

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN □ PAXTON □ PRINCETON □ RUTLAND □ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1348

Monday, July 27, 2020
7:00 PM

MEETING CONDUCTED REMOTELY, VIA GOOGLE MEET

Wachusett Regional School District Committee

Megan Weeks, Chair	Linda Long-Bellil
Michael Dennis, Vice-chair	Benjamin Mitchel
Melissa Ayala	Kenneth Mills
Nicole Amos	Karl Ottmar
Krista Bennett	Deidre Shapiro
Scott Brown	Asima Silva
Maleah Gustafson	Christina Smith
Sherrie Haber	Kelly Williamson
Jeffrey Haynes	Linda Woodland
Robert Imber	Adam Young
Laura Kirshenbaum	

Committee Members Absent:

Matthew Lavoie

Administration Present:

Darryll McCall, Superintendent of Schools
Robert Berlo, Deputy Superintendent
Daniel Deedy, Director of Business and Finance
Jeff Carlson, Director of Human Resources
Brendan Keenan, Director of Social Emotional Learning
Christine Smith, Administrator of Special Education
Barry Sclar, Supervisor of Information Technology
Rebecca Petersen, Executive Secretary to the Superintendent

Student Representatives Present:

Kathryn Mangus

Chair Weeks called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Chair Weeks announced the meeting was streaming live on Holden TV, Channel 194, and is being conducted remotely, via Google Meet. New at this meeting is the ability to access the meeting in live time via YouTube.

I. Public Hearing

Chair Weeks read aloud public comments submitted electronically.

Mary E. Lampron-Shepherd, WREA President (attachment 1)

Benjamin and Sarah Smith, Holden residents (attachment 2)

Lorraine Neilan, Holden resident (attachment 3)

Sarah Galvin, Rutland resident (attachment 4)

II. Chair's Opening Remarks

Chair Weeks addressed the Committee, speaking about the reopening of schools and assuring members all will have the opportunity to address the Committee and ask their questions and share their comments.

III. Student Representatives (K. Gomi, K. Mangus)

Student Representative Mangus spoke about the "walk across the stage" graduation event at the high school conducted two days the previous week. She spoke about a poll that was posted on Instagram, asking students their opinions about the reopening of schools. She shared the survey results, and also spoke about the student body and students in general and the plans for reopening of schools.

IV. Superintendent's Report

A. Discussion of Report

1. Overview of Possible School Reopening Scenarios

Chair Weeks turned the meeting over to Superintendent McCall, who projected a slideshow and spoke to the information in the presentation (attachment 5).

Superintendent McCall's address concluded and Chair Weeks opened the floor to questions from the members.

Vice-chair Dennis began the discussions. He spoke about the Special Meeting of the School Committee, scheduled for July 29, 2020 at 7:00 PM. He explained the special meeting will give the public the opportunity to provide input on the reopening of schools.

Member Ottmar does not see the in-person option as being viable. He voiced his opinion that District administration needs to keep in mind the educating of students whose parents opt to keep them home until schools are completely reopened. He estimated that could be 100 students per grade.

Member Shapiro encouraged the 6 foot social distance when planning for students being in classrooms and other locations in the schools.

Member Smith has concerns about the financial costs associated with implementation of a hybrid model. She also has concerns about the day-to-day activities that go on in schools, such as passing in the hallways, bathroom breaks, etc.

Member Silva's opinion is less hybrid and more remote. She had questions about what would need to be encountered to make a school need to move from a hybrid model to a remote model.

Superintendent McCall asked members to share their questions, and he would provide responses in the next day or two.

Member Williamson spoke about time on learning, and stated she has faith in teachers being able to provide effective teaching and learning remotely.

Member Woodland asked the impact if one school needs to move to complete remote, due to illness in the building, how will that impact other schools in the District. She voiced her concerns about how nursing staff will need to handle a child who becomes sick at school, and how that child will react to the impersonal and detached manner that will be necessary in order to be cautious. She also mentioned the costs associated with purchasing PPE, which Deputy Berlo explained some costs are covered by grant funds.

Superintendent McCall reported he hosted a virtual meeting with representatives from the Member Town Boards of Health and Town Administrators.

Member Young has questions about contingency plans in the event there is the need to transition from one model to another model (i.e. hybrid to remote). Compassion within the schools is something that will need to be considered.

Member Amos reiterated Member Ottmar's comment about those students who will be participating remotely from the start and she asked how these students will be a part of a cohort/classroom.

Member Ayala has concerns about ventilation in the classrooms. Superintendent McCall addressed Member Ayala's question about a parent's ability to select to use remote learning exclusively, explaining that will be an option. Member Ayala asked if students will have P.E., art, music, library, and will students move from classroom to classroom, or will teachers? Superintendent McCall explained classrooms will be self-contained.

Member Bennett is concerned about the limited time available to implement a robust remote teaching/learning model and suggested making the three models flexible, to be prepared in the event there is a need to move from model to another.

Member Brown asked how the budget will be impacted by the need to purchase PPE and other costs associated with implementation of each of the three models. Superintendent McCall spoke to these questions. Member Brown spoke about union contract implications in light of additional needs and requirements associated with each of the three models. He asked that the Committee be kept apprised about how reopening is playing out and how it is working with students and staff, because the remote teaching/learning in the spring was not completely successful.

Member Gustafson suggested the District consider spending funds in preparation for a robust remote learning program. She had questions about Special Education and services, and she suggested families be kept updated about before and after school programs, and consideration needs to be given to families and students who might need flexibility about when remote work can be done by students. Superintendent McCall spoke about the cost for some virtual/remote programs suggested by the state.

Member Haber asked if there is consideration about extending days, so that bus schedules and hygiene does not impact time on learning. She is hoping there is a strong remote program to offer to students. Per the Guidelines, it appears MCAS will be given in 2021, which is a concern to her.

Member Haynes appreciates attention given to students on IEPs as well as to students on the other end of the spectrum. For the hybrid model, there will be additional costs associated with transporting students. He would be more inclined to bring back faculty, rather than trying to coordinate transportation with social distancing. Member Haynes would appreciate a detailed list of holes in staffing. He also asked that if the hybrid model is implemented, consideration be given to keeping family members/students on the same schedule. He lastly expressed his concerns about student and staff health and safety. Superintendent McCall reported that Member Haynes' concerns were addressed and discussed at his meeting with representatives of the Boards of Health.

Member Imber asked at what point will the state say a school/district will need to implement remote learning. He asked if AA Transportation will be able to accommodate transporting students in a socially distant manner. Lastly, he asked about data analysis and keeping such records.

Member Kirshenbaum asked what is the value added when going to a hybrid model, what is the impact on parents if going remote, and how will a two day/three day hybrid schedule impact parents and teachers. Member Kirshenbaum also has questions about how staff will see a large number of students, especially at the middle school level.

Member Long-Bellil thinks it might be worth considering phasing into a hybrid model, starting the school year with a remote model. She asked about safety consideration for teachers, asking about safety shields for teachers and

if that is worth considering. Lastly, Member Long-Bellil asked about professional development for teachers during the summer months. Superintendent McCall reported District administration is looking into this.

Member Mills hopes that whatever decision is made and implemented, that it is done right and done well. He voiced several comments and questions and suggestions, touching on the topics of technology and platforms that may be used, air movement and sufficient ventilation, the October 1 SIMS count and the importance of having all Wachusett students accounted for, the status of the Early Retirement Incentive, and he cautioned the District must be careful of any potential liability associated with the reopening of schools.

Member Mitchel voiced that the District must at least anticipate going remote at some point, and to plan accordingly. He restated Member Mills' comment about whatever is implemented is done right and done well.

Student Representative Mangus asked what training for students will look like. Superintendent McCall spoke about training for students.

Member Gustafson wanted to clarify her questions about special education. It would be useful to have more details about these students' needs and how the District/schools and the District-wide programs will meet the needs of these students.

Vice-chair Dennis understands remote learning will be offered to those who want it, even in the event the hybrid model is the option to be implemented. He asked if it might be possible to offer a hybrid model to all who want this option. If the answer is no or not sure, then it would be important to offer to those who need it the most and to the youngest students. Superintendent McCall explained, at DESE's request, districts are to develop and share with DESE the three models options: in-person, hybrid, remote. Vice-chair Dennis noted the very tight timeline with a Special Meeting in two days, and another Special Meeting on August 5, 2020. He asked what information the Superintendent might need from the School Committee in order to present a comprehensive plan on August 5, 2020.

Member Woodland asked what is being looked at for remote, since parents are considering homeschooling. She encourage the District to make a remote plan an actual plan.

Member Brown asked about the 10 extra days for teachers/staff and if those days will be used for professional development, which Superintendent McCall confirmed.

B. Recommendations Requiring Action by the School Committee

1. Motion: To approve the Job Description of the Superintendent of Schools, as amended.

(L. Long-Bellil)
(A. Young)

At Chair Weeks' request, former Chair Mills explained the reason for the motion. Member Shapiro asked who will be taking on the role as Chief Negotiator. Member Mills explained it could be District Counsel, the Chair of the Legal Affairs Subcommittee, the Superintendent of Schools, or the Director of Human Resources. It can be decided on a case by case basis.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Megan Weeks
Michael Dennis
Nicole Amos
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherri Haber
Jeffrey Haynes
Robert Imber
Laura Kirshenbaum
Linda Long-Bellil
Kenneth Mills
Benjamin Mitchel
Karl Ottmar
Deidre Shapiro
Asima Silva
Christina Smith
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland
Adam Young

Opposed:

None

The motion was unanimously.

V. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business brought before the School Committee.

VI. Secretary's Report

A. Approval of #1347 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on July 13, 2020

(A. Young)
(J. Haynes)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Nicole Amos
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherri Haber
Jeffrey Haynes
Laura Kirshenbaum
Linda Long-Bellil
Benjamin Mitchel
Karl Ottmar
Asima Silva
Christina Smith
Deidre Shapiro
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland
Adam Young

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Megan Weeks
Michael Dennis
Robert Imber
Kenneth Mills

The minutes were approved 17-0-4.

Motion : To extend the meeting until 10:30 PM

(S. Haber)
(R. Imber)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Michael Dennis
Nicole Amos
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherri Haber
Jeffrey Haynes
Robert Imber
Laura Kirshenbaum

Linda Long-Bellil
Kenneth Mills
Benjamin Mitchel
Karl Ottmar
Deidre Shapiro
Asima Silva
Christina Smith
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland
Adam Young

Opposed:
None

Abstained:
Megan Weeks

The motion was approved 20-0-1.

VII. Treasurer's Report/Financial Statements

Chair Weeks reminded the Committee that if there were questions regarding the Director of Business and Finance's report that Members should contact the Superintendent; if there were questions regarding the Treasurer's Report, Members should contact the Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair.

VIII. Committee Reports

- A. Management Subcommittee (M. Weeks, Chair, M. Dennis, Vice-chair, S. Brown, M. Lavoie, C. Smith, A. Young)

Deferred

- B. Education Subcommittee (C. Smith, Chair, L. Long-Bellil, Vice-chair, N. Amos, K. Bennett, S. Haber, R. Imber, L. Kirshenbaum, D. Shapiro)

Subcommittee Chair Smith reported on the meeting of the subcommittee that took place immediately before this School Committee meeting.

- C. Business/Finance Subcommittee (M. Dennis, Chair, K. Mills, Vice-chair, M. Gustafson, B. Mitchel, K. Ottmar)

Subcommittee Chair Dennis reported on the meeting of the subcommittee held on July 22, 2020. The subcommittee did not support the recommendation of the administration to approve the contract amendments with the transportation providers. Subcommittee Chair Dennis explained administration has been requested to provide a ballpark figure on the cost of reopening.

10:00 PM Member Mitchel left the meeting.

Motion: To renew the contract by and between the Wachusett Regional School District Committee and James J. Dunbar, referred to as the Treasurer, for a period of twelve months (7/1/2020 – 6/30/2021).

(M. Dennis)
(L. Long-Bellil)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Michael Dennis
Nicole Amos
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherri Haber
Jeffrey Haynes
Robert Imber
Laura Kirshenbaum
Linda Long-Bellil
Kenneth Mills
Karl Ottmar
Asima Silva
Christina Smith
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland
Adam Young

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Megan Weeks
Deidre Shapiro

The motion was approved 18-0-2.

D. Legal Affairs Subcommittee (S. Brown, Chair, R. Imber, K. Mills, K. Ottmar)

Deferred

E. Superintendent Goals and Evaluation Subcommittee (M. Lavoie, Chair, L. Kirshenbaum, K. Williamson, L. Woodland)

Deferred

F. Facilities and Security Subcommittee (A. Young, J. Haynes, L. Woodland)

Deferred

G. Audit Advisory Board (B. Mitchel, Chair, A. Young, Vice-chair)

Deferred

H. Ad Hoc Subcommittees

1. Ad Hoc Subcommittee to Negotiate the Superintendent's Contract

Motion: To discharge the Ad Hoc Subcommittee to Negotiate the Superintendent's Contract

(K. Mills)

(S. Brown)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Michael Dennis
Nicole Amos
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherri Haber
Jeffrey Haynes
Robert Imber
Laura Kirshenbaum
Linda Long-Bellil
Kenneth Mills
Karl Ottmar
Deidre Shapiro
Asima Silva
Christina Smith
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland

Opposed:

None

Abstained:

Megan Weeks
Adam Young

The motion passed 18-0-2.

I. Building Committees

J. School Council Reports:

Central Tree Middle School (M. Lavoie), Chocksett Middle School (K. Williamson), Davis Hill Elementary School (K. Williamson), Dawson Elementary School (L. Kirshenbaum), Glenwood Elementary School (N. Amos), Houghton Elementary School (D. Shapiro), Mayo Elementary School (A. Young), Mountview Middle School (S. Brown), Naquag Elementary School (S. Haber), Paxton Center School (K. Ottmar), Thomas Prince School (A. Silva), Wachusett Regional High School (K. Mills), Early Childhood Center (L. Woodland), Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SEPAC) (M. Gustafson)

No School Councils have met yet.

IX. Public Hearing

Corey Burnham-Howard, Princeton resident (attachment 6)

Brian Kelch, parent and scientist (attachment 7)

Mellyn Shurtleff, Sterling resident (attachment 8)

Amy Michalowski, Holden resident (attachment 9)

Kristina Naiman, Grade 3 teacher (attachment 10)

Lynn Hanley, Holden resident (attachment 11)

Jenn Halloran (attachment 12)

X. New Business

Member Gustafson asked if there is anything Chair Weeks or District administration needs from the Committee. Chair Weeks has reached out to MASC for direction, in light of these unprecedented circumstances and how meetings are conducted.

Vice-chair Dennis requested that the questions asked this evening, including in the public hearing comments, be published to the District website by the close of business on Friday, July 31, 2020.

X. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

(K. Mills)
(S. Brown)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Megan Weeks
Michael Dennis
Nicole Amos

Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherri Haber
Jeffrey Haynes
Robert Imber
Laura Kirshenbaum
Linda Long-Bellil
Kenneth Mills
Karl Ottmar
Deidre Shapiro
Asima Silva
Christina Smith
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland
Adam Young

Opposed:
None

The motion was unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Darryll McCall, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

DM:rlp

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Public comment by Mary Lampron-Shepherd
- Attachment 2 – Public comment by Benjamin and Sarah Smith
- Attachment 3 – Public comment by Lorraine Neilan
- Attachment 4 – Public comment by Sarah Galvin
- Attachment 5 – Presentation: WRSD School Reopening 2020-21 Overview
- Attachment 6 – Public comment by Corey Burnham-Howard
- Attachment 7 – Public comment by Brian Kelch
- Attachment 8 – Public comment by Mellyn Shurtleff
- Attachment 9 – Public comment by Amy Michalowski
- Attachment 10 – Public comment by Kristina Naiman
- Attachment 11 – Public comment by Lynn Hanley
- Attachment 12 – Public comment by Jenn Halloran

Good Evening, my name is Mary Shepherd, president of the Wachusett Regional Education Association, 1320 Wachusett Street Jefferson. From a teacher's intuition, I believe we all need a little grounding right now. To ground my students in the art room, I begin with a breathing exercise. You see their transitioning is not always easy and the pandemic has demonstrated clearly transition can be hard for all of us. So let's begin with a little self kindness. My students start each art class by taking three release breaths. Please join me ... deep breath in and a sigh out, ... again deep breath in and a sigh out, ... last one deep breath in and a sigh out. We follow with a "get your focus on" breath, straightening our spines tall and being still, ... we start with a slow breath in, pause, and slow breath out you have control, ... again slow breath in, pause, slow breath out, ... last one slow breath in, pause, slow breath out. At this point, I would ask the students to listen to my singing bowl and I say when the sound goes away, let's arrive in art, but here let us arrive in this moment for the important work of all involved in education. Tonight's focus is two survey results of WREA members on how our educators feel about school in the fall of 2020.

The WREA board has been working hard getting our finger on the pulse of our members, especially returning to school in the mists of a pandemic. Our first survey, found 78% of WREA support the proposals by MTA, AFT, and BTU for re-entry, which includes a phased entry, first teacher return for training and set up classrooms for social distancing, second students and families visit to see the changes and new protocols, third the students return to school, fourth is assessing the new classroom curricula and health standards implemented about six weeks in. Other areas of the proposal looked at: health and safety, modification to state regulations, teaching/learning areas, full funding, reimagined curriculum, and most importantly access to computers and internet for all.

Next, the WREA surveyed our members about the 20-21 school year re-entry, 377 members responded, a strong sampling. When I analyzed two questions together it was LOUD and CLEAR how educators feel, 83% of educators are somewhat uncomfortable or uncomfortable about returning to school. Of the whole, 50% of members would return to school with proper PPE and safety measures. Our biggest concern about returning to school included knowing if there would be disinfecting materials and

PPE, air quality and proper ventilation, and public health regulations not being followed. The last two areas I will share with you tonight is first, over 51% of our members are, or one of their household family members are part of an increased risk population to be infected by COVID-19. With that said the next answer about returning to school will not surprise you, 47% of members would like to return to a remote only setting, 36% to some type of hybrid model, and 16% would like to return to in-person only with masks and social distancing. Working with many other local associations, reading blogs and articles from other areas in the state and nation, our survey results are similar. I ask you, how many of you here are ready to hold these school committee meetings in person, possibly with three feet of social distancing?

My final thought is our schools are densely populated with poor ventilation at best, just think for a moment sports arenas are densely populated with air conditioning and good ventilation, yet returning to sports arenas is not part of the Commonwealth's plan until a vaccine is widely available. How are these two densely populated public spaces so different? As we discuss returning to school, learning what others are feeling, learning what risks educators, students, parents, and all stakeholders are willing to take, we are beginning to shed some light on why our anxieties and fears are warranted, they are warning us for a reason. Are we going to listen?

Attachment 2

Dear Chair Weeks and Members of the School Committee,

As parents and concerned residents of the district, we are again writing to express our concern and displeasure about the proposal to pay AA Transportation 75% of the money the district would have paid for bus services during the COVID shutdown period.

We noted in our last letter that paying for services not rendered was illegal, and only recently became legal under emergency legislation passed just last month. Clearly, spending taxpayer money for nothing in return is not in the public interest.

It is worth remembering that we do not legally owe AA Transportation anything. When DESE suggested that municipalities pay vendors who may be at risk of financial insolvency, this was merely a suggestion, not a dictate. Any payment made is a gesture of good faith on our part toward the bus company.

To be sure, there are many districts across the commonwealth who have opted to pay nothing to vendors who did not provide services during the shutdown period. If we decided to pay 0% – which is perfectly legal – we would realize an actual savings of \$1.3 million dollars. Instead, the proposed settlement would have us pay \$1 million dollars to AA Transportation in a manner that would have been illegal in June. The \$300,000 dollars in “savings” as presented by the district, is only a “savings” if we operated under the notion that we were obligated to pay the vendor in full for services not delivered.

We understand that these are unprecedented times and that the law was changed to help vendors at risk of becoming financially insolvent. However this does not excuse the School Committee from its responsibility to perform financial due diligence on behalf of the students and taxpayers of the towns.

To date, the district administration has been unable to demonstrate AA's financial vulnerability. This is not the administration's fault – but rather the owner of AA transportation – Mr. Ron Ernenwein. His lack of transparency in detailing his financial need is a problem. It seemed clear from discussion at Wednesday's business and finance subcommittee meeting that the letter he sent asking for 75% lacked the detail necessary for the committee to make a responsible decision. Mr. Ernenwein should disclose his official business financial information for analysis by a CPA as a **precondition prior to settling on any amount**. Until Mr. Ernenwein agrees to this, the district should be conservative with taxpayer money and offer 0%.

Asking Mr. Ernenwein for full financial transparency should not be seen as an adversarial request. It is clear that the district enjoys working with Mr. Ernenwein. **Simply stated, this is a responsible and respectful request. Trust, but verify.**

Those in support of paying 75% figure frame their argument around the importance of maintaining friendly relationships with our community partners. Yet, during the June 17th Finance Sub-Committee meeting, one

member described the district as being “backed into a corner” by Mr. Ernenwein. Our district business director stated that if we don’t agree to 75%, Mr. Ernenwein told him “he would have to do what he has to do.” Is this the behavior of a quote–unquote “community partner?” No. This sounds like a threat.

In closing, it is clear that the district wants to pay AA Transportation to maintain their current working relationship with Mr. Ernenwein. Unfortunately, it is also clear that the School Committee does not have the information needed to make a fiscally responsible decision at this moment. The School Committee is literally facing a choice to either provide programs for students **or** pay AA transportation for services never delivered.

As parents, this is no contest. Our money should be going to ensuring our kids have access to music class, world language programs, teachers, and counselors who will help them recover and thrive in these challenging times. We understand that this is not a simple decision and are absolutely appalled at the apparent bullying behavior of the bus company. We urge the Committee to do the right thing, not the easy thing. Offer a fair payment rooted in evidence. Trust, but verify. Do not be cowed by threats.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Smith
Benjamin Smith



Attachment 3

Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Fwd: District School Reopening Plans

1 message

Megan Weeks <megan_weeks@wrsd.net>
 To: Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 10:16 PM

Megan K Weeks, M.Ed
 Chair WRSD School Committee
 Assistant Principal, Murdock High School

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Lorraine Neilan** <lorraineneilan@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 9:40 AM

Subject: District School Reopening Plans

To: <adam_young@wrsd.net>, <linda_woodland@wrsd.net>, <kelly_williamson@wrsd.net>, <megan_weeks@wrsd.net>, <deidre_shapiro@wrsd.net>, <christina_smithSC@wrsd.net>, <asima_silva@wrsd.net>, <karl_ottmar@wrsd.net>, <benjamin_mitchel@wrsd.net>, <kenneth_mills@wrsd.net>, <linda_longbellil@wrsd.net>, <matthew_lavoie@wrsd.net>, <laura_kirshenbaum@wrsd.net>

Lorraine Neilan
 44 Plymouth Road
 Holden MA 01520

Dear Members of the Wachusett Regional School Committee:

I am writing to you today as a 6th grade science teacher at Mountview Middle School and a taxpayer of the town of Holden. I find myself consumed with the thoughts of reopening school. We all want and need our schools to reopen. We long for getting back to normal as much as we can. But there is the reality of where we are and what we face in attempting to get there. I never expected that I would express this opinion because I feel that students will learn best in collaborative groups within the walls of the school building. However, when one weighs each and every concern, I feel it will be absurd to force teachers, or anyone else - a group that includes students, parents, administrators, support staff, bus driver, custodial and cafeteria staff AND all others with whom they interact back into the school setting that medical expert say carry a high risk for the spread of COVID 19.

My opinion is that reopening school is too dangerous and will be too disruptive. No one disagrees that the students need to be in the classroom. No one disagrees that these are tough decisions to make. But, often mandates can be misaligned with the actual circumstances. Are these decisions being made considering the views of those who actually deliver the services whether it be a bus driver or the classroom teacher? Does this pandemic require teachers to have a new job skill of miracle workers? Teachers are the ones in trenches doing the actual heavy lifting. Meanwhile, those who are making these decisions may never have to enforce children wearing a mask, coordinate social distancing (or the illusion of it), staffing the school building, prepare for both within the classroom instruction and remote learning and/ or the possibility of remote due to an infection. Thus far, we have only seen health and safety guidelines. I can only imagine the frustration of building administrators trying to achieve those health and safety guidelines.

I am asking that the school committee and the school district consider making a decision now to open school **remotely** in the fall and begin to train teachers NOW how to teach remotely. We began teaching in the spring in crisis mode. We were all forced to figure it out on our own with NO guidance from the WRSD. If we start now we have the opportunity to prepare for distance learning in the fall with purpose and intent all the while maintaining a focus on equity. There should be clear and consistent guidance with regard to the platforms and websites used within the district. Consistency will help our students become familiar with a finite set of tools for remote learning and not be subjected to numerous websites in different classrooms. Effective teaching can take place from anywhere when teachers are trained with purpose and given the correct tools.

Please consider the parents who need to get a plan in place. Imagine a scenario where a family has children in elementary school and middle school and having to figure out separate plans for their family. Consider parents who are employees of the WRSD who may not live within the district and have different schedules for themselves and their children. Consider the parents who are terrified to send their children to school and will keep them at home.

One thing that has me sleepless is the feeling of not being prepared. What works best to teach online and assess students?. What are the methods chosen by the Wachusett Regional School District to best serve our demographics? I am unaware of any summer

webinars planned by the school district on which tools and platforms we are to use. Other districts are doing this work now. They are making decisions and preparing their teachers for the fall. My fear is that the district will drop the ball with regard to teacher training as they did on the May 11th PD day. Please ask the superintendent to put in place voluntary webinars with the tools we will need to teach remotely.

Many teachers feel that we are in a canoe without a paddle heading for a waterfall. There has been no regular communication to staff from the district. None of us have heard who is participating on the reopening committee or what their discussions have entailed. Let us avoid scrambling to come up with a plan a week before school starts. Being proactive will help parents with the arrangements they need to make. Being proactive will help teachers prepare to best serve their students. All will appreciate time to settle in and prepare for the fall.

Thank you,

Lorraine Neilan

The contents of this e-mail, and any attachments, are the property of the Wachusett Regional School District, and subject to the Public Records Law, M.G.L. c.66, § 10.



Attachment 4

Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Fwd: Before & After School Care Approval

1 message

Megan Weeks <megan_weeks@wrsd.net>
To: Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 10:17 PM

Megan K Weeks, M.Ed
Chair WRSD School Committee
Assistant Principal, Murdock High School

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Sarah Galvin** <sgalvin@townofrutland.org>
Date: Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 2:33 PM
Subject: Before & After School Care Approval
To: questions@wrsd.net <questions@wrsd.net>
Cc: agreene@holdenma.gov <agreene@holdenma.gov>

Good Afternoon,

I am sending this email in regards to before and after school programs this fall. While I completely understand that the School Committee and Re-Opening Task Force have many decisions to make in a very short time period, I am wondering if a decision will also be made in regards to before and after school care if school does reopen?

After speaking with the principals at both of the elementary schools in Rutland, they have explained that is a decision that will be decided on by the Task Force. Based on Dr. McCall's email from this weekend, I understand that the decision regarding school will be made public on August 10th. In the event that school does open (whether full time or hybrid) will it also be announced if before and after programs will be able to run. I have already received emails and calls from many parents regarding this, but have not been able to give them an answer.

If a decision to not allow these programs to run has already been made, even if school is open, would it be possible to notify the Recreation Department in each of the 5 towns so that we may let families know so they have time to prepare as well as inform our staff.

Any information you can share would be greatly appreciated.

Thank You,

Sarah Galvin
Director of Safe Place

Rutland Recreation
250 Main Street
Rutland, MA 01543
(508) 886-0048

The contents of this e-mail, and any attachments, are the property of the Wachusett Regional School District, and subject to the Public Records Law, M.G.L. c.66, § 10.

WRSD School Reopening 2020-21 Overview

DRAFT

July 27, 2020

WACHUSETT REGIONAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Overview

- Review of Parent/Guardian Survey Results
- Defining learning models
 - In-Person
 - Hybrid
 - Remote
- Information to support reopening models - DESE
- Next steps



2

Survey Results

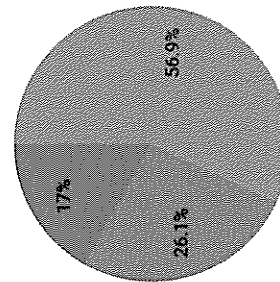
- Survey window: July 15th - 19th
- Over 4,000 responses (households)
- When presented with 3 reopening models:
 - **Most** support for hybrid
 - **Least** support for full in-person
- Technology access
- Transportation & Cafeteria Access



3

Survey Results: Learning Models

If the district implements a 100%
in-person learning model with
state-mandated safety protocols:



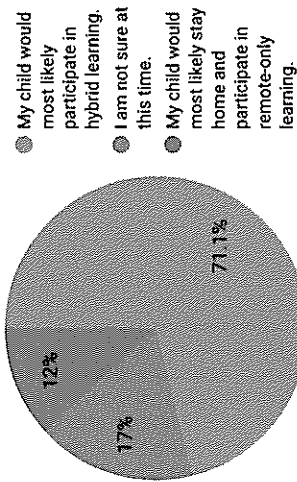
- My child would most likely attend school in-person.
- I am not sure at this time.
- My child would most likely stay home and participate in remote-only learning.



4

Survey Results: Learning Models

If the district implements a hybrid learning model with state-mandated safety protocols, where students switch between in-person and remote learning on an alternating schedule and about 50% of the students are present in school each day:



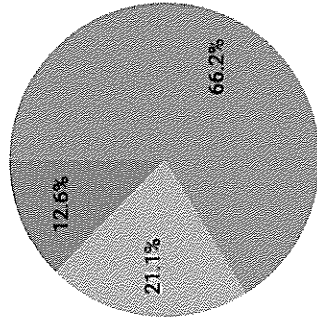
- My child would most likely participate in hybrid learning.
- I am not sure at this time.
- My child would most likely stay home and participate in remote-only learning.

5



Survey Results: Learning Models

If the District implements a 100% remote learning model:



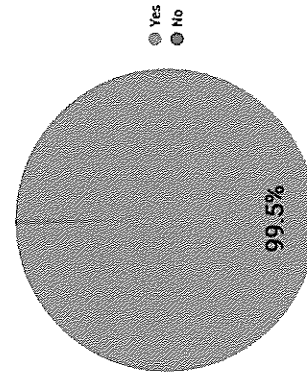
- My child would participate in remote learning.
- I may explore alternative schooling options.
- I am not sure at this time.

6



Survey Results: Technology

Does your household have internet access?



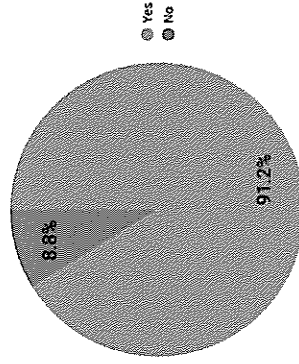
- Yes
- No

7



Survey Results: Technology

Do all school-aged children in your household have access to a computer, Chromebook, or tablet that allows them to effectively participate in remote learning?



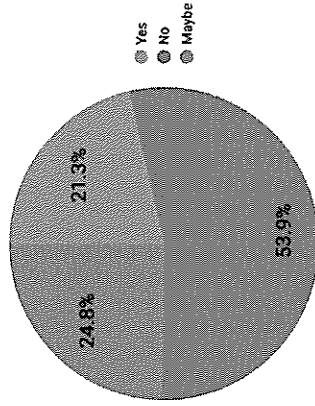
- Yes
- No

8



Survey Results: Technology

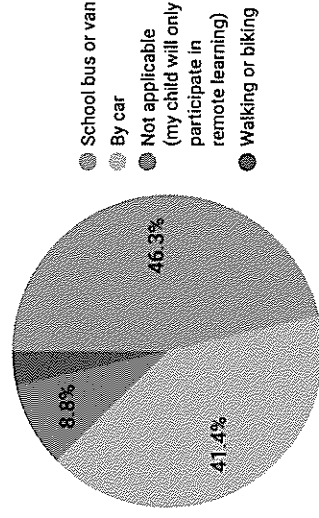
As a parent, do you anticipate that you will need **training or support** for the technology tools used in the district in order for your child(ren) to succeed in remote learning?



9

Survey Results: Transportation & Cafeteria

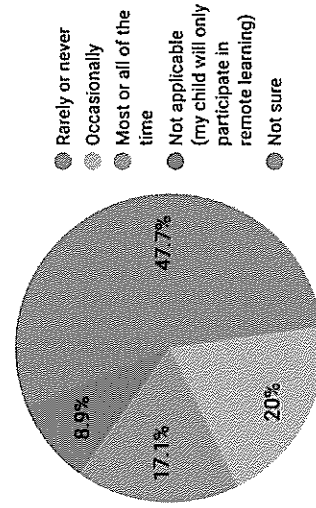
For in-person or hybrid learning, how would you plan to get your child to and from school?



10

Survey Results: Transportation & Cafeteria

For in-person or hybrid learning, how often would your child purchase meals from the cafeteria?



11

WRSD Reopening Task Force Focal Points

- Student and staff physical health - A focus on prevention, screening, monitoring, and supplies (personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning and sanitizing chemicals, etc.)
- Student and staff mental health - A focus on reconnecting relationships between and among students, faculty, & staff
- Academics - a focus on remote learning, classroom configurations, staffing implications, Special Education, & Professional Development

12

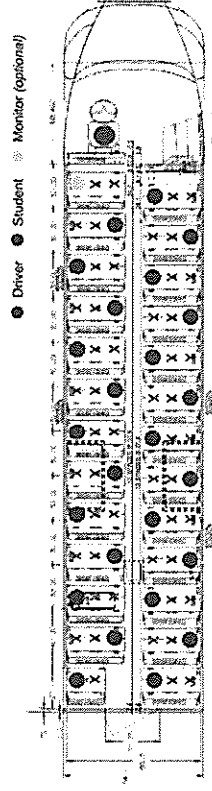
DESE Guidance: Transportation

- Transportation guidance on school buses or vans
- Masks required at all times for all riders, including Kindergarten and Grade 1
 - Not more than 1 student per bench, alternating rows
 - Students from the same family may sit together
 - Windows open whenever feasible
 - Assigned seats - no switching buses
 - Allows for accurate contact tracing
 - Districts are asked to explore the option of adding Bus Monitors

13

DESE Guidance: Transportation

Bus seating



14

DESE Guidance: Transportation

Maximum occupancy by bus size

Bus model	Maximum occupancy (excluding students who could sit together from same household)	Percentage of full bus capacity
83-passenger bus	27 passengers	33%
77-passenger bus	25 passengers	32%
71-passenger bus	23 passengers	32%
47-passenger bus	15 passengers	32%
29-passenger bus	9 passengers	31%
26-passenger bus	8 passengers	31%
22-passenger bus	7 passengers	32%
14-passenger bus	6 passengers	43%

15

Possible Learning Models for the 2020-2021 School Year

1. In-Person
2. Hybrid
3. Remote

16

Developing the WRSD Learning Models

1. **By July 31**, districts must complete and submit a **preliminary reopening plan summary** to DESE. Districts will fill out an online form that allows DESE to collect key summary information about districts' reopening models and other planning considerations.
2. **By August 10**, districts must finalize their **comprehensive plan documents**, submit them to DESE, and release them publicly to their communities



17

Learning Model 1: In-Person

- Full return to typical school model with safety measures in place
 - Social distancing of students on the bus, in school, and on the playground as well as all classroom desks and school furniture
 - Mask requirements for students and staff
 - Frequent sanitizing/hand washing
- DESE has tasked all school districts to develop a plan for a full reopening under the in-person model in the fall



18

Learning Model 1: In-Person

An example of the impact of social distancing on a typical classroom:

- Classroom measurements: 22 ft. x 29 ft. or 638 sq. ft.
- Social distance: 6 ft. (or 8 ft. from the center of one seat to the center of another)
- Classroom capacity: 10 students with no more than 2 adults in the room at any time



19

Learning Model 1: In-Person

Implications associated with facilities:

- Even at 3 ft. of social distance and converting alternative spaces such as libraries, gymnasiums, and cafeterias to classrooms, not all of our classrooms and learning spaces will allow for all students to attend at the same time.
- Additional learning spaces would need to be rented to allow for the full in-person to work



20

Learning Model 1: In-Person

Implications associated with busing:

- With the current DESE safety guidelines on transportation, it would not be feasible to transport all of our students to and from school - 1,183 possible seats
- We cannot employ a staggered student start time model without adding many additional buses
- Traditional start times would require at least 48 additional buses to accommodate rider capacity limits



21

Learning Model 2: Hybrid

- In general, half of the students would receive in-person schooling and half would participate remotely; these populations would then switch on an alternating basis
- Same 3 ft. to 6 ft. distancing
- Having 2 cohorts would reduce the cross contamination
- Typically, this would be somewhere between 10 and 14 students per class
- Compromise between full in-person and remote learning



22

Learning Model 2: Hybrid

- The hybrid model consists of dividing the student population into two (or more) cohorts
 - We are exploring a model with two cohorts
- While one of the cohorts is attending school in person, the other cohort will be working remotely
- Some students may have the opportunity to attend part or both of all sessions



23

Learning Model 2: Hybrid

Models under consideration:

- **2 days in-person/3 days remote (2 cohorts)**
 - Cohort A - Mon/Tue in-person, Wed/Thu/Fri remote
 - Cohort B - Mon/Tue/Wed remote, Thu/Fri in-person
 - Students with intensive IEP services may attend additional days
- **1 week in-person/1 week remote (2 cohorts)**
 - Cohorts A & B alternate weekly
 - 4-4.5 days per week in-person
 - Students with intensive IEP services may attend additional days



24

Learning Model 3: Remote

- Both synchronous and asynchronous learning models will be employed at all grade levels
- Teacher directed synchronous learning model will focus on whole class and small group instruction and will occur at scheduled times
- Independent asynchronous learning will employ online programs such as Google Classroom, Lexia, and Actively Learn as well as other programs that will support student online assessment and learning
- New tools used to enhance the online learning experience include Screencastify and Sora Online Library
- Teachers will continue to offer individual support and provide office hours



25

Other considerations

- There is the strong possibility that DESE will seek a waiver to the 180 day school year requirement for student learning - 170 or 175 days
- If approved, the school year calendar would allow for an additional 5 to 10 staff training days at the start of the school year prior to students starting school
- Central Office will utilize the August Administrative Retreat to work with building level administration to review reopening plans to align with safety protocols across the District



26

Next Steps

- The WRSDC will vote on the plan to be implemented for the start of the school prior to August 10th
- The School Committee will review and revise the school calendar to support the implementation of the approved plan
- WRSD will continue to collaborate with the WREA and other associations to support MOU's for the approved reopening plan with a goal of completion by August 10th
- Each school will review and implement the approved plan at the building level



27



Attachment 6

Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Fwd: Questions on planning considerations

1 message

Megan Weeks <megan_weeks@wrsd.net>
To: Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 10:18 PM

Megan K Weeks, M.Ed
Chair WRSD School Committee
Assistant Principal, Murdock High School

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Corey Burnham-Howard** <cburnhamhoward@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 7:54 PM
Subject: Questions on planning considerations
To: <questions@wrsd.net>

Good evening,

First, I would like to thank all involved in the effort to coordinate the YouTube Live stream of tonight's meeting. It is working well!

Second, a question regarding transportation: It sounds like a survey will be going to parents asking more specifically/definitively whether they would drive their students vs bus riding. I understand this will help plan for transportation availability. I think it will be helpful to know— if a family commits to driving, but has occasional need for the bus option will that be permitted?

Third, with regard to remote learning, who would be teaching those classes— whether with hybrid model or solely remote model? Would it be WRSD teachers (e.g., taking on both in-person and remote teaching with hybrid model)? Or would it be via contracted teachers through a third-party vendor?

Thank you,
Corey Burnham-Howard
11 Osgood Rd, Princeton

The contents of this e-mail, and any attachments, are the property of the Wachusett Regional School District, and subject to the Public Records Law, M.G.L. c.66, § 10.



Attachment 7

Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Fwd: Question: Is testing being considered? If so, what is that plan?

1 message

Megan Weeks <megan_weeks@wrsd.net>
To: Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 10:18 PM

Megan K. Weeks, M.Ed
Chair WRSD School Committee
Assistant Principal, Murdock High School

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Brian Kelch** <brian.kelch@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 7:58 PM
Subject: Question: Is testing being considered? If so, what is that plan?
To: <questions@wrsd.net>

Dear Committee and members of the Wachusett community,

As a parent and scientist who studies infectious diseases, I want to express my opinion that in-person schooling needs to be made safe. Risk can't be completely eliminated, but it can be reduced to acceptable levels. Many other countries are providing us with the blueprints for safe, effective schooling. Let's follow their lead.

After reading the reopening plan, I was surprised that testing was not mentioned at all. Testing is one of the critical linchpins in controlling the spread of the virus. If one looks at the countries that have successfully controlled their outbreaks, the unifying feature is widespread and ample testing. Without testing, we rely entirely on the appearance of symptoms in students, teachers, or staff. Due to the explosive nature of the spread of this virus, waiting for symptoms is usually far too late. For example, Israel learned this lesson the hard way after reopening their schools too early and with no testing; by the time they even knew they had a single individual on campus who was confirmed to be infected with coronavirus, the disease had already spread to scores of students and teachers.

While I understand there are issues with testing (for example: cost, HIPAA laws, etc.), innovative solutions are out there to allow a swift reaction before the virus can effectively spread. Rapid, cheap (\$1) saliva tests are available (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/03/opinion/coronavirus-tests.html>). Screening of sewage could detect the appearance of the virus on campus. Other testing options can allow a safe and robust reopening. This needs to be part of the plan.

The fact that testing wasn't mentioned at all is concerning, as it suggests that there has been a lack of consideration for this cornerstone of infectious disease control. **Is testing being considered? If so, what is that plan?**

Thank you,
Brian Kelch PhD

The contents of this e-mail, and any attachments, are the property of the Wachusett Regional School District, and subject to the Public Records Law, M.G.L. c.66, § 10.



Attachment 8

Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Fwd: High school impacts

1 message

Megan Weeks <megan_weeks@wrsd.net>
To: Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 10:18 PM

Megan K Weeks, M.Ed
Chair WRSD School Committee
Assistant Principal, Murdock High School

----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Mellyn Shurtleff** <mellynshurtleff@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 8:02 PM
Subject: High school impacts
To: <questions@wrsd.net>

1. How will the district keep groups of students and staff at the high school consistent when all students have different class schedules? Impacts contact tracing.

2. In the hybrid model, will teachers be teaching remotely AND in person? Is this a reasonable expectation?

Thank you,
Mellyn Shurtleff, Sterling

The contents of this e-mail, and any attachments, are the property of the Wachusett Regional School District, and subject to the Public Records Law, M.G.L. c.66, § 10.



Attachment 9

Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Fwd: Request to Dr. McCall

1 message

Megan Weeks <megan_weeks@wrsd.net>
To: Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 10:19 PM

Megan K. Weeks, M.Ed
Chair WRSD School Committee
Assistant Principal, Murdock High School

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **The Michalowskis** <amy.michalowski@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 8:20 PM
Subject: Request to Dr. McCall
To: <questions@wrsd.net>

Hi,

At the time of this email there are over 230 people watching this meeting live on YouTube and possibly (likely?) many others watching on Holden Cable TV. Members of the school committee are asking important questions about plans for September. Rather than share answers to these questions with just the school committee members, it would be very helpful if Dr. McCall would post answers to as many questions as possible on the WRSD page so that all interested members of the community are aware of current thinking. I think all families of the district are capable of understanding that the scenarios might change, but sharing current scenarios with transparency will help all district families make plans for the fall.

Thank you,
Amy Michalowski
28 Pinecroft Ave
Holden

The contents of this e-mail, and any attachments, are the property of the Wachusett Regional School District, and subject to the Public Records Law, M.G.L. c.66, § 10.



Attachment 10

Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Fwd: Public comment

1 message

Megan Weeks <megan_weeks@wrsd.net>
To: Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 10:19 PM

Megan K. Weeks, M.Ed
Chair WRSD School Committee
Assistant Principal, Murdock High School

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Kristina Naiman** <krissy.naiman@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 8:24 PM
Subject: Public comment
To: <questions@wrsd.net>

Dear School Committee,

I am a third grade teacher and I wanted to share just a quick calculation of time taken away from learning due to procedures when we are at school. Forgive me as I am sure I am missing some transitions, but this rough calculation may give some light into a "school day" of a third grader.

Arrival typically takes 15 minutes, with new procedures of 6 ft distancing and hand washing/sanitizing we can estimate it may double: 30 minutes. This would be the same for dismissal: so another 30 minutes. Now we are at one hour.

I estimate it would take about 5 minutes to sanitize before snack and 5 minutes after. This is along with an extra 5 before and after lunch. This puts us at a total of 1 hour and 20 minutes so far.

Before and after recess will probably add another 5 for each transition- this puts us at 1 hour 30 minutes.

We typically have two whole class scheduled bathroom breaks which take 10-15 minutes. Most likely this will double, so 20-30 minutes each time. Let's split the difference and say 25 minutes each time. We are now at 2 hours and 20 minutes of transitions and sanitizing and this does not include snack eating (10 minutes), lunch eating (30 minutes), recess (30 minutes).

When you add snack, lunch and recess we are now at 3 hours and 30 minutes of non-academic time (not including mask breaks by the way). This is a little more than 50% of the school day, for reference.

Thanks for your consideration of all these factors when trying to prepare the best reopening plan,
Kristina Naiman, Grade 3 Teacher

The contents of this e-mail, and any attachments, are the property of the Wachusett Regional School District, and subject to the Public Records Law, M.G.L. c.66, § 10.



Attachment 11

Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Fwd: Public comments

1 message

Megan Weeks <megan_weeks@wrsd.net>
To: Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 10:19 PM

Megan K Weeks, M.Ed
Chair WRSD School Committee
Assistant Principal, Murdock High School

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Lynn Hanley** <lynnh1@charter.net>
Date: Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 9:24 PM
Subject: Public comments
To: <questions@wrsd.net>

Good evening, and thank you for your efforts.

I have some comments that perhaps could be included in the Wednesday community input meeting:

1. DESE guidelines do not include temperature checks upon arrival at school, if we have any kind of in-person learning. This is a concern.
2. DESE guidelines do not include retesting for a negative result, for students returning to school after quarantine/illness.
3. DESE guidelines encourage carpooling in lieu of taking busses. This would seem to be contradictory to social distancing guidelines.

One of the proposed hybrid models has some students coming Monday/Tuesdays. How to address equity issues because of the Monday holidays where that cohort will miss in-person learning?

Subs are going to be very difficult to come by. Many of our excellent, existing subs are older and retired. It would be hard to imagine that they will be willing to sub in these conditions.

Surely, there are transportation savings if we offer a remote model. Those savings could be applied to materials for quality remote offerings.

Thank you for all the work you are doing to support our staff and students.
Lynn Hanley
11 Wyoming Drive

The contents of this e-mail, and any attachments, are the property of the Wachusett Regional School District, and subject to the Public Records Law, M.G.L. c.66, § 10.



Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Fwd: Questions Answered Document

1 message

Megan Weeks <megan_weeks@wrsd.net>
To: Rebecca Petersen <rebecca_petersen@wrsd.net>

Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 10:18 PM

Megan K Weeks, M.Ed
Chair WRSD School Committee
Assistant Principal, Murdock High School

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jenn Halloran** <jmdhalloran@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Jul 27, 2020 at 8:14 PM
Subject: Questions Answered Document
To: <questions@wrsd.net>

In reference to member Sylva's questions, Dr. McCall agreed to share a document with "everyone" recording answers to questions that have been raised. This would be helpful for the public as a reference to questions that have been answers and those that still remain to be answered. Will this document be made available to teachers, parents, or the public in addition to school committee members?

Thank you!

The contents of this e-mail, and any attachments, are the property of the Wachusett Regional School District, and subject to the Public Records Law, M.G.L. c.66, § 10.