

**MINUTES OF THE PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING**

March 8, 2021 – 5:33 p.m.  
Remote - Zoom

Presiding: Comm. Manuel Martinez, Vice President

Present:

Ms. Eileen F. Shafer, Superintendent of Schools  
Ms. Susana Peron, Deputy Superintendent  
Khalifah Shabazz-Charles, Esq., General Counsel  
Boris Zaydel, Esq., Board Counsel

Comm. Vincent Arrington  
Comm. Oshin Castillo-Cruz  
Comm. Jonathan Hodges  
Comm. Dania Martinez

Comm. Nakima Redmon  
Comm. Kenneth Simmons, President  
Comm. Corey Teague

Comm. M. Martinez read the Open Public Meetings Act:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to insure the right of the public to have advance notice of, and to attend the meetings of the Paterson Public School District, as well as other public bodies at which any business affecting the interest of the public is discussed or acted upon.

In accordance with the provisions of this law, the Paterson Public School District has caused notice of this meeting:

**Special Meeting  
March 8, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.  
Remote - Zoom  
90 Delaware Avenue  
Paterson, New Jersey**

to be published by having the date, time and place posted in the office of the City Clerk of the City of Paterson, at the entrance of the Paterson Public School offices, on the district's website, and by sending notice of the meeting to the Arab Voice, El Diario, the Italian Voice, the North Jersey Herald & News, and The Record.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**It was moved by Comm. Teague, seconded by Comm. Redmon that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be opened. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.**

Ms. Rosie Grant: Good evening, Commissioners, Madam Superintendent, staff, and community members. Thank you for this opportunity. It's my understanding that we have good news on the school funding issue. We will recoup last year's dollars and move along the trajectory towards full funding. Although we won't get full funding, we are moving ahead on that path so I'm thankful for that. I've already shared some of my

priorities. I just want to run through them again in light of the funds that we are to receive. Number one is health and safety, and then social/emotional well-being for the children as well as the adults who are serving them in the building. Academic rigor is a given and opportunities to make up for deficiencies in all the academic areas, which includes arts, music, and particularly some attention to culturally relevant and culturally responsive content as we do that, and attention to the whole child, which we are doing with full-service community schools and 21<sup>st</sup> Century programs. Those are some things that I wanted to highlight this evening so that they are not left by the wayside. I thank you for that and look forward to hearing your discussion.

Comm. M. Martinez: Thank you so much, Rosie, not only for tonight's words but for always being so active and engaged and for all you do. We appreciate you.

**It was moved by Comm. Hodges, seconded by Comm. Teague that the Public Comments portion of the meeting be closed. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.**

Comm. M. Martinez: Before I turn it over to our Superintendent to give a little information on these presentations, I just would like to ask the Commissioners to hold on to any questions that you might have during the course of these presentations so as to allow the folks that are presenting to get through. Then, we can circle back and give as much time as we need to address any items that may need to be addressed.

## **DISCUSSION ON THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET PRIORITIES**

Ms. Shafer: Good evening, Board Commissioners. Thank you, Mr. President. Tonight, you are going to hear our budget presentation which has three main focuses. One is for us to open and to open safely and then to address student learning loss. All of our priorities fit into one of those three categories - either opening, safety, or learning loss in academics. Again, I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Matthews, our Business Administrator, who will go through this. Then, we will take any questions.

Mr. Richard Matthews: Thank you, Ms. Shafer. I'm going to share my screen now. As Ms. Shafer said, we had three main priorities centered around putting together this budget presentation. It's learning loss, opening schools safely, and addressing mental health. I want to start with some of the budget reductions and movements that we made in terms of trying to balance out the budget. As we said to you two weeks ago, we are going to get back together again and go through our gap review. Typically, we may have this meeting a little bit sooner. We started out the year with a gap of \$50 million and we'll talk about some of the things we did to address the priorities that Ms. Shafer had mentioned and to balance out the budget. In front of you right now are three colored columns. ESSER I is the grant money that came to us last spring and that money expires in September 2022. We have ESSER II which expires in September 2023. That's the center column. The second green column is called ESSER II Guideline. We had a training last Saturday regarding federal money, how it's spent and just trying to promote an environment of compliancy and making sure that we are doing everything the right way. The guidance number you see next to the number is the guidance that we have from the government that says under that particular number these are allowable uses for this money. Going back to the first column in orange, ESSER I, purchased technical services. This is a contract in information technology for \$1.5 million. This is money that was in the local budget that we moved to the ESSER I category. Below that, you see textbooks for dual enrollment for \$975,000. We had used this money last year. Again, this is an allowable use under the guidance. That

money is taken out of the local budget and put into ESSER I. Bedside for \$300,000, and custodial cleaning services money was also in the 2021-2022 budget. It was taken out of the 2021-2022 local budget and put into the CARES Act under the category of janitorial supplies. Again, that money will be used now in the current fiscal year, but it's also an allowable expense. The green column is purchased technical services. Again, this is another contract in the technology department that was moved to the ESSER II grant. Guidance is number 9, purchased services for \$115,000 is Credit Recovery. Right below that is basically storage and use of hazardous substances. That money is \$30,000. Architectural fees for \$75,000 and supplies for \$811,000 is specific for replacing doors and windows. Again, we gave you the guidance number that we used for that particular case. Again, we have \$30,000 for facilities, \$150,000 capital equipment, \$210,000 for architectural/engineering fees, and \$1.5 million for science labs. Science labs are going to go into all schools and we've earmarked \$1.5 million for that. It's something that we've been talking about for a couple years and now we have the money to put it into projects. There's a big piece of the ESSER II funds for capital projects so we thought this was the right move to make regarding science labs. Professional services are 4%. This is basically security services that are being used for COVID mitigation efforts. We are spending time on overtime and other aspects of the year. We also plugged in 25 remote days to reduce that budget by \$1.5 million and it comes under the categories of 2, 5, and 15. There's a broad category under the guidance that talks about maintaining the continuity of business. It gives you a lot of flexibility in terms of what you are going to use the money for. When you see #15, it's really a category that is talking about maintaining the continuity of operations and services to the school district. I'm going to hit the big ones. \$2.5 million is for Northern Regional. That's for OT and PT speech and extended school year. That is going into ESSER II. \$392,000 is going to go for learning loss regarding ESY teachers and behaviorists. The next big one is sub costs. I highlighted that in bold because that was approved by DOE to be able to be used for ESSER II funds. Again, Column 1 is for CARES I/ESSER I, Column 2 is for ESSER II, and these items are normally in the local budget. Under allowable uses, we can take them out of the local budget and put them into the grant. The next screen is the amount of money that we put from ESSER I into the grant. \$3.4 million came out of the local budget into the grant. \$14 million comes out of the local budget into the ESSER II grant. That's the breakdown in terms of where money came from the local budget into the particular grant. Also added to the local budget we took the reading specialists out of ESSER II and moved it into the local budget. That amount came to 17 reading specialists and the value is \$1.4 million. We also had two nurses put into the local budget. To support the digital divide, we had to hire an instructional tech supervisor and five technology coordinators. With all the devices we have in the classroom and in the hands of students and staff, we have to be able to support the work that has happened regarding replacements, making changes and software upgrades. We have to support that effort. We can't just put devices in everybody's hands and not give that department the support they need to make everything work when things don't go the way they should. Finally, we have facilities. We've added 11 positions in facilities. We've added a glazier, electricians, maintenance workers, and HVAC so that we can address the needs regarding what's happening in terms of our buildings and grounds. Even though we've added \$593,000 to the budget through these positions, we're able to save money because we took out a lot of T&M contracts. The T&M contracts come to \$410,000. It wasn't just that we added \$593,000 to the budget, which we did in positions we need. We've been talking about investing into facilities for a long time. We also took out \$410,000 out of non-salary for things that we can now do in-house, as opposed to contracting out for T&M services, which is time and material. A lot of times in T&M you don't get the bang for your buck. You are paying a high rate for services, there's no guarantee things will be done, and they'll just keep billing us T&M. We're getting rid of that cost out of our budget and we are adding

this head count to facilities which we really need. We are adding a sector supervisor, a maintenance coordinator, HVAC, electricians, glazier, and regular B&G guys. These are the things that went into the budget. Again, the \$14.9 million comes out of the non-salary. \$3.4 million comes out of non-salary. I want to go to the gap. As I said earlier, we started the year with a \$50 million budget gap. At our last meeting, we mentioned to you that we had gotten our state aid and \$50 million from the federal government. When that money came in, we started plugging in our numbers and you can see there that for the tax investment it's \$.43 a day. The revenue for that number is \$61 million. Tuition is \$500,000. Miscellaneous revenue number is the same, \$3.6 million. Extraordinary aid is \$4.8 million because the state is talking about giving us more money for extraordinary aid. The state aid number goes to \$476 million. We received \$29,401,814. The Medicaid reimbursement number is at \$1.5 million. Budgeted fund balance is at \$2.8 million on down to our \$15 million from Fund 20. The revenue for the year is \$569,263,777. Going down to the appropriation line, charter school number from the state comes in at \$87 million. That's an increase of \$13 million from fiscal year 2021 to 2022. Non-salary numbers are up \$3.9 million to \$129 million. Non-salary/FICA/TPAF insurance is \$12 million. Salaries are \$249,910,572. That's up 3.2%. This was \$7.9 million in revenue. The health insurance is \$91 million, taking that appropriation number to \$569,263,777. As we sit here today on March 8, we do not have a gap. The budget is balanced based on the things that we did in terms of the non-salary items. They went through earlier. I'll take you through the document that we spoke about two weeks ago regarding the moneys that were in ESSER II. We went through the positions. Again, these are in the budget. We've talked about facilities for a number of years. We can finally put money into facilities and give them the things they need so we can have the kind of buildings and grounds that we need moving forward. As Ms. Shafer said, the three main priorities are learning loss, opening schools safely, and providing a safe environment for students and staff regarding mental health. Here's the allocation for the ESSER II funds. This next section is going to be things that we put into ESSER II and we'll go through each item. Security is going to be needed for the district, the value of security regarding the new guards, night guard, central registration, and seven additional guards to provide monitoring for the restart plan. Sporting events, recreation, and additional staff needed for COVID-19 protocols. When we first got CARES money, remember they used this money to keep people employed. As we open up schools, we are going to need more guards. This is non-salary money that's going to go toward reopening school safely and addressing the things that security has to do regarding COVID-19. The sub staff to monitor isolation rooms per COVID-19 protocols, which is one per building for 140 days. This is the value if you were to do it every day for the course of the year to monitor the room. Some of these numbers are worst-case scenario numbers and you'll see that throughout the presentation. This here is a transition program that is going to pay for itself. That's why I have the asterisk there. There's staff that's in this piece, coordinator, social worker, and five job coaches. If we do not do this, this is more money not to do it. That's why it makes sense for us to do it. There are positions here that are being paid for through the grant and this is an allowable use grant. If we don't do this, this will cost us probably three or four times more money because they'll go out-of-district. The same thing applies to the second section regarding transition program. I've heard in a lot of meetings that this is what people want. We want to prepare kids after high school regarding how to conduct yourself in terms of a home life, how to take care of your bedroom, what happens in the kitchen, what happens in your living room, and providing kids things they need to transition out of high school and be prepared for life on their own. This is a cost towards the \$250 million. The cost of not doing this is more money. The next one is \$80,000 for a behaviorist and they all tie together under Ms. Coy. The transportation cost is \$45,000. Again, addressing the three main priorities, tutoring programs to address learning loss is \$652,000. This number is worst-case scenario, 2,000 students at 40

hours. The column below it is the summer program to address learning loss. 1,200 students at 20 sites and these are the hours and the breakdown of the staff. That's \$3.8 million. As noted here, this includes salaries of all staff working in the program and all resources. That \$4 million is for worst-case scenario. It's something that we have to do to address learning loss. In the after-school program right below it, that's \$1.4 million for 35 sites, 12,000 students, 40 hours a week. This program is planned to start in the month of October. It's very important that we do stuff like this. It addresses the main priority of learning loss. Saturday program starts in October. This is a \$2.2 million cost to the district. Everything that's put here is being recommended going to ESSER II. We have the ELA program for intervention for \$650,000, math intervention for \$328,000, and thermometers for \$70,000. We have handheld thermometers right now. They take a beating. We also have the body scanners that are being deployed as of today into the school districts. It should be done by April 15. This is the cost for handheld thermometers that we are going to need regarding transportation on the buses. This is also another worst-case scenario because some of the buses will have their own people taking temperature checks. As part of our protocol, we want to make sure that we have this in place. Ms. Shafer, if I said anything wrong about that, you can correct me. Regular education classes busing, the bid for aides is \$150,000. Into facilities, you have the air purifier machines that are going to large areas and in the classrooms. It's 175 air curtains for large rooms. That's cafeteria and gymnasium. That price tag is \$2.2 million. We are going to be putting an air purification ventilator in every classroom in the district. That's a price tag of \$4.1 million. The last thing is the vehicles. We are still not sure if that's going to be an allowable use under ESSER. That's still being investigated, but that price tag for three vehicles is \$220,000. We go through devices. There's a lot of wear and tear. They have to be replaced and fixed so another 6,000 for the high school for 2,000 for eighth grade kids. That price tag is \$2.3 million. Cameras and hotspots are \$160,000. Online learning to address the hybrid model is \$30,000. Stipend to help staff with arrival and dismissal of students at 36 schools, this number is at worst-case scenario. I can't see the price tag going higher than this. Right now, we are estimating \$705,000 because we have to plan for worst-case scenario for the maximum numbers of kids and days to be able to provide the things that they need. The floating substitutes are \$1.2 million in case somebody is absent from the school that day. The DOE has given us the approval to use this as an item that we can put into ESSER II. We are looking at \$1.2 million for that. Last is mental health training and counseling. We had training last week on Thursday and Friday and the price tag to implement that districtwide is \$55,000. The price tag on the worst-case scenario is \$23 million for the items that have been presented to go into the grant. Ms. Shafer, is there anything that you want to make an adjustment or correction on? Are you good with everything I said? As far as we are concerned, I'll just take you back to slide #3. As we sit here today, we have a balanced budget in terms of the timelines and guidelines. The budget has to be to the County on March 19. My duty was to do a preliminary budget presentation on March 17. This meeting was designed for a gap review. Knock on wood, we have no gap today. This is where we are. Are there any questions, comments, or feedback?

Comm. M. Martinez: I'm happy to see that we got this well in advance. This way, we have some more time to go through it and I appreciate the effort put into it. It's a lot to go through, it really is, and I think myself and others are going to need some more time to go through it more thoroughly and come back with some questions. I'm very appreciative of where we are currently with the budget. We'll have to definitely go back and forth a little bit before the 19<sup>th</sup>. As far as bringing on the positions for facilities, it certainly seems like they are needs that the district has, but as I go through it, I'm just hoping that these are positions we'll be able to sustain year after year and not just bringing them on this year because of the influx that we have of federal funds and then

next year we'll be revisiting them. That's my hope and it seems like that is the case, but again I'll need some more time to thoroughly vet this budget. I am happy with where we are. Those are my comments. I'd like to open up the floor to any of the other folks who may have questions at this time.

Mr. Matthews: Commissioner, I appreciate the comment you made regarding the positions, but that's why we kept it out of the grant. The grant has an expiration date of September 2023. This is why these positions were added to the local budget as a reoccurring expense and part of our position control roster going forward. It would be like if we hired a new teacher or a new staff member. These are positions that are definitely needed. Part of the strategy was to reduce non-salary by \$410,000 by adding these positions to our position control roster. It's a move that we have been thinking about making even before this year. We're able to make it happen this year and it's not really because of federal money. It's more of a cost-saving strategy that we are implementing to hire staff and reduce our non-salary T&M costs. This is long-term. This is baked in.

Comm. M. Martinez: Sounds good. I appreciate hearing that.

Comm. Redmon: My question is about the reading specialists and also for additional IT. I understand that we are not using the money in our regular budget. I think I asked at the last meeting that we look at outside contractors because this is a one-time spend.

Mr. Matthews: The reading specialists were something that we needed long term. It's in our regular operating budget. It's not in the grant.

Comm. Redmon: I understand that, Mr. Mathews. I'm asking for additional. I'm pretty sure our students will need additional help besides what we have in-house. This is in addition to.

Mr. Matthews: I'm going to start this and maybe Ms. Shafer can jump in a little bit on it. We have these reading specialists already baked into the budget in some of our SIA schools. I know we are calling it in addition, but it's really something we need in our regular operating budget. Again, these are positions that we are baking into our regular budget as if we hired a new teacher, a new custodian, or whatever. I hear what you are saying about outsourcing the 17 positions. We have not done that yet in terms of getting a number. We can look at that and get back to you with that. As a district, we are used to cutting. Now we are adding, and I think that's a good thing. We are truly adding to be things, that are sustainable long term. We don't ever want to put a position in and then have to cut it. That's why we feel that we were very careful in terms of what we put into the budget. We also added and reduced other areas. Sometimes not having staff costs you more money, especially with the facilities piece. It is something that I have been working on for three years and it just came to a head this year. We really put together a plan to see what we can take out. By adding the staff, what can we remove? A lot of the cost is already in the budget, but now we are able to take it and put it over here and insert it with staff that can be more productive and efficient. T&M costs you more money than what you budget for. I know you are talking about reading specialists, but it's really important that we understand.

Comm. Redmon: What I'm asking basically for is in addition. It will give Commissioners the opportunity to see what it will look like outsourced and also in-house, a comparison.

Ms. Shafer: Leon, you did that for the technicians. Do you have that information? We did look to outsource the technicians.

Comm. Redmon: I'm just looking for a comparative cost. The Board members can see what we have in-house versus out of house, because we never had the opportunity to do this before. This is a great opportunity for us to see what we can do for the future or even if we can do it right now. That's the only thing I'm asking for at this point.

Mr. Matthews: You got it, Comm. Redmon. We have it for the technicians. We'll get it to you for the reading specialists as well.

Comm. Redmon: I appreciate that. Thank you.

Comm. Arrington: Mr. Matthews, thank you for the presentation. Can you go back to the cost for the isolation room? Is that a directive from the State that each school has to have an isolation room?

Ms. Shafer: Yes.

Comm. Arrington: It just seems like a resource sitting around. I don't know how many kids get sick everyday on average per school, but it just seems like an unused resource.

Ms. Shafer: If any child comes to school and the parent has not brought them to school, we have to put them in the isolation room if they have a temperature, if they have any symptoms of COVID, or they go to class, they feel fine, and later on in the day they have a COVID symptom. If you fell and scraped your knee, you're going to go to the nurse. But if you have any type of COVID symptom, you have to go to the isolation room and you have to stay there until someone can come and pick you up. Ideally, that room has to be an entrance from the inside of the school, but an egress to the outside of the building. They don't want anyone who possibly could be infected walking through the school. This is also the same for staff. The staff has to go into the isolation room as well if they don't feel well, if they are waiting for a ride or they are not capable of driving themselves at that point. Every building has to have an isolation room. It has to be equipped with a lot of PPE equipment, including a shield, a mask, a gown, and gloves. Then, the nurse would take care of those students who have any other type of sickness or ailment.

Comm. Arrington: What is the plan for that resource for the other days when no one is sick? Is he or she going to be helping in the class? Is there any plan for them?

Ms. Shafer: They can help with classes. Don't forget that we are going to have half of the students in and the other half would be remote. They can certainly help in the class or any other assignments that the principal needs to have done.

Comm. Arrington: I just wish there was a way we could regionalize it where we can have one isolation room per ward or something. It just seems like we can better utilize the resource. Thank you, Mr. Matthews and Ms. Shafer. Leon, could you go back a couple of slides? I didn't understand that \$1.5 million, the 683.

Mr. Matthews: We are baking in 25 remote days into the budget for next year. That cost is \$35,000 per day times 25. It's \$875,000. We have taken out a piece of security to use for COVID mitigation. The total price tag came to \$1.5 million.

Comm. Arrington: A remote day is when it snows?

Mr. Matthews: No. We are going to be baking in 25 remote days like we are now with the Fridays. We are going to use 25 as the number of days we are going to be remote next year. Whenever we are remote, you're not going to need a full staff of security. The other part of it is there are a lot of security things we do regarding COVID-19 that we are allocating towards this \$1.5 million. Between the 25 remote days and the other things that are security related regarding COVID-19, we can use that cost towards the ESSER II fund. We do social distancing. Say we have an event where we are going to have social distancing. You can take a block of that cost and charge it to the grant.

Comm. Arrington: Thank you, Mr. Matthews and Madam Superintendent. Like Mr. President said, once we can read over this and process it we'll better understand it. Thank you, Mr. Matthews.

Comm. M. Martinez: Just a follow up to one of the points Vince made. For the folks in the isolation rooms, is it one student at a time? Let's say multiple students happen to show symptoms. Is that one person then going to be in a room with multiple students spread out?

Ms. Shafer: There will be multiple students and there will be partitions between the students. There will also be an air purifier in the room.

Comm. M. Martinez: Copy. Who is up next?

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: What happens to this money? Is there a plan B for when all these guidelines change? I'm not saying if they change, but when they change. We've already had changes and individuals who have been vaccinated. New guidelines came out today that they no longer have to quarantine or even use masks. This is something that's going to be changing daily. I'm assuming that from here to September as the projections go a lot of these things are going to be completely obsolete or there might be new things. We don't necessarily know what that looks like. What's a plan B if we don't need an isolation room? Granted, we are not vaccinating kids right now, but if there is no need for an isolation room anymore and we are talking about herd immunity reaching that 80% by September. We are taking all these measures for September, better safe than sorry. What's plan B if we don't have to implement some of these things or bring in this additional staff or if there are new guidelines for bus companies that won't necessarily have to take the temperature of every student? What is plan B for this money?

Ms. Shafer: When Mr. Matthews went through this and he said worst case scenario, it's the maximum. We put in the maximum amount we would need right now to implement the CDC guidelines and the restart plan of the New Jersey Department of Education. Let's say in September they decide that we don't need the isolation room anymore, then we would not incur the cost for those substitutes and that money we would still have in ESSER II, which is good until 2023. We would be able to use these funds again in developing the following year's budget, 2022-2023. It's not that we would lose the funds. These funds are good until 2023. Any of the ESSER money that for whatever reason they say we didn't need to spend the money in that manner, we would have the opportunity to roll that money over until 2023.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: I'm assuming that's the same for any plan on remote learning or hybrid. All of those contingency plans might change, and we have the ability to, whatever money we budget for, use for other things or move for the following year.

Ms. Shafer: Exactly.



Comm. Castillo-Cruz: Have we budgeted for those remote days where we don't need some staff in, whether it's security or facilities? Have we budgeted for being open five days a week too? If it changes to that, have we budgeted to make sure we have the amount of money, especially since we are onboarding? We want to make sure that we are not onboarding staff members and then not being able to afford individuals for being five days and then having the conversation of RIF'g half of these individuals next year. I just want to make sure that we are not speaking in 5,000 different languages here.

Ms. Shafer: We made sure that we did not spend all of the ESSER II money. We have something like \$14 million that we did not spend out of the \$51 million. With that \$14 million, let's just say that we are not going to have any remote days and everybody's going to be in five days a week. We would be able to use some of that ESSER money for whatever the need is.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: I agree with Comm. M. Martinez. I'm usually not the one to ask for paper, but I might have to count this one out this time to look through it all. It is a lot of information. I'm sure we'll have a ton of additional questions.

Comm. Teague: My question is regarding the windows. I have heard from a lot of teachers that they are concerned about the ventilation and the air and so forth. I'm seeing that \$811,500. Are they planning on getting to work on some of these windows? There are teachers that are complaining that some of the windows don't open at all.

Ms. Shafer: In here, we have almost \$6 million worth of air purifiers. Depending on the size of the room, there's one for the classrooms and for offices. There's another one for large areas. Every classroom will have an air purifier whether your windows open or not. We do have our facilities staff going around to check which windows cannot open and they are taking care of that.

Comm. Hodges: Let's look at the isolation room, which is a little bit of a concern for me. The symptoms for flu can in fact be very similar to the symptoms for COVID. If you are putting both categories of patients in the same room because you can't distinguish between the two, if one of the students happens to be positive for COVID, what do you declare about the other ones? Do they have to go into home isolation or quarantine?

Ms. Shafer: What we are doing is keeping them all separate. We don't anticipate that we are going to have 10-15 students in the room at any given time. Parents are going to be called immediately to have students picked up. We know we are going to get some where parents can't pick them up right away. In any event, they're going to be separated from each other. There's going to be partitions between them. They will continue to have their masks on. Depending on how close or if they went to a classroom and then they came to the isolation room, we'll do contact tracing with our nurses and it's possible that they will have to go home and quarantine. It all depends on the situation.

Comm. Hodges: I'm concerned about what that procedure is going to be for people who are going to be in that room. Until immunization occurs for students there's a potential of spreading in that room, no matter how well the air circulates, which is the issue. You are going to have to have some sort of procedures that are strictly detailed for that and there has to be some contact tracing and possible quarantine or retesting of those students who were in contact in a closed room with someone who's positive. That has to be fleshed out.

Ms. Shafer: We have all of it in our reopening plan that we are going to be sending to the Board next week. It has all the procedures for the isolation room and the processes as to once you go in what's going to happen and how you exit. All the procedures are in there, as well as contact tracing.

Comm. Hodges: You're going to have Saturday and after-school programs to catch up and summer school programs. What will be the nature of that? How will you determine whether a student needs that?

Ms. Joanna Tsimpedes: We are not closing it off to students. We are not going to make it mandatory. We want it to be open to students across the district to have the opportunity to participate in the summer program. The summer program is going to be cross-curricular. It is not just math and ELA. There's going to be science involved. There's going to be extracurricular because we know it's important for our students to interact with each other on a safe level. As far as the after-school program, we are going to gear it towards on-grade level material which kids shouldn't be able to get ahead. We want to double-dose them so that they are getting the skill sets in order to be successful in the grade level they are entering. We want all the programs to mesh together, the summer program into the after-school program and the Saturday Academy. It's also important for all three programs that we address social/emotional wellness of our students and mental health. They have not been in schools since March and we know how important it is for them to have socialization with one another in a safe environment. We also need to ensure that our students are making strides with learning the material they should. We will be assessing them via on-grade level material to see where they are in the trajectory of learning.

Comm. Hodges: That's what I was looking for, the assessment. Will there be an assessment made of students to determine who needs it? The vast majority are going to need it because of the very nature of learning virtually. How will you determine how far the students are behind? Will there be remediation or enrichment as part of the process?

Ms. Tsimpedes: You have to remember it's both. You do have kids who are thriving and you have kids who are not. We need to make sure that we are remediating our students who need the support and we're also continuing to enhance the skills that our kids have. That's why we are not limiting it just for remediation. There are kids who can benefit just from interacting with others, from participating in extracurricular. We want to bring arts into our program in the summer, in our Saturday program and in our after-school program because our kids have lacked that. Even though they have it during remote, it's not the same as if you are in front of the teacher and having that one-to-one with the teacher and the students in the classroom. When we are looking at what we are addressing, we need to make sure that our students are getting the support they need in order to prosper in the grade level that they are entering in September.

Comm. Hodges: Are you putting together an assessment program that will determine where these students are and what has to be enhanced in these additional programs?

Ms. Tsimpedes: Whenever you use federal funding of some sort, you need to have a needs assessment. You need to be able to have a pre-assessment to see where they are prior to the program and where they end during the program. During the program throughout, teachers will be assessing based on benchmarks that we are providing to them on the material that they're learning. There will be multiple points of check-ins for our students to see where they are. Any program that we've ever done, we always have a pre and post-assessment to see where the students are. Those teachers

receive those scores in September to see where the kids are. It's another level of data that we provide to teachers.

Comm. Hodges: Will there be unit tests that we develop?

Ms. Tsimpedes: Yes. Also, we have software programs that they will be using when they take the assessment. It will tell us where they are working on, where they are in their academic level. As they use the program that the teacher provides at differentiation, the child should be growing and at the end of the program it will tell us where they ended. You have to meet them where they are.

Comm. Hodges: I'm just concerned about the unit assessments because we currently have unit assessments, and our students don't do well on state assessments. Yes, Mr. Martinez, it's a common situation and I'm trying to figure out how to change that.

Comm. M. Martinez: I didn't mean that in any funny way. It's déjà vu.

Comm. Hodges: This is an opportunity for us to add better structure to our approaches. We've had afternoon, summer, and Saturday classes before and they've not worked very well. That's what I'm very concerned about.

Comm. M. Martinez: Copy. Is there anything else, Dr. Hodges or any other Commissioners? Dr. Hodges, if you're through, I see Comm. D. Martinez.

Comm. D. Martinez: I wanted to add to what Comm. Hodges was saying about the assessments. I think a way to make the determination on who would benefit or qualify for the summer program, I assume that each of our schools have INRS teams.

Ms. Tsimpedes: Yes, they do.

Comm. D. Martinez: I guess working in collaboration with those INRS teams teachers are referring. If interventions are set in place or a decision is made by the end of the year, maybe referring those students over or having the INRS team making these referrals to the department for these summer programs.

Ms. Tsimpedes: Comm. Martinez, usually what happens is when we do open the summer program in the past it's based on where students are. If there are students who had a certain grade level average and below, they would be recommended. Because of the pandemic that we've been in and we feel that all students would benefit from a program, we will look at the students who are possible retentions and who are also sitting in INRS who can benefit from additional support to get them to where they need to be in September. Those are looked at as well, but we don't want to focus on just those students. We want to make sure that we provide opportunities for our students to come in and receive the support they so much need because of everything they've encountered in the last year and a half.

Comm. D. Martinez: Absolutely. It was just a suggestion. I know a lot of students are struggling. How would you be able to determine who's struggling academically because of the virtual setting, because of mental health concerns, because of isolation, not being in school, or not being around home dynamic or environment? How would you be able to assess that difference?

Ms. Tsimpedes: When teachers have conversations with students, when they have their parent conferences or when they have struggling students, the parents will say

their child does not do well with virtual. They need to be in front of a teacher. These are all things that are documented. When it comes time for teachers to also recommend students to attend the program, the goal is to have a K-5 in-person program in July. Those are our students that have not been in school, our youngest ones, especially our kindergarteners. The goal is to have them in-person with teachers following social distancing guidelines and protocols by the CDC. Our students may be struggling because they are working remotely. They may be struggling because this pandemic is costing them a lot of hardships. There may be kids who are not grasping the material for whatever reason. When teachers make that recommendation and have these conferences with the parents after third marking period, they'll be able to tell the parents this is a great opportunity for your child to participate in. Also, for kids who lack socialization skills and need to be in-person or need to have additional interactions with their peers, that's a great opportunity for teachers to showcase this program to their students. We have several opportunities for our staff members, inclusive of our building administrators, to reach out to families who they know are struggling and tell them this is a great opportunity for your child to partake in. They can be working on grade level. You can have students who are doing wonderfully but still are lacking that interaction. They are home all alone since last March and they need to be around others for their mental health and safety.

Comm. D. Martinez: Absolutely. My last question is regarding the isolation rooms. I was very open but I wasn't comfortable with the two different budgets for the isolation and a separate amount for the substitutes. I understand that the isolation rooms are needed as a state requirement to follow COVID protocols. I know that some teachers have lunch duty. Is there a way to alternate the staff that we already have to be in the isolation room and monitor those areas so we don't have to spend the money on this and allocate it somewhere else?

Ms. Shafer: Based on some of the feedback that we have from the teachers and the instructional assistants, they are going to be needed more in the classroom. If teachers are out, they may need to cover a class. Or if the teacher goes home sick, they may need to cover that class. The same goes for the instructional assistants. They all have substitute certificates so they may also need to cover the class. What was going to be safe and provide us with some consistency was to be able to have the substitute and let the teachers and the instructional assistants stay with the students who were trying to catch up on learning loss and be more consistent.

Comm. D. Martinez: Okay. Thank you.

Comm. Hodges: Mr. President, this is for the Superintendent. The people who are monitoring the isolation room, will we give priority to those people who are vaccinated?

Ms. Shafer: Right now, we are setting up with St. Joseph's and Hackensack Meridian. Both of them reached out to us and we've already developed a Google form where every employee in the district completes the Google form. Already, we're given 145 slots at the Mega Site with Hackensack Meridian for Sunday and Monday. We're going to continue to chip away at that. Luis is meeting with the substitute company tomorrow to find out how they are rolling out the vaccine for the substitutes for just that reason. My priority right now is to get every employee in the district vaccinated as quickly as possible and working with St. Joseph's and Hackensack Meridian we already have a system in place. We just sent St. Joseph's a list of 500 employees that signed up for it. Once we hear from the substitute company as to how they are getting their folks vaccinated, we'll be able to provide you with that information.

Comm. Hodges: Did you do a survey on the vaccinations?

Ms. Shafer: Yes.

Comm. Hodges: Is there a percentage of people who are vaccinated as employees in the district?

Ms. Shafer: We had over 1,200 responses to the survey and 200 already received the vaccination. Those 200 had to fit in Category 1A, which was over 65 years of age or some type of an underlying condition. That could be the reason why. We've had the drive open now since Friday and we have almost 1,000 folks signed up to get the vaccination. I'm getting emails from staff. They are anxious and really want to get the vaccination. I think that's good news. I don't think everybody will get it for one reason or another, but the majority of folks will be getting the vaccine as quickly as we can roll it out.

Comm. Hodges: Thank you.

Comm. Arrington: I know that we talked about staff, but I just want to be clear. Pritchard cleaning people and our security staff, I think it's great that we vaccinate our teachers. But if we have unvaccinated people in the building from custodial or security, I think that's a risk. I'm going to stay in my lane, Dr. Hodges, but I think the priority also needs to be cleaning and security or anyone in our building. I just want to put that out there. I think you're already working on it, Madam Superintendent.

Ms. Shafer: When we put it out to everybody, we said any employee on our payroll. After we get through that, then we are going to go to anyone who enters our building or is a contracted service. For example, our contracted security and Pritchard are not on our payroll, but they enter our schools. I agree with you. We don't want to have anybody going in our schools who didn't have the opportunity to get the vaccination if they wanted to get it. We are looking at probably 4,000 people that we are trying to get through these vaccination locations. Once we get through our employees, and that means everybody like our carpenters, our facilities staff, any employee on payroll can get it right now. They can sign up and then it will be scheduled. After that, it will be any of the contracted services that we get.

Comm. Arrington: The last thing about the isolation room is problematic in my mind. If my son Alex says he doesn't feel well and he's coughing – Dr. Hodges talked about the symptoms like the flu – but he doesn't have an elevated temperature, does he go into the isolation room? Is the temperature the triggering thing that sends a kid into the isolation room? Or is it just self-reporting?

Ms. Shafer: No, it's any COVID symptom. Your son could have a cough but no temperature, but that is a COVID symptom so he would go. Any of the symptoms that are COVID-related, you have to go right to this isolation room. They would call you and you would have to pick him up. These isolation rooms would have security in them. You would go to that door and they would sign out your son. You wouldn't go to the main office or anything like that because we are keeping your child in the isolation room only. From there, they are going home. I would tell all of you I wasn't crazy about the isolation room either. But at this point, between the CDC and the NJDOE, both of them are requiring it to be in every building.

Comm. Arrington: I'm reading that some schools say a temperature of 104 or above is the trigger to get sent to that room. Otherwise, you are sent somewhere else. Thank you.

Comm. M. Martinez: If someone has a temperature of 104, they are going to be in bad shape. 104 degrees is about as high as it gets.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: They should be sent to the emergency room.

Comm. M. Martinez: That's right to the hospital type stuff.

Comm. Hodges: Common cold symptoms are similar to COVID symptoms so it's very hard to distinguish. That's part of my concern. Any kind of symptom of a common cold, you would have to err on the side of safety and call it COVID until proven otherwise. You are going to be mixing people who may not in fact be infected with COVID but may have a simple cold, nasal congestion, runny nose, sneezing, coughing, muscle aches, and so forth. Those will all be in consideration for being sent to that room. There's going to have to be some sort of contact tracing and testing in order for those students to return to school. Otherwise, you don't know what you're dealing with.

Comm. M. Martinez: Dr. Hodges, those are very valid points. The notion of erring on the side of caution and safety in that some of those symptoms may just be attributable to a common cold or they can be on the severe end, COVID. There is going to be some adjustments that are going to have to be made as we navigate this. The point that I think you're trying to make is that you can't handle a common cold and just tell them to go back to class. You have to treat anybody symptomatic in any way, shape or form accordingly to avoid potentially spreading. The notion of testing and validating that the child is indeed not COVID positive before they return is something that we're going to have to sort out sooner than later.

Comm. Arrington: From an attendance perspective, if I keep my son home I'm going to call the school and say I'm keeping Alex home. He's out of school because he has allergies today and I don't want him to go in and go into COVID protocol. It's something we have to think about.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: Just to go on that, I don't think any of us are necessarily comfortable with this isolation room because it begs more questions than it does answers at this point. I share the same concern as Dr. Hodges. You don't want to put a child who may be COVID positive in a room with a child who just may have a cold. It works both ways. At this point, we are going to have to wait for additional guidelines to come out because this is ever-changing. Three months from now, they might say you don't need an isolation room at all. Not necessarily that that's the best call, but this is just what we're going to see developing in the next few months as more individuals get vaccinated, on what it's going to look like for children if it does at all in the next few months. I think we're just going to have to wait. The closer we get to opening schools, I think we have to have this conversation again to see what's the latest update and if there are any other recommendations or suggestions that we can add. New guidelines just came out for individuals who have been vaccinated, even though we've been vaccinating people for the last three months who had both doses of the vaccines and didn't know what to do with themselves. It's ever-changing. I think if we do open in the summer, there's a conversation that we're going to have again right before we open for the summer program. If that's in September, then we'll have the conversation in the summer or both times. We'll start seeing it a little bit more difficult to gauge once the fall and winter come again. In the spring, you have students with allergies. In the summer,

things calm down just a little bit, although it's just as dangerous. In the fall and winter, once cold and flu season and everything starts coming again, we're going to have to hope that better guidelines come out. My concern is that someone who might be COVID positive, putting them in a room with a child that may have a flu depending on their age but also what classroom they came from. We are isolating them midday or in the afternoon. Just because the child is just showing symptoms doesn't mean they didn't feel something earlier and it just wasn't bad enough to say anything. Now depending on what that classroom was or how they were interacting there, you may have to isolate the entire classroom. These are all conversations that I'm sure we'll be having.

Comm. Hodges: I don't think you should wait until later. I think you should put together some preliminary ideas of how you handle that scenario to protect people. That's my concern. This is such a conundrum, and that isolation room is a problem for that very reason. That's why these things are thought out in advance so that you can make sure.

Comm. Castillo-Cruz: I agree. We plan A, B, C, D, and E at this point.

Comm. M. Martinez: Superintendent, did you have something you wanted to add?

Ms. Shafer: We do have the isolation procedures all in our plan. We'll go back just to make sure we included everything we discussed tonight. I do want to tell you that we have been charting our own positives since the pandemic started almost a year ago. We've isolated folks in different buildings. We've quarantined people. We have done contact tracing for every individual. Kimler Williamson, our Supervisor of Nursing, has been doing a yeoman's job of doing the contact tracing to make sure that the right people are quarantined and don't come in. That's why we are asking to get two more nurses to help her out. Once we have everybody back in, we are going to have positive cases in schools as we open and she's going to need some assistance with that. We'll make sure that we cover everything in the isolation rooms and address your concerns. We have them as well.

Comm. Teague: In that regard, do you think we might be able to put on the Facebook page, and I'll share it on my page as well, that it's very important for the parents to make sure their current contact information is on record? I don't want a school to end up calling DCPNP because they're saying that a parent isn't showing up when the parent might not even know or that might not even be their number. We know sometimes there's so much going on right now, but if there's a way we can hone in on that. The last thing I want to get is a phone call from a parent saying that DYFS was called on them because they didn't know their child had gotten sick. You may have some kids that may get a fever while they're in school and the parent might not even know about it. The child was fine when they left. All of a sudden, they get a knock at their door the next day saying they're unfit and not doing what they're supposed to do when that's clearly not what happened. I've seen it happen before.

Ms. Shafer: We are doing an outreach now. There is a little silver lining to all of this and that is that we closed the digital divide. Everybody has a device. The other is that parents are now using the Parent Portal more than ever before. We have a push right now to increase the number of folks using the Parent Portal. In order to use it, you have to update all your information. We will be doing an outreach. We'll be checking it when students come in, whether it's in May or in the summer, whenever it is, just to make sure that not only do we have the correct parent information, but we need an alternative one as well just in case we can't get your parent and you are ill that we have permission

from the parent to go to the second number. It could be a grandparent, an aunt, or an uncle. We need to have at least two contacts.

Comm. Teague: Sounds good.

Comm. M. Martinez: Any other questions before we move on?

Comm. Redmon: It's not really a question, it's just a suggestion. You were talking about two additional nurses. Can we add another one just in case our nurses get sick? Instead of it being two additional, we'll have three additional.

Ms. Shafer: We can certainly look at that and see, Leon, if we can put that in the budget.

Comm. M. Martinez: Very thorough discussion. Again, we are going to continue this before we make our final submission on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Thank you, all. If there are any additional questions that you may have, feel free to reach out via email, phone call, or how you prefer to get those questions in so we can address them in a timely fashion before we do submit. I'll entertain a motion to go into executive session. Listen carefully. Similar to what we did last time, you were all sent another external link. We'll keep this window open, go to your external link, go into executive session, take care of what we need to, and come back. There's one more item we need to tend to when we come back. Then we can close out.

#### **MOTION TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS LEGAL AND PERSONNEL MATTERS**

**It was moved by Comm. Teague, seconded by Comm. Arrington that the Board goes into executive session to discuss legal and personnel matters. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.**

The Board went into executive session at 6:51 p.m.

#### **RECONVENE**

**It was moved by Comm. Arrington, seconded by Comm. Teague that the Board reconvenes the meeting. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.**

The Board reconvened the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

Comm. M. Martinez: Thank you all for bearing with us and being patient. At this time, there was an item placed on tonight's agenda that should actually be placed on Wednesday's agenda. We are going to forgo that item on the agenda for this evening and revisit it come Wednesday. Without having the rest of the agenda in front of me, I believe there is nothing else on the agenda. We are going to forgo that item on the agenda and we will revisit that at our Wednesday workshop meeting. If there are any comments or anything for the greater good at this time, I'll entertain that. If not, I will entertain a motion to adjourn.



## **ADJOURNMENT**

**It was moved by Comm. Hodges, seconded by Comm. Arrington that the meeting be adjourned. On roll call all members voted in the affirmative. The motion carried.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:44 p.m.