

**HADLEY SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
HADLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
HADLEY, MASSACHUSETTS 01035  
Minutes August 6, 2020**

**5:30 PM – Regular Meeting Zoom Meeting**

**1. Adjustments to the Agenda**

Review of School Choice for 2020-2021

**Klesch called for a motion to open the meeting**

Klesch thanked the public participants which numbered almost 70. She noted that at the last meeting, the public comment period did not take place until a couple of hours into the meeting so there would be a public comment period before and after school committee presentations and discussion.

Klesch reviewed the Public Comment Process Policy and shared Policy BEDH on the screen. She noted that there will be two comment opportunities- one prior to the SC discussion and one after. Klesch said that she wanted everyone to have the chance to speak.

**2. Public Comment**

Laurie McCullough- urges schools to start with remote teaching. She feels teachers and students should become familiar with remote learning and has some concerns about spread of the virus. She noted what she sees as deficiencies in the hybrid model. McCullough indicated that she did not think that person-to-person teaching is successful with masks.

There were no other public comments at this time.

**3. Presentations/Discussion Items**

McKenzie thanked everyone for their input into the Reopening Plan. McKenzie said the purpose of this meeting is to address issues brought up at the last meeting when reviewing the plan in detail. She informed that the Draft Plan is posted on the district website.

She asked Phifer to report on his most recent survey with 263 responders. The data is broken down by school and by student. A large majority of families plan for in person learning or leaning toward in-person learning. The second question asked about plans for transportation. McKenzie mentioned some of the comments and concerns from the July 30<sup>th</sup> meeting and how concerns were being addressed. She informed the meeting that a recent HES survey indicated that 63% of the 75% of teachers who responded felt more comfortable with a remote learning environment. Phifer asked if that 63% was in response to the specific Reopening Plan presented. Burns, HEA president indicated that it was.

McKenzie presented the part of the plan that provided for in person cohort learning. She said that if remote learning was in phase 1, the next phase of in person phase 1 would become phase 2. She wanted to clarify the process of the phases and how they would change with public health metrics. In response to a question from Phifer about the positivity rate metrics determining phase movement, McKenzie said that DPH official had informed her last week that community currently had a positivity

rate of 1.5%. If testing positivity rates reach over 5%, that is where phase movement would be considered. Movement after that would depend on decrease in positivity rate.

McKenzie said that she wanted the public to know that any remote learning plan had to be negotiated with HEA by law (M.G.L. 150e), which states that employers cannot unilaterally change working conditions without a mutually agreed upon Memorandum of Understanding.

#### Hopkins Remote Plan

Camuso presented details of the Hopkins Remote Learning Plan, including schedules, curriculum, grading, attendance, sample lesson documents, and assessments. Google Classroom platform will be used in both remote learning and the hybrid plan. She stated that this is just a draft and still had to be negotiated.

#### HES Plan

Dowd said she realizes that this is a very difficult decision for the school committee in that there were so many stakeholders and considerations. Dowd shared a draft document for the elementary school remote learning plan, which included details of student expectations, student services, a school day, and attendance. Google classroom will be the learning platform but different platforms are being considered for the younger grades that may be more suitable. Grading will be through the standards-based report cards, rather than the pass/ fail system used in the spring during the initial school closure. She added that work is being done with the goal of students being able to interact with peers and teachers, but these are subject to negotiations. Dowd provided a draft sample student schedule. She thanked her faculty and staff for their assistance.

#### Continued Review of Concerns

##### Air Flow

McKenzie asked Phifer to report on airflow in the school buildings. CARES Act money has been provided for personal protective equipment, air purifiers, ventilation and HVAC repair and cleaning. Phifer said the cafeteria and gym were too large for air purifiers to be effective. He did say that the ventilation systems in those areas are robust and have good air exchange. Fasihuddin asked if the air purifiers were of the same quality as that of hospitals. Phifer said that they were the same HEPA.

##### Social Distancing at HA

Camuso addressed a concern expressed about scheduling and social distancing of less than 6 feet at Hopkins. She said since students take a variety of different courses so class sizes vary greatly. She explained that it was not possible to maintain 6 feet for some of the larger classes. If room re-assignments are made, requiring more teacher movement, the 6 feet distancing is possible. Camuso also provided other options for achieving the 6- foot distancing.

##### Gym Space at HES

Dowd addressed concerns of 5<sup>th</sup> grade parents about holding their class in the gym. She has a priority of moving 5<sup>th</sup> graders into traditional classrooms if in-person learning enrollment numbers allow.

##### Medical Waiting Rooms

McKenzie said the district plan refers to this on page 19. Phifer said that oversized air purifiers would be placed in the nursing office and medical waiting room.

### Room Assignments

Teacher of Record is responsible for learning and support staff work under their supervision. Plans had to be made with the idea that 100% of students would participate in in-person learning. Since that may very well not be the case, room assignments and overflow rooms may change.

### Visitors

McKenzie said that visitor policies would be very strict. Student teachers in the classrooms would be very helpful and they are thoroughly trained and would adhere to strict guidelines.

### Conflict between Students in a Cohort

Parents should always reach out to the classroom teacher. The principal can also be involved but any reassignment of students would have to be seriously considered to minimize exposures.

### Social and Emotional Learning

Director of Special Education and appropriate support staff are working on the best ways to meet the needs of the students.

### After School Program

Small groups of identified students could participate in after school care, using all the same guidelines of social distancing. The program would run to the end of the school day.

### Public Comment

Nancy Sharp- has 2 concerns: UMass influx of students may affect the data of positivity rates and she would like to use remote learning until it is determined what effect the returning college population has on the data. Concern for at risk populations of staff and students and students going home to parents and grandparents.

Toni Lemerelli- refers to recommendation of American Association of Pediatrics that students return to school. She wants SC to keep that in mind when making decisions.

Emily Phifer- Concern about statistics and thinks it is likely that risk will increase with in-person learning. Would like to see schools open remotely.

Susan Bye- we can open schools remotely, but she would like requirements for students to attend daily.

Kristin Lively- Expresses the need for children to return to school. Her child does not do well with remote learning. Concern that he will miss so much if schools do not open in-person. She feels that the younger children and those with special needs will not benefit from remote learning. She would like to keep her child home for safety reasons, but feels he will not learn if he stays home.

Linda Loebel- asks for elaboration on outside learning and open windows in New England weather.

How the infection rate will be measured in the schools. Schools should go to remote learning completely so that students who are learning remotely do not feel they are missing out on anything taking place during in-person learning.

Amanda Kinchla-What is teaching modality for remote learning, especially for younger children who need structure and engagement.

Laurie McCullough- wants full remote learning and is concerned about the 5% infection rate criteria. She feels that there could be in-person learning for a small population of students with special needs.

Anthony Fyden- encourages schools to reopen in person as soon as possible. Feels we know a lot more about the virus now and how to prevent it. We should use the knowledge we have gained to facilitate reopening of the schools as the risk to children not returning is higher.

Michelle Wojtowicz- Remote learning was challenging to her students. Please keep in mind the Pediatrician's point of view. We need to consider the point of view of the child.

After conversations with her elementary school aged children, they expressed a desire to return to school, even with the restrictions that would be in place.

Meg Cain- hopes SC makes decision based on science and the numbers we have. Personal preference is for her children to go back to school in person because of all the work done to make sure children are safe. We do not know the long-term effects of children being away from their peers yet.

Allesandra Rotunno-should start remotely and take it from there. She referred to other schools that reopened and saw infections occur.

Paula Cristoforo-believes school should be starting remotely. In person learning will result in too much exposure. We have students from other communities that we need to consider that data as well.

Francis J.- works as nurse and has seen this virus up close. Wants remote learning for now. I am grateful for the work put into the plan. No matter how hard we try, we will be affected by this virus. How will children feel when they infect a parent or grandparent. We can catch up academically.

Greg Stewart- lobbies on behalf of technology for remote learning improvements. His child flourishes with remote learning. Children with special needs should be prioritized for in-person learning.

Robert Klesch- From a student's perspective, wants to return to school, but do not want to go back if opportunities for infection are there. Students may congregate and interact without masks outside of the classroom. He suggested ideas for better educational experience for remote learning.

Michael Klesch- has been in contact with several districts and there have been no reports of positive experiences from those schools that have opened for in-person learning.

Linda Loebel- Should respect the opinions of the teachers, who are not comfortable with in-person learning.

Felicia Seymour- Son has special needs, he will not be returning to in person learning due the risks involved. Some children cannot wear masks.

Matt DiBartelomeo- Wants to offer his perspective that SC consider remote learning to start school and then reevaluate. Statements made by Mr. Klesch reaffirms this opinion.

Lauren Croce-We should lean towards what is known. The least risk is the best risk.

Lisa Giddons- refers to UMASS students who walk freely in groups on campus without masks. I want to believe we can do this, but the reality is that some students will not comply with safety guidelines.

Maureen Tumenas- I request remote learning opening. Once we reopen and infections occur, we will have to close and then reopen again.

#### Close Public Comment

#### Discussion

Fasihuddin said she was initially in favor of a plan for parents to make their choice between in-person and remote learning. She said that there is a solid, data-driven plan. SC has to decide on a plan now. She thinks that an in-person reopening would expose the elderly Hadley population. She feels that the plans can be improved for maximum safety.

Fasihuddin said she is not completely satisfied with the remote plan and there is still work to be done. She said that teachers could make the classrooms studios for on-line learning with small populations of students present. She is in favor of delaying the vote until August 31<sup>st</sup>

Klesch said that 2 weeks ago, she was in favor of in-person reopening and giving parents a choice. She said that she did not want to leave the decision of risk in the hands of the parent. She does not feel it prudent to open in-person. Hearing from HEA shifted her thinking to remote learning. She said the SC should vote tonight in order to put efforts into whatever plan is decided. Klesch mentioned the disruption that would occur if new infections caused another shut down. The remote learning plan for all is the most equitable and should be made as educationally sound and robust as possible.

Brugger said she was appreciative of all the work that has gone into planning for school reopening and that she commented that everyone involved has been respectful of each other's opinions. She spoke about her struggle with her decision as a school committee member and a parent. She shared her experience as a health care worker and the challenge of wearing a mask all day. She also expressed concern about going back and forth between opening and closing if infections occur. Brugger said she agrees with Klesch and Fasihuddin that the year should start out remotely and continue monitoring data. She added that she would like to modify the reopening phase to less students returning at once for fewer days per week.

Phifer thanked the public for their input. He said he agreed that remote learning needed some improvement, but said it would not replace in-person learning. He acknowledged that returning to in-person learning did pose some risks. He compared the 65% of teachers not being comfortable with in-person learning as opposed to 80% of parents who wanted their students to return to in-person learning. He feels that the committee should try to decide based on what the majority of the constituents want. Phifer is in favor of reopening with in-person learning at this time with remote

learning available, based on the knowledge he has today. He said it is not clear when the phase would move from all remote to in-person learning.

Percy also questioned what positivity rate was low enough for students to return to school. He acknowledged that although he was comfortable with students returning to school, he respected the decision of parents who want to keep their children home. The data at this time shows that Hadley is in a very good place and there is probably no better time to reopen. Percy mentioned that we do need to be aware of the population of students that need in-person access. He acknowledged that not everyone will not be best served whatever the decision.

Klesch said they had a strong structure for all three plans to consider acceptance. Brugger mentioned the data shifting quickly across the state when school reopens as a factor. She asked McKenzie how many schools in the state are reopening in person. She referred to a conversation with the Commissioner which said about 10 % of schools were starting remotely, 10 % in-person and about 80% a hybrid model. McKenzie said that the main reason most schools chose the hybrid model because they could not accommodate the entire school population at once. Fasihuddin suggested that remote learning start with cohorts so the structure could be established before the in-person phase. Committee members continued discussions and posed questions for McKenzie. She pointed out that there were limitations to the expectations for remote learning vs. in person classroom teaching. The learning would most likely not be presented simultaneously. Fasihuddin spoke to the importance of equity in remote learning and in-person learning. She said that there are still a lot of unknowns and that perhaps the vote could be delayed until the plans for remote learning are further developed. McKenzie asked the committee to make a decision regarding the focus for the beginning of the school year. Committee members discussed different scenarios and acknowledged the complexity of the issues and that no plan would be perfect. Phifer advocated for a vote so families can plan. Fasihuddin asked for more data concerning students who may need in-person learning due to special needs or circumstances. Phifer expressed the opinion that the committee needed to be clear with families what the plan would be. Klesch asked for a motion to start school remotely with a commitment to phase into in-person learning. Discussion of the length of time for remote learning took place, including using the grading cycle as a timeframe.

Fasihuddin posed a motion to start remotely, aspiring to be back in person, studying the various metrics, getting a recommendation from our administration and educators on which things trigger us to go back into an in-person environment and in what way and look at these issues every meeting from here forward.” Klesch said she would support that motion and asked for a second. Brugger asked if the motion could be amended to include a time frame. Fasihuddin amended the motion to include the time frame of a grading quarter. Phifer said that the data suggests right now that we could open in person learning so wonders what data will be acceptable or not acceptable to open schools. He is in favor of six weeks for the time frame for remote learning initially. Dowd expresses support for the six-week time frame for the younger children. Fasihuddin and Brugger said they are comfortable with the six weeks. Brugger made a motion to begin the 2020-2021 school year remotely for a minimum of six weeks with the understanding that this period may be extended if public health metrics indicate that a return to in person cohort learning would be unsafe. Said public health metrics will be determined at a future meeting by the school committee as recommended by the administration. Fasihuddin seconded the motion and the vote was 4-1-0. Phifer voted against the motion.

#### Student Start Date

Fasihuddin made a motion to establish the start date for students as September 14, 2020. Brugger seconded and the motion passed 5-0-0.

#### School Choice Seats

McKenzie made clear that anyone who was already enrolled in School Choice would not be affected by the question to the committee regarding whether they want her to pursue the issue and legalities of pausing acceptance of new School Choice students. Fasihuddin said she thinks we should limit the number of new students. Phifer feels that the schools should be open to new students. He asked McKenzie about the number of vacancies. He added that School Choice is an asset and a factor in the schools' survival. Klesch said she is in agreement, saying that HPS has spent a lot of time and effort encouraging School Choice. Brugger said she did not want any significant change in class sizes. Brugger said that administration could determine whether seats are available within the guidelines of safety and space.

McKenzie clarified the wishes of the committee, saying, "The committee is comfortable with administration making a determination as to how many slots could be filled without exceeding the established cap." McKenzie said she would check with legal counsel and get back to the committee about reducing the number of slots available given the circumstances.

#### In Person Learning for Specific Student Populations

McKenzie said that DESE requires that public schools make accommodations for students with disabilities, ELL, lack of access, and others. She said she was planning to survey those groups to see if they would access some in-person learning during the remote learning phase. She suggests discussion of this issue at another meeting. Fasihuddin said she would like more information on the accessibility issue.

McKenzie said she will take the extension on the Learning Plan with a deadline of September 14<sup>th</sup> since the committee did not vote on the acceptance of any Learning plans.

The committee agreed to meet again on August 11, 2020 at 6:00 pm. and put a place holder for a second meeting on August 13<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm

#### Action Items

- a. Review and recommendation of Reopening Plan- No Action – will revisit
- b. Reopen schools remotely for minimum of six weeks – Motion: Brugger; Second: Fasihuddin; Vote: 4-1-0. (See detailed motion in minutes)
- c. Approve start date of September 14 for students for the 2020-2021 school year- Motion: Fasihuddin; Second: Percy; Vote: 5-0-0.

Adjournment- 9:20 pm

On motion made by Fasihuddin and seconded by Phifer, a unanimous vote to adjourn was taken.