our students just aren't engaged, they just aren't motivated right now to get through the assignments. The activities that Mrs. Pellington talked about are all about engaging them, to the point where they don't even feel like they're learning a lesson. They're learning skills, they're learning competencies, and they're writing. She expressed her thanks to Mrs. Pellington. The other thing Sharone wanted to share was her dissertation with Mrs. Pellington because she thinks it might offer some insight on service learning, and its impact and its impact on faculty and students, relationships, so as students, over time, no longer think of a faculty member or teacher in that role but more so a partner, and the conversations begin to change once there's trust and you're working on a process or a program or a Service Learning Initiative together. So Sharone applauds Mrs. Pellington.

Debbie Kulick thanked Mrs. Pellington very much for really thinking outside the box and being creative. She has actually heard a number of teachers and support personnel mirror Mrs. Pellington's enthusiasm in their own areas. Debbie thinks that Mrs. Pellington may have broken into new areas that, once back to brick and mortar, we will see a lot of those things carry through and people become a little bit more creative and experiment with things so she thanks her for being a leader of the pack.

Debbie then asked how many students does Mrs. Pellington have that are involved?

Mrs. Pellington replied that each club has different students, and some students come to two or three clubs, but depending on the day. She tries to be flexible about the time that we meet so that that students can come. For instance, art got added on and some students couldn't come at 2:00 so they changed their meeting time to 2:30. Knitting seems to be the favorite one and the students never want to get off which could be the time on Friday, so that they kind of can just relax. They have said that they found it very relaxing and peaceful, and they sometimes put music on. They start at 2:00 and there's a lot of times they are still on at 3:30 or 4:00 because they don't want to go. As long as Mrs. Pellington is not busy, she stays on with them.

Rebecca Bear added that she would love to see the book club implemented in the brick and mortar schools. It is a fabulous idea that Mrs. Pellington is actually getting kids engaged that may not have normally been engaged in discussions or may not have actually enjoyed reading.

d. Creating a Reader Family Program – Contract

Dr. Vitulli introduced this topic. He did so by asking the committee to think back, as Read from Home has been a part of the East Stroudsburg Area School District for as long as he can remember. It was an in-person program targeted towards pre K and Kindergarten parents and children in an effort to enhance their reading skills. Over the years that program has been run out of Smithfield, and as a principal back then, he does recall it taking place at Smithfield when he was there. Because of COVID, the in-person program was not able to take place this year so far. And normally would be taking place right about now. The district gets Title I grants to run this program and he spoke with Angela Byrne, the Grants Director, recently, about a month or so ago, about trying to get creative how they could bring this program in and do the program virtually. In talking with her, she suggested that this program, because she is very knowledgeable of the program and assisted with the read from home program for many years, felt it could use some refinements so they began to talk and discuss the ideas, between her and himself, came up with the idea of doing this virtually. They went out and solicited advice for the creation of a better program, still on the same lines of Read From Home. They worked with Dr. Viney, who is just retired from our school district just last year, after 29 years with our district and 26 years in the elementary program, three years of which she was the literacy coach for our district. She was also professor at ESU for four years teaching childhood literacy and such. After talking with her, they kind of refined this idea a little bit further. So Dr. Vitulli wanted to take a moment and explain the proposal to the committee from the beginning. Create a Reader Family Program is a five session parent program that presents early reading strategies to parents who have preschool and kindergarten children. As you know, reading is a complex skill, and it begins in the home. This program is going to provide parents with explicit information on the reading process, along with research based strategies to foster this early literacy development. The concepts that they are going to cover in this program are oral language, phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, word work, and, vocabulary and comprehension. This program will run five weeks. They are hoping with the approval and getting passed through the board to start this in April, late March, and what typically would take place is that they will provide parents with information manuals, games, songs, online resources and the PowerPoints that they will be using, in addition to, each family will get five fiction and nonfiction picture books that they'll work with, with Dr. Viney online, virtually, going through those and learning, teaching the parents and the children on how to read. The program will differ from our previous program basically in just its order. Dr. Viney, who Dr. Vitulli considers an expert in this field, felt that the Read from Home program that the district has been using really needed some fine tuning, and she's creating some new materials to put in there and readjust the order that she feels would be better suited for parents. That is the idea in a nutshell, turning that whole thing to a virtual platform. The program is funded through Title One, as it always has and the books and the support all come from Title One. The contract that Dr. Vitulli has provided is in the packet. For Dr. Viney to provide the five weeks and the development of this program for \$4,000. This program typically costs the district \$10,000, when it was run through the buildings. Dr. Vitulli asked if the committee had any questions for him. The questions were as follows:

Rebecca asked if we are going to have things in place for families that may not have access? So for example, we have a family who has a preschooler who may not have internet in their home, or may not have computers in their home: Are we going to be able to help them out so that they can participate?

Dr. Vitulli responded that he thinks that's a wonderful idea. He thinks we could provide hotspots that we already have and the district certainly has extra Chromebooks, should the families not have that either.

Rebecca pointed out that she wants to make sure it's equal opportunity for everybody within the district not just those that have the services because she knows not everybody does. The one thing that she knows they spoke a lot about in the committee is equity and making sure that they give the opportunity to everybody to participate.

Dr. Bonilla responded that we have said that at this point no one should be in that predicament as long as we know that there are needs in terms of Chromebooks and hotspots, and we are able to meet those needs.

Rebecca Bear wants to make sure that everyone in the district within the preschool families and the kindergarten families that if this is something they want to participate in, the district will make it happen for them and she does not want anybody to be left behind.

Dr. Vitulli pointed out that everyone in kindergarten, has or should have computers from us, and hotspots if necessary. We have been providing those to district families right now if they need it. The pre k would be an extension so Dr. Vitulli will have to work with Brian Borosh on that and come up with a plan to serve any pre-k families that may not have what we need to pull this off. Part of the marketing is to go out to our pre K's and send their students our way and advertise this to them. Generally, this program has gotten about 25 to 30 families. They are setting a goal for 100 families this year, just through some increased marketing efforts.

Dr. Bonilla reiterated Rebecca's point that the communication piece is key and Dr. Vitulli said they would survey the families and the committee would certainly love to have a follow up on that and of course if they can support let them know, but just being sure that people know that it's available to them has always been a focus of the committee. She Rebecca, and asked if Debbie or Sharone had any questions or comments.

Debbie Kulick said she would email Dr. Vitulli with some questions so she could promote it in an article.

e. DEI Update –

Dr. Vitulli welcomed Trenee for this. Trenee started out by sharing with everyone that they have been actively meeting for the past few months, and have grown greatly in the amount of people who have wanted to join us. At this point in time, they have established five different committees, and they're connected to our district initiatives and our district focuses, of which there are six. The teams that have been created at this point in time are meeting where we will come together and review goals, and then make decisions from there about how they are going to continue to move the work. And as they do that, they will come back together for their monthly meetings and be able to have some real discussions about where they are, and where they are trying to go. Their focus groups are school climate, which is also connected to their training as well. The hiring processes, learning experiences and personal connections, developing learning experience with post High School goals, and conducting a strategic audit. So all of those groups are working actively to really get to the information that they need so they can really actually see what they are looking for the come to fruition. The groups are excited to work and Trenee is in the process of meeting with groups and those groups are really looking forward to seeing all the hard work come together. Right now, they are continuing to meet monthly. They have a participatory group at this point, which is for people who are not able to make the commitment to meeting with them at this present time but allows the opportunity for people to be a part of what they are doing. They do not ever want anyone to be left behind or left out if they have the interest in being a part of the group. They have also developed a place they are putting together for their resources so that other people can be able to view them and those that have any questions about DEI have answers available to them.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Trenee and asked if anyone had any questions after offering her support and thanks for the program and the continued updates.

Rebecca Bear suggested the DEI committee meet with the law firm that was introduced at the meeting so that the law firm can see what they are doing and help plan for the future. Dr. Bonilla agree with Rebecca about this.

f. Keystone/PSSA/ESL/OLSAT testing plans update –

Dr. Vitulli wanted to let the committee know that Keystones, PSSA's, OLSAT's, ACCESS testing all these items are all slated to take place this year. He is working very closely with Dr. Bradley and Ms. Piperato, as well as the administration team, to come up with ideas and methods that the tests can be completed while keeping the students and staff as safe as possible. He knows it will not be an easy task, especially when they get into the intermediate schools and the elementary schools, and when considering the cyber program has several thousand students. They will be sending out a lot of communication in regards to the testing. He then asked if anyone had any questions?

Rebecca Bear asked if they have to be done in person?

Dr. Vitulli answered that yes, they do have to be done in person.

Rebecca Bear followed up with asking what if parents don't want their kids to come to in-person at all for whatever reason, can they opt out?

Dr. Vitulli responded that there are opportunities to opt out that the state has identified very clearly and they are straightforward. The district presents that to the parents in the information they provide the

parents.

Sharone Glasco asked when does the testing begin?

Dr. Bonilla also asked if Dr. Vitulli could give the committee a brief walkthrough on a couple of those basic questions that people might have such as timing, preparation, and audience?

Dr. Vitulli explained that updated winter Keystone testing is to start February 8 and February 9. And then the following week or two after that, we are purposely holding off testing as long as we can in case the state should come back or the Federal government and change their mind as to whether or not we even need to have this testing this year. The district will start with winter keystones in February. Access testing will most likely begin shortly after students return on January 19th, although that is a very small group of students, maybe about 80 in the whole district. The PSSA's will fall in the end of April, beginning of May. This will be followed up with spring keystones in the month of May. It is a very crowded schedule, and they are trying to keep as many kids in school and not interrupt the current hybrid model that's already in place. There's also OLSAT testing that they will be fitting in most likely in late February, or the beginning of March for the second and third graders.

Rebecca Bear followed up to ask, in regards to the winter keystones, for those kids in ESACA whose parents work, will the district be providing bussing?

Dr. Vitulli answered that yes, they will be offering bussing. But he did go on to point out that they originally anticipated a large number of students being required to take Keystone testing. Because, last spring's Keystone testing didn't take place, they made the assumption that those students were going to have to make up those tests. They recently learned that the students will not have to do that. So, the number of students required to be tested in spring will be likely much smaller than anticipated, approximately 100 students, which are much easier to make happen. Dr. Vitulli recently sent out another statement to all parents and grades. Mrs. Piperato did so the day of the meeting. The statement said that Grades 9, 10, 11 will have test taking going on, while other students are in the building. They avoided Wednesdays on purpose, so they are looking at Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Fridays for testing which allows for transportation to be provided for anyone that needs it.

Rebecca Bear asked if you have an A group student that is hybrid, they will take their Keystone on their A day, and then the B group would then take it on their B day, and the A students will have an assignment and vice versa while they're testing, if I'm understanding that correctly?

Dr. Vitulli explained that it's more complicated than that. It's very complicated, because not all students need it. Because it is a small group that needs the tests, they are looking to test all algebra students at the same time. That could be an A student or it could be a B student. The information will be going directly to each one of those individual students and their families, so there is no confusion. Normally, the Keystone numbers of those needing to be tested are going to be 300-350, at the South, and around 300 at North but because of the changes in the requirements for this, this year's group needing to be tested is reduced quite a bit.

Rebecca Bear asked why there were that few students needing to be tested this year? Was it done by design, coincidence, or is there an error with the information?

Mrs. Piperato offered that the testing numbers are actually about normal in a non COVID year. The population in the fall is much less than the one in the spring. They thought there were going to be a glut of students in the fall that they had not seen for testing before. But as Dr. Vitulli explained, the students they thought were going to have to take it who missed it last spring, don't have to. So it's really about the normal population, and in a normal winter testing environment, they do test concurrently. When those students test, it is usually one hallway that is shut down for North, and two hallways at South. They will block off the area, and reroute some classes, and then the students test in that environment. This year, testing actually mirrors what we usually do. The only difference being that we will be more spread out because of safety and COVID precautions.

g. Pathways Discussion –

Dr. Riker presented this topic. The district continues to look at how they can design programs and opportunities for students around career fields, career clusters, and career pathways. They have been meeting to look at and bring forward to the Education Committee, six different career field areas that they would like to consider as part of the program of studies. This is where they would look at aligning current programs, repurposing some programs, and adding some additional items, so that they can

immerse the students in career fields and pathways that will lead them to some of the high priority occupations that are available both locally and within a radius that has yet to be decided upon. The purpose of this being so that the district can provide employability opportunities to students, immerse them in programs that are of interest and around the passion that they have. This would lead to their day in school being really focused on those areas that they want to pursue post-graduation. To assist with this, they hope to identify and work with partners that may already be in place such as: Lehigh Valley Health, St. Luke's, and Sanofi. Some of these partners have already held meetings with the district. This team is really looking to utilize their expertise to look at our programs and say, "What are the areas that we can focus as a district, and that we can immerse our students in, so they're prepared when they leave our high schools? Whether it's a post-secondary education institution, or whether it's a career field that they're able to pursue right out of high school, how can we provide those opportunities while our students are in school?" The goal is so that it really helps to support our vision and our ideas moving forward of how do we then get students engaged in job shadowing opportunities and internship opportunities. While that is difficult now in our current COVID situation, it isn't something they have lost sight of by any means. It's a slower process than they had hoped, but they are still focused on that and they will be able to provide some of those pathways moving forward. They will be looking for the committee to give guidance and their blessing on pathways for the subsequent school year, so that students can start to align and select courses based on a career pathway that is in line with what they want to do once they leave East Stroudsburg and pursue their post-secondary education or career opportunities. The six areas they are looking at, using the terminology career fields, are:

Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources

Arts Communications and Information Systems

Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology

Health Science Technology

Human Services

Business Management and Administration

There are many pathways under each of these, and they cannot do them all, so they are going to really need to narrow the focus. They are going to narrow the focus using those high priority occupation areas that are within the geographical area that needs to be defined so that the students can be offered the employability skills under those pathways. They will keep the committee updated as they progress through the steps of this process.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Dr. Riker. She acknowledged that this topic is a discussion they had frequently during the comprehensive planning process. She is glad that it is here with the committee. She opened it up to ask if any members of the committee have questions or comments, with the knowledge that they will be part of the process as this project moves along?

Sharone Glasco asked if this team that is doing this project internal or a group of Superintendents from the Monroe 2030 group?

Dr. Riker responded that this is an internal team. They are still committed to the Monroe County Pathway Coalition, but they feel like they are able to progress a little quicker and move a little faster. They are still a part of that group and they are going to still collaborate with that group and do what they can as a district to support their efforts as well.

Sharone thanked Dr. Riker. She also asked that Dr. Riker could please consider entrepreneurship because of who our students are. It might fall under business but she requested he think about it, because students are going to service jobs they're going to higher education and they're becoming business owners.

Rebecca Bear mentioned that a good amount of alumnis have gone into entrepreneurship type roles in their careers. She suggested reaching out or working with some of our alumni who could be mentors to our students in the Pathways program as well, to lead the way on how they got to where they are. The suggestion being to develop a mentorship program with alumni.

Dr. Bonilla reinforced that she loves the idea. She also suggested that they could make some connections with the Communications Committee, to leverage those individuals that are representing some of the various areas we are looking to add to the pathways, given that there are business leaders and community leaders on the Committee. Her other suggestion was to connect this process to the DEI Committee. This will help with the considerations about how this impacts the various demographic

groups and allows us to leverage that committee's expertise, as well.

Debbie Kulick mentioned that as this progresses, we might be able to put something out through our website to survey and see what participation we can have from local businesses across our district.

Dr. Bonilla asked what is the staffing model for the project, particularly thinking about Rebecca's suggestion for some kind of mentorship opportunity?

Dr. Riker responded that we are not that far into this project. He took notes on how we might be able to expand this program. Right now, he thinks the first step is to narrow our focus on one of those career fields and then the clusters. Once they are focused on the pathways that would be within that field, it will help to start the conversations regarding staffing adjustments, the program of studies, and the involvement of staff members within those departments to help create the ideas of reaching out to the experts in the field that are out there in the community that can support the initiative. This way, they are not creating it alone, and they are leaning on those individuals that can provide some of the guidance for them. They are not there yet, but those are his thoughts on how the process will go.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Dr. Riker and expressed her excitement for this project. She also mentioned that she would love participation from the other Board Members and plans to include them in the future. She then asked if anyone had any questions before they moved to Public Participation. The following questions were asked:

George Andrews asked that he had not heard back about the DEI Committee. Should he email her?

Dr. Bonilla responded that they know he is added, but with the holidays and such, things were a bit crazy so they know he is on it, as well as Debbie, and they will be sending out communication.

Larry Dymond asked about going back to the December 9 Meeting Minutes. In there, it says that the goal of Trauma Informed training is to have the staff trained in understanding trauma and how it affects the students which will be complete by the end of 2025. Is 2025 a typo?

Mrs. Piperato volunteered to answer the question. She pointed out that it is not a typo. What they mean by staff is everyone. Everyone who comes into contact with kids whatsoever so when thinking about staff traditionally, everyone thinks about teachers first and teachers will be trained within the next two years. That training is coming right away because the staff that is the closest contact with students will be done first. But in addition to that, our pupil services department is expecting to train the cafeteria workers, bus drivers, student aides, paraprofessionals, and custodians. Anyone that comes in contact with students. That is why that 2025 deadline is out there so far, because these populations cannot all be done at once. So they are spreading out the training with Dr. Melissa Sadin.

Mr. Baddick added that the last two trainings that were held were very large. They just held the secondary teachers training, which were close 200 staff members. Prior to that, they had another group of 200. There are multiple trainings, such as training one, training two, three, four, etc. There are different days of training, so it's just not one day. There might be multiple days for that group so it's a continuation.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Mrs. Piperato and Mr. Baddick and also wanted to add to their comments. This is an ongoing discussion as well, just like the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work so it's infused throughout other efforts in the district. The training component is one discussion but this is ongoing throughout the work that is being done across the district.

Larry Dymond added that as important as this is, he thinks we need to think outside the box and try to get the training done in no more than a year.

Dr. Bonilla wanted to explain a few things about the training, but did not want to repeat any prior discussions. They have already had discussions about the key points, the training, and the plan. They can make sure that they get that information to Mr. Dymond in writing, as well as the rest of the board because it has already come through the committee previously. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training cannot and will not be rushed. Those that are facilitators and trainers know that there is a process. There is buy-in, education, formal and non-formal education and there is a lot that goes into training people and considering them trained. From this committee we will not request that this happens in a year because there is a plan. What the committee does want to see is that we continue to infuse and continue talking about it so the language is heard. She suggested that this training gets infused into the board training that they will be having this year.

Rebecca Bear added that the Trauma Informed training is ongoing and continuous, as opposed to a single training. Even if all the staff is trained by 2025, they are going to continue to be trained throughout their

career as a teacher or bus driver or paraprofessional. It is not as simple as take the class and be done, it is ongoing training.

Dr. Bonilla pointed out that Rebecca makes a good clarification because usually when people hear the word training, it is thought of as a one-time session, but Trauma Informed is not that. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work will be the same, so what work is being done fuses throughout everything. The time period is just a marker for the point at which all individuals within the district will have had these particular sessions but it is ongoing. She then thanked Larry for his commitment because all students are experiencing trauma to some degree, with the crisis and the craziness of the past year in addition to the social injustice issues that they are seeing across the board.

Larry Dymond commented that he is really bothered to think that how many students are going to be left behind over this four-year period.

Dr. Bonilla responded that there should be no students left behind because this is not a determining factor as to whether we're servicing our students or not. Our district is a leader in the subject area of Trauma Informed. Dr. Bonilla met with the president of the National School Board Association within her first month on the job and clearly delineated that our district is a leader in this conversation. Our district submitted a proposal to the National School Board Association to talk about the work that we are doing in this space. As Dr. Bonilla has talked to other colleagues in education, a colleague who is appointed to the New York State Board of Regents said that there is only one other district that she knows of in Rhode Island that has done it as comprehensively as we have. Dr. Bonilla is really proud of our work and it is something that she talks about outside of our meetings and maybe that is something everyone needs to do. She then handed the floor over to Dr. Riker.

Dr. Riker thanked Dr. Bonilla and Rebecca Bear. Dr. Riker wanted to remind the board and the committee that there are many mandated trainings required by the Department of Education and the State Board of Education. Trauma Informed is not one of them, newly it is, but it is not part of their laundry list of trainings that have to occur. There is a limited amount of time or days that is available to train staff and to train employees. There is a broader conversation that the board can support the district and those initiatives through looking at how do we expand the number of days and the amount of time we may have available to provide not only the mandated trainings, but the trainings that we are engaged in as a district because we want to be moving these ideas forward. He wants everyone to be aware of that and can share that extensive list.

Barry Krammes added that he would like to make a comment. He went on to say that the training on trauma sensitive training was really incredible and eye opening for him to see as a direct impact right away. He thinks it was invaluable that they did that and he appreciates that from the school board and the school district. He learned a lot from his colleagues and thought it was a really good training.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Barry and pointed out that an added benefit of the training that was discussed in comprehensive planning was the exchange of information and sharing and supporting one another. If someone hasn't had the training and someone who has is able to share some of the tips and information or resources in advance for the benefit of our students.

Phil Kerzner added that the teachers, students, and parents have been amazing. This has been very difficult for everybody. There are students struggling out there but parents are sitting with their kids, helping out so much, trying to help them achieve in this difficult time. He just wanted to give a shout out to everybody who's really working hard to make the best of the situation including the school board. He feels very supported by the board and all the tough decisions that they have had to make.

Dr. Bonilla thanked Phil and mentioned that she definitely wanted to echo that sentiment. Everybody has been working so hard and she thanks all for being on the meetings every month after they have worked a long day and you have their own families and their own responsibilities because it's important for the administration for the school board to hear from those of that are working with students and family's day to day.

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: There were no questions asked by the public this evening

X. ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Edgenuity Elementary Usage update - payment for enrollment above and beyond original invoice –
- b. King Spry Contract
- c. Contract for the Development and presentation of the Creating a Reader Family Program

ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE: The motion to add the King Spry contract and the contract for the Development and Presentation of the Creating a Reader Family Program to the agenda was made by Rebecca Bear. The motion was seconded by Debbie Kulick and carried unanimously 4-0.

ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE: The motion to forward the Edgenuity use update, King Spry contract, and the contract for the Development and presentation of the Creating a Reader Family Program to the Board was made by Debbie Kulick. The motion was seconded by Rebecca Bear and carried unanimously 4-0.

Dr. Bonilla announced that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 10, 2021 at 7pm. She reminded everyone that the monthly meetings are now on the 2nd Wednesday of every month. She thanked everyone for all that they do.

XI. ADJOURNMENT: Dr. Damary Bonilla asked for a motion to adjourn at 8:48 p.m.

ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE: Motion to adjourn was made by Debbie Kulick. Motion was seconded by Rebecca Bear and carried unanimously 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica Barlotta

Committee Secretary