

Classified Rep. Notes September 15, 2020

Melanie Kranz: Opening Comments

Called the meeting to order.

Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer: September's Question of the Month

"Considering COVID-19 delay, what can all stakeholders do to help improve employee retention?" See page 7 for responses.

Millard House, Director of Schools: Comments

Welcome! The first thing I want to say today is thank you, this was a very unusual start to a school year. There was a lot of apprehension and decisions that had to be made for individuals, for employees, for students and for parents. When we do things we try to work in conjunction with the community. I am proud of everyone. CMCSS has about 43% for our students virtual and 57% in person.

Tommy Butler, Safety & Health Director: COVID-19

I can't say how much I appreciate all the hard work that has gone into starting the new school year. When we contact trace a positive case in a school, be confident you were not around other staff members for 15 consecutive minutes within 6 feet. What I just told you is the most important thing in keeping schools open. As of right now, we have 19 positive active cases in the schools. Safety and Health Department team has reviewed 445 cases/ scenarios with school administration and department heads since August 14th.

When we have a confirmed positive the safety & health team working with Joey Smith at the health department make an immediate connection with Principal/Supervisor. We send them the exact forms and walk thru all of steps to get a list of who the close contacts would be. We find out all the classes the student would have been in to form an action plan. Students identified as close contacts are excluded by us for 24 hours, the health department will determine if they can come back after 24 hours or if they were truly close contact and need to be out for 14 days.

All schools can order PPEs from the state. After this next order phase we will have a good supply of PPE. Anytime you have a positive or have a scenario ([CMCSS Return to School/Work Flowchart](#)) make sure you notify your principal/supervisor. We have a document that they must fill out to trigger our response.

Sharing a positive story from your school/location

Free breakfast/lunch was great all summer.

Questions and Rumors

Question: Is there a better way to inform the parents ahead of time about possible/probable issues with technology/internet connections, etc.?

Answers: **Dr. Sean Impeartrice, Chief Academic Officer:** Internet connection is hard to predict. We can't predict who will have difficulties. It's better today than yesterday. The banner on our website will display if there are problems and live assist will let you know too.

Anthony Johnson, Chief Communications Officer: Erin Hedrick uses School Messenger to let people know. The information is also posted on social media.

Question: Stress to the parents the importance of reading the virtual parent information/training that was put out. Maybe offer up some more training for the parents.

Answer: **Dr. Sean Impeartrice, Chief Academic Officer:** Erin Hedrick is currently working on more training.

Question: Advise parents that the nurses hands are tied about sending students home with any symptoms. Nurses are getting yelled at by parents.

Answers: **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** We continue to communicate student health expectations. Nurses should refer parents to Administrators if they have questions or concerns.

Tommy Butler, Safety & Health Director: Will reach out to Anthony Johnson for a future parent communication to include information about why kids are going to be excluded during this timeframe.

Question: Parents need to understand that we (all staff, teachers, everyone) are ALL just as frustrated with the changes as they are.

Answer: **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** We have sent out many messages to the community asking for grace, we know that there are some things we aren't going to be able to resolve immediately, but we are trying. We are in this together. Hopefully the frustrations are fewer and fewer.

Question: It is understood that things are a little confusing and the step increases are being held. But it has been in the paper that the revenue stream has not been hit as hard as first thought, are we going to get the step this fall? If not, will we go up 2 steps next July? Being in the same position and being held a step back will make a difference once retirement is achieved.

Answers: **Millard House, Director of Schools:** Yes, we will review employee salary in January to see if we can make any predictors for the road ahead. We don't know what is ahead with revenue.

Marcia Demorest, Chief Financial Officer: Sales tax is looking better. BEP did decrease by \$2 million. Even though our local looks better, we have to look at the state. BEP is our largest revenue source. We won't do a 2 step but we will look at compensation as a whole. We want to be fiscally responsible and don't want to have to cut positions.

Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer: Retirement is the average of the highest 5 consecutive annual salaries. Market Analysis was cut this year from the budget for 20/21.

Question: Will nurse be moved from a classified employee to a certified employee?

Answer: **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** There have been discussions at the state level regarding nurse salaries. At this time CMCSS will continue to have nurses remain on the classified salary schedule.

Question: Is it true that teachers were given the option to work from home? Do classified staff at schools have that too? Who do we talk to if we don't feel comfortable working and want to work from home?

Answers: **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** Teachers on FFCRA and if the Principal feels they can telework and the teacher request this maybe an option. On a very temporary basis while they are quarantined and on FFCRA. This is to continue the instruction for the students to have that continuity. We do not have subs for virtual teachers. Telework logs are completed by teachers and verified by the Principal. This continuity benefits our students during this challenging time.

Dr. Sean Impeartrice, Chief Academic Officer: Continuity of instruction is important that is why this provision is for teachers. It's in the best interest of the students.

Question: Is a way to have all of the hours show on the time clock between bus driving and custodial? It's a little difficult to keep track and not get overtime. Don't get the KRONOS e-mails from technology, can we get those again?

Answers: **David Holman, Chief Technology Officer:** There really is no way for us to do that. Each time clock is set up per employee per position at that location.

Marcia Demorest, Chief Financial Officer: We will check on the weekly e-mails from Kronos for employees.

Question: Why is it that some employees get recognized for their years of service in 5 year increments but others do not?

Answer: **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** Service awards are based on 5 year increments. Must complete the full year to count. If there is a brake in service it will restart the time. If an employee feels they should have been recognized please send Amanda Smith, Amanda.smith@cmcss.net, an e-mail and she will verify the information we have for date of hire.

Question: Why it that some unfilled positions were going away due to the budget, but yet there are so many new jobs being created downtown?

Answer: **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** There were no unfilled positions taken away. There were new positions we were hoping to be able to afford but were unable to. Technology needed new positions because we added virtual and have 40K computers. A few vacant positions were moved to the virtual program.

Question: With the premium increase on the health insurance, will our step increases be re-considered to help offset that?

Answer: **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** Business Affairs will send a communication that if you were employed by June 30th in a permanent position, you will

get a \$300 bonus on October 8th. This is to help guarantee that no employee hired before June 30th will go backwards with earnings due to medical premium increase.

Question: Why were parents told they have to commit to a semester of online or virtual but we let them flip-flop when they ask to switch? This is causing a headache from transportation to front offices to sizes of classrooms. A deadline should be a deadline, why can't we stick with it and not cater to the parents?

Answer: **Dr. Sean Impeartrice, Chief Academic Officer:** It's not about catering to parents, it's about the students. We are here for students. Communication will be given in a significant amount of time about any changes.

Question: If we are not going to be having lunch at these meetings and no tables to bring our own and eat, can we change them to later in the day?

Answer: **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** Too many obstacles with changing meeting time to include schedules and room reservations, we will keep meeting at 11:30.

Question: Is central office aware of the high levels of stress among the employee groups other than teachers? It seems the focus is always on the certified staff and keeping them happy. Can there be some incentives or rewards for going the extra mile? People are really starting to feel unappreciated.

Answers: **Millard House, Director of Schools:** All employees matter. Wish I could take employees into the room this past March regarding the pay conversations that occurred. Some districts did not continue to pay classified employees who were not working. These were tough decisions but we knew that employees had bills to pay, lives to live and were being required to shelter in place. Even though we moved forward in 2019/2020 with a spending freeze, it was important for us to show our appreciation to our employees. Anytime there is major uncertainty, there are a lot of emotions out there. Listening, learning and focusing our efforts on treating our employees the way they deserve to be treated is always something that we will value. I want each of you to understand that we aim to do what is best on a daily basis for our employees. Please know that you are appreciated and if there are opportunities to do a better job we will do our best to do so. Again, thank you for all you do from the bottom of my heart.

Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer: CO is aware of the stress for all employees. Difficult decisions were made since March 13th, always taking into account employees to include classified. Focused on paying classified even if they were not working from March through May. Decision to have classified return to calendar in August and be paid although students were delayed in returning. WE appreciate and value all employees.

Dr. Sean Impeartrice, Chief Academic Officer: We used stockpile days to allow you to have all your breaks for fall break, spring break, etc. Breaks are important for employees we need to refresh and regroup.

Question: Why are the elementary schools having to take laptops to and from First Aid daily? If the courier is already coming to each location why can't they do this?

Answer: **Dr. Sean Impeartrice, Chief Academic Officer:** We have techs in middle and high but we don't have enough in elementary. Courier can't predict the timelines of getting laptops back. Process was purely for efficiency and urgency, ensuring laptops arrived to First Aid after courier may have completed pick-up from schools.

Question: For students that started after the first day, when are they getting their laptops?

Answer: **David Holman, Chief Technology Officer:** We are working on those every single day.

Question: Custodians are being told different procedures from school to school, nobody seems to be on the same page. The custodians are told to do things one way by their supervisor then another by the Principals. Can we have a lead meeting or zoom to get everyone working together?

Answer: **Kevin Scott, Building Maintenance Manager:** Operations supervise custodians when there is no school in session. Principals supervise when in session. They will work on communications. We will continue to hire as quickly as we can.

Question: Are we going to hire more float custodians to cover those that are out or to help in schools that need extra cleaning due to Covid issues?

Answer: **Kevin Scott, Building Maintenance Manager:** There are float custodian positions that we can't get filled. What is happening is the schools are picking up applicants first and not enough applicants in the pool to cover the float custodian positions.

Question: Where have the water bottles come from?

Anthony Johnson, Chief Communications Officer: Education Foundation provided those to students at each school who don't have access to water.

Question: Can you please clarify for the Sped people who wears the PPE and what is required and what is optional? The COVID trainings that we watched as part of our in-service stated that SpED PreK and regular PreK were required to wear masks, shields, gloves and gowns. When we asked for the supplies, the SpED department downtown said all of that was not required. Please clarify, do we go by the mandatory training or do we go by someone in the SpEd department? We got different answers from every person we asked downtown.

Answer: **Tommy Butler, Safety & Health Director:** Updated policy to say "recommended" rather than required. Updated slides were sent out. Schools should have PPE or Principals can request them. PPE is available for employees for those who want to use them at their school. If they don't have items their Principal/Supervisor can request them. The state has been sending out PPE.

Question: Can the OnSite clinic provide a list of places to get tested for COVID? You tell employees to get tested but provide no insight on where to go. A list would be helpful, especially to those that are new to town.

Answer: **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** The health department at Civitan Park. Every Friday the Principals receive a list of all the testing locations.

Tommy Butler, Safety & Health Director: We do not do Covid testing at the Onsite Clinic as the testing completed by the Health Department is completed at no charge. The rapid tests may be at a charge to individuals and are not as accurate for asymptomatic individuals.

Question: On the PowerSchool withdrawal sheet, can there be a line added to verify the return of the student laptop?

Answer: **David Holman, Chief Technology Officer:** This was recently updated and is on there now.

Question: The policy says we get 4 personal days this year?

Answer: **Marcia Demorest, Chief Financial Officer:** At the end of last year, employees that had all 3 for their personal days they had the option to roll over their days into 3 sick leave days and receive an extra personal day for 20/21 school year. This helped with the budgetary impact of everyone cashing out 1 personal day. The policy has not changed for future years.

Question: If we go virtual (remote) what would happen to the aides?

Answer: **Jeanine Johnson, Chief Human Resources Officer:** The aides would still show up to school to provide support to students virtually in the remote platform.

Question: Since we can't send home emergency cards, when are we going to get emergency cards?

Answer: **Dr. Angela Huff, Chief of Staff:** The following message was sent out to parents on 09/22/2020.

School Administrators,

1. Tonight all students will receive the communication shown below. The same message will go out again each Friday night to those students who haven't verified their emergency card information.

Email and Phone (Voice) Message:

Good evening,

At the beginning of each school year, the emergency contact information for all students must be updated. In the past, this was done by sending a paper form home with the child. Starting this year, the emergency contact information for students will be collected electronically instead.

Please visit <https://parents.cmcss.net> as soon as possible to verify and/or correct the information we have on file for your student. If you encounter trouble with the process, please contact your child's school to verify the student's name, birth date, and your contact information.

Thank you.

September's Question of the Month

Considering COVID-19 delay, what went well as the district started the school year and what can the district do to improve?

Went Well:

- The district had desire to provide all student laptops (access).
- The district had option for Virtual and Traditional, pending on where parents/guardians comfort level may be.
- Considering ALL that the district had to deal with in order to reopen our schools such unprecedented conditions, I believe the district did an excellent job. With so many changes and daily updates everyone has worked very hard and in unity in this trying time to provide a positive experience for all of the children. There's always room for improvement but I believe reopening schools during Covid-19 has been all-in-all very successful. We have great leadership!
- Getting closure info out to parents.
- Students are not charged for breakfast or lunch and children not enrolled can benefit from free meals as well.
- I think what went well was the staff's willing and eagerness to open the schools and have the students attend class in the traditional setting.
- The district was very upfront and open with communications. The consistent updates as new items developed allowed for all stakeholders the ability to access the information needed.
- The thing that went well was the foresight of Technology to get the laptops ordered in time to be here for all students.
- The district has done a wonderful job making decisions and taken in consideration our students, staff and parents. I am very thankful that we were compensated through this most difficult time.
- Liked all the trainings before students started school and felt very informed for the 20/21 school year.

Improvement:

- Parents need the option of "not coming back" (i.e. moving, homeschooling, etc.) vs only two choices of Traditional and Virtual, perhaps even a 4th option of "don't know/need more information".
- It would have been helpful to have "Best Practices" b/c of moving all info to Powerschool before enrollments were complete-were we only to do Face to Face? Was email supporting documents ok? There were snowballing issues because of this decision and I felt that there was little support/forward thinking for this.
- I think a key thing overall is that Administration does not understand the ins/outs of Powerschool and the enrollment process. This is not a bad thing-they have so much to do! While they may get information, they do not know what they should forward to the support team. OR, they are not at their computers to forward things right away. We sometimes starting getting calls before Admin knows there are issues? One possible solution is to send to Registrars, who are a bit more readily at their desktops with key info to the office staff, copying Admin so it can get to the front lines quicker.
- It should not have been the day before we started school to have SchoolsPLP up and running.
- We should not have been trained to use the SchoolsPLP until it was available to us because the training was useless without context.
- The breakdown of communication but do understand the ever-changing matters with COVID-19.
- The COVID flowchart being hard to understand.

- Basically the frustrations like everyone else in the district.
- Have a quicker response to the changes if possible.
- Updating the website, main site still showed “Closed Today” on 8/31. Had several calls from parents asking.
- Transportation – Confusion with parents about whether or not buses will be doing rain routes or cold weather routes. Clarification info to parents.
- One thing that would have help tremendously would have been if Technology worked out issues prior to distributing the laptops.
- Allowing us to send home the emergency cards would be helpful instead of waiting for a new program.
- Answering, responding to, and returning calls from parents.
- With the district transition to utilizing an online platform, the delays in the release of the platform and training has caused CMCSS to be far behind in development and utilization. Something this big in nature requires more than 7 days before school begins to be effectively deployed.
- The number one thing that needs improved is COMMUNICATION! It seems as though the right hand never knows what the left hand is doing these days. One department tells you one thing then the next department completely contradicts that. It’s frustrating when you seek out the correct information but everyone is just passing the buck. The department with the most confusion seems to be the Special Ed department. Sometimes it requires 5 emails to get an answer, or you just give up and guess that you make the correct assumption.