



Minutes, CEO Monthly Public Update, Sept. 20, 2017

CEO Krish Mohip convened the meeting and told the audience at Taft Elementary School about the school district's new Let's Talk feature which allows parents, students, employees and community members to submit questions or concerns about any aspect of the district or its operations. Transportation is improving daily and more improvements are expected soon.

Mohip talked about a new instructional framework being used this year and the additional training provided to teachers. Afterschool begins Sept. 25 and Mohip said he is disappointed in the number of students who have signed up. He reviewed the state report card released Sept. 14, acknowledging that the district remains at an F overall. However, for the first time since the state began assigning letter grades, YCSD earned a B as one of its component grades. That was in the K-3 Literacy score. The district also increased its five-year graduation rate significantly.

Superintendent Joseph Meranto reported that he is handling many of the district's operational necessities with the help of deputy chiefs of operations Jennifer Damico and Denise Vaclav-Danko. The district is in the process of implementing a Raptor system at all its schools that will provide an additional safety measure regarding who can enter school buildings.

During the public comment section of the meeting, a few people spoke. One woman asked who the district's deputy chiefs of transformation are and what their job descriptions are. Others thanked Mohip for the changes he's making to improve the district and said they have confidence in the people Mohip has hired and in his leadership team.

Academic Updates

Timothy Filipovich, chief of accountability and assessments, talked about the assessments being implemented this year by YCSD. Unlike the state assessments that gauge achievement, YCSD's assessments are diagnostic, allowing district personnel to determine how best to instruct individual students. The district is also using Rosetta Stone, an online foreign language program, to allow students to learn Spanish.

Christine Sawicki, chief of teaching and learning, talked about how the district this year will have a "laser focus" on instruction. She also reviewed some of the programs occurring at East and Chaney high schools and McGuffey Elementary School.

Rick Shepas, deputy chief of physical development and athletics, said the athletics program is growing with plans to offer teams at Chaney maybe as early as next school year. The physical development and athletics program is participating in the enrichment portion of YCSD's afterschool program that starts Sept. 25. Shepas also said the department is partnership with several are recreational organizations.

Patrick Lowry, director of strategic initiatives, updated the audience about the vision screenings that are ongoing in the district's elementary schools. The screenings which are in partnership with the United Way of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley, the City of Youngstown Health District and several other companies and organizations continue through the week of Sept. 25. When they're complete, more than 2,600 YCSD students will have received the vision screenings.

Michele McCaughtry, deputy chief of transformation, Youngstown Early College, Rayen Early College Intermediate School and Volney, talked about some of the programs and progress ongoing at the three schools.

REC continues its focus on social-emotional learning and as part of that, students meditate daily after lunch. Volney has started Facebook and Twitter accounts that are gaining followers and the school boasts more welcoming classrooms. A group of YEC alumni is meeting with the school's ninth and 10th graders, offering guidance and mentoring.

Shaheena Khan, deputy chief of transformation, for East Side elementary schools, talked about the community events already conducted at each of her schools. At MLK, for example, Principal Art Scissum had two open houses for families, one for younger students and one for older.

Greg Slemons, chief financial officer, said his office has been exploring changes to insurance and energy companies to generate and bolster savings. Because the Stark Education Partners, a consortium through which YCSD contracts for employee health insurance, won't charge the district for the full premium in November and December, that savings will be passed on to employees.

Lori Kopp, chief of student services, said the district this year has switched to a multi-tiered system of supports for children who need help. The student services department also recently hired a nursing supervisory.

Linda Hoey, chief of family engagement, said the first Parent-Community meeting of the school year is set for Sept. 21 at Wilson. Locations of both the parent-community meetings and the PRIDE meetings will rotate among school buildings this year.

John LaPlante, chief information officer, said the district's one-device-to-one-student initiative is moving forward. Because of an unexpected influx of new students though, the district has to order more devices. LaPlante noted that's a good problem to have. The district also has switched to SchoolMessenger for robocalls and later this year, the plan is to expand that to allow text and email messages too in cases when the parent wants that.

Colleen Murphy-Penk, chief of transportation, said her department has 58 certified drivers who travel nearly 300 routes and 4,300 miles per day. There are still a couple of buses that arrive to school later, but those issues are being addressed. The district will soon introduce another tool, Z-Pass, which will enable parents to know that their children have boarded the school bus.

Cheryl McArthur, deputy chief of human resources, referenced the list of personnel actions attached to the evening's meeting agenda. The list includes hirings, resignations and retirements. She also said that every opening in the school district is posted and may be viewed on the district's website.