

PTA “Listening Post” with School Superintendent Provenzano held via Zoom February 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm.

All Brooks Hill parents have been notified they are welcome to attend. Parents were asked to submit any questions via email to the PTA. Parents were provided with the meeting link, as well as the meeting id and passcode via email, Parent Square, and Facebook in advance.

The next PTA general meeting will be held Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 pm. Items originally planned for discussion at tonight’s meeting will be discussed at the March meeting.

In attendance: Superintendent Provenzano, Meredith Klus, Stacie Miller, Janet Bissi, Janelle Enser, Lisa Christensen, Lisa Turner, Lindsey Schwartz, Rachel Rayburn, Sharon Smith, Wendy Tome, Jackie McKenna, Laura Fiorito, Melinda Lillie, Michelle Resch, Marianne Ciminello, Renee Giodano, Becky Carafelli, Erin Deuel, Beth Brewer, Milaine Haberer, Theresa Sanna, Stephany Bowley, Lisa Cavanaugh, Holly Russell-Dent, Tasha Crown, Beth Flannigan, Cindy Fortner, Paige Shue, Annie Fitzpatrick-Post, Hannah Cummings, Nicole Schussler, Meghan Mueller, Kelly Zaryk, Theresa Sanna, Jennifer Forrest, Erica Walton, Kristen Shinohara et al. 107 in total attended this meeting

The following lists all mediation factors carried out for the 2020-2021 school year:

6 foot distancing

Masks, and appropriate use thereof, of masks worn by all students and staff

Successfully defined and executed athletic programming in the fall

Schools became approved testing labs, the required percentage of staff and students were tested

Compliance with requests to conduct contact tracing

Decision to allow high risk winter sports to begin

Tested 22 percent of students and staff with very low positive results

We realize many are asking how can high contact sports like wrestling and basketball be allowed when we have not returned to a 5 day in-person school week? What about performing arts and other extra-curricular activities like the music program etc.? This is a great question and is the same line of questioning posed to Dr. Mendoza.

We have compiled a list of metrics which we posed to the governor, department of health etc. to determine what milestones are necessary to return to full time in-person school:

- What should the 7-day rolling average be?
- What should the maximum regional R rate be? (The R rate is the average number of people an infected individual transmits the virus to, and this number helps calculate concentration and spread.)
- What should the regional hospitalization rates be?
- What is the maximum school positivity rate?
- What should the in-school transmission rate be?

The district has sent an advocacy letter to request what metrics are required to open full time. All staff (teachers, aides, paras, office and admin members, transportation employees etc.) also needs to have access to vaccinations, but demand is currently outpacing supply.

Around 30-35 percent has been vaccinated to date. What is the minimum percentage that needs to be vaccinated to open full time? We must rely on county health officials for this.

We are in frequent communication with the department of health and others. We have also been working with Monroe county superintendents and it is important that everyone has a list of representatives to contact (as these are the individuals who are ultimately responsible for making these decisions.)

The intent is not to compromise the health and safety of the community, but to ensure we have the appropriate guidance and metrics to determine the correct course.

To increase response to educational needs of students, cohorts will now attend in-person school on alternate Wednesdays.

We are aware that advocacy took place throughout January to allow students to return to sports programs.

Questions from attendees:

Q: Who exactly makes these decisions and why do we not return to school with 3-foot distancing and barriers? If other schools use 3-foot distancing why do we require 6? What about barriers?

A: The DOH makes recommendations and the state approved returning to school with 6-foot distancing and mandatory masks. We receive guidance from the local commissioner and are bound to the rules of the Department of Health. In reference to changing distancing to 3 feet and adding barriers, research is inconclusive, and 6 feet is the standard recommendation and has also been approved by the NY state Department of Health and has been confirmed by the commissioner. We are not necessarily familiar with exactly what other districts are doing but know other schools have petitioned for a 3-foot minimum and have been declined. While we understand that other schools' procedures may differ, every district has significant differences in space and staffing. In the event barriers are approved we will work to obtain them. We must follow current guidance and await further information on appropriate distancing before making any changes.

Q: What would be the barriers to using outdoor spaces to bring students back to a 4- or 5-day week by creating outdoor spaces (tents were suggested in this question) and bringing in more teachers?

A: We have specific State Education Department (SED) guidance as to what can be used for classroom spaces. Tents allowable for this purpose are not within the district budget. The district would be unable to afford tents needed to get approval to be used as classroom spaces. There are also liability factors, and while we did entertain this idea the cost was prohibitive, and this setup would not be sustainable. Teachers do bring kids outdoors as much as possible and in the spring and have increased outdoor space throughout the day whenever appropriate.

Q: What are we doing to prepare for full time in-person school in September?

A: I am optimistic about the fall and we are planning and hoping for full time, with the expectation that full time in-person school may be with masks and 6-foot distancing. Access to vaccinations must be provided for all staff, and medical leaders and the governor must state metrics for what is required to allow students to participate in extracurricular activities to provide a benchmark for what we can do.

Comment: Meredith and Stacie have begun planning for any situation for September 2021. They are working to look at master schedules and staffing to ensure they are prepared for any eventuality. Since we are at the mercy of the governor, state officials etc. We are planning to support the kids in whatever situation may occur.

Comment: Brett states everyone is working on curriculum, how to support students during transition grades, what happens for summer orientation to create opportunities for students to come in and acclimate to the new year, and preparation for teachers. We are making plans to ensure all resources are available starting this fall.

Q: Which ventilation standards were applied when testing classrooms and have there been any changes to district schools?

A: Ventilation has been adjusted as needed. I can gather more information on our airtake as needed, but we have met requirements and air quality is not a concern in our schools.

Q: If parents are uncomfortable with changes being made for the 2021-2022 school year what are the options to go remote? Would parents be allowed to move to full virtual?

A: Families will be polled and we will reach out to understand the full impact of changes.

Q: Who is dictating the 100 percent vaccination requirement for staff? Why are we requiring this if other districts are not doing so? Do students and staff participating in contact sports have a 100% vaccine access rate?

A: We are not demanding that 100 percent of all staff be vaccinated but want to ensure 100 percent has access to being vaccinated. While we receive emails from the DOH stating they have a certain number of vaccinations available, this number is extremely small compared to the overall number of educators and staff. It is an issue of access, not of being vaccinated. This is to ensure the safety of our staff, students, and the community. There is no current vaccine approved for children.

Q: How quickly can we return to full time for all if we are given clearance and have reached all the metrics?

A: Returning every student back to school full time will take weeks and will require changes to classrooms that have been modified for cohorts, adjustment of schedules, and classroom assignments that may need to be changed. It is not a simple procedure to return full time and it requires preparation. Meredith Klus states: They have been planning and preparing at each building so when they learn what the next metric is reached they can determine whether it is possible to return all hybrid students to school. We do not receive information with much advance notice, so planning time has been minimal to date.

Q: Can Minerva Deland, slated to be closed, be better utilized to address the requests to return more students to class full time?

A: The high school requires additions to move Minerva Deland students there, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students are currently using the space. In addition, given our district size using Minerva facilities is not possible.

Comment: This is an important conversation because everyone has good thoughts and a personal perspective shaped by what they think they know and what they are hearing, we are sharing what we know at this moment and what guidance we are using. We received guidance from our local health inspector and are looking for metrics to help provide clarity on where we are and where we are going.

Q: Is there an option to bring back teachers in phases? For example: Can we allow teachers to decide whether to return and bring students back as teachers are available?

A: Teachers are eager return full time as soon as the opportunity arises. This is matter of getting the ability to get back in. Phasing would be more difficult logistically than opening. Students are struggling with lack of stability and changing things multiple times to allow for phasing would intensify this.

Comments:

Outdoor lunch spaces: we do have plenty of space indoors for lunch.

Some area schools in other counties have been denied their request for 3 foot spacing with barriers.

We are working to determine how we can reopen in a safe way.

Let's use a unified voice to ask officials what we need to reach/do to move towards 5 day in person school.

In addition to addressing students' need we are trying to protect the community and minimize spread.

We must reason that foreseeability means to deny the advice of local and state experts would not be an ethical practice. We appreciate the passion to return to school but will not go against guidance.

Q: What are the guidelines for students planning to travel for winter and/or spring break?

A: Parameters will be placed per the state website. A reminder will be sent.

Q: When cohorts attend school on alternate Wednesdays will the asynchronous cohorts have access to the classroom (for example will students be able to view the class taking place via Google meet?)

A: No, students will be working on asynchronous activities. This is one of the cons of adding this day. This is true of the k-5 level. Older grades will continue as is on their Wednesdays. Issues of excessive screen time, and whether viewing an in-progress classroom would be engaging and educational. It is often challenging to keep students, and particularly elementary students, to remain engaged online.

Q: What can we, as parents, do to advocate for teachers to have better access to vaccinations?

A: Parents can contact any or all individuals listed below (please see the list of representatives and their contact information at the end of these minutes.) An advocacy letter has also been distributed via Parent Square as an example of what can be communicated to these representatives. You can coordinate with your PTA to send emails and letters. The intent is not to insult, harass, or berate but to

request clarity so we can be appropriately informed of what needs to be done to reach metrics for returning to in person school.

Comment: We are asking for officials' specific benchmarks to decide what to do. We are working to balance the needs of the greater community with the desire to return students to school. NYS DOH requirements need to be consulted and followed.

Q: Could there be summer options to help struggling students who would not normally receive summer school?

A: We want to make sure we meet students' needs, but how do we decide who is able to be brought in during summer? How do we prioritize placement in limited spaces? We are looking at ways to conduct orientation by grade and building to assist students in feeling comfortable as they return to school. We are working on summer curriculum to ensure students are met where they are academically based on NWEA data.

Q: Will there be an option for summer virtual learning for families who want the virtual model?

A: We would prefer K-5 students to learn in the building and are uncertain whether exceptions would be allowed. We are still developing procedures. We are addressing concerns about the effects students feel from not being in-person at school, and working to get all kids back to school so they have the opportunity to interact with peers and teachers, and have access to extracurricular activities.

Q: What is the plan for the remainder of the school year to assist struggling students? Is there a plan for in-person assistance for the remainder of the school year?

A: The Brooks Hill standard procedure uses NWEA results to get an idea of where kids are, and we use that in data review to assign support services. Support services offer a dilemma: can we provide in person which takes away from classroom time? Math and reading support have all been moved to virtual days to provide adult assistance for students who need help, but we do not have the capacity to bring in tier 2 reading and math students in-person. We are hoping for restrictions to be released to allow for more in-person instruction. We are continuing to assess and service and are not finding more students than usual who require additional help. Parents can advocate for more access to assistance for students by contacting officials who make decisions about procedures when we meet their requirements.

Q: Are the kids who need support compared to other students' abilities, or compared to where they would typically be at this age?

A: Nationally normed data is used relative to where students should be at this point. It is important to remember all kids will have gaps because of the situation over the past year. We are working to prepare better to meet the kids' needs now while raising expectations for a more successful entry to the next school year.

Comment: We are confident those gaps will decrease or close as student needs are continually addressed. We understand the importance of in-person learning and hope advocacy benefits the district's goals. We have a good relationship with the DOH and want all our students back in school with metrics reached and guidelines for health and safety.

Q: When can band and orchestra return for elementary levels?

A: A Wednesday rotation for band and orchestra was considered, but this is delayed following the decision for alternate cohort instruction. Discussions to resume these programs are still taking place.

Q: What are other ways we can advocate in addition to what has been sent?

A: We believe the most constructive way to advocate is to contact the individuals on the list and use the included letter.

Q: How will remote pickup take place considering Wednesday in-person instruction?

A: We are working on this issue. Pick-up may be moved physically to the back bus loop or another location where students are not present. It will likely be moved outside the school day to avoid traffic congestion at pickup time and to reduce exposure.

Q: Has the district looked at what other states are doing? Should we look at other schools and states?

A: We must stay the course with New York state guidelines and science and look at infection rates and circumstances in our community. Comparisons are not being looked at as we are looking at what is happening in our community.

The following pages include a copy of the letter sent to representatives by the Fairport Board of Education. You may reference this letter when communicating with officials to advocate for the reopening of full time in-person school.

Following this letter is a listing of officials responsible for creating requirements for in-person school.

Dear State and Local Leaders,

We want to thank you for the leadership you have provided to County School Districts throughout the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. We remain encouraged by the safety we have provided our students and staff.

Public schools work best when we are able to provide meaningful programming that is accessible to all students. Right now, there are a number of disparities among our students who are struggling academically, socially and emotionally in our current educational model.

The American Academy of Pediatrics asserts that re-engaging our students in sports activities has physical and psychological health benefits. Though we are excited for our athletes, the decision to re-engage in high-risk sports seems counterintuitive with limited in-person instruction associated with the appropriate safety protocols (masking, and 6' social distancing). We have repeatedly heard from community members that there is greater value for in-person instruction and that it should be the priority. We believe this position is hard to dispute. The decisions to re-open high risk sports has led to many questions from our community that range from; why can't performing arts or other school related activities reopen, to why can't students attend school more fully?

At this time we have not been given a clear pathway to bring students back full-time despite the approval of high risk sports by the State and County. Understandably, this is frustrating to some members of our school community and the Board of Education. With the recent allowance of play for all high-risk sports, our communities are understandably perplexed about why high-risk activities are acceptable, yet a return to full-time in-school instruction is not.

As we continue to prove that our schools are healthy and safe environments, and as infection rates decline and vaccination numbers rise, we are hopeful that the Governor and Department of Health (DOH) will be able to reassess its position on distancing requirements and provide clarity for a pathway for a safe return to school.

Recognizing the enormity of the decisions you make every day, as well as the continual challenges to those decisions, we implore you to remain a courageous thought leader until our communities are safe once again. We look for the calm, steady and data-supported guidance that will maintain the safe school environments enjoyed throughout this challenge. To that end, we ask for data-specific guideposts in the following areas, or others that you may deem appropriate:

Vaccination Level of school staff.

7-day rolling average of positivity rate.

Testing positivity.

Regional R value.

Impact of high-risk sports on community spread or capacity to test all athletes prior to engaging in competition.

Thank you for considering our critical questions about returning our students to school safely. Again, thank you for your leadership during these challenging times. We know it has been demanding on your time and energy.

State & Local Officials Contact List

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