

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
HOLDEN PAXTON PRINCETON RUTLAND STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1357

Monday, January 25, 2021
7:00 PM

MEETING CONDUCTED REMOTELY, VIA GOOGLE MEET

Wachusett Regional School District Committee

Megan Weeks, Chair	Kenneth Mills
Michael Dennis, Vice-chair	Karl Ottmar
Melissa Ayala	Michael Pantos, Jr.
Krista Bennett	Deidre Shapiro
Scott Brown	Asima Silva
Maleah Gustafson	Christina Smith
Sherrie Haber	Jeffrey Sullivan
Laura Kirshenbaum	Kelly Williamson
Matthew Lavoie	Linda Woodland
Linda Long-Bellil	Adam Young

Committee Members Absent:

Robert Imber	Benjamin Mitchel
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Administration Present:

Darryll McCall, Superintendent of Schools
Robert Berlo, Deputy Superintendent
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:

Kenichi Gomi	Kathryn Mangus
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Others:

Melissa Martin and Tammy Tod, SEPAC
Mary Cringan
Project 351 Ambassadors
Ekaavli Daga, Holden
Leighla Boucher, Paxton
Charlie Doyle, Princeton
Emma Day, Rutland
Jordan D'Amelio, Sterling

Chair Weeks called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Chair Weeks announced the meeting was being conducted remotely, via Google Meet, and was being broadcast live on Channel 194 and holdentv.com. Members of the public could access the meeting via YouTube. Chair Weeks explained that members of the public could submit comments for Public Hearing by way of a link on the District website and she will read aloud what is submitted.

Chair Weeks started the meeting by recognizing retiring secretary Rebecca Petersen.

With no objection by members, Chair Weeks moved Public Hearing to after the Chair's Opening Remarks.

I. Chair's Opening Remarks

○ Recognition of Project 351 Ambassadors

Chair Weeks invited TPS former principal Mary Cringan to speak about Project 351 and to introduce this year's Ambassadors. The students were congratulated and wished the very best in the year ahead serving as Ambassadors. Student Representative Mangus, who also served as a Project 351 Ambassador, spoke to the new Ambassadors, wishing them well in the year ahead.

○ Update/Report by SEPAC (Special Education Parent Advisory Council)

Chair Weeks welcomed Melissa Martin to the meeting, and Ms. Martin made a presentation and spoke to the information about a survey conducted by SEPAC. With Ms. Martin's approval, the presentation was shared with members of the Committee (attachment 1).

○ Discussion of WREA Statement of No Confidence and possibility of the need to form a task force to look into concerns

Chair Weeks brought forward the point of discussion on the agenda.

Motion: To refer to the Superintendent Goals and Evaluation Subcommittee the statements of no confidence by the WREA, for the purpose of investigation and to make a recommendation to the full Committee on a disposition for the complaints.

(M. Dennis)

(M. Pantos)

At Chair Week's invitation, Vice-chair Dennis, the maker of the motion, spoke to the motion and the reasoning for his bringing this motion before the School Committee. Chair Weeks opened the floor to questions and comments. Member Ottmar addressed the Committee. At Member Gustafson's suggestion and request, Member Mills, Chair of the Superintendent Goals and Evaluation Subcommittee, spoke about this matter being referred to that subcommittee.

Motion: To postpone action on the motion on the floor until the February 8, 2021 regular School Committee meeting, and to obtain an opinion from District Counsel in advance of the February 8, 2021 meeting.

(L. Long-Bellil)
(S. Haber)

Discussion continued, including the appropriateness of referring this matter to the Superintendent Goals and Evaluation Subcommittee. Member Brown, Chair of the Legal Affairs Subcommittee, also voiced his opinion about postponing action on this motion until the February 8, 2021 meeting, and also about seeking opinion from District Counsel.

Chair Weeks reminded members discussion should be limited to the motion to postpone.

Roll call vote on motion to postpone:

In favor:

Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherrie Haber
Kenneth Mills
Deidre Shapiro
Kelly Williamson
Adam Young

Opposed:

Michael Dennis
Laura Kirshenbaum
Matthew Lavoie
Linda Long-Bellil
Karl Ottmar
Michael Pantos, Jr.
Asima Silva
Christina Smith
Jeffrey Sullivan
Linda Woodland

Abstained:

Megan Weeks

The motion failed 9-10-1.

Members were given the opportunity to speak about the main motion on the floor. A few members made comments. Vice-chair Dennis again spoke to the motion. Continuing discussion in an executive session, at another date, might be inline, suggested by Member Long-Bellil. Member Gustafson suggested that perhaps the

initial discussion on this matter might be at a Management Subcommittee meeting. Vice-chair Dennis asked Member Mills if he, as Chair of the Goals and Evaluation Subcommittee, felt the matter would be appropriate to refer to that subcommittee or to another subcommittee, perhaps the Management Subcommittee.

Chair Weeks re-read the motion on the floor.

Roll call vote on main motion:

In favor:

Michael Dennis
Laura Kirshenbaum
Matthew Lavoie
Kenneth Mills
Karl Ottmar
Asima Silva
Linda Woodland
Adam Young

Opposed:

Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherrie Haber
Linda Long-Bellil
Michael Pantos, Jr.
Deidre Shapiro
Christina Smith
Jeffrey Sullivan
Kelly Williamson

Abstained:

Megan Weeks

The motion failed 8-11-1.

Chair Weeks will speak with MASC Executive Director Glenn Koocher, and she will consult with District Counsel. She will take members' questions/comments about this matter, and she will keep the Committee apprised on next steps in light of the motion on the floor failing. She also mentioned that the Management Subcommittee will meet on January 27, 2021, and she will consider having this matter on a future agenda for the Management Subcommittee.

II. Public Hearing

Chair Weeks read what members of the public submitted for Public Hearing (attachment 2):

Keith LaVigne, 135 Meadow Wood Drive, Holden

Gertrude, 47 Courtney Drive, Holden

Kerri Knorring, 30 Coventry Road, Holden

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

Student Representative Mangus spoke positively about the re-opening of schools. She spoke about Student Council making up “care packages” for teachers and for other staff members as schools began hybrid. She also reported the Wachusett Art Collaborative has created a tribute to MLK.

IV. Superintendent’s Report

A. Discussion of Report

Superintendent McCall spoke about the re-opening of schools on January 19th. He also spoke about some COVID cases that were reported in one of the programs. Superintendent McCall spoke about his meeting with Boards of Health representatives this date, and he also mentioned the rollout of vaccinations is slower than originally anticipated. He spoke about pool testing and that he is investigating how this might be implemented in the District, though more information and research is needed before any decision about pool testing is made. Upon inquiry, Superintendent McCall spoke about vaccinations and phasing. At Member Pantos’ inquiry about special education services, Administrator of Special Education Smith encouraged parents to reach out to building leaders if they have concerns or questions about services. Member Haber spoke about the District COVID dashboard and she asked if the information on the dashboard can be expanded.

Member Ayala advocated on behalf of Cohort C students, whose transition was not as smooth or positive as the transition for Cohorts A and B, the hybrid, in-person students. Superintendent McCall spoke to Member Ayala’s concerns and he told her he will look into the issues she raised.

Member Long-Bellil asked for a status update on students who selected hybrid v those who are remaining remote. Superintendent McCall reported these numbers are fluid, but are in the 70/30 (hybrid/remote) range. He explained by mid-week he will look at numbers more closely, one week after the implementation of hybrid.

Member Woodland agreed with comments made by Member Ayala and the fact that students in Cohort C may be suffering since the implementation of hybrid on January 19, 2021. Member Woodland requested a report on a regular basis, perhaps weekly, about the number of staff/students who are quarantined; individuals who would have been in a building but are not due the need to quarantine/COVID. She asked when will there be an update on what hybrid is

doing educationally for students in Cohorts A and B, information that might be available and provided by the Educational Consultant.

Member Silva agreed with Members Ayala and Woodland.

Vice-chair Dennis had a question about how remote students are receiving the required number of instructional hours, and he also mentioned use of CARES funds to assist the District with meeting instructional needs.

Member Kirshenbaum expressed her concern about live streaming and student instruction. She asked the pros and cons with regard to live streaming, and she asked about staffing needs in the classrooms, especially at the elementary level, citing an example of when a teacher, in-person, needs to step away from streaming to assist a child in the classroom and the impact of this disruption on Cohort C students. Superintendent McCall reported that Human Resources is actively attempting to hire new staff to help with coverage and staffing needs, explaining that these hires are somewhat difficult to come by. Member Kirshenbaum concluded that addressing these needs is of utmost importance.

Member Gustafson spoke about information/data on the COVID dashboard. She also asked for an update on the progress and activities of the Educational Consultant. Member Gustafson reiterated the request that Superintendent McCall keep the Committee updated on what he feels is needed in the schools, be it staffing or other items.

Member Pantos asked the number of permanent substitutes brought on board, which Superintendent McCall confirmed is 16, individuals who will be kept on for the remainder of this school year. At Member Pantos' inquiry, Superintendent McCall spoke about staffing needs, the need for some staff to quarantine if exposed, how schools are being impacted by staff being out of the schools and/or working remotely.

B. Recommendations Requiring Action by the School Committee

9:05 PM Member Smith left the meeting.

1. Motion: Acceptance of donation of school and office furniture from UNUM of Worcester, Massachusetts, with an estimated value of \$20,000.
(K. Mills)
(M. Pantos)

At Superintendent McCall's invitation, Administrator Smith spoke about the donation of furniture and other equipment, explaining it is not necessarily classroom furniture, but more conference room and office furniture. Administrator Smith explained that most of the furniture will be going to the schools, with a portion of the furniture being put into use at the Central Office.

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Megan Weeks
Michael Dennis
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherrie Haber
Laura Kirshenbaum
Matthew Lavoie
Linda Long-Bellil
Kenneth Mills
Karl Ottmar
Michael Pantos, Jr.
Deidre Shapiro
Asima Silva
Jeffrey Sullivan
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland
Adam Young

Opposed:

None

The motion passed unanimously.

V. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business brought before the School Committee.

VI. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District held on August 24, 2020

Deferred

- B. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on September 14, 2020

Deferred

- C. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on September 29, 2020

Deferred

- D. Approval of the Executive Session Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on November 9, 2020

Deferred

- E. Approval of the Executive Session Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on November 17, 2020

Deferred

- F. Approval of the Executive Session Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on December 7, 2020

Deferred

- G. Approval of #1356 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on January 11, 2021

Motion: To approve the regular meeting minutes of the WRSDC held on January 11, 2021.

(S. Brown)
(L. Long-Bellil)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Megan Weeks
Michael Dennis
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherrie Haber
Laura Kirshenbaum
Matthew Lavoie
Linda Long-Bellil
Kenneth Mills
Karl Ottmar
Michael Pantos, Jr.
Deidre Shapiro
Asima Silva
Jeffrey Sullivan
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland
Adam Young

Opposed:

None

The minutes were unanimously approved.

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, K. Mills, A. Silva, C. Smith, A. Young)

Chair Weeks reported the Management Subcommittee will meet on January 27, 2021. At Member Mills' inquiry, Chair Weeks reported review of the Regional Agreement is on the agenda for the January 27th subcommittee meeting, the settlement agreements with the transportation provider(s) should be brought before the full Committee at the February 8, 2021 meeting, and FY22 budget development has begun and there will be a Budget Retreat on February 8, 2021, from 5:30 – 7:00 PM, to include a philosophical discussion of budget priorities.

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

In Subcommittee Chair Smith's absence, no report was made.

- 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 January 19, 2021 and that the subcommittee will meet next on February 1, 2021.

Member Woodland asked about the status of the FY21 budget, and if any of the programs that have been cut this school year can be reinstated.

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

Subcommittee Chair Brown reported the WREA has voted in support of the reopening MOA, and that will be brought before the full School Committee, in executive session, on February 8, 2021. He also spoke about the contract with the WAA which has been ratified by the union and will be brought before the full Committee on February 8th. Subcommittee Chair Brown reported this subcommittee will meet next on February 2, 2021.

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

This subcommittee update was taken out of order.

Subcommittee Chair Mills called members' attention to the Superintendent's goals update which was included in the Superintendent's Report. Chair Weeks opened the floor to questions and discussion. Member Gustafson suggested that more details and context should be included in the updates provided by the Superintendent.

- F. Facilities and Security Subcommittee (A. Young, Chair, K. Bennett, M. Pantos, L. Woodland)

Subcommittee Chair Young reported this subcommittee has not met since the last School Committee meeting, but he is planning to schedule the next meeting shortly. Member Brown asked if the Public Address (PA) system at the high school, which has been malfunctioning, can be looked into.

- G. Diversity, Equity, and Anti-Racism Subcommittee (A. Silva, Chair, L. Woodland, Vice-chair, M. Ayala, K. Bennett, M. Gustafson, J. Haynes, L. Kirshenbaum, L. Long-Bellil)

Subcommittee Chair Silva reported on a presentation Director Keenan made at the last subcommittee meeting, which she said was excellent and she suggested be shared with the full Committee. Subcommittee Chair Silva reported this subcommittee will meet on February 4, 2021.

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

No report was made.

- I. Ad Hoc Subcommittees

- J. Building Committees

- K. 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)

Member Woodland – Early Childhood Center

Member Williamson reported on discussions she had with Principals Norton (Davis Hill Elementary School) and LaBreck (Chocksett Middle School) about the re-opening of schools on January 19th.

IX. Public Hearing

Chair Weeks read what members of the public submitted for Public Hearing (attachment 3):

Dutch K Velez, 78 Campbell Street, Rutland

Teresa McAndrew, 70 Sherwood Hill Drive, Holden

Daniel Hebb, 2 Davis Way, Holden

X. New Business

Chair Weeks asked members to verbalize their requests, but to also email them to her by the end of the week.

Member Gustafson has a concern about the fact the Strategic Plan expires the end of June 2021, and some decisions about budget development are tied back to the Strategic Plan.

Member Haber asked for grades for the current school year in comparison to previous years, and she asked this be an agenda item.

Member Lavoie spoke about his past requests, made multiple times, for quantitative data and the educational impact, and that the state of education with data be an agenda item.

XI. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

(S. Haber)
(K. Mills)

Roll call vote:

In favor:

Megan Weeks
Michael Dennis
Melissa Ayala
Krista Bennett
Scott Brown
Maleah Gustafson
Sherrie Haber
Laura Kirshenbaum
Matthew Lavoie
Linda Long-Bellil
Kenneth Mills
Karl Ottmar

Michael Pantos, Jr.
Deidre Shapiro
Asima Silva
Jeffrey Sullivan
Kelly Williamson
Linda Woodland
Adam Young

Opposed:
None

The motion passed unanimously

The meeting adjourned at 9:46 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Darryll McCall, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

DM:rlp

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – SEPAC presentation
- Attachment 2 – Public comments
- Attachment 3 – Public comments



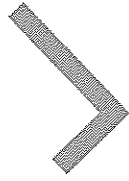
SURVEY RESULTS

JANUARY 12, 2021

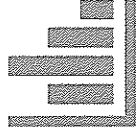
AGENDA



Goal of survey



Timeline



Results



Next Steps

GOAL OF SURVEY

01

Capture recent feedback from all stakeholders in district – parents, staff & administration

02

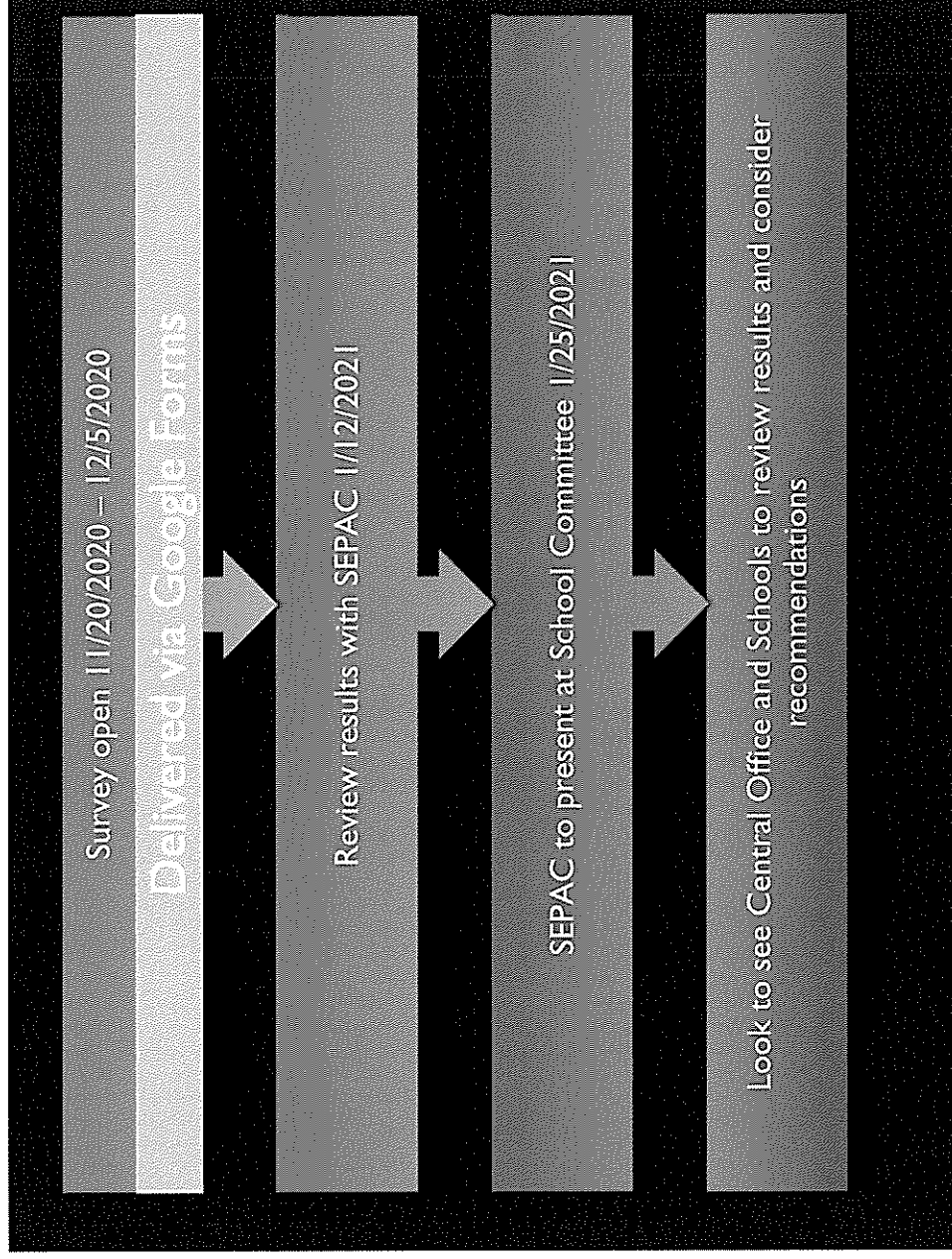
Understand unique issues – allow for transparency from all parties

03

Present findings and then focus on working to ensure progress can be made across district for the benefit of families and staff

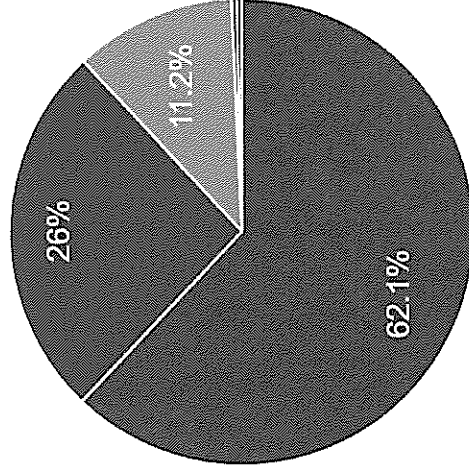
Conduct the survey, present findings and then see schools. SEPAC and administration act on recommendations. SEPAC would like to show at the end of the year the progress that's been made across areas.

TIMELINE



285 responses

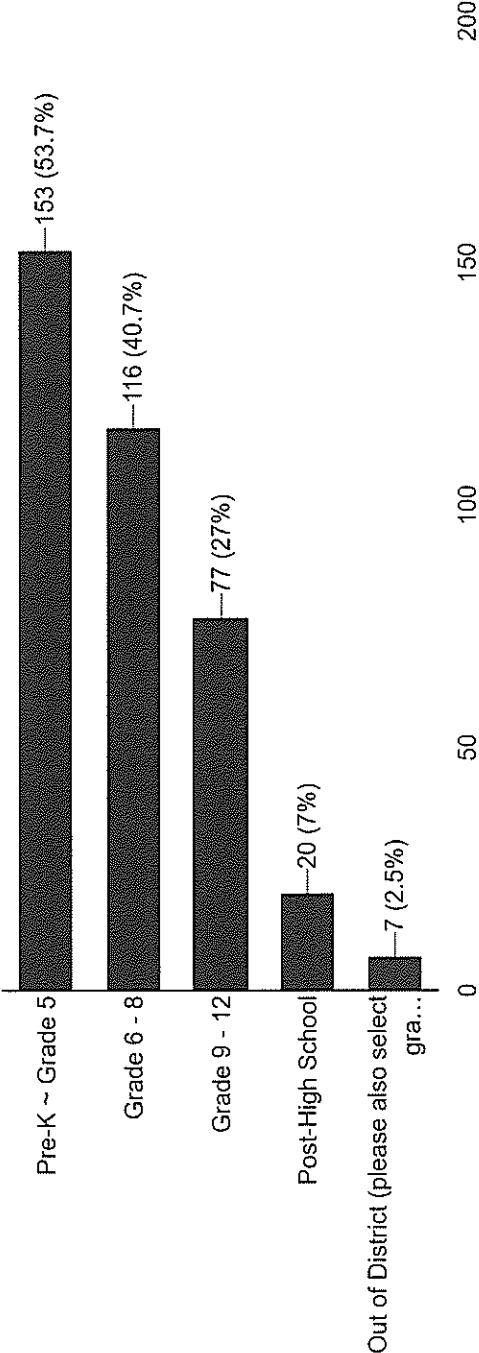
- Parent/Guardian of a WRSD student(s)
- Staff/Administration/Educator/Professional within WRSD
- Both
- Both a parent and work for wrsd
- Speech-Language Pathologist



RESPONSES BY RESPONDENT ROLE

Select the grade levels your student(s) are in.

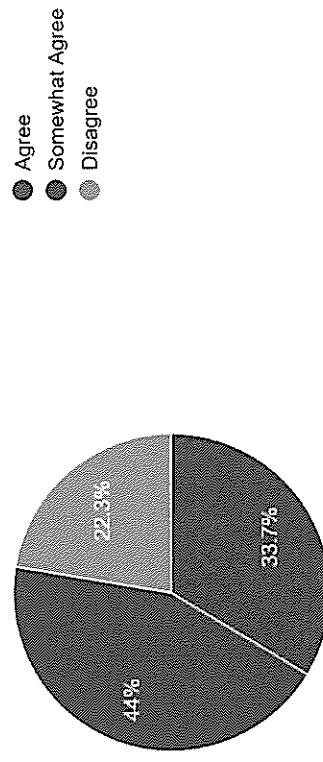
285 responses



RESPONSES BY GRADE

"The role of SEPAC within the community is clearly defined and communicated to parents and staff"

282 responses



ROLE OF SEPAC

Social emotional
health – Over 25%
of respondents
noted need for
SEL resources

- Struggling to connect with peers
- Transition back to school – concerns with routine and adjusting

Need for
in-person learning
– Over 65% of
parents noted
need for in-person
learning

- Frustration at delay in multiple false starts for school
- Missed communication
- More kids back in schools with IEP

MAJOR THEMES - PARENTS

COVID SAFETY

- COVID Safety
 - Students and Staff – Every high school staff respondent was concerned about in-person student safety
 - Consistency across district in protocols being followed
 - Transparency with issues and spread data

STAFF CONCERNS

-
- Staff concerns
 - Opportunities to keep up with paperwork
 - More common time for planning
 - Social emotional health
 - Communication from Central Office + SPED Office
 - More staffing needed

ADDITIONAL TOPICS

- Dyslexia screening
- Improved reading program – multi-sensory reading
- Online tutoring for students
- Service Delivery NOT met
- Programming for moderate needs children
- Post-grad program – need more vocational opportunities

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

- Support groups
- Opportunities for students to connect –
buddy/peer program for
Younger/Older students
- Parent support

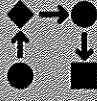
NEXT STEPS



Would like to see administration and schools review results for consideration in their planning



Stay connected with administration and parents to monitor progress



Re-survey in May and provide updates on progress/concerns