

IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE
 Worcester, Massachusetts
 Wednesday, July 22, 2020
 Agenda #24

The School Committee of the Worcester Public Schools met in Open Session at 5:37 p.m. virtually in Room 410 of the Durkin Administration Building on Wednesday, July 22, 2020.

There were present at the Call to Order:

Miss Biancheria, Mrs. Clancey, Mr. Foley,
 Mr. Monfredo and Ms. Novick and Mayor Petty

Ms. McCullough was absent.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. gb #0-236.1 - Administration School Reopening/
update on
 (July 17, 2020)

To consider an update on school reopening.

Mayor Petty began by stating that the purpose of this special meeting was to present a preliminary overview of the plans for the reopening of school. He said there would be a presentation followed by questions and that the meeting was being streamed on Facebook and You Tube.

Brian Allen, Chief Financial and Operations Officer of the Worcester Public Schools provided an analysis regarding facilities and transportation. He outlined the classroom capacities using both the six and three feet social distancing models. Although guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is still unavailable, Mr. Allen presented transportation parameters which included large and mid-size buses along with wheelchair buses.

Dr. Mary Meade-Montaque, Secondary Schools Manager and Dr. Marie Morse, Elementary School Manager both spoke to two return to school models. The first would have students attend school in-person fifty percent of the time, and another that would have them attend one third of the time. The fifty percent model is based on three feet spacing between students and would include two in-person days each week.

The one third model is based on the six feet spacing between students and would include one day of in-person learning per week. Both options allow for the fact that students who need more in-person support, like English language learners and SPED students, would attend in-person school more often than other students. If full remote learning becomes necessary, the hybrid models presented would allow for easier conversion to full remote learning.

Sarah Kyriazis, Instructional Technology and Digital Learning Manager stated that every student will be provided with a device and hotspots, if needed. Chromebooks will be provided to staff including Instructional Assistants.

Robert Pezzella, School Safety Director outlined the protocol for PPE, cleaning and disinfecting. Temperatures will not be taken upon arrival and COVID-19 testing will not be performed. The district will notify the parents and the Department of Public Health if there is a positive case parents should monitor their child's health and employees should be cognizant of any symptoms of COVID-19 and stay home if they are sick.

Superintendent Binienda commented that there will be a meeting with the medical professionals within the next week and stated that a ConnectEd message will go out to parents with instructions how to forward your questions to them. There will be a panel that will be able to answer the questions with the most updated COVID-19 guidance on the virus and how it affects children and adults.

Mayor Petty opened up the meeting to allow attendees to ask questions or provide comments. Some of the questions and concerns put forth by parents, students and employees were:

Questions

1. Are students going to be disciplined if they refuse to wear the masks in school, and if so, what will the protocol be?
2. Can a doctor's note be provided for a student to not wear a mask in school?
3. What is the district going to do to keep the kids safe?

4. Whom can I call when a child is not following the rules regarding masks?
5. Are the doctors that the district getting their input from a group of pediatricians or do we have immunologists for people that are dealing with auto immune issues?
6. Are there infectious disease doctors involved with making the decisions both for Worcester and for DESE?
7. Have the HVAC systems in the school buildings been addressed?
8. How are students categorized in the A, B and C group model?
9. Are students on an IEP automatically in group C?
10. Why is Friday's not a school day?
11. Can students remove their masks at their desk if they are 6 feet apart?
12. Are students going to be taught proper hygiene to help spread of the virus?
13. Why are teachers not having 100% interaction with the students?
14. If a student is sent home sick, who is responsible to take them home?
15. How is the system going to support the teachers, are they going to hire more?
16. Why can't the classroom be live streamed?
17. What will the impact be on the MCAS tests?
18. If one of the models does not work for a student can the parent switch them to the other model?
19. If a student or staff member is tested positive for COVID-19, will the individuals that were in contact with them be quarantined?
20. What has the district done to ask for more funding from the state?

21. When will parents receive information on their child/ren returning to Worcester Technical High School?
22. When will the classes be disinfected?
23. Is the district going to survey all parents to see who wants to keep their child/ren home or who wants to send their child to school full time?
24. What is the timeline for the final plan for students to go back to work?
25. What is the criteria or metric for full remote and the hybrid?
26. Is there something proactive that can be done to periodically check in with students so that they can be transparent to share their concerns?
27. Are parents going to have support for them if they choose to keep their child home?
28. Are the afterschool programs going to be held?
29. How is the district going to protect the bus drivers and how are they going to mandate students to wear their masks on the bus?
30. What will be the teacher/student ratio?
31. Is there going to be lessons for parents to help their child with their classwork?
32. How will parents be notified if someone in their child's school is tested positive?
33. How are the students going to be monitored in the hallways?
34. How do I vote for the hybrid model?
35. Is the system going to receive the SOA money?
36. Is there going to be help for daycare for at risk parents?
37. Is the WRTA going to provide free fair for students.
38. How are teacher specialists going to work remotely?
39. Are there going to be support for the nurses in schools?

40. How is the isolation room going to be set up?
41. How is the system dealing with parents with children starting Kindergarten?
42. How are the social emotional learning needs of the students going to be addressed, particularly the younger grades?
43. Is the School Committee or the School Leadership team ready to deviate from any of the guidelines from DESE if they feel that those guidelines are less than appropriate, for example, K, pre-K and first graders not wearing masks?
44. Would School Committee members be willing to go into a classroom as required by teachers?
45. How do we ensure that students are really participating in the remote learning?
46. Are the PPE materials that were ordered a guaranteed delivery?
47. Are children going to be learning the same materials remotely and online?
48. Who will pay for the COVID-19 test?
49. Are there any other alternative for school than sending my child back to the WPS?
50. Do we know when the notification of the other Chromebook coming out so we can get the second one?
51. Can you detail the steps that you are taking to prepare teachers to not just teach online, but also to deal with adapting to a new system of electronic teaching?
52. Will the teacher for my children possibly change based on whether I chose the remote learning or the hybrid learning?
53. How will electives like music, art and especially gym be taught virtually?
54. Who do we contact when our child has Chromebook issues?

55. Are there any plans to increase textbooks access for upper level students for novels that aren't in the public domain for either a hybrid or the online learning?
56. Who is going to cover a teacher's class is he/she is out sick?
57. What is the teachers schedule going to look like and how are they going to support students that are at home?
58. How are pod classrooms going to be divided?
59. How is absenteeism going to be addressed?
60. What would the breakfasts and lunches be like in school?
61. When will students be able to participate in school sports?
62. What will AP classes look like?
63. Are teachers getting a pay raise?
64. What will the effect of this be on the music, art and gym teachers?

Comments

1. Parents needs to realize that the districts remote learning that happened in the spring was an emergency crisis situation and teachers did the best they could.
2. All teachers should be involved in the decisions of the district regarding the remote and online learning.
3. I don't feel reopening schools is a good idea.
4. I feel that reopening schools will put teachers at risk.
5. I feel that it should be a teacher's choice if they want to return to the School Building.
6. I feel that that students should go back to school full time.

7. Teaching our child/ren the safety procedure regarding COVID-19 should not be the burden of the teachers and staff, it needs to start at home first.
8. I am afraid of sending the child back to school because the other students may not follow the rules.
9. I feel that it is very important that my child has interaction with their teacher every day.
10. I am terrified to send my child back to school who is in life skill classes.
11. I feel that students will have a hard time learning if they keep switching from the hybrid model to the full online learning.
12. I want to state that teachers have been overworked and it will be increasing once the schools either open or a full online model is in place.
13. I am a students and I would not mind having my temperature taken every day before entering into school.
14. I feel that the masked don't work. Therefore, I am not sending my child to school.
15. I would like to see more interaction between my child and the teacher during the week.
16. I am happy to know that parents have a choice between hybrid and remote learning.
17. I think the system is making a mistake by sending children to school. Schools are like a petri-dish.
18. I discussed the decision regarding going back to school with my child and against my wishes they want to go back.
19. The online work and the teachers trying to communicate with the kids one day a week, I don't feel is really enough.
20. I strongly urge you to ultimately choose fully remote until there is a vaccine.

21. I'm much more reassured about the upcoming model because I do know that teachers take it upon themselves to take advantage of a lot of the opportunities that the district was offering for different types of technology immersion.
22. I'm also deeply worried about the health of my colleagues, about students, the parents and grandparents of those students who so often are providing care.
23. I miss my students horribly and I want to get back to school.
24. I really hope that we're not pressing to go back because so many people have this overwhelming desire to be able to have their kids watched so they can earn money.

On a roll call of 6-0-1 (absent Ms. McCullough) it was moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:16 p.m.

Helen A. Friel, Ed.D.
Clerk of the School Committee