

## Mespa Meeting Notes– October 11, 2023

Dr. Frank Hackett –

School year has gotten to a good start, every year is better, 3<sup>rd</sup> year in this school district. I've been a superintendent, high school and middle school principal, teacher, etc. Started in Maine in a very small rural school. Been here for 12 years, wife is also superintendent of schools. Winchester has a great staff, community, etc. we look into what we can improve but we also need to step back and look into everything that we do that's so great and we do it all at a very low price per student. We spend at the bottom 2/3rds of the state.

Lynch elementary, on budget and on time to open fall 2025. Lynch transferred to the Parkhurst in module units, they did a great job with the modular units. That was a huge lift this summer to get all the kids, staff, and material moved over. We're excited about the school project, working on a strategic plan for the district. One of the initiatives that we've rolled out is a new safety protocol.

Parent summary of a school safety and Immediate Response protocol, it's very familiar and much more clear since 2018 which was the last time there was any significant district training of staff. Our director of finance and operations have been trained in this, principals have some training, the incident management team come together quarterly and each school has a school based IMT (Incident Management Team). It's an opportunity for people to debrief on various issues....stranger in the parking lot, etc. often times they lead to nothing but the conversation of teachers and bringing up issues to the group helps.

There will be an additional early release day for staff training in December, we'll bring in additional police training, and those dates will be announced on October 28<sup>th</sup>. It's a reset for our staff, and as new people come on we'll do a refresher. We'll train staff first, then we'll work with students at a developmental age appropriate way. With staff trained it's always better for instructions to come from the classroom teacher. There's a lot of research on the full lockdown scenario, and not surprisingly we created a lot of harm, increasing anxiety and fear with that type of training.

Because the Muraco building is dated, we've had quirky things happen. Last year right before the start of the school day our CO alarms went off, students are arriving, early Kidsborough program was going on, fire/police presence at the school, we alerted people about what was going on, evacuated, etc. It was amazingly flawless because we've had to practice these glitchy things. The messaging we share with students is we really need to listen to our teachers. We don't want to scare the students either.

You'll see a communication protocol as well, the communication with this protocol is well designed. What I've come to accept is that with live reports from students texting, social media, etc. we're never going to be the first people that people are going to hear from. What we're focusing on is getting the right information when we can so that when we communicate it's accurate and official.

We've applied for a 500k department of homeland security grant which will be applied to updating all schools. Timeline for grant is end of this month. We could use some of the Muraco money and make updates to security system depending on how other projects go.

When you put the sign on the bin for recycling it was helpful, discussed getting a garbage bin outside of Muraco.

By law flag needs to be lit.

Great start to the year, IMT processes, we have quarterly district meetings where police, fire, Winchester hospital are in attendance. Should something happen we have to utilize outside resources. There are so many constituents at that meeting it's so overwhelmingly reassuring. We practice things internally, sometimes letting staff know something is going to happen, sometimes not. In addition to fire drills, we might do a modified shelter in place, or if someone has medical plans we practice that. Some students tell you every detail, and some have really big responses, so we have our mental health providers on alert.

Last year we had a fire for one of our neighbors and the message from Leslie and the Muraco office was amazing, I have heard of a story board that was presented to the kids and that was so helpful. The immediacy was so awesome, and taking care of the kids' social and emotional support.

If a student has seen any out of the ordinary incidents and there are kids around let us know, kids are resilient but they also act in a way that we don't anticipate.

Safety updates. As the winter come as a community, we have to be on top of DPW because we maintain a lot of this ourselves. It's very difficult for them to keep our sidewalks clear, it's the parents that are really spreading a lot of sand on the ice. On those thaw freeze days its just something we do as a community. As part of the safe routes to school we're on a busy bike path so we regularly have bike safety meetings, we have to schedule one of those soon. We've been trying to have more walk to school days, the more we can encourage the kids to walk to school, the less safety issues we have out on the street. We're not going to do grants through safe routes because it seems that it hasn't been the greatest experience because the town had very little control over the project, timeline, etc.. when it becomes a federal project.

**Winchester Safety Coalition Safety committee**, we need people who are really excited for walk to school, meetings, etc.

We have a new bike rack coming, appreciate the new helmet signs, car line volunteers.

Last year we had some safety incidents with busses, where parents weren't stopping for the bus. We had an incident where a driver almost took a kid out because they went around the bus. There are some other strategies such as busses parking diagonally, etc. we work really hard to have kids dropped off on the right side of the street so there's no need to cross.

**Green team updates.** Sneaker drive is over 286 pairs of sneakers, last year we had 144 pairs. It's not a huge fundraiser but it's a huge initiative.

Candy wrapper fundraiser, two weeks before Halloween and two weeks after. It's through the recycling program for Mars.

Compost it going well, we'll be bringing in more parent volunteers after breaks but it sounds like it's going well. Students are so appreciative of the composting initiative.

Forestry is slowly growing and there are invasive trees that need to be trimmed down. Maybe we can do an invasive species clean up day. We have nothing planned besides a sneaker drive in the spring, we had one idea of a clothing swap. It will require a lot of planning but funds a lot, VO and Lynch do a book sale.

The DPW have come to clear the bike path, once the weeds grow there are blind spots. The DPW does maintain it but you need inform them by sending an email.

**Room parents**, we have 1 or 2 parents for each class. Online directory, we have 350 students, it launched today. Now the new parents can sign up and the returning parents don't have to reenter information.

**Authorfest on October 26<sup>th</sup>**, we have 6 authors coming in that day. We need a parent volunteer coordinator and 3-4 parents to help them walk them to the classroom, and help with Authorfest. It's a 2-3 hour commitment.

**Book Fair** is officially here, open next week during conferenced. Kids are always super excited.

**Mamados** artisan bakery, consider re-starting a fundraising.

**4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade mentoring program**. Are any parents interested in sharing about their careers and partner with a student or shadow them, a follow up presentation night. We're interested in restarting it if parents are interested in volunteering.

For example, I may go to whole foods bakery and learn how to frost a cake, and then there's a mentoring night where the mentor and the mentee present what they did and learned. We could do it in reverse, who would like to be a mentor for two hours in November, etc.

Spread the word amongst friends for more volunteers. We can put up all the signs but it's human nature where after a while we need to switch things up for people to pay attention. Not a lot of time commitment, it's down to a science now, really not a lot of work but we need someone to take over.