

DANBURY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
TUESDAY, JULY 29, 2020- 6:00 PM
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM
LIVE STREAM

In English:

https://youtu.be/WWarRSaX_-I

En Español:

<https://youtu.be/GxF9Q2IUnjI>

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chairperson, G. Cooper, called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm and those assembled recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Rachel Chaleski, Kate Conetta, Gladys Cooper, Richard Jannelli, Amy Spallino, Kathleen Molinaro, Kathryn Hodgdon, Joseph DaSilva, Albert Russo (came in late due to technical issues), J. DaSilva (had to leave early due to prior commitment)

Absent: Joseph Britton, Loren Daly

Also Present: Dr. Pascarella, Courtney Leborious, Kelly Truchsess, Kim Thompson, Kevin Walston, Kara Casimiro

ACTION ITEMS

A.Education Specifications for Ellsworth Street School Annex

MOTION: K. Molinaro moved, seconded by J. DaSilva that the Board of Education approve the revised calendar for 2020-2021.

- Dr. Pascarella stated that the State Board permitted the district to enact a waiver, allowing the district to use three days before the start of school for Covid-19 related training. Students will start on 9/1/2020.
- A. Spallino asked if those would be PD days for the entire year or if they still have additional PD days. Dr. Pascarella stated that the Hybrid Model allows for Wednesday PDs as well.
- R. Chaleski pointed out that there is a permanent 90 min early release for the entire year. K. Casimiro confirmed.
- Dr. Pascarella stated that the calendar will impact conferences with the Hybrid Model. We will need time each day for staff to interact with students. HS will end 90 mins early and elementary will end 1 hour early. A full day would be too long to wear masks. The calendar will come to 885 hours for the 177 days of school.

Motion passed at 6:43 pm

DISCUSSION

- Dr. Pascarella stated that the district will start on a Hybrid Model.
- K. Conetta asked if staff have possessions to remove from classrooms, when can they do so? C. Leborious stated that staff may do so on a voluntary basis and principals will coordinate that on the week of 8/5/2020. K. Thompson stated that custodians will likely gather items and keep them stored in the school until they can be picked up by staff that do not voluntarily come in to pick them up.
- A. Spallino asked what the district is doing about working parents with the new Hybrid Model? This will affect people with the early dismissals. Is their childcare? How will that work? A. Mead stated that ELP will function as it normally does, a before and after school program tailored to the hours that students go to school. Also working with an outside agency to see about the possibility of them using a local site in Danbury to offer full daycare Monday through Friday, 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. Still in negotiations. Within a week or two, should have more word on that. Keeping track of families calling ELP and asking for full time care. So far, 30 - 40 families are looking for that care.
- A. Spallino asked how many families generally ask for ELP care? A. Mead stated that there are close to 60 registrations for ELP registrations. 21st Century schools have more than that. Normally the ELP program has close to 1600 children in it.
- K. Walston stated that it is also important to note how the principals are looking to schedule their buildings by street address and neighborhood. If we can schedule buildings by street address, families will be able to go together and there will be more opportunity for working families to get to work.
- C. Leborious stated that this also helps with buses and cohorting. People within apartment buildings will remain relatively cohorted together. Adjustments at where people register for their preferred school option (Hybrid or DL). They will be called the Blue Group/Orange Group versus A/B group. This will keep sibling groups together and help cohort neighborhoods.
- Dr. Pascarella asked Mayor Boughton if the City is thinking about anything to help working parents. Mayor Boughtons stated that it may be a great opportunity for some non-profit groups to grow their programming. He will reach out to YMCA and other organizations to see if they would be willing to put together some programming. Dr. Pascarella stated that the district tried to rent the Dome but the price was over the top. Mayor Boughton stated that there is an opportunity for non-profit groups to access education money. Mayor Boughton stated that he will reach out to Jim Maloney.
- Dr. Pascarella stated that Pathways was interested in helping as well.
- G. Cooper asked Dr. Pascarella if he has had a conversation with New Hope because they have a daycare center. Dr. Pascarella stated that he spoke to Reverend Parker and asked if we could set up sites throughout the community where parents can frequent for daycare at reasonable rates. Reverend Parker said he would speak to the minister. Dr. Pascarella stated he will follow up.
- G. Cooper stated that Eden Drive and the church on Rowen Street are possibilities as well.
- R. Jannelli asked if we are anticipating ELP programs to be maintained at individual schools or offsite? A. Mead stated that they would be onsite and try to continue cohorting as much as possible.
- R. Jannelli asked if there will be any particular hours. A. Mead stated that they are looking at starting when school ends. When the final schedule is formalized, they will

work more with HR to bring staff in at those times, just like they do on a half day or ED day. Extend to 6pm for working parents.

- R. Jannelli said now the Hybrid Model is announced, do we anticipate more parents signing up? A. Mead stated that as parents are informed on school schedules, they will look at what their options are.
- R. Jannelli asked if all safety protocols will adhere in ELP and learning centers? A. Mead stated absolutely and that is what they are doing in the programs now as well.
- R. Chaleski stated that she saw a document with questions on it. Was it a compilation of Board member questions? Dr. Pascarella stated that there is another document he is finishing that was from the last parents meeting and they will be merging the two. Dr. Pascarella will send it to Board members when complete. There will be one running document of Q&A for parents.
- R. Chaleski asked will 100% Distance Learning still be an option? Dr. Pascarella stated that there are three options: Homeschooling, full time Distance Learning or Hybrid. This will be for all levels, Pre-K through 12.
- R. Chaleski asked how flexible are those choices? Dr. Pascarella stated that the way the state gives clarification, parents can change at any time. They just need to give the district a week's notice so they can arrange transportation and such.
- K. Molinaro asked how this will be advertised to parents and how often? Dr. Pascarella stated that a letter and robo calls will be sent. There will be a series of communications that will go out. Will also be posted on the district website and school websites. New families will be advised as they hand in their paperwork.
- Dr. Pascarella thanked Mayor Boughton and legislatures for helping to push the Hybrid Model.
- R. Jannelli asked based on scenarios, is the district comfortable that the capacity of the schools will be able to handle the number of students on the Hybrid Model? C. Leborious stated that there is an assumption that a certain percentage of families will choose 100% Distance Learning. The district has looked at every single angle that they can think of. An architect has been working at Stadley Rough, Rogers Park and DHS to set up optimal spacing. They have looked at three foot, four foot and six foot spacing in the classrooms. Looked at every classroom size and type of classroom and set up an optimal distancing. Ideally, six foot distance in the majority of classrooms. Working on egressing hallways. Use one directional hallways where possible. Arrows and dots on the floors to re-enforce flow and distancing. Address all egress and flow issues. It will be a little messy on day one and all hands on deck but doing as much planning as possible to make it as safe as it can possibly be. Much safer approach for us.
- Food situation will be unique for each school. Will not use the cafeterias for eating. Will be grabbed and go for grades 6 through 12. Elementary students will be eating in the school, hoping to have them eat in the classroom to keep cohorting.
- Identifying swing spaces in the event that teachers are ill and not able to show up. Plan to have at least two or three classes in the auditorium, gym, cafe and media where students can socially distance for those classes.
- D. Donovan stated that in the cafeteria with six feet and no masks, they can only fit 120 students which means they would have to have 12 lunch waves, which you can't do. Using large space to monitor certain classes in case we don't have enough subs. Meeting with the architects on 7/29/2020 to go over all up and down stair towers. They don't have

one way hallways so making the up and down stair towers will force traffic in a certain way. Going hybrid helps a lot.

- K. Conetta stated that she is afraid to see a lot more teachers who will not return to school. Is there a plan in place for replacing that staff on a temporary basis or how that will all work out? K. Thompson stated that it is a work in progress and it depends on the numbers. Very nervous about the numbers. Don't think we've seen even a fraction of what we will see. There was some bad information that was slowing down communication with HR and that has caused a real back and forth problem. The HR team is trying to encourage the dialog with teachers so they can manage accommodations. As of this meeting date, numbers are in the 30's of not returning but if those numbers get up around 100, not sure how that will be handled. There are provisions to request from the State and Commissioner to use those with HS diplomas and not college degrees as temporary substitutes. Older college students and Education Majors who are not going back to college. All neighboring districts will likely be in the same situation. Have to be creative on how to fill some of these gaps.
- Demand to Bargain from Teachers Union over whether or not the plan will have an impact on their working conditions. Attorney Mooney will come in to work with the district. The benefit is he is working with a lot of districts so he can see what is going around in the state. We can anticipate that there will be a lot of demands. A lot of pushback from teachers unions across the state. Believes we will find ourselves at the bargaining table with teachers unions on a lot of these provisions.
- K. Thompson stated that G. Cooper will need to assign two Board members to participate in contract term negotiations (impact bargaining). G. Cooper asked Board members interested to submit their names to K. Pompano.
- A. Russo asked about the Distance Learning component. K. Casimiro stated that last year the district used Google Classroom as the platform. Will continue to use Google Classroom for some purposes but will bring in courseware from a company called Engenuity. They have a variety of platform and course options. The one we are selecting is teacher cofacilitie courses that are pre-populated. District can customize to the current curriculum. Content is digitized, there are videos, questions, assessments, activities and seminars for students to engage in. District feels that this will be helpful for teachers and students. More time in the teaching part and less time trying to scramble for resources. At the secondary level, the teacher of record will be responsible for students whether they are in the Hybrid Model or full DL. Will use an Edgenuity course to support that model as well as livestreaming in the classroom with new laptops. Will have the ability to engage students at home whether they are hybrid or DL. Important, particularly if there are students who change their course selection, they will need to be incorporated into the classroom relatively quickly, be at the same pace and have the same curricular experience as students who were in the classroom.
- A. Russo asked if this will be partially live streaming? S. Pascarella stated that this is what we would like to see. With us having to go in to command to bargain, this has to be worked out. For the benefit of the students and planning for teachers, this would be the best modality for all concerned.
- K. Casimiro stated that certification at the Pre-K through 5 level, teachers have a variety of certifications and they can teach a variety of levels and subjects. At the Secondary Level, teachers have specific certifications and we have to be able to service those

students so that they can maintain their graduation plan and get the credits that they need. We do not have the staffing to have a complete DL program that mirrors all of the student courses in their schedule. This is why many of the surrounding districts are discussing the same issues with live streaming.

- R. Jannelli asked at Pre-K through 5 level, is that teacher responsible for lesson plans for both hybrid and DL? K. Casimiro stated that at Pre-K through 5 level (all depends on number of students who opt in for DL and number of available staff) we are thinking of having a teacher be exclusive for DL. Difficult to manage younger students on DL and hybrid. Could possibly mean that DL students will be grouped with other grade level students across the district.
- R. Chaleski asked that if the district transitions back to full in school in the middle of the year, students may be with a different teacher than they were in hybrid? K. Casimiro stated that is possible.
- R. Chaleski asked what grading will look like? K. Casimiro stated that the district will revert back to original grading methods. We are in a much different place in the community than we were in the Spring. If a child or family is struggling, they can petition the school to talk about challenges and we can offer pass fail with documentation.
- K. Hodgdon asked how many times can families go back and forth between hybrid and DL? Dr. Pascarella stated that families can do this as much as they need to. Important for families to understand that once homeschool is selected, they are unenrolled and if they want to come back they have to re-enroll. Families can choose any three options as often as needed. If they are at WSMSA or AIS and choose homeschool, they lose their spot.
- A. Russo asked if there are out of district students coming to AIS? How do we control that? K. O'Dowd stated that we would look at the community spread in those communities for students coming from other districts. As of right now, community spread is very low. Will be working with K. Prunty at the Health Department. K. Prunty stated that she is working with other health directors and other communities along with the entire country. Monitoring all of it and taking it into consideration.
- R. Jannelli stated that at this time of year, we would be suggesting enrollment. Where do we stand on enrollment so far relative to the last couple of years? Also is there an update on Matrix?
- Mayor Boughton stated that they continue to have discussions with the State and it is very promising but nothing definitive. In September, the State will go back into session to do their school construction bill. Goal is to try to get a reimbursement program in place for the Summit/Matrix. Will have better numbers in the next seven to eight days to understand a little more about costs. Still have time to put in front of the Council in September should we need to go to voters. So far have been given green light. Currently understanding how to put it into legislative language which can be tricky. Thanked D. Arconti for working very hard on it.
- G. Jasmine stated that her and K. Walston are monitoring enrollment on a weekly basis. Kindergarten right inline with enrollment where we were at this time last year. Currently don't see a big influx in 9th grade like we did last year. Once we release plan, that could change. Thinking kindergarten registrations will uptick as normal, especially since we have hybrid option as many families were waiting for that decision. There are a lot of people from NY state moving into CT so anticipate a bump from that.

- K. Connetta asked about staff or families that are identified as possible Covid-19. There is also the asymptomatic piece. Will assumed positive be mandated to be tested before they can come back? K. Prunty stated that there are community providers doing testing in a drive through fashion as well as onsite testing. The availability is there, foresee it going on. Will ask people to go get tested if there has been any kind of exposure or Covid-19 symptoms. K. O'Dowd stated that the Health Services Department has always had sick guidelines in place and they have been updated. Because symptoms of Covid-19 mimic many other conditions, it is impossible for a school nurse to assess a child and it is not their role to diagnose. Any child that presents to a nurse with any symptoms that would be on Covid-19 list, they will immediately be sent home, referred to a healthcare provider and recommended to be tested. If they are sent home ill, they need to come back with a doctor's note if they are cleared. Families do not need an order. There is no cost for Covid-19 testing per.
- K. Thompson stated that will be a similar situation with employees but with the Families First Act. May trigger protection of that act which includes the first two weeks to stay home paid. When balancing risks we would like to implement the act and have people stay home. Over the course of summer, have required a doctor's note before returning to work. Preserving confidentiality as much as we can. Will go through HR and collaborate with K. O'Dowd on what is needed for staff to be able to return to work. While there is rapid testing around the city results can take a while. Also stated that rapid result tests are not always accurate. For right now trying to build a flexible enough policy so we can be nimble as we get more information.
- K. Connetta asked how the district will handle the attendance policy for staff and students. K. Thompson stated that she has trained her team to be well vested in the collective bargaining unit, sick time, Families First Act and long term disability. Working hard on her team to make sure all pieces of the puzzle come together. Encouraging all staff to have dialog with the HR team. Confidentiality and records are preserved. Support employees as much as we can.
- G. Cooper asked if a child becomes ill at school and for some reason you can not contact parents or emergency contact, what will you do? K. O'Dowd stated that they are trying to be very proactive with parent outreach. Have done more parent outreach than ever before. Sick day guidelines will go out to parents. Will also ask school nurses and principals to zoom with parents prior to school starting. Have to emphasize to parents that it is of their child's health and safety and of the community's as well.
- R. Jannelli asked if there is a benchmark for each individual school or generally speaking for all schools as to how many cases or conditions where the district would close the school? K. O'Dowd stated that the Department of Health will be issuing guidelines as to what is considered low, mild and high risk. Anytime there is a positive case, that will be discussed with the Health Department collectively and a decision will be made by Dr. Pascarella to close school based on their recommendations.
- K. Molinaro asked if this will be school by school or the entire district? K. O'Dowd stated that it would be school by school not the entire district unless the Health Department suggests it based on community transmission.
- K. Thompson stated that her team is also in contact with quite a few employees who are taking their children to college in hotspots. That is another list they are maintaining in HR. Staff must remain in quarantine for 14 days or have a negative test result to return.

Comfortable that most of those staff will clear the quarantine period before students come back on 9/1/2020.

- K. Prunty stated that the State is developing metrics that will be low, moderate and high. She will also be working with K. O'Dowd to assess each positive test and determine what level of closure will be needed whether it be classroom, school or more. Different scenarios that would ensure closers. Somewhat individualized to make those determinations.
- K. Connetta asked if we have multiple students who are sick at school, do they all stay in the same isolation room. K. O'Dowd stated that even in an isolation room, we still have to maintain safe distance and that is a very challenging question. She is in contact with other districts to see what they are doing. Depending on the weather they may be outside with an adult, which is safer than multiple being in an isolation room. Hopefully we will see a decline in some common illnesses due to social distancing. Identifying isolation spaces is challenging in schools.
- K. Connetta asked if there will be additional nursing staff hired? K. O'Dowd stated that they are having those conversations now.
- Dr. Pascarella thanked the team, Mayor Boughton and City staff for all their hard work. Focus is on safety. The yeoman's work that has been done is incomprehensible and still more to do. Confident that we are nimble enough and with the focus on safety, we will do the right thing. Going slow is a good thing at this point. Giving us the ability to split puts us in position to plan. We feel that it will be much safer.
- G. Cooper stated that as we get ready to reenter the phase of school reopening, it is important to keep communication open. In a week or two, there will be another Board Meeting to share any additional information. Encouraged Board members to think before they speak. We know that Dr. Pascarella and staff are working very hard. Thanked everyone for their support and those that sent in communication to delegates and governor.

ADJOURNMENT

R. Jannelli moved, seconded by A. Spallino, that the Board of Education adjourn its Meeting of July 29, 2020 and the meeting was adjourned at 7:43 pm.

Kathleen Molinaro, Secretary

(Meeting was videotaped)