

To: School Committee
From: Michael Sullivan, Superintendent
Date: August 21, 2016
Re: Report for School Committee meeting of August 23, 2016

1. It will be a pleasure to introduce to you, at Tuesday's meeting, the district's two new assistant principals. Joining Sheffield Elementary School will be Ms. Christine Limoges. Ms. Limoges comes to us from Springfield where she was an elementary teacher in grades 1 and 4 for nine years and then an ELA instructional specialist for three years. Our new secondary level assistant principal will be Mr. Ervin Santiago. Mr. Santiago also comes to us from Springfield public schools where he taught middle school science for three years before being asked to become an administrator. Mr. Santiago has been a middle school assistant principal for six and a half years and was most recently serving as an assistant high school principal at Putnam Tech this past spring semester. We are excited to have these two leaders, each with rich professional experience, well matched to the needs of their new schools.

2. The Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education has announced that his department has signed a five-year contract with Measured Progress of Dover, N.H. to collaborate on the development and administration of the Next-Generation MCAS. Measured Progress, a not-for-profit organization that is the vendor for the existing MCAS, was one of two vendors that responded to DESE's request for responses. Measured Progress' subcontractors will include Pearson Education, the developers of the PARCC exams, which will provide supporting services, primarily related to on-line testing technology. Test schedule specifics for the upcoming year have not yet been released.

3. The Commissioner of Education's office has also announced that six groups have submitted preliminary proposals to open new charter schools, and 12 existing charter schools have asked to expand their enrollment. The Department will decide by mid-September which applicant groups to invite to submit full proposals. The final applications will be due by November 1, 2016, and Commissioner Chester will then decide which finalists to recommend to the Board of Education in February.

In our area, the Pioneer Valley Chinese Emersion School in Hadley, which has an enrollment of 584 students, is proposing to increase its maximum enrollment by an additional 560 students. Approximately 20 students who live in our district attend this school.

4. Mohawk Superintendent, Michael Buoniconti, continues to take the lead in what has become known as the Massachusetts Rural Schools Coalition. Michael has recently released a draft report which area superintendents have provided input and feedback on. The report first explains the difficult and unsustainable situation of rural school districts. The executive summary summarizes the situation by stating, "a combination of declining student enrollment, flat Chapter 70 state education aid, and rising operating costs have resulted in chronic financial and educational crisis in rural Massachusetts." The second part of the report proposes the creation of a new component of the Chapter 70 Education Aid Program called Rural School Aid. In its current draft, the report calls for a tiered system of financial support based upon four criteria: (1) enrollment, (2) density factor,

(3) Chapter 70 support, and (4) per capita income. Qualifying districts would receive between \$1,000 and \$100 per student increases in annual Chapter 70 aid based upon these factors. The proposal is intended to bring broader public attention to this situation and also encourage rural communities to unite in order to gain the legislative support necessary to help solve the problem. If the school committee is interested I can bring information about the particulars of this proposal to you for your study and consideration of support.

5. On Tuesday morning, Business and Operations Director, Joanne Blier; Facilities Director, Jim Huber; and I will visit each school to see how summer work is wrapping up. I may have some particulars to share Tuesday evening.

6. Joanne Blier, will have updated information about the conditions of the middle/high school playing fields to provide in her report Tuesday evening.

7. On Wednesday and Thursday of this week, the elementary team leaders, and secondary curriculum coordinators, along the district administrative team, will participate in a two day training on effective teacher leadership practices and district teacher collaboration goals to be facilitated by UMass Education Professor, Rebecca Woodland. We are very excited about having this opportunity for all of us to develop a common set of expectations, processes, and language for our ramped up work to improve instruction and student performance through teacher collaboration.

8. Attached is an updated list of new teacher hires. Unfortunately, we have had a three recent resignations resulting in vacancies. These positions were posted immediately and we have over 20 applicants each for the Sheffield fourth grade teacher position and the high school physical education and health position. We also have a brand new vacancy at the elementary librarian position. By the time of our meeting Tuesday the fourth grade position is likely to have been filled.

7. School Registered Nurse (RN) and licensed practical nurse (LPN) update: Shortly after being informed that she was to be transferred to the RN vacancy at Sheffield Elementary School, MS/HS Nurse Anne Mastrototaro notified the district of her resignation to take a position at Hopkins Academy. Claire Johnson, has requested to be transferred back to Sheffield Elementary School and we would like to honor this request. This move creates a RN vacancy at the MS/HS as well as an LPN vacancy at that school. Both positions have been posted and Pupil Services Director, Nancy Parlakulas and at least one of the RNs have been reviewing applicants for both vacancies. We believe we already have strong candidates for both positions.

I understand school nurses (RNs) are positions hired by school committees. Given the time of year, I would like to recommend that the school committee allow Nancy to present you with a finalist candidate prior to the next scheduled school committee meeting. Or, if you prefer to have more direct school committee involvement in the hiring process, I would request that a selection committee with school committee representation be selected during this meeting (August 23).

I do not have a finalized LPN job description for your consideration this evening. After meeting with the nurses and the GMEA president it was agreed that the details of the job description should be worked out at the next Unit C contract negotiation session on August 25.