

**Mansfield School Committee  
Return to Learning Subcommittee  
Minutes for January 12, 2021**

A meeting of the Mansfield School Committee Return to Learning subcommittee was opened and called to order at 8:08am.

**Attendees:** Lauren Scher, Linda Fernando, Teresa Murphy, Michael Connelly, Mary Watkins

**Approval of Minutes**

Nov 10 - approved.

Dec 8 - approved.

**New Business**

• *Virtual Remote Cohort*

- Mary Watkins discussed the virtual remote cohort (VRC) for MHS for the 2021-22 year. This is important to consider now as plans are being made for course offerings. Currently MHS teachers are staffing the VRC. However, MHS is hoping to bring back staff into next year.
  - The VRC has cost \$76K this year, including textbooks, AP classes (not provided by Edgenuity), and cost of teachers, paras, and other staff.
  - Currently, 91 students enrolled in VRC, 4 students pending, with 3-5 requests for cohort changes each week and 66 changes over the year.
  - 6 staff w one additional beginning Feb 1 cover the VRC.
  - Current schedule includes one remote synch class and directed study/support with a teacher; rest is Edgenuity
  - There are multiple platforms of Edgenuity:
    - Edge 1 option is less expensive but requires teachers grading, oral practices, grading essays and grading projects.
    - Edge 2 is a separate platform and provides the AP courses. Have an actual teacher assigned to the courses – can be frequently in communication. One of the problems – you can't modify the curriculum. Have to start the course from the beginning of you transfer in. The VRC is like creating a whole school ground up.
  - If going to have VRC would prefer both platforms for flexibility; would advocate not to have MHS teachers involved (current teachers pulled from teaching pool – had to cancel some classes at the HS to redeploy teachers)
  - Suggestion: keep it focused on students with legitimate health concerns and perhaps add teachers specifically for that cohort; also create a handbook.
  - The VRC is using a lot of administration time in coordinating, including finding a comparable course, discussing with dept chairs, keeping curriculum integrity.
  - Currently the VRC is relatively evenly split across the grade levels ((15 freshman, 17 23 sophomores, about 33 Juniors, 17 seniors).
  - # of teachers who want/need to be virtual next year? This year able to support but next year need to determine reasonable accommodation.
  - Edgenuity had been used in the past for students who needed tutoring if not able to use a teacher (w medical documentation)

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- Lauren: We should think about which students have chosen to be in the VRC, and how best to prepare them to come back to school next year, including social-emotional concerns. What percentage are related to school refusal?
  - Mary: Students in VRC vary substantially. Some have had a history of school refusal. Others are very academically motivated and are advancing through the curriculum quickly. It may be useful to dig into this to get a sense of the subset who had attendance or academic concerns prior to COVID.
  - Teresa: Attendance has been a broader concern this year. The district is working hard to connect with students and get them to engage with school, even in the hybrid.
  - Mike: We will need to determine what aspect of the VRC will remain. We currently don't have the capacity to run it fully in house.
  - Mary: There would need to be at least some level of staff support to implement something like Edgenuity to ensure that students remain on track.
  - Teresa/Mary: Need to get a handle on the reasons why students are in the VRC to get a sense of how many are medically compromised or have family members who are medically compromised to get a better sense of potential numbers for next year.
  - Mike: We should investigate the benefits of different platforms such as Tecca Academy and Edgenuity and the required staff time needed.
- *Structured Learning Time*
    - School administration is collaborating with school-level representatives from the MEA to work through revising the schedules to meet or exceed the new state expectations for structured learning time. These conversations are tailored to the needs of each school.
  - *Staffing / substitute concerns*
    - Three college students will be working as subs over the college break. Some others have put in applications. This will assist during these early weeks in January. Some former subs will be returning back to school. There are also some college students who are graduating soon and will be available.
    - At the high school, there are three dedicated building subs and have been having a much easier time filling slots in any given day and not have to make as much use of the cafeteria.
  - *Other*
    - COVID rates. Although the numbers have been going up, we are still not seeing evidence of in-school transmission.
    - We are currently not planning to apply for the pooled student testing program. This has been discussed with the Mansfield public health officials who advised not going in this direction at this time given staffing constraints. The goal right now is to prioritize vaccinations. The Commissioner has not presented a plan to DESE on how educators will be immunized. They are expecting that this will be rolled out between February and April.
    - Future meeting should discuss plans and benchmarks for phasing back to in-person learning.

**Next meeting date: Feb 9 @ 8:00 am.**

**Meeting adjourned: 9:00 am**