

Hanover School Committee Meeting Minutes
December 8, 2021
Hybrid Meeting
Hanover High School-Media Center
7:00 PM

Present: Mrs. Leah Miller, Mr. Pete Miraglia, Mrs. Libby Corbo, Mrs. Ryan Hall, and Mrs. Ruth Lynch

Also Present: Matthew Ferron, Debbie St. Ives, Michael Oates, Patricia Smith, Dan Birolini, Jane DeGrenier, Garry Pelletier, Matthew Mattos, Matthew Plummer, Mike Perrone

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM by Mrs. Miller.

Mr. Ferron addressed the community regarding the *Public Comment* period of a School Committee meeting. He explained that a community member can speak on whatever issue they would like. If there are a lot of people who want to speak, the Chair can limit the speaking time and cap the amount of time for public comment. Mr. Ferron also mentioned that the *Parent Petition with Concerns with The ADL Training Manual* is on the agenda. The [petition](#) and the [Peer Training Student Manual](#) are posted on the School Committee website under [Public Meeting Documents](#). He discussed the process when a formal complaint is made regarding the curriculum. The complaint is added to a School Committee Meeting agenda. The complaint then gets referred to a Faculty Review Committee to give recommendations to the Superintendent to review with the School Committee. Due to the holidays, the Petition will not be deliberated on until a meeting late in January to give the Faculty Review Committee time to review and discuss the petition. Mr. Ferron reminded the community that the School Committee and Board are here to listen but there will be no deliberation on Public Comment tonight. He also asked that when speaking to state your name and address.

Mrs. Miller added the meeting tonight will start with Public Comment. She will alternate between in-person and zoom when needed. Public Comment will be held for 30 minutes to continue with the agenda items.

Public Comment:

Public Comment were given by residents Adrianna Mason-47 Fair Acres Drive, Courtney Ceurvels-30 Cushing Hill Road, Mary Gilmartin-179 Dillingham Way, Andrew McLean-34 Meeting Hill Lane, Brian May-10 Howland Park, Carrie Bellerby-120 Old school House Lane, Paige Cleary-164 River Road, and Ed Bratz-52 Brook Circle. These residents expressed their feelings, concerns, support, and non-support of the *Anti-bias Leadership Program* using the Peer Training Student Manual. Please refer to the Hanover Public Schools website for [December 8, 2021](#), School Committee Meeting for more detail.

Approval of Minutes:

November 17, 2021: Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to approve the November 17, 2021; *School Committee Minutes* as written. The motion was moved by Mr. Miraglia and seconded by Mrs. Lynch. The motion carried unanimously.

Report of the Superintendent:

- **Parent Petition: Concern about ADL Peer Training Manual-Presented by Lisa Adams and Cathy Campo:** The [Parent Petition on Curriculum](#) and the [ADL Peer Training Student Manual](#) can be found on the School Committee website under Public Meeting Documents.

- Lisa Adams stated that “the main problem” they have with the Manual is not the leadership course itself, but it is the Manual at the high school level that teaches kids to “police” other students. She continues by reading the below statement:

We stand before you as students, parents, and concerned citizens. The Manual from the ADL teaches how to infringe on our First Amendment Rights. It does not teach us how to learn from our history and become a better society but instead to feel that we cannot be successful because we are either victims or oppressors. Our children should be learning all of our American History and yes, our forefathers were flawed, but they all strived to correct the atrocities of their time. In doing so, making our Country where every man and woman are created equal and that they were endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. Members of the community believe in equality, not racism or exclusion. We believe we are perfect as God made us. We believe that what may appear as a flaw to one, can make us unique and special. We believe in respecting each other's freedoms even if we do not agree. We believe in civil discourse and to shake hands and listen to each other regardless of our stance. We believe in learning the history of our forefathers and our County not removing, it but instead to learn what we have overcome and how not to make the same mistakes. We should learn how our great nation was formed and the good and bad of the men and women who contributed as each person is complex in nature. If you truly want the lesson to be acceptance of diversity, equality, and inclusion then we first must be taught to love ourselves for who we are and accept one another as they are. To lift each other up. To know regardless of what our race, religion, and beliefs and that are we are accountable for our own success. We have the capability to pursue happiness. If we are taught that we cannot be successful due to society being against us or we should feel guilty due to race, then nobody wins. You have successfully made a whole generation feel as they have failed before starting. We all have our crosses to bear or obstacles to overcome. We should be taught to persevere, to not give up, to assist each other in their pursuit, to find our passion, to find our superpower within, to know all of us have the capability and the freedom to pursue our happiness.”

- Ms. Lisa Adams continues by addressing the School Committee with the below statement:

Dear Members of the Hanover School Committee,

We, the undersigned, pursuant to Hanover School Committee Policy File KEC (namely *Public Complaints about the Curriculum or Instructional Materials*), formally request that the pilot curriculum material known as "ADL Peer Training Student Manual" consisting of 312 pages be withdrawn from school use immediately and remain out of use until such time as a review and reevaluation as set forth in this policy KEC has been completed and a report acceptable to the undersigned is provided. While the Manual has many redeeming values, the undersigned find that disturbing and bias concepts are inserted in numerous sections: concepts that are inappropriate for presentation to students. On page 245, systemic racism is defined as grounded in the history of our laws and institutions which were created on a foundation of white supremacy. This and subsequent definitions throughout the Manual are offensive and exhibit, an obvious bias on the part of ADL, calling into question many sections of the manual. Should you require additional examples of Manual content which appear to be outside the realm of students' right to learn and the freedom of teachers to teach, we will provide them upon request. Sincerely, Lisa Rodrigues Adams, Cathy Campo, Kara Dougherty, Laurie Heffron, Julia Leone, and Kellie Puleo.

- Ms. Cathy Campo read the below statement:

Several weeks ago, we heard the ADL was conducting an anti-bullying program in our schools. It sounded harmless until I read the entire Manual. I discovered that among the useful pages, there were many pages on ideas that do not conform to my values nor the values of others. On page 103 of the Manual, it asks our kids to think about what they are discouraged to do because of their identity, gender, race, language, etc. I am a white female,

Italian American, who had to attend every parent/teacher conference with my mother so I could translate for her. I cannot think of one thing I was discouraged to do despite these facts. Is it because I am white? Is that the key? I don't think so because if it was page 103 would state: "Share a time you were discouraged from doing something because of your race." As a matter of fact, on page 147 of this Manual, I find out because I am a woman, I am a marginalized person. This is a false statement. It is what's called by this same Manual "A microaggression against me because it is a slight, indignity, a putdown, and an insult."

I am not marginalized by this and neither is my daughter nor is any other woman in this room. On pages 107 & 108, is explicitly biased when it becomes to religion. As we heard at the November 3rd School Committee meeting, Hanover is so Christian. So what? Should the Christian residents feel bad about that? How do we come together over the bias definitions of gender that this Manual gives? Aren't these definitions its own beliefs system? The definitions given by the ADL are contrary to what my specific religion teaches, which by the way is the same religion as a large group of Hanover residents, including several of you on the School Committee. Are my children expected to embrace the ADL's definition of these terms? Page 108-many cultures define genders as more fluid. What are these many cultures? Can you name just one? How should we answer the example on page 108 which states "Many cultures define gender as more fluid and along a continuum." I ask you members of the School Committee; what are these many cultures? Do you know? Can you name just one? Interestingly, the ADL has not provided one example of these many cultures. Our kids will read this and believe it to be true because it is written in the pages of the book provided to them by the school and their teachers. It does no one any good to comfort them with a lie. This Manual on page 129 tells my white son that he can never experience racism but he can experience individual prejudices and discrimination. Unfortunately, this is a politically left-leaning statement: Black conservatives such as Thomas Soule, Dr. Ben Carson, Condoleezza Rice, and others disagree with this statement. Because the ADL Manual is being used perhaps, we can have a course taught by black conservatives and that way both sides can be heard. They would also give their experience on systemic racism which is different than what this Manual says. Which black voices are we to listen to? Thomas Soule said, "One of the most dangerous trends of our times is making the truth socially unacceptable." I agree. Therefore, let's do good while we still have time. Opponents want to silence us from bringing into light what is in this Manual. It is an absolute malignant distortion of reality. "Moral principles do not depend on majority vote. Wrong is wrong even if everybody is wrong. Right is right even if nobody is right." That last sentence was a quote by the venerable Bishop Fulton Sheen.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Corbo noted that she is going to limit herself to comments to the petition and asked since you invited us to ask for examples of microaggressions that are said to be hidden throughout the Manual. Mrs. Corbo asked if the petitioners have provided all of the examples or are there any others that needed to be added. Ms. Lisa Adams responded that they can provide a written list via email. Mrs. Corbo asked if they would provide in writing the parts of the petition that say; "Disturbing and biased concepts are inserted in numerous sections. Concepts that are inappropriate for presentation to the students?" Ms. Cathy Campo replied no comment until a reevaluation of the book is completed. Mrs. Corbo then followed up with on the petition should you require additional examples of Manual contents which appear to be outside the realm of students' rights to learn and teachers' freedom to teach and wondered if those would be provided. The response was that Ms. Lisa Adams already responded to that question. She also noted that they have a list but it is on one piece of paper with the quotes on it, but that it would be better if the document is emailed to everyone which they will do after the meeting.

Mr. Ferron commented by thanking the petitioners for presenting the Petition. He added that the Policy will be followed and will keep everyone posted on the next steps.

- **District Updates presented by Mr. Matthew Ferron:**
 - The 8th-grade open house is tomorrow at 6:00 PM at the high school. All current 8th-grade students and their parents are invited to come.
 - The program review for our Special Education Program is ongoing. Mr. Oates is meeting with his team. Mr. Ferron, Mrs. St. Ives, Mr. Oates, SEPAC, staff members, and parents of special education students have met with the Program Evaluator. A few more meetings are scheduled. Mr. Oates will give an anticipated budget driver for next year in the Report of Finance Department.
- **COVID Update presented by Mrs. Patricia Smith:**
 - COVID 19 cases have been on the rise for the past month, not only in Hanover but across the State. Mrs. Smith encourages the community to follow the [Hanover COVID-19 Dashboard](#) to stay informed on those numbers. Students are being surveillance tested in school for symptoms and to Test and Stay. The Test and Stay program is important because it allows students who are close contacts to remain in school and be tested every day. The testing program has grown so large we had to move the testing offsite with a drive-thru testing centralized program with our Hanover Fire Department. If there is an inability to utilize the drive-thru testing, there will be some testing at the school. Mrs. Smith reiterated to stay in touch with the school nurse with all questions or concerns.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Corbo asked if the State has expressed concern about the number of cases in the schools or town? Mrs. Smith responded that they are concerned but we are not the only School District with high numbers. The State's main concern is if we are able to continue testing to keep the schools open and at this time. We are able to continue testing.

Mr. Miraglia expressed his gratitude to Mrs. Smith's team and the Town for keeping the schools open which is the goal. He inquired how are the nurses were holding up. Mrs. Smith stated that they will appreciate Mr. Miraglia's inquiry and that it is a heavy lift, but with the support from the Town, the testing will continue so the kids can continue going to school.

Mrs. Hall inquired about when the drive-thru testing will begin. Mrs. Smith noted that it is day two of using the drive-thru and it is being rolled out a little at a time. Going forward if a student is a close contact, the parent will be notified to bring the student to Sylvester for testing. If there is a hardship, we ask they reach out to the school nurses.

Mrs. Lynch commented on Mrs. Smith's response to Mrs. Hall's inquiry that the nurses are appreciated and cannot be thanked enough. Mrs. Lynch has taken advantage of testing at the Fire Department and noted how easy it was to get tested and how quickly the results have come back. She then asked if there was a current vaccination rate at the high school. Mrs. Smith stated it is still at 69% with the student rate at 68.2% fully vaccinated and 71% had at least one dose.

Mrs. Miller asked what the turnaround time was for the results of a PCR test. Mrs. Smith stated responded that typically the turnaround rate is 24 hours, but it is taking longer because of the surge and the holidays.

Mr. Miraglia asked where the numbers are for the other schools. Mrs. Smith responded with the below numbers:

Cedar School-95 students had 1 dose and 22 students had 2 doses.

Center School-154 students had 1 dose and 31 students had 2 doses.

Middle School-268 students had 2 doses and 81 students had 1 dose.

High School-487 students had 2 doses and 20 students had 1 dose.

Mrs. Corbo mentioned that DESE allows the percentage to include staff in the calculation and noticed that those vaccinations were for students. She wanted to know what the percentage of the staff is vaccinated. Mrs. Smith answered by stating that the staff vaccinations are still coming in, so we do not have a full count of the percentage of staff vaccinations. Mrs. Corbo inquired if Mrs. Smith knew when to expect that count and Mrs. Smith replied, "Soon." Mr. Ferron noted that even if every member of the staff at the high school is fully vaccinated, we will still not hit 80%.

Mr. Ferron added that this is the last meeting of the calendar year and the last meeting where our Fire Chief and Police Chief will be officially working for our community. Jeff Blanchard and Larry Sweeney have done a lot for our school district. They have been supportive of everything the School District has done through COVID. They both have served our community and students very well. Mr. Ferron expressed his gratitude towards Jeff Blanchard, Larry Sweeney, and their families.

- **Class Size Update K-12 presented by Mr. Matthew Plummer:** It is projected there will be 15 more students next year than this year. On October 1st, we reported to the Department of Education that we had 2654 students. The [Enrollment and Class Size 2022-2023](#) document can be found in full for review on the School Committee webpage under the public meeting document page.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Corbo noticed the drop-off between grades 8 and 9 and asked if this was because students are going to vocation, private, or charter high schools. Mr. Plummer noted that each year, there is between 10 to 15% of students that do not go from grade 8 to our high school. Last year was an uptick of 24 students going to a vocational school which is higher than in the past.

Mr. Miraglia noted that this is an estimate and asked what kind of things could change? Mr. Plummer responded that it is not expected to change much and each year about 3 or 4 students come back from private schools and a handful of students move into and out of town. The high school has a lower enrollment this year than in the past few years because last year we graduated 217 and only 176 eighth graders came to the high school.

Mrs. Hall noticed that looking at the high school class sizes and with the average class size being 25 and noticed that several English and History classes are at or over that average. She asked the reasons for the overcapacity. Mr. Plummer explained that sometimes it is a combination of courses a student wants to take. We want to keep them in balance as much as possible, but this is a puzzle, we work on all year round. It is a big dilemma but they try not to turn students away.

Report of Finance Department presented by Mr. Michael Perrone:

- **Budget Planning FY '23 – Expected Budget Drivers:**
 - Mr. Perrone is working on building the non-discretion part of the budget and moving all positions to FY '23 which is 95% of the budget. He will bring the updates to the Board. He also added the discretionary part of the budget is being worked on by Mr. Oates and he will discuss this piece.
 - Mr. Oates explained that there are some anticipated increases in the area of Special Education. At this time, we have identified three areas where we anticipate additional staff and resources. The first being an immediate and future need for a district-wide School Psychologist. Secondly, for next year the middle school has a need for an additional separate program as students transition from Center School into the middle school and we are looking into a partnership with New England. Center for Children. Finally, at the high school, we are looking at programming and the potential need for additional staffing for students with language-based learning disabilities.
 - Mr. Ferron added that we have done this process starting with budget 1.0. What we have experienced from COVID now means we have a different set of needs. We have been trying to find staff in all areas. We are adjusting pay for substitute teachers, looking at our support staff salaries, and how competitive we are in the region. We are doing the same amount of work with

the same amount of people and this can only go on for so long. The expectations that we aspire to rise to are not the same. Federal money is confusing and trying to figure out what it is for and when/how can we use it.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Corbo inquired about the ARA funds and if they are required to be requested by the end of the month. Mr. Ferron responded yes; the ARA funds need to be used before the end of the month. Mrs. Corbo also asked if any of these anticipated needs will come in the form of warrant articles at a town meeting and Mr. Ferron responded that there will be a town article put forward for Special Ed Reserve. Mrs. Miller added that it is anticipated that the reserve will be used and Mr. Ferron stated that it is anticipated that we use it plus some more.

Report on Teaching and Learning:

- **Literacy Program Update:** Mrs. St. Ives introduced the Literacy Program team comprised of Christine Clark, Nina Olson, Anastasia Frank, Martha Stamper, Meghan Caiafa, and Ellen Burns.
 - Christine Clarke: The *Science of Reading* is the result of years of peer-reviewed research, from experts in the field, concerning how children learn to read, write, and understand the English language. Our journey began about 3 years ago when we made a concerted effort to align our instructional practices with the principles of the Science of Reading. This work encompasses the model for delivery of instruction as well as the actual content being delivered. The SOR is woven into all of the work that we do, but this year, in particular, we are thrilled to provide ongoing Professional Development in this area for teachers and administrators using a comprehensive course called the Big Dippers. We are also very happy to be training many of our grade 2 and 3 classroom teachers as part of a research study using the Orton-Gillingham approach. Our ongoing work with the SOR has led us to our exciting topic this evening, which is the adoption process for a new literacy program in Hanover.
 - Nina Olson: In researching programs not only did we ensure that the programs we looked at were grounded in the *Science of Reading*, but we also looked at the highest-rated programs using ED reports and DESE's Curate (Curriculum rated by teachers highest from ed reports). We reached out to surrounding towns and high performing districts. We used the DESE map to see what other cities/towns in MA were using. We asked our Professional Literacy Organizations (such as the MASS literacy Support Network for Coaches and building based Leaders for Literacy) and the Assistant Superintendent Lighthouse Group. We reached out to experts in the field including David Kilpatrick and Tim Shanahan. We asked friends that are teachers in other districts what they were using and we even joined some Facebook groups to gather the information that way.
 - Anastasia Franks: After conducting all the research that Nina talked about, we ordered samples of various programs and the companies gave an overview to our Instructional Support Team. From there, we were able to narrow it down based on a list of criteria from research and also feedback from teachers. Some examples of our criteria were DI, decodable texts for K-2, alignment to SOR, a strong writing component, making sure it had supports for our special needs students, and alignment to MA Standards. We looked at a lot of programs. Some examples were from Savvas, Amplify, McGraw Hill, and Great Minds. What we found when we looked closer at each program was that some programs were lacking in differentiated instruction, some programs like Amplify would require us to supplement in a number of areas to address the MA standards fully for certain grades, and some did not have great accessibility for students and were difficult for teachers to use. We learned and grew throughout this process as we educated ourselves in what makes a high-quality core curriculum. We learned that there is no perfect program but we were able to narrow it down to two that were highly rated in Ed Reports and DESE Curate and met our criteria. For k-5; *Wonders* from McGraw Hill and *myView* from Savvas and at our middle school grades 6-8; *StudySync* from McGraw Hill and *myPerspectives* from Savvas.

- Martha Stamper: A lot of research has been done and the progress of this initiative has been shared at all district levels through faculty meetings, PLCs, grade-level meetings, individual meetings, Department Head meetings, and Leadership meetings. Communication is very important especially during an adoption process and that is why there have been many opportunities to update staff on the process. In the meantime, we asked teachers if they wanted to be part of the "Literacy Leadership Team" and if they were interested in piloting or reviewing materials K-8. We received a wonderful response: 44 teachers volunteered to pilot/review including classroom teachers, special education teachers, and EL teachers (33 to pilot and 11 to review).
- Meghan Caiafa: Moving forward in our process, we set up times for Savvas and McGraw Hill to present to the staff and we received complete grade-level materials for everyone to look at (during PLCs, mornings, and some teachers looked at it during prep time). These materials were put on display at each building. We set up a time for Savvas and McGraw Hill companies to train our pilot teachers on each program. This week, we have had ongoing training for our pilot teachers to delve deeper into both programs at Cedar, Center, and Middle School. In our half-day professional development time, teachers have had time to review all materials and reflect on pilot lessons. We have had such a positive response from all teachers and so many have been invested in this process and are excited about a new program.
- Ellen Burns: We then created an adoption evaluation tool for pilot teachers and reviewers to fill out after they have had a chance to evaluate and try out some lessons. We combined the evaluation tools from the iMet (Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool) from Achieve the Core, Amplify, and the Reading League. We took questions that we knew would guide us in our quest to find a program that best supports the needs of our students and staff. The questions are broken out by; Qualities of a Comprehensive Program, Student Accessibility, Writing, and Final Thoughts. Once the survey is complete, we'll analyze and compile the results and present our recommendation to the Administration. We are fully immersed in the process. The teachers are piloting lessons and we are hearing about how it is going in our PLCs and hallways. The conversations around the building are inspiring. The level of enthusiasm is so contagious looking at the materials, delving into them, and understanding them. Everyone is giving feedback from special education teachers, classrooms, ELL, social-emotional components, and our school psychologists. This is truly a collaborative effort with the teachers. We are all so united in our effort to find something amazing and is just the right fit for our Hanover students.

Questions/Comments:

Mrs. Miller asked if the teachers piloted both of them and the presenters responded.

Mrs. St. Ives added that 44 teachers volunteered.

Mrs. Hall asked if the 44 teachers were across all grade levels. Mrs. St. Ives responded by stating they made sure they had teachers at every grade level to review materials and to pilot the materials and let anyone participate who wanted to. She has a list and will share it with anyone who wants to see the list. She noted that there are about 3 for every grade level from grades K to 8.

Other Comments:

Mrs. Corbo reminded the community that Chief Sweeney's retirement party is December 16th at the Council of Aging and echoed Mr. Ferron's earlier comments.

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for January 5, 2021, at 7:00 PM at Hanover High School. Expected agenda items will be: Budget Update, Literacy Program Update; others TBD.

Motion entertained by Mrs. Miller to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 PM. The motion was moved by Mr. Miraglia and seconded by Mrs. Lynch. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Tahnee Warner

Tahnee Warner

Executive Assistant/ Recording Secretary