

**Work Session
March 23, 2021**

Opening

Call to Order

At 6:04 p.m. School Board President Michael Marasco called the March 23, 2021, Caesar Rodney School District Work Session to order.

Roll Call

Members present in addition to President Marasco were Vice President, Ms. Jessica Marelli, Board Members Mr. Dave Failing, Dr. Joyce Denman, and Executive Secretary Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald. Mr. P. Scott Wilson was not present at the time of roll call.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Failing made a motion to adopt the March 23, 2021 agenda as presented. Dr. Denman seconded the motion and after roll call, the motion carried 4-0 with one absent (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, and Denman).

Discussion Items

President Marasco stated the presentation scheduled for this meeting regarding bringing students into school five days a week is a fact-finding mission requested by the Board. Although a vote could be possible, it is very unlikely. The Board intends to provide the best make decision in the best interest of students and staff. They will continue to meet weekly and have done this throughout the COVID pandemic. The Board members have received several comments regarding the current hybrid platform and information related to any changes that may be considered. He thanked those who reached out and gave their input.

Update of School Return- Presentation

Mrs. Tara Faircloth, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, was asked to give the Board information on the current hybrid setup and what the District could do with the recent CDC guideline changes. She reviewed our current hybrid instruction. She reminded the Board of the CDC guidelines in place and the efforts we are taking to meet those restrictions which included social distancing, hand washing, mask-wearing, and cleaning procedures. She included a parent survey that was distributed in the fall asking if parents wanted to make a change in the instruction they previously selected. The result was many students wanted to be remote. We were able to combined cohorts and now have two instead of three for elementary. Individual families were personally contacted by the building administration team.

Instructionally, she gave a shout-out to all of our educators. They have embraced both hybrid and remote instruction. They have done an outstanding job at adjusting the instructional approach. Even though we were not face-to-face, we have built a great rapport with our students. Secondary schedules had an eighth period added. This gave an additional 2 hours and 20 minutes of face-to-face instruction. She shared an email she received from a Fifer staff member.

She spoke on the next steps. All educators who would like a vaccine should have this opportunity before spring break. She gave the new CDC guidelines for social distancing which remain 6 ft. for eating and 3ft. in a classroom. She stated we must maintain the cleanliness of the schools. We are able to do this in the evenings allowing for the extra day for instruction. Transportation can add a run on Wednesday. She included adding Wednesday would give more in-person instruction time. She discussed schedules for all grade levels. She shared the school calendar and explained the "A" and "B" cohorts, blue/gold days, and additional supports for loss of learning. Before and after school summer programming, asynchronous ELA & Math are resources. We would also have an early start for the 21-22 School Year on August 24th.

Dr. Denman asked about additional support for special education students. Mr. Kevin Thompson, Director of Student Services, stated we have already started the ESY instruction and have been working on the summer program. They have a plan in place for this. This is based on the individual student's needs.

Ms. Marelli asked about the CDC guidelines changes for social distancing at 3 ft. apart. She asked if we could take advantage of that for bussing or the number of students in class. Dr. Fitzgerald stated that 23 students on a bus are 3 ft. apart. In the classroom, Mrs. Faircloth is looking into this. There are issues with class sizes since not rooms are all the same size. We need to be consistent. The major change is 6 ft. apart is with no mask and can eat, 3 ft. is a mask on all time and all facing the same direction. This would be a contact tracing concern. We are looking to see if this is feasible. Ms. Marelli asked if the governor is ok with that change. The CDC and DPH are not the same restrictions. There has been no more flexibility on transportation. We have asked legislators if we have to transport all students. Only an executive order would change this and allow parents to bring students in.

Ms. Marelli stated she likes the instruction plan. She wants to continue thinking ahead to remediation. She has a concern on the Wednesday (in-person) 5th day for the elementary level. They are taking advantage to use this day to connect with their remote students. They are teaching social studies and science live rather than recording. Many special ed teachers are using that time to help their students. She isn't sure if it is worth giving one thing back to take away another. Ms. Faircloth stated elementary staff embraced small groups and social studies and science would not change. The change would be remote signing in at a later time. Special circumstances would be considered with small groups. We must be mindful of the special education students and meeting their IEP requirements.

Mr. Failing stated it is good to look ahead to next year. Understanding the rules may change. He asked about summer school staffing. Dr. Michael Noel, Assistant Superintendent/ HR Director, stated we do have more interest and we will be adequately staffed. Mr. Failing continued to state that transportation concerns are state-wide. We need to be more proactive to get more bus drivers. There are a lot of different factors. We may need more buses and that seems impossible to do right now. Numerous teachers have reached out requesting small group time and more one on one. Bussing cleaning is also a concern. Our number one issue is that this is the time to get kids caught up. Many changes we have made especially early on, he understands it is really difficult to make changes. He wonders with not much time left in this year, is this worth it? He wants kids in school, but almost 50% have chosen to stay home as remote. We can short them of their education. We have the responsibility to keep finding solutions or come to a realization that we just can't do this. It is a timely process and we have perfected how we now communicate. We must keep the best interest of our students first.

Mr. Wilson was present for the Board discussion.

Mr. Wilson stated he missed the presentation but it is his understanding that after the break they would bring more students back. This would be four days of additional in-person instruction. He doesn't feel this is beneficial. He believes this is a wrong decision and stated one day every two weeks is not going to solve the problem. The bottom line is it is a good effort but causes more problems than it solves. Ms. Marelli agreed with Mr. Wilson. Mr. Wilson believes we should not make those drastic changes at this late time in the year.

President Marasco stated some students are also caretakers, We need more input from teachers and parents on this presentation. The impact is important for each grade level. Elementary is different than secondary. He is concerned about the transition from middle school to high school. We need to look into secondary school options and leave elementary alone. More input is needed.

Mr. Wilson shared that the public believes other school districts are going to five days a week. But that is not the case. President Marasco reached out to Dr. Fitzgerald for that information. In comparison, Mrs. Faircloth gave a breakdown of other districts in the state.

Smyrna	AA/BB Cohorts	Remote Wednesday	Staff in on Wednesday
Capitol	AA/BB Cohorts	Remote Wednesday	Staff in on Wednesday
Polytech	ABC Rotation	In all 5 days	Staff and Students in 5 Days / Week

Milford	AA/BB Cohorts	Remote Wednesday	Staff in 5 Days / Week
Lake Forest	A/B Cohorts Alternating Weekly	Elementary in 4 full day and will add 8:20 - 1:20 on Fridays	Secondary: 9:30 - 2:30 Rotating A / B Weeks and adding Fridays
Laurel	AA/BB Cohorts	Adding Wednesdays to Rotate Between A/B	Staff and Students in 5 Days/ Week
Seaford	60% of elementary go 4 days and 20% hybrid in 2 cohorts	50% secondary go 4 days and 15% AA/BB	Staff in 5 Day / Week
Cape Henlopen	Elementary in 5 Days / Week with Waitlists in Some Locations	Adding Wednesdays to Rotate Between A/B	Staff and Students in 5 Days / Week
Sussex Tech	A/B 2 Cohorts	Students in 4 Days	Staff in 5 Days / Week
Woodbridge	K - 12 A/B Weekly Rotations	5.5 Hour Days	Students and Staff in 5 Days / Week
Indian River	AA/BB Cohorts	Remote Wednesday	Staff in 5 Days / Week

Mr. Wilson stated that no one is doing everyone in school every day. There is some sort of rotation.

President Marasco asked about having just one cohort with 3 ft. social distancing. Mrs. Faircloth stated the secondary may not be able to do that. The problem is that some schools were renovated at different times and classroom sizes are different. She will look at that and bring more information to the next meeting.

President Marasco asked about transportation and if we could bring in the contractors for their input. Mr. Failing stated it has been lots of changes. We have time to think about next year now. He suggested we set up a system to put ideas together for what next year should look like. We should work on different scenarios. We can fix the past, but we might take some different directions for next year. Mr. Wilson stated we should get several different groups involved. We could over the summer make a committee to have that input. In reality, the governor will decide what rules are changing, We can use what we have learned, We hopefully will know in enough time to have a plan. We need to put pressure on the governor to move forward with restrictions before August. He suggested possible college-level scheduling for the high school could be an option.

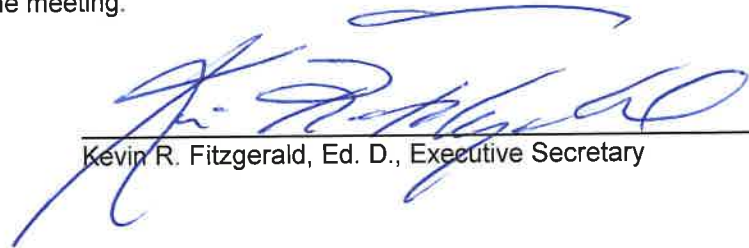
Mr. Failing would like to see something started soon. He suggested a small group representing everyone. Even though he is not a fan of committees, we should have three plans in place. Best case, good case, and continuing the same as we are right now. Mr. Wilson stated we should continue to listen and react to DPH and the governor. He hopes to get students back soon. President Marasco agreed and stated we must be proactive.

Executive Session

At 6:55 p.m. Mr. Wilson made a motion to go into Executive Session and for the meeting to be adjourned without returning to the general session. Dr. Denman seconded the motion and the motion carried 5-0. (Marasco, Marelli, Failing, Wilson, and Denman).

Adjournment

At 7:19 p.m., Mr. Marasco adjourned the meeting.


Kevin R. Fitzgerald, Ed. D., Executive Secretary Date 4/20/21

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