

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Approved minutes of the meeting of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee, held Wednesday, August 5, 2020 at 7 p.m. **Via Video Conferencing and Live Streaming**

- Video Conferencing - Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/91126942011>
- Live Streaming - Vimeo (Direct): <https://vimeo.com/443134808>

In attendance were members of the School Committee:

Kenneth J. Laferriere, Chair
Pauline J. Aucoin, Vice Chair
Cathleen Carmignani
Jordan W. Evans
Catherine M. Kabala
Stephanie A. Reed
Jamie L. Terry

Also in attendance were Steven M. Lamarche, Superintendent of Schools, Richard J. Mathieu, Director of Finance and Operations, Brian J. Ackerman, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning; district administrators Lorinda C. Allen, William F. Chaplin Daniel D'Arcangelo, Jennifer A. Desto, Lori A. Pacheco, Dean W. Packard, Kathleen E. Pastore, Christopher E. Starczewski, Andrew Leach, Michael Tucker, Peter Olson, Michael Resener, Kelly True, representatives, Sandra Sullivan, secretary. 196 attendees from Zoom and Vimeo live streaming.

I. Call to Order

The chair called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

II. Moment of Silence

The chair called for an observance of a moment of silence.

III. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of Regular Meeting of Wednesday, July 22, 2020

A motion was made by P. Aucoin, second by C. Kabala to approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting of Wednesday, July 22,2020, and this was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

C. Carmignani - yes
J. Evans - yes
C. Kabala -yes
S. Reed - yes
J. Terry - yes
P. Aucoin - yes
K. Laferriere - yes

IV. Approval of Warrant

All warrants continue to be reviewed and approved electronically.

V. Citizens' Forum

Mrs. Carmignani said she has been contacted by a parent who would like to speak, but will hold this until the question and answer portion of the agenda.

VI. Communications

Members reported they each received an email from Mr. and Mrs. Roach, and Charlton members received a communication from Mrs. Kustigian.

VII. New Business

A. Comprehensive Reopening Plan for the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District

Mr. Lamarche said he is aware that parents in both Dudley and Charlton are currently without power after Tuesday's storm. He said this evening's meeting will be recorded and made available on the district website.

Mr. Lamarche said education is a difficult field, and educator's take their roles seriously; they like to solve problems and this is not solvable for everyone's preferences. The state has charged school districts to present a plan for reopening schools from the Covid-19 incurred shutdown, and file it by Monday, August 10, 2020. There are three options to consider: fully in-person learning, fully remote learning, and a hybrid of the two. The district continues to receive guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Administrators are taking a conservative approach, with the end point being full, in-person learning. The state has experienced an uptick in Covid-19 cases following a decline through July. The governor has mentioned the possibility of returning to Phase II of his reopening plan.

Fully In-Person – health and safety measures, cost increases.

Hybrid model – offers pivot points from remote to full in-person. Features include staggered seating on buses, student cohorts, mid-day dismissal and afternoon, at-home sessions.

Fully Remote learning – expectations will be higher than in the spring with accountability measures, academic rigor, attendance and grading.

Dr. Ackerman explained the instructional strategy, saying a school day cannot be replicated through remote learning. The pacing will be different. There will be shorter increments of instruction, followed by time offline to work with a student group or family member. Instruction and grading are paramount, he said, and we have to reimagine what instruction will look like. An assessment tool – IXL, will be used for math and ELA to give teachers a snapshot of where students are.

Access will be through the G Suite, with each student being provided account to connect with classmates and teachers. Dr. Ackerman said there will be an information session on the G Suite for parents and students prior to the opening of school.

Mr. Lamarche described the work ahead as safety protocol training for staff beginning Aug. 31. Students will need training in how to use masks. Mr. Lamarche will present more details concerning funding and cost factors at the August 26 school committee meeting. The superintendent is meeting with town administrators regarding the CARES funds, and continues to collaborate with health agents in both towns.

The administration continues to rely on information gathered through staff and parent surveys, as well as through the information meeting held via video conferencing on Tuesday, August 4, 2020. Dr. Ackerman responded to 90 of the 2,500 questions regarding instruction, transportation, cohorts, scheduling, social-emotional wellness, process and procedure, and safety.

Administrators recognize that remote learning creates a hard life for parents. To ease this stress, teachers will share a learning plan each week which can be used by parents to schedule work activities, movement breaks, time for direct supervision and independent work. Dr. Ackerman said AP classes will continue. Teachers will be recording lessons from classrooms. There will be full schedule of unified arts, and office hours will be built into a teacher's schedule.

The district has received \$1.1 million in grants to address Covid-related expenses, and the superintendent is working with both towns to share their grants. Under a remote learning scenario, snow days are a thing of the past.

1. Recommendation

10 days for staff training
September 16 start date for students
Masks are mandatory
Regular inspection of HVAC systems

Additional staff such as administrative assistants (for special education coordinators), custodians, nurses, substitutes.

As of August 5, 2020, the DCRSD Administration recommends a phased reopening for all students starting September 16, 2020. The recommendation is to start with remote learning and transition soft openings incrementally by cohort and grade.

September 16, 2020, first day for all students in remote learning model with the exception of Cohort D
October 5, first week for Cohort C. Cohort A and B continue remote learning
October 19, 2020, first hybrid week for Mason Road and Charlton Elementary Cohort A and B – half day.

November 2, 2020, first hybrid week for Heritage School and Dudley Elementary Cohort A and B
November 16, 2020, first hybrid week for all middle and high school students Cohort A and B

Mr. Laferriere opened the floor for questions by the school committee.

Questions ranged from the availability of devices for students, to contact tracing and point of care testing.

Committee members expressed concern for the proposed entry dates of October and November, noting that this is flu season.

Mrs. Terry suggested forming a remote learning subcommittee, which Mr. Lamarche said is work that Dr. Ackerman has already begun.

It was noted that car pool pickups and bus times adjustments will be allowed to accommodate students. Cohorts will return in stages, but not for full days as this would be difficult to process them through lunches and allow for cleaning. Mr. Lamarche noted this is a starting point. Guidance from the state indicates that students in K-5 need to be in school.

Mrs. Carmignani questioned the need for and frequency of use by staff of office hours. She said this time can be better used for time on learning.

Mr. Laferriere noted he prefers a full day hybrid, as he is concerned about keeping kids out of school until October and November.

Mr. Lamarche said the administration is relying on the school committee to give us the direction and we will make it work.

Mr. Lamarche noted the additional funds received for COVID relief could be used for the proposed additional staff. In addition, two Integrated Technology Specialists positions are not being filled following resignations. The additional staff would be one-year positions.

2. Question and Answer Period

Mr. Starczewski moderated questions from the public.

As the hour approached 11 p.m., the chair entertained a motion to waive Policy BE, which requires meetings to end by 11 p.m. This waiver will allow discussion to continue.

This motion was made by J. Terry, second by J. Evans, and approved by unanimous roll call vote.

C. Carmignani - yes

J. Evans - yes

C. Kabala -yes

S. Reed - yes

J. Terry - yes

P. Aucoin - yes

K. Laferriere - yes

The committee reviewed safety measures for custodians as prescribed by DESE. These include wearing PPE and possibly N95 masks.

- AP course labs are built into the schedule, will have to be reimagined
- MCAS – DESE has indicated that we will plan for them moving forward.
- Content is not watered down, state provided standards. Weeding process of the curriculum to touch upon those power standards, for focus areas. Dr. Ackerman said the pacing will change.

Mr. Lamarche said administrators are doing everything to find conservative ways to maximize our resources, and said tonight's recommendation is based on feedback received at the Aug. 4 community forum.

Mr. Chaplin said there has been no state guidance regarding the state of high school sports.

3. School Committee vote

Mrs. Reed asked the committee to delay a vote as there are unanswered questions about safety for staff and students. We will vote and then have to change it in two weeks. Everyone needs stability.

Mr. Laferriere said it is too early to decide, but his choice would be to start with a hybrid model.

Mrs. Reed requested an update on the in-person extended school year program currently running in the district, for which students are allowed in the schools.

Mrs. Terry said we needed to give the community more time to answer questions, and suggested holding an emergency meeting on either Friday or Monday. She suggested holding off on a vote on the Reopening Plan saying that with power outages in both towns, information is not getting out to all parents.

A motion was made by C. Carmignani, second by S. Reed to delay the vote tonight and schedule an emergency meeting on Monday, to reject the reopening plan as proposed this evening, and ask that they look at the hybrid model to include a full day.

Mrs. Terry said she is not in support of the motion and that it is not her intent to to reject the plan brought forth tonight, but to allow the community time to receive answers to their questions.

Mrs. Carmignani agreed this motion needs to be two separate motions. Mrs. Reed withdrew her second, Mrs. Carmignani withdrew her motion.

Mrs. Carmignani made a motion, second by S. Reed to delay the vote this evening, and schedule an emergency school committee meeting on Monday, August 10, 2020, to allow the school committee to review all of the questions asked tonight by parents, and this was approved by a roll call vote of 5-2.

Mrs. Carmignani -yes
Ms. Evans - yes
Mrs. Kabala - no
Mrs. Reed - yes
Mrs. Terry - yes
Mrs. Aucoin - no
Mr. Laferriere – yes

Mrs. Kabala said she is in favor of opening to remote learning for four weeks as this allows more thought and time to study the state of Covid-19 cases, which are currently increasing in the state.

Ms. Evans said there are a number of parents without power and they deserve to have their voice represented at this meeting.

Mrs. Kabala said she has heard from teachers who are concerned about coming to work. We have not addressed this issue. A month is not too long to wait. If nothing else we need to decide to open school on September 16.

B. In-Person School Committee Meeting

Mr. Laferriere requested discussion to let the community know that if, by their vote, students were returning to schools, the school committee would begin holding its meetings in person.

Mrs. Reed said if we are voting on a hybrid for students and staff, the committee we should meet in person, but maintain the video forum to allow parents to ask questions.

Members may choose to maintain their remote participation, however.

VIII. Next Meeting Dates

School Committee Meeting:

Emergency Meeting: Monday, August 10, 2020, 6 p.m. via video conferencing, and live stream.

Regularly Scheduled Meeting: Wednesday, August 26, 2020, via video conferencing and live stream, 7 p.m.

IX. Future Agenda Items: Fiscal Year 2021 budget, Equity Committee Update, Superintendent Feedback.

The superintendent's evaluation process was tabled by the state in view of the pandemic. The committee agreed to wait until September to begin with the superintendent's goals and therefore have something to measure by.

Mr. Lamarche requested the committee consider taking a vote regarding a start date for the 2020-2021 school year, as a guide for the reopening committee's work.

A motion was made by C. Kabala, second by J. Terry to amend the student start date of the 2020-2021 school year to Wednesday, September 16, 2020, and this was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

C. Carmignani - yes
J. Evans - yes
C. Kabala -yes
S. Reed - yes

J. Terry - yes
P. Aucoin - yes
K. Laferriere - yes

Heritage School Principal Kathleen Pastore thanked the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee for its work, and parents who stayed up late tonight. She said she feels blessed to work in the District. She said the district's reputation is built by the parents' trust in us as educational leaders. She thanked the committee for trusting administrators. We are working hard to make this right for everyone and balance it with the best education.

X. Adjourn

A motion was made by S. Reed, second by C. Kabala to adjourn the meeting, and this was approved by unanimous roll call vote at 12:10 a.m.

C. Carmignani -yes
J. Evans -yes
C. Kabala -yes
S. Reed -yes
J. Terry -yes
P. Aucoin -yes
K. Laferriere -yes

Items used for this meeting include: Agenda, August 5, 2020; Minutes of School Committee Meeting of Wednesday, July 22, 2020; 8/2/20 Continued DCRSD Educator Feedback; DCRSD Initial Staff Return Survey v. 1; DCRSD Reopening Educator Feedback Version 3; DCRSD Staff Return Survey Follow-up, v2; DCRSD Reopen slides 8/4/20; DCTA Survey Summary; Parent Request to Share 8/5/20; Presentation 8/5/20.

Respectfully submitted by Sandra Sullivan, Secretary