

RIVER EDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

RIVER EDGE, NEW JERSEY 07661

“Building Bright Futures Together”

Minutes of the Regular Public Meeting – January 20, 2021

7:30 Public Meeting

The Board of Education, Borough of River Edge, County of Bergen, State of New Jersey conducted this meeting through a Zoom Meeting.

CALL TO ORDER AND FLAG SALUTE

Ms. Kang called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM.

ROLL CALL

Present on roll call were Ms. Brown; Ms. Dansky; Ms. Doyle; Mr. Herbst; Ms. Juskeliene; Mr. Sim; Ms. Kang. Also present were Dr. Ben-Dov, Mrs. Napolitano, Mrs. Heitman and approximately 191 members of the public.

MISSION STATEMENT

Ms. Brown read the Mission Statement.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS NOTICE

Mrs. Napolitano read the Open Public Meeting Act Notice.

SPECIAL/DISCUSSION ITEMS

Public Comment on Agenda Items – None

Region V Presentation – Linda Distler

Dr. Ben-Dov introduced Ms. Distler and explained that Ms. Distler will give a general introduction of various aspects of Region V functioning. Ms. Distler explained the history of the Bergen County Regions, Region V Council for Special Education, the Region V Organization Chart and who they are, the Region V By-Laws, the Member Districts for 2020-2021, the Member Districts Agreements, Collaborative Meetings, Transportation Services, Related Services, Evaluations, Nursing Services, Non-Public Schools, Parent Outreach Programs, Shared Resources, Regional Professional Development, Inter-Regional Collaboration, lists of Inter-Regional Workshop Offerings for 2020-2021, 2020-2021 Region V Goals, and present challenges and obstacles.

2021 - 2022 School Calendar Discussion

Dr. Ben-Dov proposed a draft of the 2021-2022 school calendar to the board members and public. A discussion took place regarding the unique features to this calendar. Dr. Ben-Dov explained the school year will start with three days of Professional Development with the students beginning on September 9th. She explained we are identical with River Dell when it comes to the three major, week-long vacations. The end of our school year will be June 24th with River Dell ending on June 23rd. We will have three, instead of four, emergency days because a day of emergency can be a virtual day. With doing that, we are able to have a full February break. The Principals counted out the days in each marking period in a more equivalent way where each marking period is approximately 60 days. Dr. Ben-Dov stated the 2021-2022 calendar will be on the February 3rd agenda for approval. Dr. Ben-Dov answered all questions that were asked by the board members.

Proposed Plan for Hybrid/Virtual Learning

Dr. Ben-Dov started the presentation with a brief background of all of our efforts of planning and implementing the Hybrid model of instruction throughout the school year. She stated we came up with something different and practical and safe that represents the next phase. It is a phase we all think we can move into in a responsible fashion. Mr. Henzel reported on the statistical survey results presented at the Pandemic Response Team for Roosevelt School and Mrs. Heitman reported on the statistical survey results presented at the Pandemic Response Team for Cherry Hill School for hybrid verses virtual numbers. Dr. Ben-Dov stated that as a result of the responses on the surveys and our existing spaces we came up with a proposal to increase in-person attendance for Grades K-1 to 8:25AM to 1:15PM across district. This proposal adheres to two important principles that have guided our decisions and maintained our low Covid-19 positivity rate as we developed the reopening plan and its future phases. The two guiding principles are 1). The safety of students and staff will be maintained through all existing health and cleaning protocols and social distancing that will maintain 6' of distance between students' desks in their instructional spaces. 2). Teaching and learning will remain consistent for the same grade levels across district. She also reviewed the rationale and advantages of the proposed plan: same days of attendance with more instructional time, developmental and pedagogic appropriateness, Related Arts schedule more efficient, more opportunity for differentiation and small group instruction, schedule adheres to 2-6 grades, a convenience for families, limited distraction and financial expenditure within district capabilities, manageable first step in preparation for the future. This plan can be implemented on February 1st if the board is in agreement. The next step for upper grades will begin to be planned subsequently to the implementation of this current plan. Dr. Ben-Dov answered all questions that were asked by the board.

REPORTS

SUPERINTENDENT

- Roosevelt School and New Bridge Center are all virtual until Monday, January 25th and Cherry Hill School remains in a hybrid mode. At the last board meeting, Dr. Ben-Dov reported on the positivity rate which was 1.5% and today it is at 2%. Dr. Ben-Dov firmly believes that the percentage stays low because of our protocols and our social distancing.
- We are engaging in all sorts of meetings regarding budget planning for the 2021-2022 school year.

- On Thursday, January 28th there will be Committee Meetings. Finance and Facilities will meet at 4:00 PM and Personnel and Management will meet at 5:00 PM. We will request questions from the chairs soon.
- On Monday, February 1st we will have a meeting of the Curriculum and Instruction Committee with special guests: Dr. Penelope Lattimer and Dr. Adele Macula. They will help with our goal in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. They will present to the Committee some of their plans and meet with the Administrators on January 26th. And Professional Development for the staff in February and March. In the spring there is a plan for them to hold a Parent Academy for the River Edge Community.
- Mid-Year assessments are in progress. This will tell us where our students are in terms of the established benchmarks academically for the mid-year.
- Dr. Ben-Dov attended a meeting that was held by the Mayor that had various town agencies on Tuesday, January 12th. Chief Starace thanked the County for additional funds. We were also recipients, having received \$25,000 from the County which was used to purchase webcams, document cameras, plexiglass dividers, and some air purifiers. Chief Starace also spoke about the importance of being able to reach the most vulnerable people in town and he will be asking us to communicate with the River Edge School constituencies. Ms. Faustini spoke about the rise in covid in town. The Mayor shared that vaccines for group 1B are imminent and a few days later that did open up and some people in that category were able to receive their vaccines. The Clergy spoke and there was a recommendation that the Clergy in town meet regularly.

PRINCIPAL

Mrs. Heitman reported on the following:

- Our fifth grade students will be starting with Liberty Science Center. Mr. Werner has been working with the teachers and Liberty Science directly. They delivered some supplies already.
- We are excited to have the Family Fun Fitness on January 26th at 6:30 PM.
- Our PTO is trying to continue with some of their events such as Spirit Wear for the children and Valentine messages for the students to send to each other.
- There is a 12:45 PM day on February 4th for our students for our teacher's Professional Development afternoon.
- We had our first International Day meeting at Cherry Hill School. I want to thank all who volunteered and we are planning for this event to be sometime in March.
- Our classes reviewed lessons on Martin Luther King as well as the government process for the Inauguration. Our upper grades had the opportunity to view that event today.

BOARD SECRETARY

Mrs. Napolitano reported on the following

- We are very thankful for the County money of the \$25,000. We have applied for FEMA reimbursement for many items that we purchased in the beginning of Covid. We are still waiting to see if we will get reimbursed for those items.
- We have been working on our 2021-2022 school year budget. The software opened up today on the State portal. We started looking at our numbers and are working on that.
- At the end of February the Governor will announce our State Aid funding. The date has not been released.

PRESIDENT

Ms. Kang reported on the following:

- There will be a virtual Bergen County School Boards Meeting on Monday, January 25th at 6:30PM. Mr. Herbst is nominated to be on the Executive Committee and the voting will be at that meeting. Ms. Kang asked the board to virtually attend that meeting to support Mr. Herbst.
- Ms. Kang gave an update on the Interim Superintendent search. We received a lot of resumes and interviewed a few candidates on January 13th. We are in the process of finalizing a contract with one candidate and once that is finalized it will go on an agenda for board approval. We are looking to hire a search consultant to help us find a permanent Superintendent. The Request for Qualifications have been posted and published. We are waiting for proposals from different consultants.

COMMITTEES

No committees reported at this meeting

MOTIONS TO BE ACTED UPON

A. ADMINISTRATION/POLICY

1. That the Board of Education approve the Minutes and Confidential Minutes of January 6, 2021.
2. That the Board of Education approve the Minutes and Confidential Minutes of January 13, 2021.
3. That the Board of Education approve the staff development and travel as per the schedules for January 2021 including relevant mileage reimbursement. (Addendum)

Motion by: Ms. Brown Seconded by: Mr. Herbst

Ayes: Ms. Brown, Ms. Dansky, Ms. Doyle, Mr. Herbst, Ms. Juskeliene, Ms. Kang
Nays: None

B. CURRICULUM/EDUCATION - None

C. BUILDINGS & GROUNDS - None

D. FINANCE/GRANTS/GIFTS

1. That the Board of Education approve the bills & claims dated January 2021 totaling \$538,575.68 including checks #44077 through #44140. Payrolls dated December 15, 2020 and December 23, 2020, totaling \$1,300,948.90 issued therefore, a copy of such warrants list be attached as part of these minutes. (Addendum)
2. That the Board of Education approve the Budget Transfers for the school year 2020-2021 as of December 31, 2020. (Addendum)
3. That the River Edge Board of Education approve the Secretary's and Treasurer's Report for the period ending December 31, 2020.

Further, we certify that as of December 31, 2020 after review of the secretary's monthly financial report (appropriations section) and upon consultation with the appropriate district officials, to the best of our knowledge no major account or fund has been overexpended in violation of N.J.A.C. 6A:23-2.11 and that sufficient funds are available to meet the districts financial obligation for the remainder of the fiscal year. (Addendum)

Motion by: Ms. Brown Seconded by: Ms. Dansky

Ayes: Ms. Brown, Ms. Dansky, Ms. Doyle, Mr. Herbst, Ms. Juskeliene, Ms. Kang

Nays: None

E. PERSONNEL

1. That the Board of Education designate Louise Napolitano as the Public Agency Compliance Officer for the 2020-2021 school year.
2. That the Board of Education approve the following individual for movement on the step guide effective February 1, 2021 based on educational credentials.

Megan Lubin from BA to BA+15

3. That the Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Superintendent approve an extended child care leave of absence for Stephanie Rosenblum to continue from March 15, 2021 through June 30, 2021.
4. That the Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Superintendent approve Rozanna Shindelman, MA+15, Step 5 to continue as Leave Replacement Psychologist through June 30, 2021.
5. That the Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Superintendent approve an extended child care leave of absence for Leigh Anne Kaufmann to continue from March 2, 2021 through June 30, 2021.
6. That the Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Superintendent approve an extended child care leave of absence for Julie Fallon to continue from March 12, 2021 through June 30, 2021.

7. That the Board of Education, with the recommendation of the Superintendent approve Harrison Mashig, MA, Step 1 to continue as Leave Replacement Teacher through June 30, 2021.

Motion by: Ms. Doyle Seconded by: Ms. Dansky

Ayes: Ms. Brown, Ms. Dansky, Ms. Doyle, Mr. Herbst, Ms. Juskeliene, Ms. Kang
Nays: None

8. That the Board of Education accept, with regret, the resignation of Lisa Patrocinio, Teacher, effective on or about March 19, 2021.

Ms. Dansky, Dr. Ben-Dov, Mrs. Heitman, and Ms. Kang spoke kind words of Mrs. Patrocinio's and thanked her for her service.

Motion by: Ms. Dansky Seconded by: Mr. Herbst

Ayes: Ms. Brown, Ms. Dansky, Ms. Doyle, Mr. Herbst, Ms. Juskeliene, Ms. Kang
Nays: None

F. RIVER EDGE SPECIAL EDUCATION - None

G. REGION V ADMINISTRATION & TRANSPORTATION

1. That the Board of Education approve the bills & claims dated January 2021 totaling \$700,834.22 including checks #74233 through #74327.
2. WHEREAS, the River Edge Board of Education (the "Board") is the lead education agency ("LEA") for the Bergen County Region V Council for Special Education ("Region V"); and

WHEREAS, Region V provides shared services for its member districts such as evaluations, direct services, and consultation; and

WHEREAS, as the LEA, the Board must approve the consultant agreements of the providers that Region V utilizes to deliver shared services to its member districts.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board, upon recommendation of the Superintendent, re-approves the consultant agreements of the following Region V Shared Services Consultants, Psychologists, Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultants, Social Workers, Speech Language Specialists, Occupational and Physical Therapists, and Translators to provide evaluations, direct services, and consultation, to non-public and public schools for member districts upon request for the 2020-2021 school year:

Business Office Solutions LLC	Temporary Staffing Services
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Motion by: Ms. Brown Seconded by: Ms. Doyle

Ayes: Ms. Brown, Ms. Dansky, Ms. Doyle, Mr. Herbst, Ms. Juskeliene, Ms. Kang
Nays: None

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Danksy reported on the CAL (County Association Leadership) meeting that took place on Monday, January 11, 2021. In addition she shared her perspective on what is happening throughout the state of New Jersey regarding in-person versus remote programs.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Matt Taylor (311 Woodland): why do the cohorts never change days? For example cohort A goes to school Monday, Tuesday, and virtual Thursday and Friday and cohort B goes on Thursday, Friday, and virtual Monday and Tuesday. When you know that the month of November the cohort B will be missing at the very least 2 weeks of in school learning because of the holidays and teacher in session at the beginning of the month; why is there no “proactive” flexibility for the kids you know will be missing at the very least 2 weeks of in person learning? If for whatever reason a family needs to quarantine during that time there is a strong possibility of students never having in school learning time. Ms. Kang responded we do this for consistency for families. Going back and forth creates a lot of inconsistencies for them. Dr. Ben-Dov responded that we need to look at the totality of the school year for the cohorts. It really isn't much of a difference. Several Mondays are missed for the A cohort. It may have looked that way for cohort B because of the month of November. One of the things that were discussed with the principals was for teachers to look carefully at the students in cohort B and see if they can offer during office hours small group instruction to those kids if they need it if they had more of a learning loss.

Lauren Thiffault (159 Greenway): can you please explain the Wednesday plan/logic again and next steps? Dr. Ben-Dov reviewed the results of the survey of virtual Wednesdays of both staff and parents. She also viewed the importance of the deep cleaning that happens on Wednesdays and the fact that this is the only day when the teacher has his or her whole classroom together to consolidate learning for all.

Rachel Richins (938 Wikkow): please comment on why River Edge School District is mandating 6 feet between desks. There is no New Jersey Department of Health mandate for this and I believe many parents would prefer more in person time to 6 feet spacing that is not mandatory? Ms. Kang responded the 6 feet distance between the desks comes from the state guidelines in the Road Back Plan. Mr. Herbst responded that it states multiple times in the Road Back Plan the 6 feet is the minimum anticipated standard to have 6 feet distance. Dr. Ben-Dov reminded us there are often more adults in the room and students that need that distance.

Kiersten Eng (921 Bogert Road): based on the Pandemic Response Team minutes from the Roosevelt Team it states that if we didn't adhere to the 6 foot guidelines that River Edge adopted we could bring more students back. I believe that the 6 feet is a guideline and this was before masks were mandated. We also have partitions. I have heard of another school in Bergen County sitting closer so that all our elementary students can attend school daily. It is a recommendation from Dr. Ben-Dov, but I have heard it is up to the board of education to decide. Ms. Kang responded the guidelines come from the State and the recommendation of our Superintendent.

Michelle Bressack (708 Millbrook): I would like to know who wants to keep virtual Wednesdays? Ms. Kang responded this was a question on the survey and the results on the survey are on our district website.

Craig Arkenau (309 Taft Road): the updates from Dr. Ben-Dov regarding the positive covid cases aren't helpful since it does not state who the child is and should end. Thank you to all the teachers and staff for your hard work. The only question we need to ask is does a child succeed more if they are in person. We are doing a huge disservice, the data is only half of it, and it should be based on student needs. This should be taken into account. There needs to be more data than just numbers from parents that need to be incorporated in the overall decision for our children.

Caitie Lehmann (190 Tenney Avenue): I would like to know the main reason for virtual Wednesday. I was under the impression that it was initially intended for "deep cleaning" the schools. I do not believe that the cleaning being done on Wednesday is different or more important than the cleaning that should be done each day at 3:00 PM. Mrs. Napolitano responded we moved our night shift custodians to the day to keep the cohorts separate and all of the rooms cleaned. We do fog the rooms and some of the foggers need to sit for 24 hours. We still feel it is important to continue the deep cleaning on Wednesdays and have more custodians during the day when the students are there to continually clean.

Anjali (193 Kinderkamack Road Apt 2): can the school hours increase a bit instead of closing down at 1:15 PM. Kids start at 8:40 AM than they have two 15 minutes breaks and school ends at 1:15 PM. They have a lot of time on their hands and Epic website is still not accessible after school hours which I had started in the last meeting, but no one got back to us. Ms. Kang responded the reason why we are ending at 1:15 PM is to make sure we are maximizing the time that students have with their teachers without including lunch. Teachers have office hours during the afternoon and until lunch can be brought back into school we cannot extend that at this point. Dr. Ben-Dov responded school begins at 8:25 and recess is mandated. Not every class has two 15 minutes breaks. Ms. Fox responded Epic is a free service during the school day. If parents would like 24 hours access to it there is an app they can purchase. Classrooms teachers can send an email out to allow parents to have two extra hours a week.

Marilena Puma (River Edge Teacher): will there be coverage for teachers to pack up and set up since we are expected to move our entire class in just one week? With 17 students in 1st grade classroom plus children on zoom is much more the amount of students in person in grades 2-6 who have 8-10 max. Would aides be considered to help support students? Dr. Ben-Dov responded that Mr. Henzel has a plan with helping for the move. We will explore if aides can be considered to help support students. It is a possibility, we want to help you.

Euralis Spingarn (14 Tenney Avenue): my concerns for the kindergarten are the virtual students going to get the right amount of attention for kindergarten kids? They have a limited amount of focus of screen time. The class size would make it hard for teachers to pay equal attention to both in person and virtual. Any of the kids who are virtual would be at disadvantage. I feel the kids small amount of one on one time would be even less. Dr. Ben-Dov responded that part of the reason for having the younger students to have more of an in person opportunity is for hands-on activities. There will be more hands-on activities for both virtual and in person learning.

Matt Taylor (311 Woodland): when the kids in cohort B only went to in school for 5 total days since Halloween how is that meeting the needs of the kids in cohort B? Dr. Ben-Dov responded based on an email from Mr. Taylor she believes the number is not accurate as to the number of days they had an opportunity to be in school. She did check and there were more days available to cohort B.

Jenna Heydt (282 Taft Court): is it possible to share the unused spaces at Cherry Hill School between both schools to bring the upper grades back where possible? Ms. Kang responded she is not sure if Cherry Hill School has enough space to accommodate the extra rooms that we need at Roosevelt School.

Dana Hosey (219 Voorhis Avenue): I feel so happy that days will be made longer at this point I don't even care about Wednesday's being virtual. However my biggest concern is the frequency of classes being closed it takes away any consistency whatsoever and is it possible to reconsider the 2 cases and close to maybe 3 or 4 and close since it's a recommendation. Dr. Ben-Dov responded the school nurse and principals contact our local health department and the recommendation is made at that point. The recent closure at Roosevelt School was because we had four in person cases in nine days. There is a consultation and the district follows the recommendations they were given by the local health department as mandated.

Colleen Poole (River Edge Teacher): will aides be considered to help support students in k & 1? Dr. Ben-Dov responded it is a possibility.

Sebastian Muscarella (781 5th Ave): we are being told the committees and the Board of Education are thinking outside the box, I would like to know what those ideas have been so far to get our children back in school. Dr. Ben-Dov responded in December many more people chose to be virtual and our idea was to combine the cohorts and have them attend four times a week. The results of the survey following that idea were that we couldn't do it for all at this time. We therefore took our first step to consolidate the cohorts of K and 1. There is a lot of fear and concern coming from these meetings so there hasn't yet been any substantial plan for the next phase but it will be discussed in the near future. We want to implement this first step and then discuss what can be the next step.

Kirsten Apa (175 Voorhis Ave): we saw the presentations, but would like to know specifically how many classrooms in grades 2-6 in each school that cannot accommodate the in person students? Can some classes from Roosevelt School be moved to the larger spaces in Cherry Hill School? Can portable classrooms be leased to accommodate? Our daughter is 7 and we do not consider her an "older" student. She is in 2nd grade. When will these students get in more? What's next for them? Ms. Kang responded to lease portable classrooms that is very expensive and is not within our budget right now. Ms. Dansky stated you cannot just put trailers on your property and bring them to the district you have to have a plan to replace them with building. There are codes and other specifications you have to deal with the State in order to get them. You will need to have a building plan to replace them. Ms. Napolitano stated you will need a plan and have it approved from the County Office. You will need plumbing, electricity, fire alarms and all protocols for safety.

Ethan Eng (921 Bogert Road): can a survey be sent out to parents asking if they would be okay with 3 feet distance? Dr. Ben-Dov responded this is not up to the parents. This is up to the guidelines that we are following and the safety we want to provide to our students and staff.

Michelle Bressack (708 Millbrook): I don't know anyone that wants virtual Wednesdays. It seems they majority don't want virtual anything. It's not even a full school day on Wednesday and by full I mean until 1:15 PM I would much rather have my children in person. Ms. Kang thanked her for her comment.

Ethan Eng (921 Bogert Road): I'm not sure if teachers cherishing virtual Wednesdays are a good reason to keep them. I cherish in-person learning. I would take any hour I could get. Could you review the percentages? Ms. Kang responded the percentages are posted.

Michelle Bressack (708 Millbrook): I would also like a survey given about 3 feet vs 6 feet. Other towns are doing this and there is no reason we can't look into this to bring more kids back to school. . Ms. Kang thanked her for her comment.

Lauren Carrabs (848 Bogert Road): Ms. Dansky began her comments with “let’s not compare districts,” and then she continued to do exactly that-compare and contrasts districts. If in-person learning is the gold standard shouldn’t you be creatively working towards that goal? Like the other 80 something districts in New Jersey that are in person. Mr. Herbst responded there are 80 districts that are in person instruction, 360 are hybrid of in person and remote instruction, 325 are full remote, and 46 are a mix of all remote, in district or hybrid learning. This information was posted from the Governor.

Gina Cetta (213 Wales Avenue): is the River Edge Board of Health consulted before every decision to close school? . Dr. Ben-Dov responded yes.

Caitie Lehmann (190 Tenney Avenue): River Dell High School is phasing out the virtual Wednesday. Having 17 first graders on a zoom together on virtual Wednesday is challenging, frustrating, and not very productive. Ms. Kang thanked her for her comment.

Kate Daibes (749 Williams Avenue): if we don’t change the 6ft distance how will we ever get grades 2-6 in more? Ms. Kang responded these things could change once the pandemic gets better. This is where we are now; we will not be like this forever.

Rita Houghtalin (300 Woodland): have you considered re-adjusting the daily schedule for grades 2-6 now that they will not be in person as a result of the survey? For example, can specials be scheduled after 1:15 PM to allow more time for core subjects between 8:25 AM-1:15 PM for grades 2-6? Dr. Ben-Dov responded she does not have the answer to that. One thing affects another and scheduling is extremely difficult and she is not sure if you can or cannot. There is a good chance for some of the Related Arts to be happening after 1:15 PM.

Joe Carrabs (848 Bogert Road): 6 feet is a “guideline” not a mandate. If teachers want 6 feet provide them with 6 feet if it means getting children in school let’s try it. Several studies continue to show 3 feet is sufficient. Ms. Kang thanked him for his comment.

Brianne Etter (711 Elm Avenue): as a healthcare worker in a hospital setting, this is extremely frustrating. Direct contact is defined as within a 6 foot distance without masks for more than 15 minutes. Our children never have this. As a working Mother, my poor child is suffering as she is in 1st grade and struggling to Zoom. The 6 feet is a guideline from the board of health from New Jersey. I just read it online updated on January 19, 2021. Give people the options to stay virtual, That’s fine. But at this point, these kids need to be in school. Ms. Kang thanked her for her comment.

Maya (River Edge Resident): parents in town need to know the cases in school so the family appreciates the email from the school about all of the cases. Ms. Kang thanked her for her comments.

Ethan Eng (921 Bogert Road): I looked at the pie charts regarding virtual Wednesdays. Staff 99% wanted to keep virtual Wednesday. For 2-6 parents 45.7 wanted to take away virtual Wednesday. Ms. Kang stated thanked you for sharing,

Rita Houghtalin (300 Woodland): since you have stated that cleaning is consistent daily and effective, can we consider adjusting the cohort schedule similar to Oradell where cohort A is Monday-Thursday and cohort B is Tuesday-Friday? This may alleviate screen fatigue of three straight days of virtual learning per week. Ms. Kang responded this was a consideration in the beginning when the Pandemic Response Team was trying to figure out what was best for scheduling to keep the cohorts together to lessen the spread.

Beth Barone (272 Voorhis Avenue): what is your timeline to move grades 2-6 back in person keeping virtual option available to those who want? I understand you can move the young ones in due to numbers/spacing per the decisions tonight. If you cannot do this now with the older kids 2-6 feet, than when? What will change between now and September? Can you shift virtual Wednesday to cohort A one week and cohort B another week? Why isn't this an option? Ms. Kang responded the Pandemic Response Team meets monthly and this will continue as a conversation on how to gets kids in grade 2-6 back in person. Numbers need to go down too. Conversations will continue.

Brianne Etter (711 Elm Ave): I'm not sure if you can share this info, but has there been any proof of contact tracing that a child got covid from another child while in school? Dr. Ben-Dov responded we do not believe so. From the best of our knowledge we do not believe we had anything in school directly. There was one situation we know of that was probably two individuals in district but other than that we are not aware through contact tracing from one child to another.

Jenni Shahin (201 Cherry Lane): being that 2-6 is out of the question for February 1st, will this option be addressed in the future or are we looking at a full year of only 10 hours per week in person learning for these grades? Is there any option to add a rotating 3rd day? Is there any option to utilize/reconfigure some of the empty space at Cherry Hill School in order to allow more 2-6 grade children to attend in person in the future? It is a shame that the district has purchased expensive plexi dividers, air purifiers, etc. to largely go unused. Can we make it mandatory in the next survey go round that if a parent chooses in person on the survey it is not "reserving a space" and their child must attend. This has resulted in a waste of precious space and resources. Glen Rock, Wyckoff, and Old Tappan are 3 Bergen districts that can be reached out regarding utilizing less than a full 6 feet of distance. Thank you for increasing the in person time for k-1 students. Can we please not require them to bring in their Chromebooks as this is the primary benefit of having them in person? Ms. Kang responded all of these suggestions for rotating Wednesdays we are still considering. We just cannot do it right now. Dr. Ben-Dov responded reserving a space will not be allowed. Mrs. Napolitano responded everything we purchased is being utilized. Dr. Ben-Dov agrees the children should not be carrying their chromebooks when they have the opportunity to be in class.

Ethan Eng (921 Bogert Road): I called the Board of Health and the Mayor and he actually wouldn't answer whether or not they "recommend" the closure due to possible legal ramifications. When I spoke to them earlier this year about an abundance of caution closure they said that you were justified but not that it was recommend. Dr. Ben-Dov explained that she received a call on Friday, in November late in the day from the local Health official with a recommendation to close proactively for two weeks around TG. She couldn't ignore such a recommendation and immediately sat down and wrote the letter to the community and the Board on the basis of this phone call..

Patti Cordts (161 Continental Avenue): Administrators should refine change based on scientific data and not on "feelings." Parents have the right to be a part of the decision making process for their children so I think the next step would be to send out a survey ASAP to parents who would support the default of 3 feet distancing . The most recent statement from the AAP continues to strongly advocate that all policy considerations for school should have a goal of having students physically present in school and the CDC uses the term "feasible" well 6 ft. is not feasible in Roosevelt School but 3 feet is. Teachers can remain 6ft from the students. School Administrators must also consider the mounting evidence regarding covid in children, including the role they play in transmission. Children under 10 are less likely to become infected and less likely to spread the disease. My question is how many covid cases in the schools are from a student to student transmission (not family members) or a student to teacher transmission? Ms. Kang stated that question was already answered.

Beth Barone (272 Voorhis Avenue): is there any reason why there is no discussion about being creative with buildings and space? Tents? Trailers? How else are all students going to get back in this September? Ms. Kang responded the Administrators are trying to be creative with the current space that is feasible right now.

Diana Richards (River Edge Teacher): spoke on behalf of the teachers. Teachers are anxious and are doing a lot of extra time outside of school hours. It's a lot and she feels that not everyone is taking that into account. She gave the Administration and custodians a round of applause for all of their hard work. She wants parents to know they care about the kids and they are doing the best they can, but they can all use a little bit of compassion to understand what they are going through as well. Ms. Kang thanked her for her comment.

Kiersten Eng (921 Bogert Road): I don't know that decisions should be based on fear.

Taylor Minervini (181 Wales): I just want to say thank you to all the teachers, administrators, and staff who are risking so much every day to come to school. Your sacrifice is tremendous, and it needs to be said, thank you for what you are doing. Dr. Ben-Dov replied thank you.

Craig Arkenau (309 Taft Road): thank you for responding to a lot of the questions, but can we at least agree to look at the numbers again and take it to one lower level (1). Which parents asked for their children to go in person (2). Of those students, which students can benefit most from being in person? Those two data points combined should result in a happy medium. Ms. Kang responded this is noted.

Kate Murray (30 Eastbrook Drive): I totally understand and appreciate where Ms. Richards is coming from. I'm concerned about watching my child deteriorate. Their willingness and engagement is suffering. There needs to be an opportunity for the cohorts that are very small we need to explore before we get into a model where we are going more on a daily basis. There needs to be flexibility where kids can attend school with more kids in some of these cohorts. Mrs. Heitman responded when the cohorts were originally created we tried to make sure they were all even. You raise a good point. At Cherry Hill there is a lot more virtual learners than in person learners. We will talk about it with the Administrators.

Michelle Bressack (708 Millbrook): my son just played flag football with 65 boys and this is sponsored by the town of River Edge. Where is the consistency between the town and the school district? Ms. Kang responded we cannot speak for the town or the league.

Kirsten Apa (175 Voorhis Avenue): our first question was not answered: specifically how many classrooms in grades 2-6 in each school that cannot accommodate the in person students? Mr. Henzel responded for Roosevelt School we could not accommodate 12 and Mrs. Heitman responded for Cherry Hill School we could not accommodate 4.

Anjali (193 Kinderkamack Road Apt 2): is it possible to split the meeting into 2 sections? It's almost 10 and kids have school tomorrow and parents have early day back to work. Mrs. Kang responded we will stop at 10:30 PM. She is trying to get all voices heard.

Matt Taylor (311 Woodland): is there going to be a protocol in place at the end of the year or an evaluation: if kids should move to the next grade or repeat their current grade because of the lack of in person learning? Dr. Ben-Dov responded an evaluation will be done the way it is done every year. Teachers are beginning to do their mid-year benchmark assessments at this point. She is not hearing about major learning loss at this point but after the mid-year assessments we will know about where children stand. Communications from teachers will be coming. It will not be left to an "end-of-the year" communication about retention.

Colleen Poole (River Edge Teacher): how can K & 1 teachers stay 6 feet from children when they need help with jackets, gloves, packing up, etc.? Dr. Ben-Dov responded this is understood about keeping the children and teachers 6 ft. apart at this age.

Maya (179 Monroe Avenue): Thank you all for your hard work. Ms. Kang replied thank you.

K. Sprenger (River Edge Resident): I'm so happy the students have football to play. I think maybe what Michelle is saying is why wouldn't the Board of Health shut down football if they don't feel we should be in school? Ms. Kang responded that this is a question for the Board of Health.

Charlene Malki (473 Windsor Road): I would be okay with switching to Monday/Thursday and Tuesday/Friday cohorts.

Caitie Lehmann (190 Tenney Avenue): the kids are not 6 feet apart at recess, but instead playing right next to each other. Why do they need to be 6 feet apart in the classroom? Dr. Ben-Dov responded recess is outdoors so it's less dangerous.

Tom Koch (98 Lakeview Street): there have been several comments this evening regarding each district and more importantly in this case each school is being different. Your survey has proven we can be different in how we handle Roosevelt School and Cherry Hill School. What consideration has been given to opening up Cherry Hill School to more in person for those who have chosen to do so? Allow kids to get back and reevaluate more frequently. Things are changing monthly, weekly, even daily. Dr. Ben-Dov responded at this point it is a Board of Education decision because one of the mandates for us always, was to make our schools as cohesive as possible. If a decision is being made that given the circumstances maybe there is a different way to treat Cherry Hill than Roosevelt School it could only be a Board decision that wouldn't be consistent with the way we have operated.

Brianne Etter (711 Elm Ave): I would like to thank the teachers for all that you do. I understand your jobs are becoming that much harder. Please keep in mind this has also caused parents to work that much harder. We have to put in extra hours of work that we are being pulled away from because of the virtual side. Parents working from home, parents working out of the home, we are all having the added anxiety and hours added to our jobs. So while I understand your frustrations and while I very much appreciate all you do, you are not the only ones that are adding hours to your day. We are also having the possibilities of losing our jobs because we are constantly being called away from our desk or work to help our kids with zoom or work. Everyone is feeling the anxiety and stress of the pandemic. Ms. Kang responded everyone is feeling the anxiety and stress. We are all feeling it in our own way and in our own situations.

Lauren Cerullo (River Edge Resident): I would like to say I have a lot of respect and gratitude for all of the teachers and administration. I would like to emphasize that wanting kids in school more often in no way takes away that gratitude and respect.

Kristen Apreda (River Edge Teacher): thank you Diana for speaking for us. We care about the River Edge children so much.

K. Sprenger (River Edge Resident): I second Lauren Cerullo's comment. Virtual learning is a struggle for my son. He is also cohort B so had less days and then all the closures have impacted that. That is why I feel so strongly about in person learning. We very much appreciate his teacher and all the teachers.

Beth Barone (272 Voorhis Avenue): thank you Lauren. My kids have excellent educators at Cherry Hill School. I do not want to take away from their dedication to teaching my children. I would just like them to learn more in person verses over a screen along in their rooms.

Lauren Thiffault (159 Greenway): can there be an update to the plan so we can put what the milestones are and what the requirements are to get to those milestones? Dr. Ben-Dov responded the plan will be updated with the new information we have to date.

CLOSED SESSION

Motion made by Mr. Sim, seconded by Mr. Herbst to convene into closed session at 10:31 PM.

Motion by: Mr. Sim Seconded by: Mr. Herbst

Ayes: Ms. Brown, Ms. Dansky, Ms. Doyle, Mr. Herbst, Ms. Juskeleiene, Mr. Sim, Ms. Kang

Nays: None

RECONVENE

Motion made by Ms. Doyle, seconded by Mr. Sim to reconvene and adjourn the regular public meeting at 11:48 PM.

All Ayes

Louise Napolitano
Board Secretary/Business Administrator