

**Work Session Meeting  
September 14, 2020**

**Opening**

Call to Order

At 6:02 p.m. School Board President Michael Marasco called the September 14, 2020, Caesar Rodney School District Work Session Meeting to order.

Roll Call

Members present in addition to President Marasco were Vice President, Ms. Jessica Marelli, Board Members Mr. Dave Failing, and Executive Secretary Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald. Dr. Joyce Denman, Mr. P. Scott Wilson arriving late.

Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Marelli made a motion to adopt the September 14, 2020 agenda as presented. Mr. Failing seconded the motion and after roll call, the motion carried 5-0 (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, Wilson, and Denman).

Update on School Re-Opening

President Marasco thanked all attendees for joining the meeting this evening. He stated this was the most unusual school opening ever. He stated the Board wants to be involved during this time. There were several topics to be discussed this evening.

Dr. Fitzgerald stated we have distributed over 99% of our student devices. Administrators and counselors are reaching out to parents who have not received those yet. Attendance averaged around 90% and we are on target with attendance. We should see even better attendance after students become more familiar with the process.

Mr. Rodgers stated we served 12,300 breakfast and lunch meals on the first day of school. By tomorrow, we will have firm numbers from today's distribution. Dr. Fitzgerald gave kudos to the Child Nutrition Department.

Mrs. Faircloth stated we added a second tech hotline. The hotlines are working with families to get connected. Students seem very excited. Over 80 families are receiving hot spots for connectivity. We are working with the Base Youth Center to assist with their connectivity. The Securly App is a new program allowing parents to see what their students are seeing. A parent information night is coming up this week. Interim Reports were discussed with more information to come. Some of the concerns are the amount of hours students are logged in. Once we have the baseline data, small groups will be formed allowing for different activities and instruction. Lots of engagement is going on keeping students focused. Mr. Wilson stated he has received comments with concern for the long hours for the younger children. He asked that we consider bringing back students sooner. Mrs. Faircloth stated we are working on that and working with transportation to make that happen. Mr. Wilson stated he appreciated the work they are doing and that they are considering the younger children.

Ms. Marelli asked about returning students to the building and teaching remotely at the same time. Mrs. Faircloth stated there are more remote students. They have also been looking at logistical pieces for the hybrid plan. Ms. Marelli asked about the professional development and if there is time for training. Mrs. Faircloth stated we do have the time and can adjust it as needed. Ms. Marelli shared her children find this instruction better than the spring online instruction and shared her thanks to the department. Ms. Marelli asked about finding assignments, etc. for her children. Home Access Center is still available for parents. Dr. Denman asked what should parents do if they are having trouble getting Home Access. Mrs. Faircloth stated they should call the individual school. Ms. Marelli continued saying once we have the baseline data, we can see who needs small group instruction and screen breaks will begin to happen. Pre-recorded lessons were discussed. Parents are allowed to do those lessons outside of the school day. Grading was discussed. Mrs. Faircloth stated we must be creative when it comes to grading. The 50-minute planning period was also discussed. Ms. Marelli asked if this was enough time. Mrs. Faircloth stated office hours have been added for planning purposes. School day start and end times have also been considered for transportation.

Ms. Marelli asked about the Chromebooks. Mrs. Faircloth continued to say Tech Liaisons are assigned to each building. As issues arise, work orders are done based on when the request is received. We will have some devices on hand for those devices that may need repair. Mr. Marasco asked about the document cameras and when we can use those. Mrs. Faircloth shared that videos have been released for teachers to use them from home. We are looking at getting more of them out there.

Mr. Marasco asked about the attendance policy. Mrs. Toles-Torain stated the policy is still similar with some allowances regarding logging in, etc. If there are families with special circumstances, they should contact the building principal to work out a plan. Dr. Fitzgerald shared the state has a very general and broad policy with a lot of flexibility for districts to work with families.

Mr. Marasco asked about filling our current vacancies. Dr. Noel stated we are currently filling all vacancies. We had some resignations last week and hope to have them filled very soon. Dr. Denman asked for the percentage of staff teaching from home. Dr. Fitzgerald stated it varies from day to day. We can provide that data at a later date. She asked how the special education teachers are being utilized at this time. Mr. Thompson stated depending on which building you are in it is different across the district. Teachers are excited to work with small groups of students and they do have a plan. Support is very important. Therapy staff members are pulling together their final plans for remote sessions. They are considering providing more support for teachers. Dr. Denman shared a parent concern. The time of the middle school day was the concern and they felt it is very long. Dr. Kris Failing shared that she has heard some parents feel it is not long enough. Once they get moving over the next week the day will be broken up more to allow for less screen time. Board member, Mr. Failing, appreciates the effort the teachers are making to reach out to the parents. As a parent, he thanks them for their communication. It is a big help for parents. He stated patience is necessary. He asked about future transportation once school is open for in-building instruction. Mr. Bonner stated the structure is now in place. Routes are being put in place based on the parent commitment letters we received. He has met with bus contractors. He stated that we just don't know where we will be with drivers. He is optimistic for the elementary students. Mr. Failing asked about the bus cleaning restrictions. Mr. Bonner stated this should not be a problem. Dr. Fitzgerald shared the state is still paying the bus contractors as if they are working. We are supposed to supervise this which is difficult to do. We won't know more about cleaning until we see them with actual students on the buses. Mr. Marasco about picking up students who may be at the bus stop without their masks on. Mr. Bonner stated DOE has issued guidance that all K-12 must wear a mask to board the bus. Special needs students could be an exception. Mr. Thompson stated we would have extra masks available for students. Parent pick-up/drop-off volume was discussed. Mr. Bonner has a meeting scheduled next week with principals regarding this and the cleaning of shuttle buses, etc. Mr. Failing understands the difficulty in creating a schedule for sports and non-sports. He is hoping we look forward to getting this in place as soon as possible.

Mr. Wilson brought up a concern regarding the diversity and equity training for the high school. He asked that all Board members be invited to attend all trainings. Dr. Kijowski shared that the ZOOM information is available for all Board members to log in and attend the trainings.

Ms. Marelli asked about alternative programs such as Parkway, etc. Mr. Thompson shared these students are still in their alternative programs remotely and they are continuing to prepare students and families for progression to their home schools. Dr. Denman stated she would like to discuss this further at a later time.

Dr. Fitzgerald shared the Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association (DIAA) received information from the Delaware Department of Public Health (DPA) that football, lacrosse, and wrestling could be played with certain guidelines and restrictions. They are considered high-risk sports and were previously not allowed. This past Thursday things changed. A modified schedule was introduced along with DPH procedures to follow. The state board meets this week and votes and has the final say. If approved, practice could begin on 9/28. Athletes must wear masks. There may be penalties involved if guidelines are not followed. Transportation is a challenge. Dr. Fitzgerald is also in support of middle school athletics, but districts are not mandated to have athletics at this level. Some districts are having trouble finding coaches. The Henlopen Conference met today and discussed their schedule and restrictions which must be followed. There are still a lot of questions unanswered at this time regarding athletics. Dr. Fitzgerald stated If we are looking into having athletics, we would like to also know about marching band and cheerleading as they do not fall under DIAA. We hope to have more guidance for these programs from DPH. DIAA stated spectators are not allowed, but DPH stated one spectator per child is allowed. We hope they will follow the same guidelines as we did for graduation. Other clubs and activities are also being addressed. If the Board doesn't feel we should move forward with athletics, it would be at the Board's pleasure to cast a vote. Mr. Wilson asked for clarification and stated he is in support of athletics. We can live stream all games for families and we hope for flexibility for the spectator

restrictions. It will take a lot of work from all involved. Mr. Marasco was happy to hear we are seeking guidance from DPH to get our students back into these activities. Ms. Marelli stated she is supportive of all athletics even if requires bussing. She asked about the swim team and finding a pool for them. Dr. Kijowski stated Mr. Beron is working on that and projecting ahead. We are going to be very creative with scheduling. Mr. Wilson asked if any sport was excluded in the DIAA decision. Dr. Fitzgerald stated no sports are excluded at this time but they are challenges. Mr. Wilson asked about DIAA meeting with the YMCA directors regarding the use of their pool. Dr. Fitzgerald stated that the conversation has not happened but he could put it out on their radar. We have a lot of students interested in swimming and we would hate for that to go away. Dr. Denman asked if we need to provide a plan to DPH for our athletic programs. Dr. Fitzgerald stated we have not been given the details yet, but DPH would like a plan. Mr. Failing also supports sports and he would like to see students back in school. He gave thanks to the high school coaches and the athletic director. We are also concerned about all other non-athletic students and their programs. Dr. Denman asked how the coaches are feeling about running their programs. Dr. Kijowski stated they had a meeting with trainers, coaches, and nurses. They launched the out-of-season programs today. They conducted screening outside and followed social distancing, etc. Coaches seem to be ready if they are given the green light to move forward. Mr. Wilson asked about coaching vacancies. Currently, only one position is still open at the high school. Dr. Denman asked about the plan to test athletics for COVID 19. Dr. Fitzgerald stated this is not mandated. We are simply conducting a screening questionnaire.

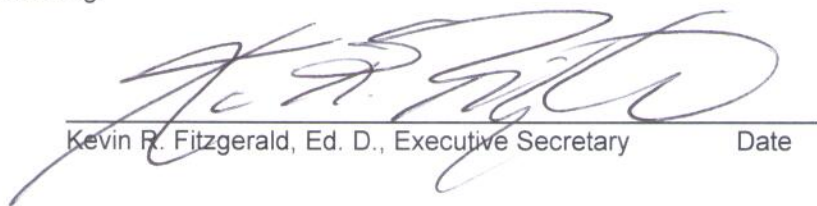
Ms. Marelli asked about posting the recording as soon as we can so people can hear the good information discussed tonight. Mr. Marasco shared he had a parent share that they were happy with connectivity and her pop-up school students from CR have had great success earning remotely. He thanked everyone involved with that. He stated this was a terrific work session with a lot of information.

### **Executive Session**

There was no Executive Session.

### **Adjournment**

At 7:42 p.m. Mr. Marasco adjourned the meeting.

  
Kevin R. Fitzgerald, Ed. D., Executive Secretary \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The Caesar Rodney School District is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate in employment or educational programs, services or activities based on race, color, religion, national origin, veteran or marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation or genetic information in accordance with state and federal laws. Inquiries about compliance should be made to the Title IX, District 504 and ADA Compliance Officers: Paul L. Dunbar Administration Building, 7 Front Street, Wyoming, DE 19934.  
Phone: (302) 698-4800.