

**EAST STROUDSBURG AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD OF EDUCATION
EDUCATION PROGRAMS & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING
August 11, 2021
VIA Zoom
7:00 P.M.
Minutes**

- I. The Chairperson,** Dr. Damary Bonilla, called the Education Programs & Resources Committee meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Secretary Jessica Newberry called the roll.
- II. Board Committee Members Present:** Dr. Damary Bonilla, Rebecca Bear, Jason Gullstrand, Debbie Kulick
- III. School Personnel Present:** George Andrews, Brian Baddick, Brian Borosh, Anglea Byrne, Erin Dreisbach, Erika Huber, Trenee Lurry, Nicole Miller, Jessica Newberry, Heather Piperato, William Riker, Matthew Sadowsky, William Vitulli
- IV. Community Members Present:** Jennifer Floyd, Keleisha Phillip-Stringer
- V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:

Motion was made by Jason Gullstrand to approve the agenda for August 11, 2021 and with members of the Committee reserving the right to add to the agenda and take further action in the best interest of the District. Motion was seconded by Rebecca Bear and carried unanimously, 4-0.

RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMITTEE:

Motion was made by Debbie Kulick to approve the minutes of the July 14, 2021 meeting. Motion was seconded by Jason Gullstrand and carried unanimously, 4-0.

Dr. Vitulli asks about adding an additional item for discussion to the agenda. Motion was made by Jason Gullstrand to add Discovery Education to the discussion. Motion was seconded by Rebecca Bear.

VI. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

a. MOU in regards to Translation Services

Dr. Vitulli begins with an explanation of MotaWord LLC. MotaWord is a web based translation service company based out of New York City. This company was brought to my attention by Janice Rodriguez, she is the ESL teacher at Resica, she participated in a demonstration and thought it was very good. I also was able to have a demonstration from a sales representative. MotaWord is able to translate all documents in any form they are given. They can translate from word documents, Powerpoints, PDF's, videos, etc. They leverage artificial intelligence as well as the services of 21,000 translators across the world. Documents can be done quickly. Some within minutes; others hours. Extensive documents may take a day or more. We go to a website and upload documents. Then put what language you need and it will be translated and sent to your email. Words that we use throughout the year are recorded and put into a bank and the computer removes and translates all those words automatically at no charge and we're only

charged \$.10 a word for anything that hasn't been translated. This is a contracted service and we have a need for it. It is quick and versatile and I see us having a need for this, especially this upcoming year. It is also available in other languages and that charge is about \$.14 a word. Dr. Vitulli continues with an estimated cost of \$5,000 coming from the Title III grant. Dr. Bonilla states she realizes the ones that cost more are not necessarily languages that we have represented in the district, but can you tell us what other languages we may translate as well? Dr. Vitulli states the MotaWord has 97 languages available and that would be up to demand. With a service like this it is easy to get whatever language we need. I don't know what our needs are when it comes to printing but I'll look for guidance from our Principals and teachers to help make that decision. Dr. Bonilla responds, considering the postcard we sent out with the Spanish information, this would be a good opportunity also with the information that we've got back from the communications that we did with Sandy Coakley and others in the community who gave us feedback around the need to better communicate with our families. Ms. Bear thinks Polish would be needed due to having a big Polish population. Dr. Bonilla suggests conducting an assessment with the Principals as well as the DEI committee and figure out who is represented. Ms. Bear asks if there is a fee to enroll? Dr. Vitulli replies there isn't a fee to enroll. If you don't use it there isn't a fee. Mr. Gullstrand asks who would have access to the program? He thinks it sounds like a good program and likes the idea of capping it at \$5,000. Dr. Vitulli believes that it would be beneficial to have one person handling the messaging, it is currently going through Eric Forsyth and we'd want to continue that practice. Ms. Kulick agrees with the program. Dr. Vitulli adds when you submit your documentation a chart comes up and shows you the progress and you can see people from all around the world jumping on your document and watch the progress.

b. DEI Update

Ms. Trenee Lurry states that the DEI Executive Committee is continuing to meet in preparation for the school year. Also, the stamp book club concluded on Monday, August 9 after five weeks. We began on July 12th and met every Monday over a five-week period. There was a great response, many great discussions and courageous conversations took place. The overall consensus was that the participants felt that they gained more ability and confidence to have discussions related to race and felt the book and our discussions enabled them to do that. I also received an update from Janice Rodriguez, who was a book club member, that there were two students that became American Citizens and one more that will be an American citizen within the next few months.

c. Student Assistance Program (SAP)

Ms. Erin Dreisbach begins with an update on the student assistance program. This is a state mandated program that Shae Jones, Coordinator of Social Services for Elementary and myself oversee. This is a systematic team process used to provide school resources to remove barriers to learning and it's designed to assist in identifying concerns which include alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and mental health concerns which can pose a barrier to a student's success. This is confidential, and provides the resources and support to students. It utilizes teams at each building. SAP teams meet weekly to go over new referrals and also to review students from past referrals to see where their progress is and then assess to make sure that student is where they need with resources and if they need additional more intense resources. There is a SAP referral system on each building's website and also a link on the main ESASD website. Anyone can refer a student where they feel that there's concerns and that a student needs some extra support and resources. That includes a parent, teacher, neighbor or coach. On the SAP team we have a district administrator, which is myself and Shae as well as building Principals and Assistant Principals. We also have teachers, counselors, MTSS, nurses, SRO's and also community partners. Carbon Monroe Pike Mental Health and Developmental Services liaison comes to the meetings as well as Pike Drug and Alcohol Commission. A few examples of when to refer a student would be a decline in hygiene or a recent loss of a loved one, bullying, or acting aggressive. If there's concern for a student where you feel that student could use extra

support or resources it's always best to refer the student through the SAP team, they can really look into it and provide services to that student. The services we have here in our district buildings are Tier Two, which is check in check out, Social Emotional Learning groups, counseling, educational groups or supportive groups. For Tier Three we have mentoring, Check and Connect, individual social emotional lessons, individual counseling, and Alternatives to Expulsion. We are waiting on the final total for the 2021 school year, but there is an incline in referrals from 2017/2018 to 2019/2020. Dr. Bonilla says this is a good opportunity for us to see the programs, the resources and the support we are asking about on this committee and I think with the uncertainty that the new school year is bringing again it's good for us to have a visual. I noted that the elementary school referrals went down while the middle and high schools increased. I wonder if that is because students have some emotional circumstances in terms of the change with middle school and then the change with high school and the increased responsibility. Ms. Kulick asks if we take outside agency information. Ms. Dreisbach responds yes, sometimes HIPPA does get involved where you need that release of information, but if you have concerns about a student absolutely make a referral. Ms. Kulick asks who is the contact person for an outside agency? Ms. Dreisbach states that each team has a leader but who it is varies by building. You can call Ms. Dreisbach or the building Principal and we can take that information and give it to where it needs to go. Ms. Kulick states when responding with EMS that the first question should be which school do you go to? Dr. Bonilla asks if there is information that we can share with the community? Ms. Dreisbach says yes, there is information on the Pupil Services page on the ESASD website. There is a link that says SAP, when you click it, it goes to Pupil Services and gives you information and lists all the schools. You can click on the school link and it will take you to the referral page where you can refer online. Ms. Piperato that the referrals are online and they're different by school. She would encourage that talking to somebody at a school is important but the referral form asks some questions that help you think of information that you wouldn't have thought to give. It can be anonymous; anyone can submit a referral. Ms. Bear asks if you identify a student do you have to get the parents' permission to move forward with services? Mrs. Dreisbach responds yes we do need the parents' permission. Ms. Bear continues, what if something is happening at home where the parent might be the cause of the problem and they say no, but we know that there's an issue at home, maybe something that's underlying? Can we still provide the services? Ms. Dreisbach states that if there is a significant concern where a child is at risk, we would have to contact Children and Youth. If it is something where the student is not in danger, however you know something is going on at home, but the parent declines, we have to respect the parents' wishes and provide individual counseling and we can continue to build relationships with that student while in school, we just wouldn't be able to provide some of the services. Ms. Bear asks when we communicate to parents that this is what we want to do. I've heard that it's a negative stigma that they get, are we presenting it the right way? Ms. Dreisbach replies that there is a scripted SAP parent letter that is read when contacting families. It is strength based and a great way to say this is what's going on, it's not a negative thing, and these are all the positive things that can come from this. We can discuss this with the SAP teams this coming year and how we are discussing with parents because it's a touchy topic. Ms. Bear her point is, are we communicating it effectively, looking at all the DEI aspects of the dynamics of the family and what stigmas people place on certain things because of cultural things. There is a letter, but is it really communicating the message properly and effectively to our community? Ms. Piperato states that the SAP program is a mandate from the state. There are some provisions of the services and one of the things that does often accompany it is a very specific, detailed, SAP training. When we went through the training, there is incredible consideration given to the approach that we take with families and making sure they are comfortable and that we're saying this is private and anonymous, to the extent that teachers often don't get to find out what happens. Things may be happening but because they are not privy to that information we really safeguard that and we don't want to put that stigma of other kids saying "oh you're in that group". Dr. Bonilla is pleased with the training component and refreshers. The DEI Lenses is something that we can incorporate as we go along. Some of it isn't about the way it's presented by the team, but really the perception that individuals already have about systems and certain processes. Dr. Bonilla asks how we are talking about SAP in terms of the new school year, letting parents and families know from the beginning? Mr. Baddick

replies that one of the new pieces of information we included this year in the student code of conduct is statements for parents and students about Safe to Say, and we also listed the resources available. We put information about student assistance. A few years ago we updated the Pupil Services web page, we put information on their listing all the agencies we are involved in and who provides what services. During orientation, we have to ensure that our building Principals are saying this is a resource. Ms. Driesbach and Ms. Jones will be creating posters and some other things we can put across the district and other initiatives. We want to make more awareness throughout the Community and our district about mental health awareness and the resources we have. Mr. Baddick continues that he would like to focus on the Social Services and Social workers we have available across the district. Dr. Bonilla states we want to ensure that people know and become familiar with this information. Ms. Bear adds that when Dr. Riker does the back to school video to possibly add what services we have and to make it sound positive, also at orientations. Mr. Baddick confirms that the school counselors attend orientation and present information regarding programs available. Dr. Bonilla suggests having information at Open House and reminders throughout the year for families. Ms. Bear adds that the PTO presidents at buildings can give an overview at PTO meetings. Ms. Kulick adds that we should emphasize how quickly we can respond, the timeline and who gets involved. Mr. Gullstrand talks about his experience with the SAP Program and agrees it is a wonderful program. He thinks providing the online SAP referral form is critical. Dr. Riker adds where the links can be found on the webpage. Dr. Bonilla replies that sharing it with the PTO Leadership as a reminder would be helpful since they spend a lot of time engaging with families. Dr. Vitulli adds that the MTSS handbook will be complete in September/October and this information will be included.

d. YMCA Before/After School Program

Mr. Sadowsky begins with the need at Bushkill for a before and after school program. They decided to contact the YMCA since the district is already using the program at J.M. Hill and East Stroudsburg Elementary Schools. In May 2021 a survey was sent to the families of Bushkill Elementary. There were 23 family responses saying that they are in need of this program. There have also been about 10-15 phone calls over the summer expressing the need for this program. Ms. Nicole Miller, Childcare Director at the YMCA confirms there is a huge need in the Bushkill area due to child care centers closing. Ms. Miller continues with the benefits of providing a before and after school program. They provide academic and enrichment opportunities and also help with homework. They work with peer relations and emotional adjustments. Erika Huber, Asst. Director continues to explain how many students are left home a lot due to lack of options and they want to provide a safe environment for them to continue learning and make bonds with one another. At the YMCA everything they do is related to their core values which are caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. We try to instill these in the kids through our lesson plans and activities. We also take them outside or into the gym to get that physical activity component. The program times are 6:30 am until the start of the school day and then dismissal until 6:30 pm. During delays we provide care until the start of the school day. On school closure days we offer care at the YMCA facility. The YMCA participates in CCIS and EIFC which provides subsidies for parents that need assistance. In addition to that, the YMCA provides scholarships for those that do not qualify for the other subsidies. Dr. Vitulli asks for the anticipated start date upon approval. Ms. Huber replies they are hoping to open by the end of September. It could take up to 30 days from when we submit our licensing and certification which will be submitted on August 17, 2021. Mr. Sadowsky clarifies that due to Bushkill Elementary being in Pike County there are different licensing and certifications that they need to do. Dr. Bonilla asks what the cost is for families. Ms. Huber states it is \$110 per week for both before and after school care. There is a sibling discount. Ms. Kulick asks if they are a YMCA member do they get a discount? Ms. Huber responds that all children in the program are required to have a membership. Dr. Bonilla confirms that families will pay for the membership and program cost. Ms. Huber replies yes. The youth membership fee is \$12 per month. Ms. Kulick asks how much interest there is and has it been published outside of the school? Mr. Sadowsky states that it has only been published in the school and in June there were 23 families, 37 children. There were also families that called over the summer. Ms.

Kulick asks if many of them qualify for subsidy? Ms. Huber replies that 30% of families in the current program receive help paying their child care fees. Ms. Bear adds that the fees quoted are reasonable. Dr. Bonilla replies considering the circumstances that people are facing right now, we cannot determine how reasonable the fees are. We have to be responsible to ensure we're providing a service based on need. Dr. Bonilla asks Mr. Sadowsky when the last time families reached out and if the numbers are still the same. Mr. Sadowsky confirmed that the numbers previously mentioned are accurate and the need will rise with the number of families returning to work. Dr. Vitulli states that we still need to take the steps to get this approved by the Board. We provide the space, similar to Head Start and miscellaneous supplies. The YMCA provides the staff. Dr. Bonilla asks Ms. Miller if she can tell us how many families are using the services in ESE and J.M. Hill schools. Ms. Miller explains that both sites were at max capacity prior to COVID.

e. Algebra-A New Concept

Algebra is one of the state assessed courses. It is not an easy course and a number of students that have had to take algebra a second time gives me an indicator that perhaps there might be a better way to teach this course. I'd like to get teachers together and a math coach and give them the opportunity to take what we've been doing in the district and start over with the idea of teaching this class with a hands-on component or different method using different tools. I'd like to continue to work on a formal proposal requesting hours for three teachers and one math coach, starting with 50 hours to begin to explore algebra and the changes and possibilities of a different style for students and the course. We would still have our traditional algebra just a different way to present the material. Ms. Kulick is asking for the total cost and are there programs currently available? Dr. Vitulli responds it would be Schedule B rate which is \$29.56 per hour with a max number of hours. Dr. Bonilla states one of the areas that emerged as a critical area at the last comprehensive planning meeting was the views of our students in terms of math and the feeling that they could not navigate math and the fear of doing math. How do we engage our students in a way that makes them have fun with math and that helps them understand math from a day to day lenses as opposed to this out of this world subject that they are not interested in.? While the cost is important, I would lean towards saying this is something we have to do, based on test scores that we've received in math before COVID. When we started this committee we had a proposal for an after school math tutoring program that was going to cost a lot of money and set students apart in a way they would maybe get others to point them out. I anticipate that with the challenges of virtual learning that our students have faced this is going to be a subject we need to talk about more. Ms. Bear agrees that we need to find a way to connect better with the students to make math fun. If the content can be made more relatable and understandable students will get it more. Dr. Vitulli states we want students to be more successful and this particular class is where students struggle tremendously. Mr. Gullstrand states it seems as if we want to create a Math committee to deconstruct the way in which algebra is taught. To take what we know works and what we know doesn't work and look at the data from the state to come up with an overall program on how to bring that information to students. He agrees this is a good idea. Dr. Bonilla states that it is similar to what happened with the Social Studies team in terms of looking for a new text. It engages individuals in a way that we hear from different practitioners working in the subject area knowing what works and what doesn't work. We would like more information in terms of cost. Ms. Bear suggested having student involvement where students can work together. Ms. Kulick would like to see more structure to the process. Dr. Bonilla states the general consensus is that this is important and the cost is important. The students are learning in a way that is fun and engaging and that we are preparing them to be able to use Math when they leave our district is the priority.

f. Steam*R Results

Angela Byrne, Coordinator of Federal Programs/Grants, stating that because the planning was so early for Steam*r they made a commitment to be virtual, not knowing what the summer was going to look like. We had 149 students across our 6 Elementary buildings. Enrollment was down slightly from last year where we had 215 students. We did a district wide theme of the Olympics, we felt it was appropriate and we were going to allow our students to make some real world connections. We sent a parent survey to all families that attended this year to get basic feedback about the program. There were 31 responses. The survey showed that every student enjoyed the activities and sessions and their favorite activity was the crafts. The parents also indicated that their child benefited from the program and that they were given quality learning opportunities. Many parents hope that it will be back in person next year. The program was very successful again this year. This program is made possible through combining some of our grants. We use some Title I funding as well as title IV which is specifically earmarked towards STEM. There are also two community partners that supply all of the supplies for that program. They are PP&L and Pocono Mountain United Way with the EITC grant. We had to apply for this several years ago to have an innovative program and they partnered with us. We are the only EITC program in Monroe County. Big organizations, like PP&L in lieu of paying certain corporate taxes can make a donation to the United Way for our program. This year we had \$12,000 in funding from our partners. Mrs. Byrne said the teachers have a passion for what they are doing. We start with a committee, a teacher from each grade level plus six building coordinators as well as a Health/PE and music teachers. There is limited screen time. Students are on their Chromebooks for an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon and in between they are doing the stem challenges. Dr. Bonilla thanks Mrs. Byrne for another successful program and to the partners for the supplies. Ms. Kulick adds it's a phenomenal program and the dedication to it is certainly evident.

g. Discovery Education Program

The district has utilized a streaming service provided by the IU 20 for a number of years, called Discovery Education. I have usage reports showing that it is a highly used program and 50% of this program is paid by the IU, it comes out to be \$.73 a student. This program is used by all the schools and by many of the teachers many different times throughout the school year. It is an inexpensive program and this year there is a sponsor upping our level to DEX. Dr. Bonilla asks where the funds are coming from. Dr. Vitulli replies it is budgeted to come from Curriculum & Instruction however if we can push it to the 20% that's required for ESSERS III that would be the first choice. Mr. Gullstrand loves the software and the content has grown so much. Ms. Kulick thinks it's a valuable tool.

VII. Questions & Comments from Board Committee Members on agenda items

Dr. Bonilla asks Mr. Andrews if he has any questions or comments about the times discussed. Mr. Andrews asked if the YMCA will be down at South? Dr. Vitulli responds that the long term goal of the YMCA is to have a program in every school. Dr. Bonilla adds that it is currently at ESE and J.M. Hill, this proposal is for Bushkill Elementary. Mr. Andrews asks about the new concept for Algebra and asks if that can happen during the monthly meetings that the teachers have. Dr. Vitulli responds that he would like to create that opportunity for a number of individuals to give them free rein and redesign the course. Mr. Andrews suggests we may want business people or maybe a Board member that had some different experiences that are non-traditional. Dr. Bonilla thinks it's a good time for us to think about who serves on these committees and how we approach it because we didn't have external members for the social studies committee. Not the entire process but certain components of information gathering and feedback we could engage external partners or different stakeholders at different levels then go back to the internal committee.

VIII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – LIMITED TO ITEMS OF DISCUSSION

None

IX. PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED TO FINANCE COMMITTEE

- a. Zaner-Bloser-SuperKids-Pioneering agreement- K-2 ELA program that Dr. Bradley with a number of staff members selected. An agreement was made with the company that we will be pioneering this program for a year at no cost at the moment. The idea is that we would like to use this program for one year, should we not see the results we are hoping for we would like them to pick the materials at the end of the school year and take them back. The company agreed. If the data shows reading growth, then we will pay them the amount required by the end of June 2022 which is \$41,459.10 and secure the program for the following 5-6 years. Ms. Kulick asks what is the threshold that we are seeing what we want? Dr. Vitulli responds we will need to define the qualitative data and ask parents and students. We also have Acadience quantitative data that we will review throughout the year. This program will only be used by the classroom teachers that are Pioneering it this school year. We will be able to compare it with our Reading Wonders. Ms. Bear confirms that Superkids is for K-2 students and 3rd-5th grade will continue to use Reading Wonders. Dr. Vitulli responds there is a pioneering program for grades 3-5, he is working with the company for a similar agreement. The investment is about \$900,000.00 over six years, we want to make sure we are seeing that this program is working. Ms. Bear asks how the pioneering teachers are being determined? Mr. Sadowsky explains they started with grade level chairs, they then asked for volunteers within their grade level to join the committee in the search for the program. Since those teachers were so involved and wanted to see it be successful they were chosen to pioneer the program. There are pioneers in each elementary building across the grade levels.
- b. Reading Wonders-approved by Finance Committee. The original invoice was twice the amount however in discussion with the Principals we have evidence that our students aren't using the web based part of Reading Wonders. Therefore, I asked Reading Wonders to remove the student seats because we have a tremendous amount of physical materials in the room and price out the teacher seats for online materials.

X. ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

a. Motion to approve items previously submitted to the Finance Committee & Discovery Education

BY THE RECOMMENDATION COMMITTEE: Dr. Bonilla asks for a motion to move the previously submitted items above from the Finance Committee. Motion was made by Ms. Kulick. Motion was seconded by Mr. Gullstrand and carried unanimously 4-0.

XI. **NEXT MEETING-** Wednesday, September 8th at 7:00 p.m.- Via Zoom

BY THE RECOMMENDATION COMMITTEE:

Motion was made by Ms. Kulick to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Mr. Gullstrand carried unanimously, 4-0

XII. **ADJOURNMENT: 8:25 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Newberry