



**QUABBIN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
School Committee Minutes
Tuesday, March 16, 2021
Educational Support Center**

This meeting was held remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, Section 2 utilizing Zoom Technology.

PRESENT

Chair	Lee Wolanin	Member, Barre
Vice-Chair	Mark Brophy	Member, Barre
	Dr. Richard Allan	Member, Barre
	Emilly Cartier	Member, Hardwick
	Deb Chamberlain	Member, Hubbardston
	David Correia	Member, Hubbardston
	Dave Deschamps	Member, Barre
	William Hansen	Member, Hubbardston
	Fred Jean-Francois	Member, Oakham
	Ned Kelly	Member, Hardwick
	David Marsh	Member, Barre
	Walter Nutter	Member, Oakham
	Marcelino Sarabia	Member, Hardwick
	Peggy Thompson	Member, New Braintree
	Mark Wigler	Member, Hubbardston (departed 7:20 p.m.)

ALSO PRESENT

Dr. Sheila Muir	Superintendent of Schools
District Administrators	Cheryl Duval; Kristin Campione; Colleen Mucha; Andrew Walsh; Adam Couturier; Gregory Devine; Tricia Worthington; Sue Musnicki; Chris Carlson; Shelly St. George; Jill Peterson
District Staff Member:	Staff members in attendance not necessarily identifiable on Zoom
Press:	
Town Officials/Residents:	Other parents and community members not necessarily identifiable on Zoom

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER - The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m.
2. MODIFICATION TO 2020-2021 SCHOOL REOPENING PLAN – a vote will be required

Dr. Muir opened the meeting by speaking to the new guidelines that have been issued.

Transportation guidelines that were released on February 11th require all students to be masked with windows open 2" for ventilation. Student may be two to a seat, but all students should have assigned seating for contact tracing. Distance capacity and physical distancing requirements have been lifted, except for MS/HS with a high community prevalence of COVID-19.

An update to guidance on singing was release on March 1st. Students may now sing indoors with masks, at a low volume, 30 minutes or less singing time, and students ten feet apart. Quabbin is recommending students wear two masks while singing inside.

An update to guidance on school meals was issued on March 9th. While eating, all students must maintain a strict 6 foot distance and all face the same direction. It is suggested to be able to accommodate this, to add lunch periods or shorten lunch period; eat in classrooms at every other desk if 3' distancing in the classroom; alternate students with ½ the class at recess and ½ at lunch; use other areas such as gyms or unused classrooms; use outside tents.

On March 5th, the Board of Education voted to allow Commissioner Riley determine future changes to allowable school learning models. The Commissioner issued the following:

- All students learning 100% remotely can remain 100% remote
- All students who wish to learn 100% remotely can move to that model
- All elementary students not learning remotely must be receiving in-person instruction 5 days per week as of April 5, 2021. QRSD elementary students have been receiving in person instruction since September 8, 2020, so that will not present a problem for the district.
- All middle school students not learning remotely must be receiving in-person instruction 5 days per week as of April 28th.
- High school students will be returning to in person learning as well, but a timeline for their return has not yet been published.

In constructing a plan for in person learning in the QRSD, the administration came up with proposal objectives. These included maintaining health and safety protocols, maximizing the opportunity for in person instruction, providing minimal disruption to established systems and structures and ensuring that students learning in person and students learning remotely continue to have access to effective supports such as Week-At-A-Glance and MS/HS teacher office hours.

The administration believe that the sooner students receive more in-person instruction, the better it will be. If the MS/HS students return on March 29th, they will gain 49.5 hours of in-person instruction. If they begin on April 4th, will gain 36 hours of in-person instruction. These are compared to an April 28th start.

The process for return can be started relatively quickly. With the existing furniture, classrooms can be furnished so that students are no less than 3 feet apart. Mrs. Skerry has been working on alternate plans for bus routes, so that could happen relatively quickly as well. If the decision is made to feed students lunch, it will be necessary to wait until late April because there is not enough furniture to keep students 6 feet apart in the MS/HS. In addition, the School Nutrition Department would need time to place food orders to change menus from take home to eat in school.

Discussion ensued in regard to extending the school day. Some factors to consider were the addition of lunch at the MS/HS which would mean the purchase of additional furniture; increased Food and Nutrition staff hours. In addition, this would create a later dismissal time for elementary students, which would result in loss of common

planning time devoted to collaboration between educators sharing the same groups of students, as well as the WAAG not being available to students. This would also cause loss of teacher prep time at the MS/HS which would eliminate office hours and the WAAG may not be available to all students.

The recommendation of the administration at the elementary level of no significant changes to the school day schedule would require no change to childcare or work schedules for families.

The recommendation of the administration at the MS/HS level would be that, beginning March 29th, bring all hybrid students into school 5 days per week. The administration would collect data through the month of April to inform any future consideration of lengthening the school day before the end of the school year. This would also require no change to childcare or work schedules for families and would help build student routines, expectations and awareness of 3' vs. 6'. In addition, this plan would build stamina for in person instruction from 2 days per week to 5 days per week.

Discussion and questions then ensued amongst the committee members and the administration in regard to the recommendation set forth.

Students do have the option of going remote if they have to quarantine due to close contact or a positive case. The Commissioner stated that it is his intent not to allow remote learning after the end of this school year.

Evan Barringer, president of QRTA, stated that although the administration has done an amazing job working collaboratively with the QRTA, there are still concerns as to why the district does not wait on reopening the MS/HS so as many teachers as possible can be vaccinated. Dr. Muir explained that the elementary PK – 5 teachers have been in close contact with students since September 8th, and reminded Mr. Barringer that any cases in the district schools have come from the outside. There has been no spread of COVID-19 in any of the schools. The district will provide additional PPE if requested by staff, and will also allow staff to maintain more than 3' distancing.

Question was raised as to doing an incremental return from hybrid. Dr. Muir believes the benefit of doing that would be very minimal and beginning with a cycle of 5 days per week in a consistent manner will help to maintain consistency and structure.

Motion made by Dr. Allan and seconded by Mr. Kelly to allow the administration to move forward with the proposed amendments to the School Reopening Plan.

Motion passed by a roll call vote of 12-0-2: Dr. Allan – yes; Mr. Marsh – yes; Mr. Brophy – yes; Mr. Deschamps – yes; Chairman Wolanin – yes; Mr. Kelly – yes; Mr. Sarabia – yes; Ms. Cartier – yes; Mrs. Chamberlain – yes; Mr. Hansen – no; Mr. Correia – no; Mrs. Thompson – yes; Mr. Nutter – yes; Mr. Jean-Francois – yes.

3. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Dr. Allan and seconded by Mr. Brophy to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica A. Bennett
School Committee Secretary