

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Approved minutes of the meeting of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee held Wednesday, December 9, 2020 at 7 PM via

Live Stream - Vimeo:

<https://vimeo.com/dcrsd>
<https://vimeo.com/486803944>

Video Conferencing - Zoom:

<https://zoom.us/j/98184033389>

Attending remotely 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
Michaela Cluett, Student Representative

Also in attending remotely 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, Kelly True, Peter Olson, Michael Resener, James Scanlon, Michael Tucker, Nicole Heroux; district nurses Marilyn Gerrard, Roberta Johnson, Rachael Goetz, Kareen Powaza, Jill Robichaud, Stephanie Moisan, Christine Harrington; Charlton Board of Health representatives: Kathleen Walker, Jon Sanborn, James Philbrook; School Physician Dr. Rock Jean-Guillaume; Dudley Board of Health representatives Jennifer Cournoyer; Eric Romeo, of Consulting Engineering Services; meeting moderator Richard Earle, over 80 attendees from Zoom and Vimeo live streaming, Sandra Sullivan, secretary.

I. Call to Order

The chair called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Moment of Silence

IV. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of Regular Meeting of Wednesday, November 18, 2020

A motion by C. Kabala, second by C. Carmignani to approve the minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, November 18, 2020, 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

The meeting was paused at 7:08 PM to allow Mrs. Aucoin to establish connection. The meeting resumed at 7:12 PM

V. Approval of Warrant

The following warrants were approved electronically by a majority of members.

Payroll Warrants		Vendor Expense	
1412 D	\$493,889.54	29	\$279,559.61
1412 P	\$1,320,148.26	30	\$629,920.73
Total	\$1,814,037.80	Total	\$909,480.34

VI. Citizens' Forum

No one spoke at this time.

VII. Communications

Members shared feedback and questions they received from the community:

What is the procedure for remote learning on a snow day.

Community members talked about how they did not really mind the remote day, but working parents struggled with the remote day.

Mr. Laferriere said the administration is working on clarifications going forward.

Mr. Lamarche shared two cards were received from the Boys and Girls Cross Country teams thanking the School committee for allowing them to have a season.

Mr. Laferriere shared a communication from district counsel James Cosgrove.

Mrs. Kabala thanked those who were responsible for the recent ride of Santa Claus through the whole town.

Principal Chaplin announced that Shepherd Hill has received another Capital Skills Grant in the amount of \$100,000 to be used for the Biomedical Innovation Pathways program to purchase a virtual dissection table. Last year's grant of \$350,000 was also used for that purpose.

VIII. Student Representative Report – Ms. Michaela M. Cluett

Ms. Cluett reported on the Show Choir's virtual Holiday Spectacular which will be live streamed Saturday at 6 PM.

The Class of 2022 class completed its fundraiser.

The Student Council hosted the Season of Hope, working with three organizations, collecting canned soups, games, cleaning supplies, etc., to donate to the local senior center, shelters and the Mustard Seed in Worcester.

Student Council is also hosting a holiday drive-in movie night December 19.

NHS hosted *12 days 'til Christmas* featuring service projects in the community and in the schools.

The Shepherd Hill student body participated in the educational survey.

IX. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Lamarche expressed his sincere appreciation to the Masons of the Charlton/Brimfield Masonic Angel Fund for their generosity in providing gift cards to Charlton families in need.

Mr. Lamarche noted the surprise weather-related day on Tuesday called for a full day of remote learning rather than what would otherwise have been a two-hour delay. It was not a snow day. Going forward, afternoon preschool and Cohort D will be in school if they can safely be transported after a two-hour delay.

Instructionally, we received great feedback, and noted some areas where improvement is needed.

Mrs. Aucoin asked what is expected of the staff in those instances. Mr. Lamarche said it was slightly different at each building. The administrative team noted the complexities and questions that arose such as combining cohorts, and the work needed to develop plans for big events. We learned we did not have a perfect plan in place.

Mrs. Terry said this was a safety call that needed to be made at the time the information was available. She noted that she has heard feedback that Cohort A students were able to see their teachers for much of the day. We have the ability to make this a great day of learning.

During today's video conference with Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley, the message was to increase live, in-person learning for public school students. Mr. Lamarche noted that neither Dudley-Charlton Regional School District nor any school in the state have not been provided with the resources to overcome the barriers to this plan.

Proposal for what is next – a proposal was made at the last meeting. Mr. Lamarche noted this is not a final plan, nor a directive, or an item presented for a vote. Mr. Lamarche said the in this recent surge of cases, this is not the time to evolve the plan dramatically. Mr. Lamarche said increasing in person learning will be the greatest benefit for all students and we must determine what is the best way to make this plan work.

Mr. Lamarche noted the district has been accepted as one of the 10 districts in the state by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for membership in the Education Resource Strategies Working Group. The charge of this group is to evolve our current reentry model of learning. Mr. Lamarche noted that the district's plan was for reentry, and now it must evolve to the next phase.

The district was also selected by MADESE to participate in the use of Abbott BinaxNOW Covid-19 antigen testing. As part of the application, the district was required to target a population. The district has targeted Shepherd Hill students and staff as well as all Cohort D students and staff. Student participation requires parental consent. There will be more information forthcoming.

X. New Business

A. SHRHS Winter Sports – Athletic Director James Scanlon

Mr. Scanlon expressed his gratitude and pride in the boys and girls Cross Country teams, who also raised funds to give gifts to all staff before Thanksgiving. It was a demonstration of leadership and character.

Mr. Scanlon reviewed the fall season, which, despite the lack of benchmarks, was a success. Looking to winter, there is no way to eliminate risk, but the charge is to utilize the latest information available and come up with strategies. Basketball is the only sport approved at this point with modifications and restrictions as outlined by the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association. The season for boys' and girls' basketball will begin January 4 and run through end of February. No spectators will be allowed; however, Mr. Scanlon will provide a live stream option on the website.

B. SHRHS Winter Show Choir – Principal William Chaplin
Members enjoyed two videos of the Show Choir performing holiday songs.

C. Report of the Director of Finance and Operations – Richard Mathieu
a. Fiscal Year 2021

Mr. Mathieu reported the FY 21 budget has passed the legislature's Conference Committee, but he is not aware that the governor has signed the budget. Included in this budget is COVID-19 relief grants of \$25 per pupil to support ongoing operations. There are restrictions and targets regarding the use of this money. Mr. Mathieu noted the federal government has not stepped in with promised funding. The state grants will provide some assistance beyond December 30, which is when the CARES Act monies run out.

b. Donations

Mr. Mathieu presented the following donation for the committee's acceptance:
To Charlton Elementary School from Planet Aid - \$75.50.

A motion by P. Aucoin, second by C. Kabala to accept the donation from Planet Aid in the amount of \$75.50 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

c. Update HVAC systems and planning

Mr. Mathieu said work continues on the HVAC systems at all schools except Heritage School, and is slated for completion by the end of December. The delivery of MERV 13 filters has been delayed.

Eric Romeo of Consulting Engineering Services is in attendance this evening to highlight the work done so far and to explain what needs to be done at Heritage School through bipolar ionization units. Mr. Romeo noted these improvements work in tandem with mitigating measures such as hand washing, social distancing. One of the best ways to clean the air is to bring in air from the outdoors. Naturally occurring ions break down viruses. These devices will be installed in the ductwork at Heritage School. HEPA filters in each classroom will provide four air changes per hour which when combined with the ionization devices, will clean the air. This solution is also within the budget.

Mr. Mathieu said he is waiting to hear about the actual costs, but is budgeted at \$200,000 for the work at Heritage School. The cost for the other schools is approximately \$600,000 range. These totals are far below the original proposal of the \$1.6 million project at Heritage School.

Mr. Romeo said the system will require maintenance but there should be no need to upgrade this system until a major renovation can replace it.

Shepherd Hill is still undergoing testing and balancing. There are no final cost estimates at this point.

D. Report of the Curriculum Subcommittee – Cathleen Carmignani/Jamie Terry

Mrs. Terry and Mrs. Carmignani reported on the subcommittee meeting of Monday, November 30, during which they discussed with Dr. Ackerman such topics as the professional development offered to families in the G-Suite platform. These sessions were well attended and Mrs. Carmignani has requested these sessions be loaded onto the district website for future reference. The committee reviewed the challenges and benefits of live stream instruction, and the piloting of this effort at the high school and middle schools. The district continues to implement the reading grant with the input of principals and reading specialists.

The subcommittee discussed the IXL assessment tool, and whether is it discouraging to students. The parent who attended the meeting asked the subcommittee members to urge the committee to begin evolving the current hybrid learning model, and to use Wednesday as an instruction day.

Mrs. Carmignani had expressed concern that the recent survey did not adequately represent what the school committee needed to know to be able to vote. The subcommittee learned then about the town hall meetings that are being held this week with good attendance.

Mrs. Carmignani expressed concern about the committee makeup, and that it should include teachers and community members. Mr. Lamarche said this is a subcommittee of the school committee and is a public meeting which anyone can attend. He was not aware we were making up membership for all subcommittees.

The subcommittee will set a meeting date in January.

E. Update School Year 20/21

a. DCRSD School Nurses/Boards of Health – Nurse Coordinator
Marilyn Gerrard

Mrs. Gerrard said the nurses recently met with the Charlton and Dudley Boards of Health and school physician Dr. Rock Jean-Guillaume to discuss full in person learning. This group opposes full in person learning as we cannot maintain a safe 6' distance. Mrs. Gerrard stated the change to 3' is not supported by scientific research and impacts adult health. The group cited the lack of safe distance on buses, and their duty to protect students, staff and the community from this highly contagious disease.

Mrs. Gerrard stated to date, 535 students have been quarantined, 28 students have tested positive. Among staff 104 have been quarantined, with 12 positive cases. Mrs. Gerrard said staff and students are quarantined based on travel, symptoms or exposure. There have been 40 positive cases in the schools since we started tracking. Mrs. Gerrard said several medium sized families have been particularly affected.

Mrs. Carmignani said this is a high number of staff quarantines. Mr. Lamarche said we have been managing the need for substitutes. There are times when building principals have filled in roles when needed. The district hired full time building based substitutes with CARES Act funds, which expires December 30.

Students need to make up work, get in a remote classroom. Extra efforts are made to give the students when they need during absences or quarantines.

Mr. Lamarche said all constituencies will be consulted on a plan going forward.

Ms. Cournoyer said the board of health would like to be a part of the conversation and offer concerns for the town and to stop the spread. Mrs. Walker agreed, expressing concern about the difference between 6' and 3'. Both communities are in the Red zone due to the number of cases, which continue to rise.

Mr. Laferriere reiterated that this decision should not have to be made the local level, but by the governor. The burden weighs heavily on all of us. There will be no vote this evening as it is irresponsible to do anything during this surge.

Dr. Rock said there is no playbook for this. We all want schools to be open but we want to be safe.

b. Transition recommendation – Steven Lamarche

Mr. Lamarche said he has enjoyed working with both boards of health since last March. He has attending nurses meeting with health directors, and open lines of communication have been established and we support what they are saying this evening. We know this is not the time for change, but the state is requiring the district to develop a transition plan. Mr. Lamarche said there is no recommendation this evening to change our current model; however, the numbers indicate any shift would be toward fully remote.

Mrs. Terry asked who will make this decision, and if school committee, would there be an emergency school committee meeting.

Mr. Lamarche said he will take the direction of the school committee. Mr. Laferriere and Mrs. Aucoin said it should be left to the administration.

Mrs. Terry said she agrees, but that the school committee should set a metric or a threshold.

The district must find a pathway forward from its reentry model to increase in-person synchronous learning while decreasing asynchronous learning and to identify systems and practices that would lead to this increase. The reentry model provides critical components in establishing a connection between the student and the teacher of record four school days per week, as well as professional development. It built longevity through surges.

Mr. Lamarche said more time is need to hear from constituents. We want to do what is best for our community. Town Hall-style meetings are a way to gather this information.

The district had initially suggested a transition date of January 4. Mr. Lamarche said this not realistic and suggested the earliest tentative date to roll out a new phase would be January 19.

Mrs. Terry said another consideration should be looked at such as evolving the Wednesday into another half day of learning for students. There is little data on the effects of 3' distance because not everyone is employing that model. We should not be pressured by DESE to move to that distance as there are other options.

Mr. Lamarche said administrators are looking for feedback, and if the committee says revamp Wednesdays to take a vote and we will do it.

Mrs. Carmignani suggested looking for data from Connecticut schools who have employed the 3' distance. She said we need to increase students' exposure to their teacher even if it means teachers lose a half prep day.

Mrs. Terry said if we were to adopt the three feet, there will be an increase in the number of those quarantined, disrupting the students and families as well.

Dr. Rock said the prevalent data used is based on prior virulent strains causing illness. Those studies did not include the use of a mask at 6'. We are more protected with a mask. He said in terms of moving to 3', he would not entertain that until the third or fourth week in January. We don't want to be the first to do this. We need to study it. He would recommend wearing a face shield over the mask, or installing plexiglass within 3'.

Mr. Lamarche said there is a profound difference in students' health and well-being during this 10-month pandemic. There is research about the impact this is having. He said some students are striving but it is not the norm if we look at the whole child. We are not seeing the whole child. He said students are being overly compliant with mandated mitigating measures, but this has created passive non-participatory students.

Mr. Laferriere said prior to the pandemic, there was great focus on the social emotional well-being of our students, and this has gotten lost. He said he has great concerns about their mental health and what this generation of students has lost.

c. Preliminary outreach results – Dr. Brian Ackerman

Dr. Ackerman shared the results of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District Educational Environment Survey. He said this is a comprehensive data set that looked at four cross sections of the community: caregivers and families, Massachusetts School Districts, high school and middle school students, and staff. Over 2600 data points were read and reviewed. The survey closed Sunday after running from November 20-December 1, 2020.

The community results featured 1,200 responses representing all the schools and families, including those who had students in more than one school.

Move to five half day hybrid with not less than 3' distance - 800, or more than 2/3 were in favor.

Move to fully remote – 60% no, 20% yes

Move fully remote families to half day hybrid, less than 3' - 89 yes, 172 no

Transportation, 6' on buses in person and without resources, bringing child to and from school – 50% yes, 41% no.

Feedback from other districts in Mass: 100 responses.

Regarding level of spacing allowed in their district - 87.4% said not less than 6'

10% allowed of 3-4'

2% respondents are in remote learning

Regarding documented COVID-19 spread - 92% indicated none; under 8% indicated yes

Cases within 6' = no

Cases within 3-4' = 2 cases of spread

Student responses -700 responses, more seniors
90% respondents are in the Hybrid model –
In the 3'vs 6', 2/3 feel ok with less than 3'
1/3 are not in favor
Progressing toward half day hybrid: 61% support, 42% no
Remote session in afternoon - 51% yes, 50% no

Students responses indicate they definitely want to be back in school, but most support half day hybrid.

500 responses from middle school students:
In person, 5 days, - 62% yes, 40% no
Theme is they want more time with teachers.
All remote students offered some positive feedback, suggesting the idea of forming study groups.

Staff respondents – 200 responses
Combine cohorts A and B for 5-day hybrid, less than 6' – 60% no
Staff is not as accepting of evolving from current plan, prefer the 6' of social distance.
Livestreaming received positive feedback

Dr. Ackerman said we need more data as we have collected a baseline, and have been thorough in seeking feedback to drive the processes going forward.

Teachers and administrators are purposefully reaching out to students as so many are struggling.

Miss Evans asked if students are taking advantage of the offers of help. This will be investigated.

F. MASC Report – Jordan Evans

This item was tabled to the January 13, 2021 meeting.

XI. Next Meeting Dates

Special School Committee Meeting: Wednesday, January 6, 2021 7:00 PM to discuss transition recommendations only.

School Committee Meeting: Wednesday, January 13, 2021 7:00 PM

Budget and Finance Subcommittee: Tuesday, December 15, 2020, 4:30 PM

Policy Review Subcommittee: TBD

Curriculum Subcommittee for Teaching and Learning: TBD

Capital Outlay/Safety Subcommittee: Friday, January 8, 2021, 10:00 AM

A. **Future Agenda Items:** Update HVAC, Update Fiscal Year 2021, Update Equity Committee, Update Plan Transitions, Update Student Services Department, Superintendent's Award of Academic Excellence (January), SHRHS Principal's Award (January), Fiscal Year 2022 (January) MASC Report – Jordan Evans

XII. Adjourn

A motion by C. Kabala, second by J. Evans to adjourn the meeting was approved at 10:59 PM 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

Items used for this meeting include:

Agenda 12/9/20	Minutes of Meeting 11/18/20	Superintendent's Report 12/9/20
Transition Report	Athletic Director Fall Summary/Winter Preview	Opposition to full in-person learning
DFO Report 12/3/20	AtmosAir Coronavirus Test Results	AtmosAir Summary and Technical Guide
Cleaning the air using AtmosAir	Report on AtmosAir Inactivation	NYU Times Opinion

Respectfully submitted by Sandra Sullivan, Secretary