

CLERK OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
20 IRVING STREET
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01609

AGENDA #32A

SUPPLEMENTAL

The School Committee will hold a regular meeting:

on: Thursday, September 17, 2020

at: 6:00 p.m. – Executive Session

7:00 p.m. – Regular Session

virtually in: Room 410 in the Durkin Administration Building

ORDER OF BUSINESS

ACTION

- I. CALL TO ORDER – REGULAR MEETING
INVOCATION
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/NATIONAL ANTHEM
- II. ROLL CALL
- III. APPROVAL OF RECORDS NONE
- IV. MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION - NONE
- V. IMMEDIATE ACTION - NONE
- VI. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT – NONE
- VII. COMMUNICATION AND PETITION - NONE
- VIII. REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

The Standing Committee on Governance and Employee Issues met virtually on Monday, September 10, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. in Room 410 of the Durkin Administration Building.

Approve

- IX. PERSONNEL - NONE
- X. GENERAL BUSINESS - NONE

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Committee Members
Laura Clancey, Chairman
John Monfredo, Vice-chairman
Tracy O'Connell-Novick

AGENDA #3
G/EI
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A C T I O N S

The Standing Committee on Governance and Employee Issues met virtually at 4:03 p.m. on Monday, September 14, 2020 at the Durkin Administration Building in Room 410.

There were present: Mr. Monfredo, Ms. Novick and Chairman Clancey

Representing Administration: Ms. Boulais, Dr. O'Neil, Superintendent Binienda and Dr. Friel

gb #0-264 - Ms. Novick/Mrs. Clancey/Ms. McCullough (August 17, 2020)

Consider and redraft as necessary the policies and associated sections of the student handbook considered by "Pandemic Policy Specific for Back to School."

Ms. Novick made the following motions:

Request that the School Calendar and File IC/ICA - School Year/School Calendar of the Policy Manual be amended to read **170 days** not 180 days.

Request that the Administration amend the Immunization Schedule in the Student Handbook on page 4 by adding the influenza vaccine.

On a roll call of 3-0, the motions were approved.

Mrs. Clancey asked the Administration how it plans to take into account the attendance for students during power outages, internet problems and other situations that might render a student unable to log in for their class. She also asked for an update on how attendance will be taken at the elementary and secondary levels on synchronous and asynchronous days.

Superintendent Binienda stated that the Attendance Policy will not change. Attendance will be taken every morning and during every class Monday through Thursday for synchronous remote learning. If a student comes in tardy they will be marked as tardy. If they miss more than half the day, it will be considered an absence. If a student is present for the first two periods, but not the rest of the day that will be considered a dismissal. She also stated that the State guidelines for attendance were very specific as to what the district has to record for both hybrid and remote learning.

Ms. Novick questioned how the student's attendance will be done on Fridays for the asynchronous learning.

Superintendent Binienda stated that the state requires attendance to be taken on Friday which is the asynchronous learning day. Every school will have an assigned teacher to take attendance during the hours between 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. She further stated that if a student has an appointment or is having trouble logging in during the check in-time, the parent or student should notify the Assistant Principal via email or phone of the situation.

Ms. Novick stated that the idea of having every secondary school student on their computer at a specific hour is not in line with the State's intention. She feels that there needs to be a backstop created for students who are having problems with connectivity and that the language for the Attendance Policy in the Student Handbook needs to be redrafted. She suggested the following language for synchronous learning be added to the policy:

- If a student cannot be reached and has not turned in any work, then that student will be marked absent from school.

Superintendent Binienda stated that the State and the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Riley were very clear that attendance has to be taken in every class because "this is a school day, and we ought to take attendance like a regular day." As far as the asynchronous day on Friday, there has to be a set time to take attendance because teachers are involved in common planning and/or staff development. If a student's Wi-Fi goes down, it is the principals and teachers who will handle the situation and they will be very understanding of what's happening with the student during the remote learning time.

Superintendent Binienda stated that the reporting required by the state is very specific on how the system has to record attendance, dismissals and tardiness and the data that is provided back to the state is what the plan was based on.

Mr. Monfredo stated that he feels that the asynchronous learning day is a normal school day and that the Superintendent has made the right decision regarding the time for students to check in for their attendance to be taken. He also stated that there needs to be only one set of rules and that student attendance is very important.

Ms. Novick questioned the need to take attendance at a specific time every morning when the States guidelines may allow for other ways to monitor students like reviewing their work on the Google classroom accounts.

Superintendent Binienda stated that discussions took place with all principals in the system regarding the asynchronous learning day and taking attendance during the morning was the best scenario for everyone involved. The Commissioner stated that a student must be in attendance during the school day to be registered as present. She further stated that the system needs an organized process of doing attendance and believes that the Administration has provided the best option.

Mrs. Clancey stated that she would like to see a clear Attendance Policy in writing with a statement that, when a student is absent during the time the attendance was taken, the student or parent must email the Assistant Principal or the teacher with the reason for their absence.

Ms. Novick voiced her concern regarding the issue of connectivity and every student on the Wi-Fi at the same time. She doesn't think it is an equitable system and is not a good policy. The policy needs to be thoughtful and sensitive to the families that the system serves. She further stated that the hotspots do not have the capacity to sustain Zoom for families with multiple children.

Superintendent Binienda stated that the system needs to have high expectations of the students and attendance is a very important part of that. As far as the backstop, if a student doesn't show up, the teachers will call his/her home to inquire why that student was not in class. Every Monday, the first teacher of the day will be doing a check-in survey and every Thursday, the last teacher of the day will be doing an SEL survey asking how students are doing. She stated that there was a test run done for the hotspots where an individual, who has 4 children in the system, took one home to use. All 4 students were streaming at the same time for a long period of time with no issues.

Mr. Monfredo suggested that the attendance time change from 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. on Fridays and reconvene in a month to evaluate if any more changes that need to be made.

Mrs. Clancey asked the Administration to provide options for students and families to notify the schools if connectivity is lost. She would like to have the current policy of Friday check-in adopted for the start of the remote learning quarter and revisit the policy going further. She would like the item held in the Standing Committee on Governance and Employee Issues for further follow-up of the Attendance Policy.

Ms. Clancey made the following motions:

Request that the Administration draft a proposed Attendance Policy for synchronous and asynchronous remote learning.

Request that the item be held at the Standing Committee level for further review and discussion.

On a roll call of 2-1 (nay Ms. Novick), the motion was approved.

gb #0-272 - Ms. Novick/Mrs. Clancey/Ms. McCullough (August 19, 2020)

To consider proposed policy EBCFA regarding face coverings.

Mrs. Clancey stated that she would like to make two changes to the proposed policy. She believes that students in K-2 should be wearing masks which most have been doing since the pandemic hit.

Mr. Monfredo stated that K-2 students should be required to wear masks.

Superintendent Binienda stated that pre-k – Kindergarten teachers would really like to see all students wearing masks.

Mrs. Clancey made the following motions:

Request that the last line in paragraph two be deleted from the proposed policy EBCFA as follows:

“Exempted from this policy are students in Grade 1 and below.”

Request that the following sentence be added to the first line in paragraph two under the proposed policy EBCFA:

“A face covering that fully covers the nose and mouth must be worn.”

On a roll call of 3-0, the motions were approved.

On a roll call of 3-0, it was moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:10 p.m.