

IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
 Worcester, Massachusetts  
 Thursday, August 6, 2020  
 Agenda #27

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 Thursday August 6, 2020.

There were present at the Call to Order:

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

1. GENERAL BUSINESS

gb #0-245 - Administration  
 (July 28, 2020)

School Reopening/  
 update on

To consider an update on school reopening.

Mayor Petty began by stating that the purpose of this special meeting was to provide an update on the plans for the reopening of schools. He commended the Administration for their effort to get this information out and announced that after the presentation, there would be time for questions from the public.

Superintendent Binienda outlined the three possible learning models as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

- in person learning
- hybrid of in person and remote learning
- continuation of remote learning

These proposed models were the result of staff and parent surveys, guidance from DESE and careful analysis in order to provide for the safety and well-being of students and staff.

Brian Allen, Chief Financial and Operations Officer of the Worcester Public Schools began by providing a brief overview of both the building capacity and transportation analyses using the 6ft social distancing parameters.

Mr. Allen focused on the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) analysis by detailing guidance from DESE, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The recommendation is that schools should work to increase outdoor air ventilation instead of using recirculated air and increase air filtration as much as possible for the ventilation and filtration system. He said that the district will take all classrooms that are in the basement without windows or adequate ventilation out of service until further notice. The district will be working over the next four months to address the following risk reduction strategies:

- increasing outdoor air and improving indoor ventilation
- increasing the efficiency of the HVAC filters and
- using portable air cleaners

He presented information on the ages and types of HVAC systems currently in each building and plans for upgrades and replacements as needed. Dr. Mary Meade-Montaque, Secondary Schools Manager, presented two proposed return to school models and began by outlining the 100% remote model in which students would engage in:

- synchronous learning four days a week in all core content subject, electives, and enrichment
- small group synchronous learning from support teachers according to their needs and
- asynchronous learning one day each week

Sample student and teacher schedules were presented for Groups A, B and C for elementary, middle and high schools.

Dr. Marie Morse, Elementary School Manager explained that in transitioning to the hybrid model, students would be grouped into one of four cohorts with sibling consistency, hardship consideration and bus routes as determining factors.

The first quarter will be 100% remote and the start date for Grades 1-12 will be September 15, 2020. Classes for students in pre-K and kindergarten will begin on September 17, 2020.

Families will be receiving a form to fill out stating whether or not they would be continuing to keep their child/ren home and engaging in 100% remote learning or sending them to school, as outlined in the hybrid model.

Once it is determined which students are choosing which option (full remote or hybrid), then the district can plan accordingly in order to maintain consistent learning.

Robert Pezzella, School Safety Director, closed out the presentation by stating the following:

- Nurses will be in each school.
- Isolation rooms will be monitored by nurses until the family is able to take their child home.
- ALL students in grades 2 through 12 will be required to wear masks.
- Teachers will be provided with a checklist.
- Free testing is available at Worcester Arts Magnet and WTHS.

Mr. Foley opened up the meeting to allow attendees to ask questions which were as follows:

#### Questions

1. How will notification sent out determining which group a child will be in?
2. Why put 8 million dollars into schools which have full or partial HVAC and only 1 million into schools that have no HVAC?
3. How will shop work at WTHS?
4. Will headsets be provided?
5. How and when will textbooks be delivered?
6. Why do we have to make a decision by August 14th if school is going to be remote for 10 weeks?
7. How will students be able to socialize if they are 6ft apart?

8. Who will be liable if a child brings the virus home and the person at home becomes ill?
9. Who decided on the members for the committees?
10. Why were there no nurses on the committees?
11. Why were there no instructional design staff on the committees?
12. Will there be live technical support if issues arise during remote learning?
13. Will students suffer as a result of fewer classes per day?
14. Who makes the final decision on the model?
15. What happens if more families choose the hybrid than can be accommodated?
16. Will IEP meetings be virtual or in person?
17. How will attendance be captured?
18. How can the students be protected in an open school format?
19. Will the teachers be responsible for providing supplies to their students?
20. What is the shop week schedule for WTHS?
21. Why are students only having in person learning one day a week with the hybrid model?
22. Will kindergarten students be issued iPads?
23. Who provides ongoing replenishment of supplies?
24. When will every student have a Chromebook?
25. Can Google Classroom be recorded?
26. Can a family change to hybrid if they chose remote learning on the survey?
27. How do children access their belongings that have been in the school since the Spring?
28. Has anyone looked into alternative spaces in lieu of antiquated schools?
29. Could a kindergarten student meet face to face with their teacher before going remote?
30. What is the plan for a student who was accepted into the Hanover Theater Academy?
31. Will there be a point person working with the YMCA?
32. What about co-ops with WTHS students?
33. Why were there only two teachers on the committee?

34. Will teachers be surveyed on how they feel about going back to school?
35. Will Early College classes be remote?
36. Were there any African-Americans on the committee besides Dr. Meade-Montaque?
37. Were there any students on the committee?
38. What about EBT cards?
39. How does the hybrid model work?
40. When will teachers be receiving their teaching materials and textbooks?
41. Who will assign the COVID Coordinator at each school and how will they be trained?
42. Will the nurse assigned to the Isolation Room be trained?
43. Will there be a separate meeting for Dual Language?
44. Will there be RNs at all schools?
45. Will there be a waiver to sign absolving WPS from liability?
46. Can you guarantee that the HVAC systems will be up to standard in all schools?
47. How feasible would it be to test all teachers?
48. Why do teachers have to have 12 days of in person training?
49. Are child care centers accountable for taking attendance?
50. What if no one is at home to help teach their child?
51. Will my two children be attending in person learning on the same day?
52. Has anyone been following the trends in the other states?
53. How will my child be evaluated for kindergarten?
54. Will the medical group be expanded to include epidemiologists?
55. Has anything been done about the air quality at Columbus Park?
56. How will I know by August 14th if my child's school is going to have proper air quality in order for me to answer the survey?
57. When will class materials be given out?
58. Will my child be evaluated for speech and language?
59. Will preschool be classified as Group C?

60. Will teachers be responsible for Group C if they go remote?
61. Will there be any extracurricular activities?
62. What about MIAA rulings on fall sports?
63. Will there be a hotline for parents who need technical support?
64. How is it that Group C teachers will be safe when others work remotely?
65. How will assessment be formulated throughout the year?
66. Do cafeteria workers have a job during remote learning?
67. Will Instructional Assistants be required to report for school during remote learning?
68. Will children be able to communicate with their friends during school?
69. Why is the School Committee involved with this decision?
70. When will teachers be informed of the results of the HEPA/MERV ratings?
71. Can a parent of a child in Group C choose 100% remote?
72. Can the district guarantee enough PPE?
73. What is the preschool schedule?
74. What are the rules and protocol for bus etiquette?
75. Will there be a meeting for WTHS parents?
76. How can WTHS students learn shop remotely?
77. Will there be plexiglass barriers in all classrooms?
78. What about snow days?
79. What is the plan for substitutes?
80. Is the decision already made to choose this model?
81. How will I be able to take care of my children's school work if I teach in another district?
82. If attendance wasn't counted in the Spring, why is it being counted now?
83. How will attendance be monitored?
84. Will transportation still be available from Worcester to another town?
85. How can I obtain a Student ID for my child?
86. What about vaccines?
87. Is there any guidance from DESE on MCAS, PSATs and SATs?

88. Is there a plan if there is an outbreak?
89. Are there resources available for day care support?
90. Will my child be able to get tested if they choose?
91. Wouldn't it be easier to quarantine if there were "pods" instead of full classrooms?
92. Has anyone looked into what Boston is doing?
93. Are there any options for making up MCAS?
94. Why were students hand selected for the committee?
95. What is the plan if the city experiences internet outages?
96. How can you guarantee teachers won't be near each other?

Mayor Petty thanked the callers and the Administration for an informative meeting. He said that the vote on the model for the reopening of schools will take place at the School Committee meeting to be held at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 13, 2020 and public comments will be welcomed.

On a roll call of 7-0, the meeting was adjourned at 12:03 a.m. on August 7, 2020.

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