

## WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN □ PAXTON □ PRINCETON □ RUTLAND □ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1359

Monday, March 1, 2021

7:00 PM

MEETING CONDUCTED REMOTELY, VIA GOOGLE MEET

*Wachusett Regional School District Committee*

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

*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  
 Daniel Deedy, Director of Business and Finance  
 Brendan Keenan, Director of Social Emotional Learning  
 Christine Smith, Administrator of Special Education  
 Barry Sclar, Supervisor of Information Technology  
 Randi Jacob, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

*Student Representatives Present:*

Kenichi Gomi	Kathryn Mangus
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Chair Dennis called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

Chair Dennis 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 Dennis explained that members of the public could participate in Public Hearing by way of a link on the District website. Chair Dennis asked the public to state their name and address, to address any comments directly to the Chair, keep comments to two minutes, and to then disconnect from the meeting at the conclusion of their remarks. Chair Dennis asked if the public

would like to forward a written version of their comments to be included in the public record, to please forward to Randi Jacob.

## I. Public Hearing

The following members of the public spoke:

1. Robert Lavigne, 129 Cannon Road, Holden
2. Julie Reno, 10 Frederickson Avenue, Holden
3. Julie Hurley, 444 Marshall Street, Paxton
4. Mary Shepherd, President-WREA, 1320 Wachusett Street, Jefferson

Chair Dennis read what members of the public submitted for Public Hearing (attachment 1):

1. Rosemary Heinold, 378 Malden Street, Holden

## II. Election of Vice-chair

Chair Dennis accepted the following nomination for Vice-chair.

Motion: To nominate Christina Smith to serve as Vice-chair.

( K. Mills ) ( S. Brown )

Chair Dennis closed nominations for Vice-chair.

Roll call vote:

*In favor:*

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

*Abstained:*

Christina Smith - abstained

Member Christina Smith took over as Vice-chair of the School Committee. Vice-Chair Smith thanked the Committee for electing her as Vice-chair of the School Committee.

## III. Chair's Opening Remarks

Chair Dennis requested to take Chair's Opening remarks out of order to speak first to Opening Remarks. Chair Dennis acknowledged that Chair Weeks had stepped down from the School Committee, and on behalf of the School Committee would like to thank former Chair Weeks for her 5 years of service and to wish her well. Under the By-Laws, the Vice-chair resumes the role of Chair and Chair Dennis agreed to serve in that role for the remainder of the term.

Chair Dennis asked that during the meeting members raise their hands to speak through the chat.

Chair Dennis explained that the majority of the meeting's discussions would center around the FY22 budget and budget priorities. He further explained that the Annual Budget Hearing would be held on Monday, March 8, 2021, at 7:00 PM via Google Meet. The full Committee will be asked to vote approval of the proposed FY22 Appropriation at the regular School Committee meeting scheduled for Monday, March 15, 2021.

#### IV. Student Representatives (K. Gomi, K. Mangus)

Student Representative Kathryn Mangus reported Science Fair participants will be notified of their placement tonight which will determine representatives to Regional and State science fairs. Football, Girls Volleyball, and Cheerleading have started. Seniors have started their countdown party for the last 50 days of school. Scheduling of classes for next year has started. A Wellness Day is being offered on March 10th for students and staff. Signups starting on March 1st.

Student Representative Kenichi Gomi wished good luck to those students taking the SATs Saturday, March 13th.

#### V. Superintendent's Report

##### A. Recommendations Requiring Action by the School Committee

Motion: To affirm accuracy of Policy 6613.2 **Policy Relating to Pupil Services Athletic Head Injury and Concussion Policy**  
(S. Brown) (S. Haber )

Superintendent McCall explained the annual requirement of the Department of Public Health for the School Committee to vote to affirm that Policy 6613.2 is an accurate reflection of this district's concussion policy.

Roll call vote:

*In favor:*

Michael Dennis  
Christina Smith  
Melissa Ayala  
Krista Bennett  
Scott Brown  
Maleah Gustafson

Sherrie Haber  
Laura Kirshenbaum  
Matthew Lavoie  
Linda Long-Bellil  
Kenneth Mills  
Karl Ottmar  
Deidre Shapiro  
Asima Silva  
Jeffrey Sullivan  
Kelly Williamson  
Linda Woodland  
Adam Young

*Opposed:*

None

*Abstained:*

Mchael Pantos, Jr.

The motion passed 18-0-1.

B. Discussion of Report

Chair Dennis shared that the Superintendents' Report be broken out into four categories: FY22 Budget Priorities, Plan to increase in-person learning, Vision for the Model of SY 21-22, and review of the Regional Agreement. Chair Dennis has asked Superintendent McCall to present under each of those categories. Chair Dennis turned the meeting over to Superintendent McCall.

Superintendent McCall thanked members for sharing their thoughts and suggestions about the developing FY22 budget, and he appreciated their input submitted electronically via survey.

Budget Priorities

Superintendent McCall shared results of the FY22 Budget Priorities survey from 14 School Committee members (attachment 2).

Superintendent McCall started with a review of slides with a listing of all items that did not have specific budget implications.

Superintendent McCall asked that Members provide input as he goes through the survey results.

Several members had questions and comments about proposed or suggested new staffing positions.

Superintendent McCall reviewed survey results grouped under Domain 2 - Budget Considerations.

Member Williamson discussed Fountas and Pinnell curriculum, that it is a great resource and she recommended we do not discontinue this curriculum.

Superintendent McCall reviewed survey results grouped under Domain 3 - Budget Considerations Effective Instruction

Member Mills requested a staffing plan to be shared before upcoming Town Meetings.

Chair Dennis stated that we need approval from the School Committee no later than March 17th in order for the WRSDC proposed FY22 appropriation to be included on the warrant for the first Town Meetings, scheduled for Monday, May 3, 2021. Timing is important.

Member Gustafson asked what the administration is doing to assess and estimate the expected student population for next year and understand if students who have left are planning to return. Superintendent McCall indicated that a survey will be going out soon to these families who have left the District and their plans for coming back into the District. Superintendent McCall did say that it may be difficult to contact these families as they are no longer in the system.

Member Brown asked if we are looking to reach out to those students who are fully remote and their reason why they are staying remote. Superintendent McCall shared there will be a survey going to families to determine decisions to stay or switch from in-person back to remote or vice versa.

Superintendent McCall reviewed Domain 4 Budget Considerations (PD & Instructions for Collaboration)

Member Kirshenbaum questioned how we might leverage teachers' expertise in different areas for PD. Can a stipend per workshop, compensation of some sort be offered. This could be a cost saving measure having someone in staff provide professional development. Details for this in the budget plan could be useful.

Member Williamson suggested Teachers could provide a huge opportunity in providing online Professional Development for their peers.

Discussion about what Trauma Informed District might look like took place.

Superintendent McCall reviewed Domain 5 Budget Considerations (Students' Social, Emotional, and Health Needs).

Member Lavoie, Member Haber, and Member Mills all had comments about the staffing plan for this year and next year.

Superintendent McCall corrected the slide to reflect 3 additional counselors not 6.

Superintendent McCall reviewed Pandemic-Related Budget Considerations

Superintendent McCall reviewed 2020-2027 Staffing Plan - Pre-Pandemic.  
Superintendent McCall Reviewed 21 Actual Staffing Additions.

Superintendent McCall reviewed Covid Relief Grants

Member Long-Bellil requested that Special Education compensatory services be identified as its own item.

Member Mills would like to compare what we reduced in staffing last year and asked to add a column FY21 Pre-Pandemic Eliminations to the 2020-2027 Staffing Plan. Superintendent McCall is working on Proposed Additions based on staffing plan, Reductions and then Actuals. Director Deedy will address this at the Business/Finance Subcommittee meeting, and then it will be shared with all members.

Superintendent McCall asked Supervisor of Information Services Sclar to post the survey link in the chat.

Several members expressed their concerns that the survey would not provide any meaningful information, commenting their opinions that the survey is too general.

Chair Dennis moved to the next agenda item, to increase in-person learning for this school year.

Superintendent McCall presented, and spoke to DESE Plan to increase in-person learning this school year.

Superintendent McCall asked Administrator of Special Education Smith to talk about relaxing the ridership restrictions on van transportation starting on March 15th.

Superintendent continued with his presentation.

Chair Dennis asked Superintendent McCall to provide to the School Committee by Monday, March 8th, the in-person learning plan for elementary and middle schools.

Member Haber strongly suggested that a survey not be sent without a plan in place. She also expressed her concern about spacing in the classroom.

Member Woodland, Member Gustafson, and Member Woodland raised concerns about the conflicts of 6 foot distancing messaging between CDC, the state and DESE. DESE and the state go against the CDC guidelines of 6 feet.

A discussion ensued on use of Binex Testing. Director Keenan explained that Binex can provide some value as people could show symptoms that develop during the day.

Member Kirshenbaum recommended that when the District surveys families that a question be added to remote families specifically, asking their willingness to return to school with or without a vaccine. This may help with plans for the fall. Comment was made that some families will not send children to school until there is a vaccine in place for children.

Member Ayala has concerns about 3 foot distancing and a concern about not offering a remote program in the fall especially for those students who, for medical reasons, cannot return to school.

Administrator Smith explained that individual plans are written for students either on an IEP or 504 to accommodate needs, including medical.

Significant discussion ensued, including how lunch is served in the schools, increasing van and bus capacities, pool testing, the pros and cons of surveys.

Superintendent McCall confirmed he is working with AA Transportation and building principals to ensure assigned seating is addressed on the “yellow buses.”

Member Gustafson asked about the Back to School Task Force. Superintendent McCall confirmed the Task Force is reconvening meetings next week.

Chair Dennis asked that given half of the students at the high school are continuing with remote instruction and are not hybrid/in-person two days a week, what is preventing the school/District from having hybrid days being full days instead of half days. Superintendent McCall would consider this and if there is an option to do it, it could perhaps be implemented.

Superintendent McCall talked to slide on Vision for School Year 2021-2022.

Motion: To extend the meeting to 10:30.  
(K.Ottmar), (L. Long-Bellil)

Roll call vote:

*In favor:*

Michael Dennis  
Christina Smith  
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.

Member Kirshenbaum and Member Woodland would like to ensure the District is thinking now of options to offer a remote option for fall 2021.

Chair Dennis moved forward to the next agenda item, Regional Review Agreement.

Superintendent McCall gave an overview of the Regional Review Agreement.

Member Mills provided an update on the Regional Agreement review. He did voice his concerns on how quickly the Committee needs to move on this review.

Chair Dennis thanked members who have agreed to serve on the Ad Hoc Subcommittee to Review the Regional Agreement. He explained that this process should have started much earlier, and as a result are finding ourselves in an extremely tight timeframe to conduct a proper review.

Members have inquired about the status of School Committee meetings returning to in-person, and Chair Dennis has asked the administration what may or may not be feasible to have the School Committee back in person. Chair Dennis explained that this was not intended for a topic tonight and that there is no timeframe set to go back to meetings in person.

#### VI. Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business brought before the Committee.

#### VII. Secretary's Report

With no objection from members, Chair Dennis proposed the Committee vote approval of the January 25, 2021 special and regular meeting minutes, and the February 8, 2021 special and regular meetings minutes by unanimous consent. Chair Dennis will hold over on approval of executive session minutes until the next executive session.



- 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 #330 Special Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on January 25, 2021

No Motion brought forth to approve the regular meeting minutes of the WRSDC held on January 25, 2021. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

- H. Approval of #1357 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on January 25, 2021

No Motion brought forth to approve the regular meeting minutes of the WRSDC held on January 25, 2021. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

- I. Approval of the Executive Session Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on February 8, 2021

Deferred

- J. Approval of #331 Special Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on February 8, 2021

No Motion brought forth to approve the regular meeting minutes of the WRSDC held on February 8, 2021. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

- K. Approval of #1358 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on February 8, 2021

No Motion brought forth to approve the regular meeting minutes of the WRSDC held on January 25, 2021. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

VIII. Treasurer's Report/Financial Statements

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

IX. Committee Reports

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

Chair Dennis reported the Management Subcommittee met on February 11, 2021 and will meet again on March 11, 2021

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

Vice Chair Smith provided an update on the last Education Subcommittee meeting, where there was a discussion on budget priorities, the technology plan, a staffing plan, and a textbook plan. The subcommittee will meet next on Monday, March 8th.

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

Newly appointed Subcommittee Chair Mills reported the subcommittee will meet next on Tuesday, March 2nd. An update will be provided at an upcoming School Committee meeting.

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

In Subcommittee Chair Brown's absence, Member Ottmar updated that the next Legal Affairs meeting is on March 10th

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

Newly appointed Subcommittee Chair Lavoie updated that the next Superintendent Goals Subcommittee meeting will be on March 22nd..

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

Subcommittee Chair Young provided an update on the last Facilities and Securities Subcommittee meeting. Member Young gave big kudos to the level of effort to get the maintenance needs up to speed in all the buildings. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 25th.

- 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 Vice-chair Woodland provided an update on the Diversity, Equity, and Anti-racism Subcommittee meeting, during which the subcommittee updated the harassment policy. Next meeting is March 23rd where the main topic will be an update on DEEP.

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

AAB Vice-chair Young reported this Board has not met since the last School Committee meeting.

- I. Ad Hoc Subcommittees

Ad Hoc Subcommittee to Review the Regional Agreement

- 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 Haber - Naquag Elementary School

- X. New Business

There was no new business brought before the School Committee.

- XI. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn. (S.Haber), (R.Young)

Roll call vote:

*In favor:*

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

*Opposed:*

None

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Darryll McCall, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

DM:rj

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Public comment by Holden resident Heinold
- Attachment 2 – Survey results
- Attachment 3 - PowerPoint presentation

Attachment 1

378 Malden Street  
Holden, MA 01520  
December 4, 2020

Wachusett School Committee:

As a lifelong resident of the Wachusett Region and alumna of its school system, I would like to weigh in on the current sad condition of the Wachusett District schools. My children are also products of the system and my grandchildren are currently in the system, and since I taught for several years in the system, so I feel I have some perspective here.

Last winter I read about the hiring of a Director of Social Emotional Learning at a 6 figure salary. Since I firmly believe that the direction of a child's emotional state should be his or her parents' primary responsibility, I wanted to know exactly what this person would be doing in the schools. By this time, children were no longer being taught in person due to Covid and it was pretty obvious that the school system had not prepared for this situation and children were in fact not being educated at all.

I called the superintendent's office and asked to speak to Mr. McCall. He was out of the office so I left a voice message. When I didn't hear from him in a reasonable time, I called again. The secretary who answered said he was working from home and she would pass along the message. When I still didn't hear from him, I called again. This time the secretary said he was working from home and asked what I wanted to speak with him about. I asked for a copy of the job description for the Director of Social and Emotional Learning. She said it hadn't been updated since the last person who held the job (Wasn't this supposed to be a new position?) and then regaled me with what a nice young man the new director was. After several more attempts, I finally received a copy of the job description. It was dated May 2018 but reading the 160 words it contains, one would never attach a 6 figure salary to the position described. Wondering what the new director's job really was, I called back until Mr. McCall finally called me. I was not impressed. He had few answers. He had done little planning and his hang dog attitude exhibited no enthusiasm for the challenges he was facing. It was obvious that he was unprepared as he described how woefully understaffed he was and how school systems of our size are normally staffed with twice as many people as he has.

As the final arbiters of the hiring process, the School Committee is equally responsible with the superintendent for the disgraceful irresponsibility of the hiring for this position, regardless of what a nice young man the new director was. You can then image my surprise when I read that the superintendent had assigned the Covid Task Force leadership to this brand new hire who didn't have a current job description. Such an abdication of leadership during a time a crisis should have been grounds for immediate termination of Mr. McCall. The fact that the School Committee did not do so is an indication of the School Committee's incompetence and lack of leadership and is the reason that the Wachusett Schools find themselves in the sad state they are in today. For the salary being paid to the superintendent, there are highly qualified administrators available who would get the schools moving ahead – you should hire one. I won't even go into the disgraceful motives of the teachers' union. The education of our kids seems to be the last thing all of you are interested in.

As an FYI, St. John's High School in Shrewsbury received the very same stay home order that every other school received. The students there were given one day off to get set up for at-home learning last March. The second day they began a full schedule of classes which progressed almost seamlessly until the end of the school year. When the 2020-21 school year began, they were back in school in person full-time literally without losing a step.

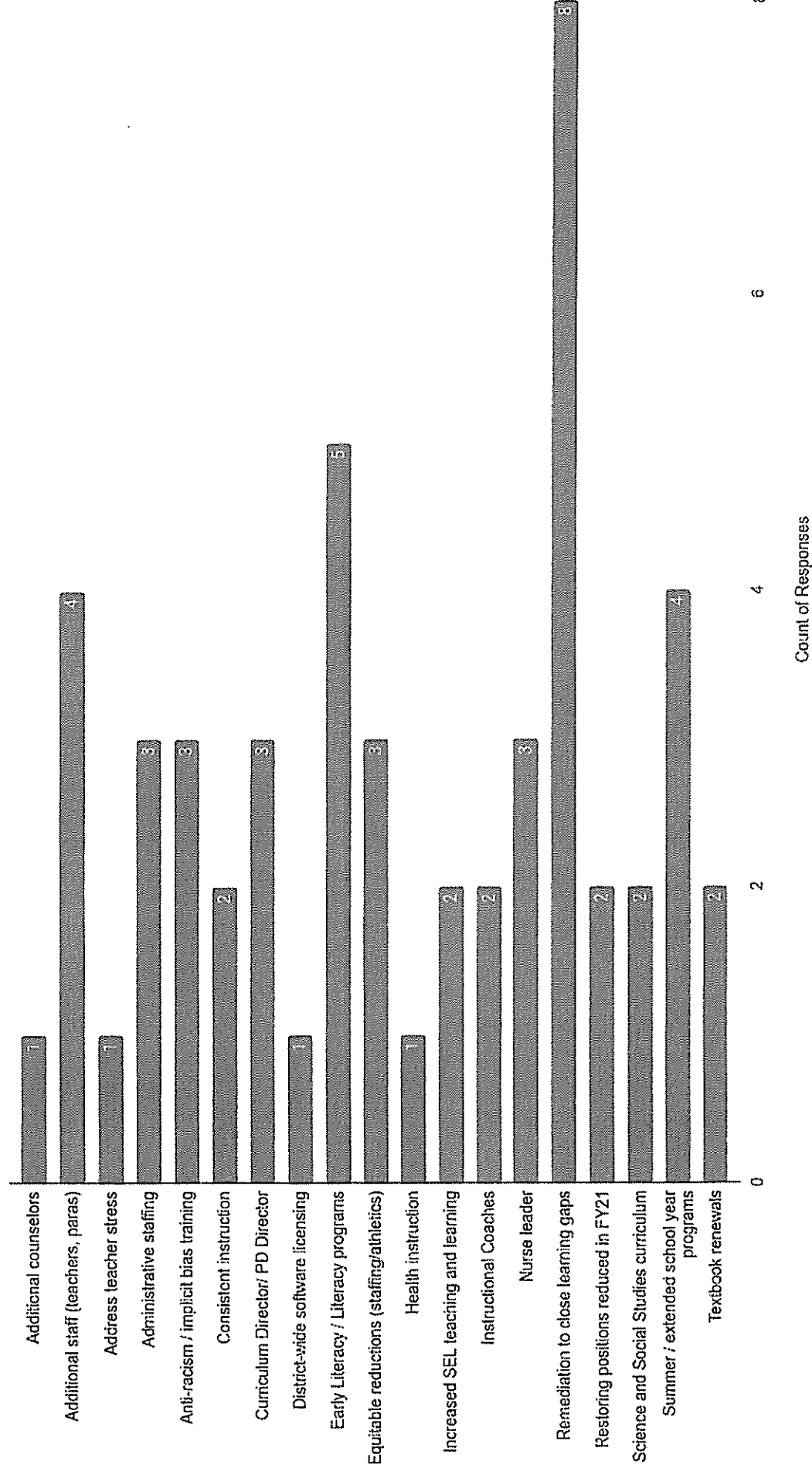
Why aren't the Wachusett Schools back in session? Due to your incompetence and irresponsibility our kids have lost a year of education that will negatively follow them for the rest of their lives. Do you not realize that while kids are at home receiving little to no valid instruction, many parents cannot work? You are destroying these kids and their families. As all state and federal officials have stated, these kids belong in school. You should all be ashamed of yourselves.

Rosemary E. Heinold

## FY22 Budget Priorities Survey Results

The chart below reflects WRSDC member responses (14 received) to the budget priorities survey shared during the 3/1 meeting.

## FY22 Budget Priorities Discussion



**Domain 1: Leadership, Governance, and Communication**

WRSD Social Media Presence / Outreach. Low to No budget impact. Enhance Outreach with texting / notification platform and survey functionality.

More leadership positions might be helpful.

Nurse and Assistant Business Director

Increased transparency within budget. Including itemized budget wherever possible, listing dollar amount spent on each type of materials/items.

Central office administration would greatly benefit having additional staff to assist with coordinating many different aspects to the district.

Line-item budget

Director of Facilities - as a new position or adjusted from current

An admin position to aid responding to the effects of COVID on our students and staff over the next couple of years. An admin position to provide reports and data for open communication with the public, maintain a dashboard of statistics.

Further Transparency in all communications including but not limited to: Budget, past spending, & current covid regulations and plans including possible roadblocks.

\*if we continue to use consultant, a clear vision of what her role will be and specific outcomes to maximize resources

\*Assistant Business Manager

\*Also, a data/assessment/survey manger -- or hiring someone with expertise in this area to fill Asst Bus Manager OR Asst Supt position. This will allow us to be more efficient in many areas - from assessment to "telling our story" in financial reports to tracking what's working with faculty & families and pull data to assist in grants, reports to SC, and decision-making

And THEN maybe:

\*Online presence for district - weekly video updates or live Q&A -- and technology to support it (Do we need Zoom to provide better communication?) Multi-media communication?

\*[although not requested, I also wonder about an Assistant Director for SPED as they are understaffed for a district our size]

Hire a new Deputy Superintendent

Bottom up approach on using simco reports on what is needed in the schools.



**Domain 2: Aligned Curriculum**

- Identify curricular changes (foreign language, music and arts) that were cut due to the funding issue and have a full discussion about what to restore before any other positions are added.

Have we checked that our books are not written with a supremacist biased?

Prioritizing spending on REQUIRED curriculum. Focusing less on optional or non-essential subject areas. Only purchasing new text books where absolutely necessary. (Example: Math and Science text books that are more than 20 years old.)

On the elementary level there is a need for a stronger science curriculum and an updated social studies/history curriculum. It should be equitable among all elementary schools in the district. The middle and high school level should also have updated history curriculum as well.

Math & science textbook renewals

Return of programs cut during the spring/summer of 2020. Any possibility to accelerate new textbooks and curriculum adoption.

Literacy program

I would like to see a return of the curriculum coordinator position.

Make Algebra I in 8th grade available to all students who demonstrate a proficiency in 7th grade.

\*Diversity/Inclusion initiatives (SEL?) embedded throughout (& training)

\*Early Literacy programs to meet needs of ALL students (F&P likley does not & a means for dyslexia screening that is required by law)

\*Improved consistency among schools -- ex: algebra I expanded (as descibed in strategic plan 5 yrs ago), SEL programs. We are a DISTRICT and need more consistent expectations

\*Making sure we are meeting needs of ALL students -- will adding more AP classes do that? or is it more effective to add a tech/literacy course to address all students not just our highest acheiving? Or investing in resources for differentiated instruction & inclusion particularly in the lower grades to reduce gaps in the foundational skills and allow students to reach their full potential

\*This isn't really curriculum, but IF we are cutting languages from some schools and arts in some schools, we need to ALSO consider reducing a proportional amount in athletics if we truly value all in the education of our students

**Domain 3: Effective Instruction**

Remote with. Full Time In Person. Best method to align staff with students with budgetary impacts.

-Identify and reinforce best practices from remote learning that will enrich the curriculum moving forward. This might require the purchase of apps, online resources, and hardware, and PD to use it well. Our curriculum should be adaptative to the needs of all learners, both those gifted and those struggling, and this is a point in time to use our new tools to achieve that.

-Identify students who have fallen behind and create a plan to bring them back to level, whether in the summer or with other supplemental instruction, or by holding them back where appropriate.

More teachers are needed. More paras. More subs.

Early Literacy - particularly addressing pandemic-related remedial needs - making sure everyone is caught up.

Focus on less screen-time based learning platforms.

Having enough staff is priority but also clear consistent instruction across the district. Possibly having PD days to work on this, also to include administrators in these PD days. Or possibly this is where central office needs additional staffing to ensure Effective Instruction is equitable across the district.

Improvements to the WRSD's digital infrastructure.

Opportunities for smaller class sizes and/or during the school day small group tutoring. Librarians/media specialists for middle schools (and hopefully elementary as well), to augment and/or expand from technology integration specialists. Continue upgrading teacher equipment.

Chromebooks for all 6-12, Apps and tech that redefine "text books"

I feel like this area needs to remain flexible based on the educational model we will be following at that time. Additional tech support will not be needed if we are back to a full in school model.

\*Diversity/Inclusion initiatives (SEL?) embedded throughout (& training)

\*District-wide licenses for programs used -- teachers should not have PTA paying for apps in one building and paying out of their own pocket in another. Coordinate and give them the tools they need to teach in the current environment

\*Greater emphasis on technology skills -- including typing in younger grades. If we are implementing 1:1 Chromebooks for more grades, we need to also provide skills in technology, web-based research, typing, apps, presentation skills, and other tools to teach them how to use them. I would suggest that DIGITAL LITERACY specialists (or "LIBRARIANS" would be able to do this)

Make sure we have the budget to train staff to effectively teach the students. Purchase any software that maybe needed for the training.

**Domain 4: Professional Development & Structures for Collaboration**

- Continued PD around remote learning strategies that can enrich typical curriculum.

Our schools need to become trauma informed schools. Professional Development should be solely focused on that, and it needs to be mandatory NOT voluntary.

Prioritizing spending on necessary staff and personnel without creating extra positions.

List job descriptions for all proposed positions for public viewing.

Clear understanding and schedule for professional development days. More structured information provided to teachers on conducting remote/hybrid teaching simultaneously. Especially if this teaching method is necessary long term. Staff development training on communication for all staff including administrators.

Feedback on PD from employees as well as administrators.

Progress towards anti-racism/implicit bias training, exploring possibilities of trauma-informed training (see below in Domain 5) for all staff.

Address the extreme stress teachers and all staff have been working under since March 2020. My thought there comes from the adage "you can't pour from an empty cup". We need to make sure our teachers are supported to do their best work, which should lead to better student outcomes.

Staff Training on using technology innovations that have been introduced this year

It seems that much of the current PD is self guided. I'd like to see the district focus on being more cohesive. For example I would have liked the Caitlin Tucker class to be required as the district rolled out the new learning model. If we want teachers to be on the same page we need to give them the same tools.

\* Diversity/Inclusion initiatives (SEL?) embedded throughout (& training)

\* District-wide training on things like differentiated instruction in reading/writing/math and SEL -- not just for SPED teachers and psychologist. We have at least one principal who has received grants to implement this in their building -- we need to make this an expectation and find ways to share this knowledge across all schools so that ALL students may benefit.

\* Technology instruction for ALL

\* Greater expectation of consistency across district

We need to make sure we have communication in place with what the administration and teachers need from PD. This should cost us very little.

**Domain 5: Students' Social, Emotional, and Health Needs**

Summer School services for any and all who need it

- Weigh hiring counselors against cutting teachers and programs. I am a bit aghast that we let go classroom teachers and are hiring staff without a discussion.

We need to have more than one counselor in each school. And there needs to be a curriculum implemented towards empathy, introspection, interoception, to develop a salutogenic model of health instead of a purely reactionary pathogenic model. This curriculum need not be intensive, but it needs to be consistent throughout every grade level, and mandatory.

Ensure all schools have adequate staffing of physical and mental health professionals (nurses, counselors, etc.)

Counselors, Resource Nurse, stress relief and management

Elementary counselors are needed and health teachers/classes for middle school students are a necessity. Health class plays a huge role in diversity training among other health topics that are essential in this age range.

Increased numbers of counselors.

Progress towards Anti-racism/implicit bias training - with remote learning, I am seeing a lot of missed opportunities for shifting the mindset in what our youngest learners are exposed to for what is deemed as "default" culturally. I'm sure it's been like this in all settings for a long time, meaning I don't think this is new to remote (instead, a new opportunity to observe this up close). It's through no malice, but lack of awareness. I've seen 6 year old children calculate if it's worth it to fight micro-aggressions on any given day when unintentionally marginalized through activities, word choice, visuals choice, etc. I've also seen teacher frustration at knowing that the response given isn't the best, but not having the tools to confidently correct themselves in the moment. These messages at such a young age, including the bystanders, are causing lasting damage the district should be committed to undo.

Counselors in the Elementary schools, support for after school clubs both online or in person (when we are back)

Continue INTERFACE program. Increase clubs at middle school level for more social interaction.

\* Counselors

\* Increased SEL teaching & learning across the district and embedded into academics at all levels -- which requires PD for teachers on how to integrate this [many are doing it, but needs to be an expectation & resources provided] AND access to specific curriculum resources to do so.

\* Maintain services like the Interface that support families

\*Maximize SPED services & resources (particularly inclusion students not in district-wide programs - we should never have a family feel as if they are not receiving what their student needs because we do not have the time/resources to do so. We need to find a way. If that is more SLP so they can visit classes and do real-time social skills, or additional paras to work on executive function areas OR provide consistency even when the primary teacher is absent. Identify what we NEED then ways to maximize the budget to meet those needs, rather than saying that "we need X, but the budget is limited."

\* Awareness of SES diversity within our district and policies that recognize that in a district where that may be particularly stigmatized. For example, I would love to see us find a way to support the free lunch implemented this year if possible. We have many more students impacted by low income situations in our district than people realize, many just above the poverty line, and need to find ways to support them (increasing fees for so many things does not do that).

In the past years we have added school counselors and installed programs to help students in need. It would be beneficial if we could add more to the district.

### **Pandemic-Related Priorities**

Getting back to school safely, full time, with all the supports needed for teachers and students

- Quickly decide if a remote academy would keep kids in district next year and make it happen.

same as above.

it all ties in together.

Testing and Contact Tracing

Full-Time In-Person Learning for 2021/22.

Making sure that teachers have needed supplies for safety; making sure tech programs are robust; training for teachers for tech, if needed

Pool testing continue to run through 2021/2022. Also to have additional staff or substitutes readily available for the 2021/2022 school year in case of staff/teacher quarantine.

Continued improvements for healthy buildings and facilities.

Maintaining a robust remote option within the district, in some way, for the students who cannot return to in-person school until children can be vaccinated. Perhaps this remote option could be used as a school choice draw for other districts to opt into. Also, remediation for missed screening for dyslexia/speech/etc, tutoring or other intervention to address pandemic-related disruptions to learning.

In theory, the district would be able to provide (outdoor) groups for S-E health during the summer and early fall to focus on reconnecting to each other in person, in order to create a better foundation for student learning once the typical school year begins again. Some of our students who cannot return to buildings could return outdoors in small groups.

Need to address anticipated early literacy gaps due to k-2 online instruction (more tutoring, extended day/year)

-Remediation / summer classes for ANY student who needs it. It should not be limited to those in special education or those who failed a course. If we do not have teachers available an online option should be made available. Special consideration should be made for those elementary children who did not reach reading level requirements. -Budget considerations need to be made for things like additional desks for elementary schools should students be back full time with spacing requirements still in place.

Bring all students back to school full time

\* Virtual academy -- there are some students who learn best and/or need to stay remote for health reasons. It is essential that we do whatever is needed to give them an option to stay in district

\* Re testing: I would be interested in investigated pooled testing on our own. It may have fewer hoops than what the state is offering and be able to be implemented more quickly for similar cost since we are a large district. Or could we form a consortium for testing purchasing with nearby districts to maximize our purchasing power as one of the largest regional districts in the state? Cost-comparison of different options --not just assuming the state is best

\* Summer options to help stem learning loss - not just for ESY students

Have a clear plan in place and communicate this to the employees and the parents of the district. If we want the elementary students in full time and the higher grades in more then we have them currently. We will have a added cost to have the students in more then the current hybrid plan we have in place now. Additional bussing cost. How to deal with the lunch situation at the high school and what related cost would that have. PPE cost.

### Additional Priorities

Transportation. Budget impact.

- Survey every kid that left the district for home school, SOON, and see what you can learn about what will bring them back next year. The private school kids are gone.

Stop spreading people thin...and hire the necessary staff!

Compensatory Education for Children in Special Education

Ensure contribution from each town is no greater than 3.00% increase from last year.

Hire qualified personnel for new District Director of Facilities role.

Increase budget for facilities and operations in order to continue to provide quality buildings with decent indoor air quality. Facilities budget has been level funded for past several years.

The middle school in Holden is in need of additional teaching staff. Also to ensure there are enough paraprofessionals and aides to consistently cover all children where needed per their IEP or 504 plan.

While this isn't quite able to be spelled out over the domains, I believe that our top priority should be increasing the number of counselors in our schools, as we have consistently heard about the mental health challenges associated with the pandemic. After that, would be to prioritize our SPED programs. After those, then would be to look at class size.

I'm concerned about town acceptance of any increase beyond "keeping the doors open", (which in itself is a fraught phrase and idea this year). I would love to see priority given to address the disruptions since Spring 2020, but I am skeptical that our towns will see increases in the budget as acceptable, even as they ask for the district to make up for lost ground. The communication of these priorities is critical, and must be aimed for those not well-versed in education-speak, all in the hope that we can create better opportunities for our students.

## Low student to teacher ratios

-I'm concerned about the transportation budget and its impact on the rest of the priorities. Based on the items listed as needing school committee input: I expect that the district will use Excess and Deficiency and stabilization money as we are expecting our towns to do the same. This will be a lean year for everyone. - Additional Staffing: if possible I'd like to see us return to our staffing plan and work in order of priority (maybe those priorities have changed with COVID) - Athletics: If athletic fees need to increase to keep programs active then they should increase where needed. I do not think that the track surface project should be a consideration this year. -%Goal: I don't think we should have a goal % increase but to see what is REQUIRED, then what is NEEDED and go from there.

Conduct systematic standards-based assessments and provide remediation through summer and extended day programming

\*I will reiterate that I think a data/survey person would have long-term benefits to many other areas of our district -- from curriculum assessment to parent outreach & satisfaction to SEL and financials. It would allow us to do more with less more efficiently and maximize the efficiency in which we design, collect, and use information to inform decisions and track progress as well as help identify trends to access funds

\* The diversity initiative is also essential in creating the kind of inclusive district -- from administration to curriculum to SEL -- that we have discussed. It touches every aspect of our district and engagement of families, staff, & students.

Looking at the overall budget and what the towns are asking us to bring to the table my priority is to not have any layoffs in any of our current employees. Classroom size is my number one priority. Also looking at the budget and the future we need to look at what cost comes with a remote academy. And what cost if we don't come up with a remote academy and students leave the district because they do not want to be in the buildings.

# Wachusett Regional School District

Report of Superintendent McCall  
March 1, 2021  
School Committee Meeting

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## *Topics for discussion*

1. Setting Our FY22 Budget Priorities
2. Plan to Increase In-person Learning for this School Year
3. Vision for Model of School Year 2021-2022
4. Regional Agreement Review

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## *Setting Our FY22 Budget Priorities*

- A survey of WRSDC members was conducted in late February in order to gather recommendations for FY22 budget planning
- The results are outlined over the next several slides, organized and consolidated to facilitate discussion
- Recommendations are also being gathered from the school Principals and Directors to inform our FY22 budget planning
- All of this information will be used to create our FY22 budget

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## Budget Priorities



## WRSDC Survey Results

The following items from the survey do not have specific budget implications:

- Social media / online presence and communication
  - Text notifications, surveys, video updates
- Budget transparency / line-item budget
  - Line-item budget provided 3/1/21
- Clarify role for consultant
- SIMCO reports to inform budget decisions
- Bias in curriculum materials
- Improved programmatic consistency

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## WRSDC Survey Results

The following items from the survey do not have specific budget implications:

- Reinforce best remote practices to enrich curriculum
- Reduced screen-based instruction
- Chromebook 1:1 program grades 6-12
  - Completed in February 2021
- Redefining "textbooks"
- Trauma informed district / schools
- Job descriptions for new positions
- PD feedback from staff
- Consistent district-wide PD

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## Strategic Plan Domains

Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5
Leadership, Governance, & Communication	Aligned Curriculum	Effective Instruction	Professional Development & Structures for Collaboration	Students' Social, Emotional, & Health Needs

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## WRSDC Survey Results

Domain 1 Budget Considerations  
(Leadership, Governance, & Communication)

- Administrative positions
  - Assistant Business Manager
  - Deputy Superintendent
  - Nurse Leader / COVID-related support
  - Data Manager
  - Assistant Special Ed Director
  - Curriculum Coordinator / PD Coordinator

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## **WRSDC Survey Results**

### **Domain 2 Budget Considerations (Aligned Curriculum)**

- Restoring positions reduced in FY21
- Textbook renewals
- Stronger Science and Social Studies curriculum
- Early Literacy / Literacy program
- 8th Grade Algebra availability
- Dyslexia screening and support
- Equitable reductions (staffing/athletics)

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## **WRSDC Survey Results**

### **Domain 3 Budget Considerations (Effective Instruction)**

- Pandemic-related remedial needs
- Summer / ESY programs
- Additional staff
  - Teachers, paras, subs
- Consistent instruction
  - Instructional coaches may help address this
- Librarians / media specialists
- Upgrade teacher equipment
- District-wide software licensing
- Digital literacy
  - Technology integration staff will provide support in this area

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## **WRSDC Survey Results**

### **Domain 4 Budget Considerations (Professional Development & Structures for Collaboration)**

- Increased district-wide PD offerings
- Anti-racism / implicit bias training
- Address teacher stress
- Continued training for technology added in FY21
  - Tech integration team will provide support in this area

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## **WRSDC Survey Results**

### **Domain 5 Budget Considerations (Students' Social, Emotional, and Health Needs)**

- Additional Counselors - six members identified this as priority
- Begin formal training to address anti-racism, anti-bias work in the district
- Interface counseling referral system
- Nurse Leader
- Increased SEL teaching and learning across the district, and embedding into instruction
- Health instruction

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## WRSDC Survey Results

### Pandemic-Related Budget Considerations

- Virtual academy
- Full-time in-person learning - plan
- Pooled testing
- PPE
- Summer remediation/tutoring

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## 2020-2027 Staffing Plan - Pre-Pandemic

### FY21 Proposed Additions:

- 3 Elementary Counselors
- 1 Support Nurse
- 1 AP (Naquag)
- 2 Classroom teachers

### FY22 Proposed Additions:

- 1 Director Voke/Tech Ed
- 1 ESL Teacher
- 1 Tech. Int. Specialist
- 1 Team Chair (ECC)
- 5 Classroom Teachers (Class Size)
- 1 Assist. Business Director

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## FY 21 Actual Staffing Additions

- 20 Building Subs
- 1 Nurse Leader (not hired yet)
- 3 Elementary Guidance Counselors (not hired yet)
- 2 Technology Integration Specialists
- 1 Naquag A.P.
- 1 Custodian

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## Covid Relief Grants

- Fund Code 118: \$164,004 from the Remote Learning Technology Essentials Grant
  - Partially covered the cost of 1,200 Chromebooks
  - Partially covered the cost of 50 mobile hotspots
- Fund Code 113: \$176,898 from the Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER)
  - Purchased licenses for Lexia Learning
  - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
  - Cleaning supplies

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## Covid Relief Grants (Continued)

- **Fund Code 102: \$1,572,300 from the School Reopening Grant**
  - Funded the remaining cost of 1200 Chromebooks and 50 hotspots
  - Software and Apps, including Seesaw online learning platform, STAR Reading and STAR Math comprehensive assessments, Automated science labs, Music Software
  - Online textbook subscriptions
  - Technology to support teachers (cameras, mics, hardware, etc.)
  - PPE for all students and staff, included masks for musical instruments
  - Cleaning supplies
  - Bathroom partitions, plexiglass, and overtime to cover HVAC and facility repairs
  - Unemployment costs
  - Cafeteria expenses, including packaging and staff costs
  - Professional development for teachers

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## Plan to Increase In-person Learning for this School Year

### DESE Plan to Increase In-person Learning This School Year

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) would like all K-5 students back to full In-person learning by the first week of April

Commissioner Riley will be seeking the authority from the Board of Education to:

- Force schools to reopen
- No longer count hybrid and remote models as structured learning hours

With mitigation strategies in place, the belief is that schools should be able to reopen safely

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### DESE Guidance

- DESE relaxed ridership restrictions for student transportation
  - More students may ride the bus and vans moving forward
- DESE continues to promote a minimum of 3 feet to 6 feet of social distancing in schools
  - This applies to all spaces within a school where a mask is worn
  - Cafeterias will remain at a minimum of 6 feet of distancing since students must remove their masks to eat

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## Planning Steps to Increase In-person Learning

Since bringing students back to school for hybrid learning, WRSD mitigation strategies have included:

- Maintaining 6 feet of physical distancing in almost all learning environments
- Requiring mask wearing
- Following hand hygiene protocols
- Erecting spatial barriers
- Following detailed cleaning protocols
- Ensuring all ventilation systems are providing 4 or more air changes per hour

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## Planning Steps to Increase In-person Learning

Transitioning students into the elementary schools for a full in-person experience will require us to:

- Shift from 6 feet of distance in most classrooms to between 6 feet and 3 feet of distance.
- We will be assessing school learning spaces over the next two weeks. This will include cafeterias where distancing must remain at 6 feet when students are not wearing masks. DESE will share updated guidance with districts in the next few weeks.
- This week, a survey will be sent to K-5 families so we are able to assess which families will choose to return to full in person learning.

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## Full In-Person Start Date Goal - Month of April

We will be providing additional information to families and staff as we continue to assess the viability of full in-person learning starting with grades K-5.

At this time, we do not have a specific date in April for a full return as there are still obstacles to overcome such as distancing of students in the cafeteria.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Board of Education will be providing additional guidelines and information.

This is an exciting time for our community and the district as we work together towards a return to a safe, full in-person learning model.

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## Remote Learning Model

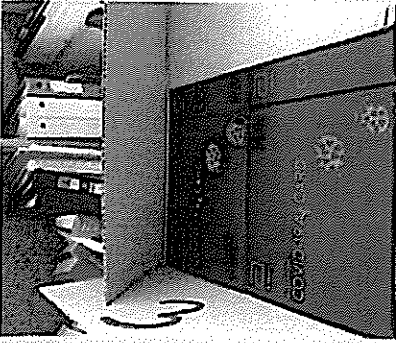
The WRSD will continue our full remote learning programming for Cohort C students through the remainder of this school year.

Through our survey we will reach out to families to determine if any Cohort C students would like to shift to the full in-person model when available.

Please note that DESE has informally noted that it is unlikely to offer support of full remote options for the 2021-2022 school year.

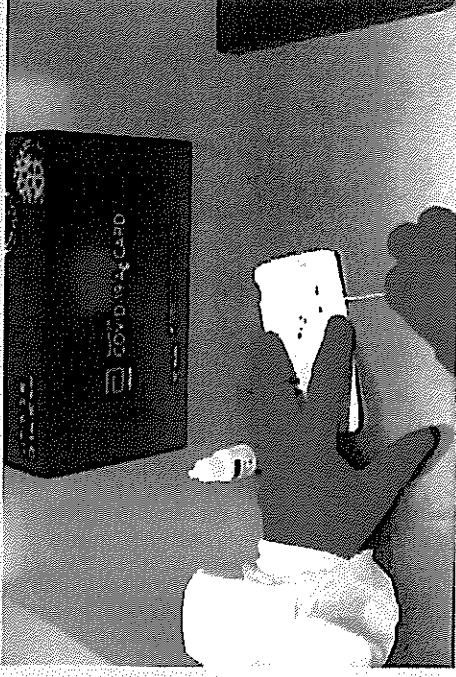
24

## BinaxNOW Testing Program



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## BinaxNOW Testing Program



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## Status of BinaxNOW testing in WRSD

- BinaxNOW testing is used for symptomatic students and staff in school
  - Rapid antigen test administered with a nasal swab
  - Testing is optional
- Testing kits were delivered to School Nurses during the week of February 22nd
- School nurses will be trained to administer tests during the week of March 1st
- We expect testing program to begin soon
- First step prior to Pooled Testing
  - Pooled Testing window has been extended to April 18th
    - DESE will pay for 6 weeks of pooled testing as long as it starts prior to April 18th
    - Must start Binex testing before moving to pooled testing
    - District looking at feasibility of conducting pooled testing

[DESE BinaxNOW Informational website](#)

[BinaxNOW FAQ Document](#)

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## Vision for Model of School Year 2021-2022

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## **Vision for School Year 2021-2022**

For the next school year, there will be full in-person learning for all students in the Wachusett Regional School District with continued mitigation strategies put into place that are recommended by DESE including wearing masks, hand-washing, air circulation, etc. Toward meeting this goal we will:

- Assess our spring reopening plan
- Gather feedback from administration, teachers, families, and students to inform planning
- Work with our reopening task force to assist with planning steps - First meeting 3/22

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## **Additional Plans for 2021-2022 Include**

- Continue to monitor network demands and expand our infrastructure and internet connection as needed
- Provide additional equipment, applications and software as needed
- Continue to provide training to staff in the form of professional development workshops, district funded courses, and individualized instruction
- Begin the process of developing our next Strategic Plan

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## **Regional Agreement**

### **Regional Agreement - Next steps include:**

- Subcommittee defined
- Review of the agreement
- Identify District and town priorities
- Hold a public hearing
- Draft and review an agreement
- Submit to towns for approval at town meetings

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A large, faint watermark of the University of Toronto seal is visible in the background of the slide. The seal is circular and contains the text "UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO" around the perimeter.

# Thank You