

**MINUTES**

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee  
School Committee Meeting  
Monday, August 10, 2020 - 6:30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Adam Emerson, Mike Mucci, Bethany DeMarco, Nannette Reid

**REMOTE:** Regina Hill, Mike Henault

**ABSENT:** Marty Bush

**OTHERS:** Superintendent Aaron Dean, (various community members & staff - via remote)

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**103689 Call to Order**

Chairman Mike Mucci called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**103690 Public Comment or questions** - Moved to the end of the reopening plan presentation to allow for questions after the presentation

**103691 Approval of Minutes - July 27, 2020**

**MOTION:** On Motion of Nannette Reid and second Bethany DeMarco:

VOTED: To approve the July 27, 2020 minutes. The vote was unanimous.

**103692 Report of Treasurer/Business Manager - None**

**103693 Report of Sub-Committees - None**

**103694 Communications - None**

**103695 Report of Superintendent -**

**A. Superintendent Evaluation** - Superintendent Dean asked if he could submit his evidence at the September 14, 2020 meeting. Mike Henault stated that due to the reopening plan and all the work that has gone into it he will amend the timeline for evidence to be submitted on September 14th.

**103696 Chairman's Report - None**

**103697 Unfinished Business - None**

**103698 New Business -**

**103699 Action Items -**

**A. Reopening Plan** - A lot of work has gone into this over the last couple of months. The start of school will be bumped 10 days. Those 10 days will be staff training, cleaning, etc. There is a lot for us to prepare for. We need the

summer school with some in person services. The nurses did training with masks, maintaining the highest amount of safety. It has been going well. Students will go into session on September 15th. We still need to negotiate some of these with the Union.

Guiding principles used while putting this plan together. This situation is ever evolving. The biggest piece is safety. We need to make sure it is in the best interest of everyone involved. Our guiding principles are: Safety: data, medicine & science will guide decision making and operational planning over the course of the year. Parents will always have the option of a remote program until the end of the pandemic; Education: Students, staff and families will be provided with ongoing information about health and safety protocols over the course of the virus; Equity: we will work to ensure that every student receives what is needed to be successful and compensate for the effects of the pandemic to date; Learning: we will move forward with the curriculum and work to increase student engagement using the state frameworks and student interest to guide us regardless of the method of delivery; Improve remote access and delivery: using family feedback, we will enhance our remote or distance learning plan using one platform and a single log-in for remote access; Pacing: we will use a staged approach to re-open the school for in-person learning once we are assured that students and families have a very clear understanding and commitment to all health protocols; Social/Emotional: we recognize and will attempt to mitigate the trauma brought on by the past 6 months recognizing that school will not be the same until the pandemic has ended. Masks and social distancing will be difficult and inhibiting for staff and students. A large focus in the curriculum will be on social and emotional wellness; Anti-racism: in addition to the pandemic, we are making a commitment to address racism in our school and community; Communication: we commit to transparency and respect and will recognize what we know and what we don't know. We will recognize that some will agree and others will disagree with our decisions ahead and will use our commitment to health and safety as our guide.

**In-Person Learning:** Last meeting we talked about the feasibility study for in person learning. It was the will of the committee to look at 6 feet instead of 3 feet. It was not feasible to space 3 feet apart. The leadership team completed inventories of each school building looking at available supplies, furniture, sinks, bathrooms and classroom space (including alternative spaces such as the gym, media centers, school yard) Analyzing the traveling routes in each building for students and staff to safely enter, move through and leave in cohorts. The conclusion reached by the leadership team is that a return to full time in person learning is not feasible for the district at this time. Three reasons: Safety of HVRSD students and staff; academic, social and emotional well being of students and the financial implications for the community. Safety of the students and staff is paramount. We can adhere to physical distance requirements (3 feet) for desks and chairs, the number of students within the building sharing bathrooms, arriving and departing moving in hallways creates significant safety challenges and higher risk situations. Students, families and staff are anxious about returning to in person learning. The anxiety has created an imperative for HVRSD to assess our student's mental health and provide support and services before we ask them to return to in person learning on a full time basis. To return to full in person learning would cost the town at least an additional 1.3 million: Teaching staff: 10-15 minimum extra staff at \$675,000; Support staff: additional 5-10 per building \$340,000; Additional furniture/outfitting spaces: \$150,000; PPE safety supplies for full return is estimated at \$150,000. The challenges related to student and staff safety, and finances and in the interest of the wellbeing of the students, an immediate full return to in person is not feasible at this time.

**Remote Learning:** We have to offer remote learning to anyone who does not want to go in person. HVRSD staff and students still have much to learn about navigating a remote learning environment, we are in much better position to bring dynamic teaching and learning to a remote setting heading into this fall than we were in the spring. Remote learning this fall will be more consistent, more rigorous and more like school than what students and staff experienced March through June. The remote cohort will be a full time remote learning option for families. Students in kindergarten through grade 8 will follow a daily schedule comparable to a traditional school schedule. HVRSD teachers who are unable to return to an in person learning environment will be assigned to classes within the remote cohort. Google classroom will be our learning management system for all grades district wide. Google classroom organizes content in one place for easy access and storage. We are endeavoring to also connect to powerschool for one convenient login. Students in all grades will have a @hoosacvalley.org email account. For most grades, restrictions will be in place to limit the user's ability to send email to or receive emails from outside our domain. Clever will be used as a single sign on; Googlemeet/zoom will be used for synchronous meetings/teaching; HVRSD is striving to be 1:1 for student issued devices in all grades. We are encouraging students to buy your own device if possible as we are awaiting the arrival of approximately 200 devices; Attendance will be taken. Students will be assessed as they would if they were in school.

**Hybrid Model:** Elementary/Middle/High School: 2 cohorts: The 2:3 hybrid model for the elementary schools starts by identifying two cohorts of students as each grade level in each school: Cohort A and Cohort B. Students in Cohort A will attend school in person on Mondays and Tuesday and engage in remote learning on Wednesday, Thursday and Fridays.

Students in Cohort B will engage in remote learning on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesday and attend school in person on Thursdays and Fridays. This schedule ensures that school buildings never approach full capacity, allowing staff to spread students out throughout the day and easing the demand on hallways and common spaces. It also reserves Wednesday for deep cleaning between cohorts being in person. Using stable cohorts of students is consistent with the DESE reopening guidance to keep students safe. Cohorts will be created by assigning half the classes at each grade level to Cohort A and the other half to Cohort B. By dividing the grade level in half and keeping individual classes intact, we will create consistency for students and staff. Students will be with their primary teachers and the same group of peers every day when they are attending school in person and when they are remote. We will endeavor to assign siblings in HVRSD to the same cohort to ease the burden on families. Scheduling: to make it simple for students, families and staff, a single schedule will be used at each grade level as much as possible given service delivery requirements. Our leadership team strongly recommended that remote learning days follow a schedule like that used in person days. In all the schedules, there will be time built in for hourly scheduled mask and hand washing breaks. Building administration teams will endeavor to identify outdoor spaces that can be used throughout each day of in person instruction and mask breaks. Principals and teachers will work out those schedules as the new year begins. Using the same schedule for in person remote learning days will help students establish productive learning routines and allow a seamless transition should public health indicators require our district to return to full time remote learning.

**The Intended Plan:** The leadership team recommends a phased in hybrid reopening plan for the 2020-2021 school year under this model:

Staff may return to school building first to set up classrooms in a safe, staggered schedule; Staff will virtually participate in professional development designed to support them in navigating both a remote and a hybrid return to school; Special populations will be prioritized to come back four days (M, Tu, Thurs, Fri) in September; Students in all other grades will transition from full time remote learning to a hybrid schedule only when it is deemed safe to do so; The district will reevaluate the plan at monthly school committee meetings, with the superintendent checking in with the Board of Health regularly.

HVRSD will reopen one step at a time. Assuming public health indicators related to COVID-19 pandemic continue to trend in a positive direction, the district intends to reopen schools safely in four phases

Phase 1: Staff and system readiness (plan approval - September 14th)

Phase 2: mostly remote/in person introduced to special populations/ K (September 15 - October 2);

Phase 3: remote plus - hybrid introduced to grades 1-3, 4 and 8 (October 5 - 23)

Phase 4: transition to full hybrid model district wide (October 26)

Phase 1: Staff and readiness - these days will provide an opportunity to prepare staff and school buildings to welcome students back to rigorous, standards based instruction in a manner that adheres to all health and safety guidelines. The impact for families is a 10 day delay in the start of session for students which would move from September 2 to September 15. It will allow teachers/staff to prepare to welcome students into remote and in person classrooms. DESE reopening guidelines were published after teacher and other school year staff adjourned for the summer.

Phase 2: mostly remote (September 15 - October 23): 3 goals for Phase 2: Every student understands the expectations for participation in remote and in person learning for the school year; launch the remote learning program for all students; identify each student's unique academic, social and emotional learning needs give the impact of the pandemic on top of the usual summer learning loss. Week of September 8 families may pick up chromebooks from the 8th - 11th; Week of September 14th: remote learning will begin for all students on September 15th; families will be invited to participate in virtual open houses to meet their children's teachers and learn about school policies and procedures for the school year; families will be provided technology training opportunities; the focus of beginning days is to ensure all students virtually meet their new teachers, receive devices and materials necessary for remote learning. Staff begin remote learning for all students on September 15th; staff administer diagnostic assessments remotely; staff will analyze data to identify each student's needs;

Phase 3: Remote Plus (possible start as early as October 5th); The district plans to begin expansion from a mostly remote model to a hybrid learning model in Phase 3. Students in grades 1 - 3, grade 4 and grade 8 students will transition to a hybrid schedule, allowing students in transition grades to get settled in their new settings prior to scaling up district wide. Students in these grades will return to school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday each week with a deep cleaning day on Wednesday. October 5th: Grades 1-3, grade 4 and 8 will be welcomed back into the district for in person instruction and

support.. All other students will continue to participate in remote learning. Staff will begin implementing the remote plus schedule for grades 1-3, 4 and 8. Some staff will continue to work with students in a remote model.

Phase 4: This model will only go into effect when it is determined to be safe for a larger group to return to school in person. In Phase 4, students will come back into buildings in a full hybrid model. Students will participate in a 2:3 remote model, with Cohort A or Cohort B grouping. Some students may choose to continue with remote learning.

Aaron asked the committee if they have any questions? We are going to have to look at families that will be struggling. Looking at some potential remote learning centers. There is no definite but we are trying to work on options for families.

Mike Henault asked if Aaron could clarify the reasoning behind starting with pre k and kindergarten in person? Aaron stated we are introducing them to school and some studies have shown that they are the safer cohort, the least to transmit. Pre-k is mostly special education and are the most vulnerable that need to get in person services the most.

Sports: we don't have guidance on that yet. We are talking about feasibility with clubs, etc.

Mike Mucci: asked about phase 3 and phase 4. Phase 4, the end of October grades 5, 6, 6, 9, 10, 12 will be the first time they are getting into the school. Why can't some start in Phase 3? Aaron stated that we might make that shift in the beginning of October. Students in grades 5 - 8 and 9 - 12 have been the most successful as far as the learning platform..

Adam Emerson asked if the October 26th date can't be met, what will the new date be? We will have to revisit that on a monthly basis. Take a look to see if we are on track. Want people to know that we are making a good faith effort to get students in person. To give as much notice as possible.

Mike Henault: you mentioned metric, subject to collective bargaining can you explain any of the metrics as far as the state's guidelines? The state has not given too much information in terms of that metric. Basically as you reach the 5% transmission rate, you are looking at remote learning. The County is between 2 - 3 %. Adams/Cheshire as of now does not have any cases, but that doesn't mean in 2 weeks we won't.

Regina Hill: Phase 2 full remote a timeline as to how that is going? Remote learning may not be going as well as expected. At the September inservice day, we will use that as a checkpoint, knowing there will be a couple more weeks until the next phase.

Mike Henault: can we survey families to see that things are going as well as expected? Aaron stated that he will.

Some data and rationale behind our approach. Family survey and registration data: 70% in favor of some form of in person; 30% choosing full remote; 53% utilize transportation. This data would suggest we need a 3 cohort model as current numbers would create the need for double bus runs; Relative low transmission rate in Berkshire Count between 2 -3%; currently no cases in Adams/Cheshire. Latest studies show younger children transmit the disease (10 and under), but at a lesser rate than older students and adults. These are for families that are wanting that in person option. Looking at schools closing, Israel, Georgia and other cases of in school transmission. Which is why we need to establish the remote platform to start. Creating a mask culture.

Next steps: assemble schedules, guidelines - family friendly formats; communicate and plan with staff; contact pre-k and k high needs families and plan cohorts; continue assembling learning experiences for staff and families; continue preparing facilities with sanitizer, ppe, masks and other safety needs; work with dufour on transportation.

Doing a walk through with Berkshire Health Systems regarding the air filtration, filters have been changed.

Adam Emerson asked if someone has come in contact with someone, if we do have a student that comes into a classroom and tests positive, will that portion of the cohort, quarantine for 14 days, and if so, do they go fully remote? Aaron stated that could potentially happen, this is something we will be working out with the Board of Health. Start with contact tracing and then recommendation from the board of health. They can only come back after testing or quarantine ends and are symptom free. What about sick days? If I can log in, I don't get charged for sick days? Aaron stated that if you are learning you are not charged a sick day.

Nannette Reid: when we go to hybrid, the elementary and middle school each cohort will be in the same class and not shifting around... what happens to the high school? Aaron stated that logistically it is a huge task... maybe looking at leaving them in the same class and have teachers come into the classroom.

**Public Comment Questions (Chat questions):**

Will siblings be in the same group? Yes

Students that are medical fragile and not in person but cannot attend an online learning what will the plan be? Joshua Dickson stated that his office reached out to preschool as well as substantially sub programs, our goal is to have as many students in school in those 3 populations but families have the choice, to have some services, speech, ot, pt or whether they would like to attend fully remote. Toward the end of the month we will reach out to families who receive special education, will receive calls and a remote learning plan that has an individual schedule whether they are in person or fully remote. There will also be special education liaison and monitoring engagement.

Will parents have the option that they choose for children. Aaron yes, but we are asking to commit for a marking period. However, if it's not working, we will need to support and if it doesn't work we look at different ways to make it work.

Does special population mean all students in bridges and cornerstone programs?.... Josh Dickson: yes, they are to be prioritized for in person services first

Will there be before and after daycare? It is our goal to do that - but the EEC guidelines are pretty stringent... we need to evaluate spaces, etc. we are working that out as soon as possible

What will preschool look like with hours and days? Josh Dickson:: we have a meeting scheduled this week in regard to what the model will look like. It looks like ½ day sessions, the number of days are dependent on class size, we will prioritize our special education students first.

What is going to happen if a child has multiple therapies? All therapies will be provided remotely or in person. Will Work with clinical staff to work out logistics

If a student is transferring from another school can they visit the school to help with transition? We are hoping that we are able to do that

Children from elementary received tablets now going to middle school can he keep the device? Aaron: yes he will be able to.

Will there be a chance for a face to face to meet teachers? Aaron stated that yes that is the plan and its important to get that personalization for students

What role will paras play? It depends on the setting, we have paraprofessionals in bridges and prek, in some cases delivering intervention for special education, students in buildings will be used for extra support. We have plenty for them to be engaged.

How many hours of screen time for students... are they expected to be on a computer from 9 - 3? Aaron: No, we are looking at 2 -3 hours for onscreen, there are guidelines we have to work with the state.

Will grades be actual and not a pass/fail? How will grading be in comparison to last year? It is going to be a true grading system, we can't get away with pass/fail, that's the state guidelines.

Will students choosing fully remote start the school year with the same teachers as hybrid? Yes,

Will students be required to take gym, art, etc. - the plan is to provide some form of it , but not to the extent that it was in the past.

Will children be leaving classes to get services? It will all depend on the individual student.

What type of protection that the teachers/ paras have for students that are hands on? It depends on what services are provided... they have masks, gowns, gloves, it's a case by case basis.

Mike Mucci: We have been doing Q & A for 30 minutes. There are a lot of specific questions, will there be another opportunity for parents to ask administration? Aaron: We have to get the plan posted this week and we will hold another forum either this week or next. Will get the administrative team on that call. It will be school specific so it makes sense to get all principals on board.

Mike Mucci: we had a presentation tonight, this plan has a lot of information but still has a lot of details that need to be worked out. We need the committee to approve the remote, hybrid, in person and intended plan.

**MOTION:** On Motion of Adam Emerson and second by Mike Henault - to approve the in person, remote and hybrid model - Adam Emerson withdrew this motion.

New Motion:

**MOTION:** On Motion of Adam Emerson and second by Mike Henault:

VOTED: To approve the in person, remote and hybrid model, subject to collective bargaining negotiation and health metric status. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

**MOTION:** On Motion of Nannette Reid and second by Bethany DeMarco:

VOTED: to approve the recommended Intended Plan, with a phased in approach, subject to collective bargaining negotiations and health metric status. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

**B. Revised School Calendar** - start date August 31 for staff and September 15th for students.

**MOTION:** On Motion of Bethany DeMarco and second by Regina Hill.

VOTED: to approve the revised school calendar. The vote was unanimous.

**103700 For the Good of the Order** -

Regina Hill: very impressed with the graduation ceremony.

Mike Henault: the work we are doing is unprecedented and no real model to follow and commends Aaron and his administrative team and his communication with families has been outstanding.

Nannette Reid: thanked Aaron for all his hard work and making the right approach and taking it cautious.

Adam Emerson: thanked principal Byrd and her team for an amazing graduation and having it on the football field with Greylock as a background. This is not an easy time, and yet we seem to be navigating it very well. It truly takes a village to make this happen. Aaron is steering the ship but there is a lot of work with staff, administration, etc. and wanted to recognize their hard work.

Mike Mucci: The great graduation ceremony celebrating the graduating class of 2020.

**MOTION:** On Motion of Bethany DeMarco and second by Adam Emerson:

VOTED: To adjourn the regular meeting at 8:20 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Lisa Bresett, Recording Secretary

**Place: Per Governor Baker's order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting G.L. c. 30a, Sec. 20, the public will not be allowed to physically access this School Committee Meeting. Members of the public can access this meeting via live stream by calling 1 929 436 2866; Meeting ID: 987 4367 8020; Password: 728928**

The listing of matters is those reasonably anticipated by the Chairman which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.