

Re-Entry Committee Virtual Meeting Minutes
July 1, 2020
3:30 p.m.

Committee Members:

Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue	Anne Uberti	Dr. Frank Purcaro
Ron Bienkowski	Chris Geissler	Dr. Kathy Gombos
Dr. Matt Correia	Dr. Kim Longobucco	Dr. Michelle Ku
John Vouros	Rebekah Harriman-Stites	Tom Kuroski
Marlene Bucci	Erin Ardino	Anne Dalton
Karen Powell	Mark Pompano	Matt Memoli
Suzanne Hurley	Bob Gerbert	Jack Vichiola
Brett Nichols	Kim Shapiro	Lisa Kilcourse
Donna Culbert	Suzanne D'Eramo	Carmella Amodeo
Michelle Hiscavich	Kristen Bonacci	Allyson Story
Deb Petersen	Sharon Vetrano	Jen Hoag
Kerri Sommer	Alan Colangelo	Tom Pescarmona
Kierstin Raccio	Andrew SanAngelo	Tracy Galassi
Induk Song	Meredith Walsky	Kristin Larson

Dr. Rodrigue opened the meeting at 3:32 p.m. and spoke about the Governor's Plan. This is a comprehensive plan with required mandates which includes facemask. Parents need to know there are parameters that can't be changed. Social distancing is not the 6 feet but maximizing it to the best of our ability. The ESY and summer school guidelines were very specific. This plan follows the trends and current health care conditions. They want to be sure all students are engaged and not socially isolated and were very clear on special education and IDEA students. Another important item was not mixing grade levels. We also need to be ready for parents who are not comfortable sending students back so there will be some working remotely. Contingencies have to be in place based on local and state health conditions.

Behind the scenes we are exploring additional types of devices we can utilize such as desk shields. We have a deadline of July 24 for the semblance of a plan for the State but it's not for approval at that time so it can be changed. Everything needs to be clear and precise for each group because we now need to consolidate, prioritize and put this into clear language.

Pay close attention to the reports' priorities to be sure it is equitable for all students. We will have to prioritize data we get from parents especially if they don't want students to attend school.

Instruction and Technology Subcommittee:

Dr. Purcaro reported that this group collected feedback on the greatest concerns shared by parents, students and staff these past months and what needs to be strengthened in the next plan. Survey results have been reviewed to help set priorities as group. We identified five non-negotiables and are now coming together with action steps such as more direct instruction and more live instruction as well as a more structured and scheduled day .

Tracy Galassi referred to the survey and asked who could return including staff members. If a large number of families were not sending students back, how will distance learning work? That survey is important to determining next steps.

Dr. Rodrigue would be talking to unions about students coming back to school. We have been flexible with employees here and in the town office and working case-by-case with employees.

Facilities Subcommittee:

Mr. Geissler reported they met last week and discussed emerging ideas and our responsibilities. Bob Gerbert gave an update on HVAC, supplies and PPE as well as summer school cleaning protocols. Tom Kuroski shared the facilities section of the AFT report. They also talked about school signage and handwashing, as well as dismissal. There were questions about storage space with desks, EdAdvance, hand sanitizing stations, volunteers, class celebrations, and field trips.

Mr. Vouros asked if the committee talked about the number of custodial staff necessary to keep everything constantly clean and sanitized.

Mr. Geissler's committee reviewed that and discussed shifts for custodians and possibly moving someone to the day shift.

Mr. Kuroski noted that questions regarding health and safety measures came out of the report. We have a heat problem in some of our buildings and teachers are concerned about conditions in their buildings where temperatures can exceed 90 degrees in the middle school, Hawley and Middle Gate. Wearing masks is another issue. We have to look at bringing people into the buildings with high temperatures.

Dr. Rodrigue said we know we aren't getting HVAC in those buildings by September so we have to decide what to do if the buildings are hot. We will look at other buildings that are air conditioned. Mr. Gerbert looked at special filters for the buildings with air conditioning.

School Operations:

Dr. Longobucco's group came up with 10 focus areas and developed questions and concerns. One is about transportation and asking parents if they were sending their children on a bus. They also talked about the possibility of having assigned seats. Building capacity is another focus area and Mr. Gerbert gave us the space needed with the number of students. They spoke about how to handle the situation where a staff member's child attends school in another district where a child tested positive.

Mr. Stango said they discussed lunch in the schools and who would monitor that time. There will be no open containers and there will be a need for more workers depending on how quickly lunch can get to the rooms.

Mr. Memoli spoke about physical education classes and arrivals and dismissals taking a longer period of time. Also discussed were the one-on-one paras.

Mr. Kuroski said that regarding the CIAC stand, they have a tiered level of participation of how sports will be offered to students. He asked if there was talk about reintroducing full contact sports in our district and the potential for cross-contamination.

Dr. Longobucco said the tiered level is if we go back to school with sports. There is some talk about regional competitions between schools closer to us. They haven't planned for fall sports yet.

Mr. Memoli said CIAC is providing the watered down version. They approved basic conditioning workouts with 10 or less students. The fall situation is fluid but may change.

Mr. Vouros asked if there was any mention about monitors on buses with K-6 students.

Dr. Longobucco said that was not in the new regulations.

Mr. Vouros wants it to be brought up for bus protocol and recommended having bus monitors.

Wellness Committee:

Mrs. Ku reported this group has been looking at the effectiveness of mitigation strategies. Transportation with monitors was discussed. They haven't worked on contingency planning yet. They have to look at cases in the community and the expectations in dealing with that. We discussed ventilation and building checks before opening including ventilation, the touch list including doorknobs, bathrooms, hand sanitizers, water fountains, and how the cafeterias would work. How would the School-Based Health Center be addressed as well as those having signs of illness? There was also talk about providing thermometers to parents.

Mr. Kuroski met with AFT leaders and asked parents to respond under what circumstance they would they have their child return to school. 30% said no return until there is a vaccine. 50% wants students back regardless. It would be beneficial starting with a hybrid plan. Another piece was having a person in the school being a COVID liaison which would be an additional responsibility for an administrator or another position. He asked if there been any consideration for a testing program to speed us in the process of getting tested and to consider the quality of our PPE.

Mrs. Ku said the liaison piece will be up to the Superintendent.

Dr. Rodrigue stated we are still discussing this position for a health-related liaison. We need to be ready for all facets of the change and be able to move in and out of situations.

Social/Emotional Committee:

Dr. Gombos said our job is to communicate an optimism and hope and provide help socially and emotionally. Some students have a hard transition to school so we need to know in August who needs help. We will provide guidance on the lessons that have to be done K-12 including conversations on the virus, PPE, and dealing with anxiety as well as how to mitigate the staff and family stress.

Governance Committee:

Dr. Correia reported that their piece is the introduction of the plan which has to provide goals and be concise as possible. It will touch on the competence and trust piece for parents and let them know we are prepared for the fall. We have to preserve the health and wellbeing of students and will preserve the academics but provide flexibility. Parents need to look at this and know we have carefully considered looking at what the schools will look like next year.

Dr. Rodrigue felt the communication piece is critical and the plan will be multifaceted with a possible open forum which will build parents a comfort level. Education has moved to new ways of teaching, blended learning, and digital outreach.

Mr. Kuroski said because there are huge overlaps with Mrs. Ku's and Mr. Geissler's groups it would be good to bring us together instead of having two small groups.

Dr. Rodrigue said there are no restrictions reaching out to other groups. We need to have people who will take the groups work and put it together.

Tracy Galassi said we talked about building the bridge communicating with parents. Some are not familiar with google classrooms. We need a conversation on how to educate parents with this.

Dr. Rodrigue felt that was a great point and Mrs. Uberti and Dr. Purcaro would look at the digital components. Parents have to be a big part of that. We need to make sure everything is in place the right way along with training.

Mr. Kuroski said teachers with young children who don't live in Newtown are concerned about the plan we develop compared with their town's plan. There might be difficult situations including their availability to address their own children's needs.

Dr. Rodrigue said that has come up in the Superintendent's group conversations. This is critically important and parents have to have a contingency plans in place.
The meeting ended 4:55 p.m.