

**Transcript of Board of Education Meeting
October 21, 2020**

Mr. Buono:

I want call the meeting to order, it is 7 P.M. For attendance we have Board members here and Mr. Dunn and Ms. Massey are joining us remotely and Ms. Skumurski, we expect to join us a little later, she had a work commitment. So with that, if you could please rise and join us with the Pledge of Allegiance.

All:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you. Katie and Ryan did let us know that they would both be unable to make it, but they did let us know they have a meeting next week and some other activities planned. I think they have a sale of some sort, right?

Mr. Simons:

Yes

Mr. Simons:

Yes. a fundraiser of some sort, for apparel.

Mr. Buono:

Moving on, we have the Public Forum. Last week we switched the Board forum and Public forum to get information to the community so we could hear about some of the updates. This time we will stay with the regular schedule public forum, and as indicated previously in Board meetings, if you have something to note for the Board, please use the designated email for that, and well, I'll be able to read those. I did want to comment too that we have received several emails from community members, parents about the K-5 instruction delivery plan. As we discussed last week, we appreciate your comments and we hope to hear more from the Superintendent after the Public Forum. So with that, residents, students, employees, and business representatives of the East Greenbush Central School District may address the Board on matters considering programs and/or operations of the District, other than matters involving personnel. Members of the Board do not directly respond to citizen's concerns during the public forum.

Mr. Buono:

If a response is appropriate, then the President or Superintendent will contact individual in the future. Those persons wishing to address the Board will be recognized by the chair of the meeting and should state for the record, the name and address or affiliation with district or business.

Mr. Buono:

The Board does not wish to infringe upon the free speech protections. It must be stressed that this forum is not deemed to be open forum.

Mr. Buono:

The Board President will conduct the forum according to the efficient operation of the Board business. In addition, any remarks which we consider defamatory or stigmatizing, or prohibited will be declared out of order. So with that, we will move to Ms. Wager who will monitor the emails.

Ms. Wager:

We do have some emails this evening.

Mr. Buono:

Okay, so just make sure part of that being that the people do recognize who they are and where they're from and their affiliation with the district if we can. At least the name.

Ms. Wager:

Okay our first email this evening is from Julie Adler. She would like to know if tonight's meeting is going to focus on options for K-5 or will other grades will be addressed.

Mr. Buono:

I think at this point, as we see in our agenda, the K-5 instructional grades will be addressed during this meeting.

Ms. Wager:

The next question is from Donald Marble and his concern is that other schools are handling the full in-person K-5 and we are not. And he notes that there are no major outbreaks in these other districts and he's voicing his concern about that.

Mr. Buono:

We appreciate him voicing those concerns. One of the reasons that we took on this issue was because we've heard from people in the community and we feel that we can take a look again at the K-5 closer, which we did last week and the Superintendent's team has done that. And there'll be a report after the public forum on those findings and recommendations.

Ms. Wager:

Thank you. The next question is from Ralph Maresca, and he's wondering about when the daily schedules were sent out, the virtual days were supposed to have the same length as in person school days. Apparently he thinks his student is starting at 12:30 in the afternoon with one classroom. And he is concerned that either the parents or guardians are misinformed or there has been a change in the schedule. And he overheard a class yesterday and he didn't think there was much control and he's... Do the teachers have the ability to mute students' mics.

Mr. Buono:

So a few things there, Mr. Simons or Mr. McHugh, You want to address those?

Mr. Simons:

Students should not be starting class at 12:30, and the answer to the question depends on whether or not the parent is referring to a day when their student is on remote or on a virtual Wednesday. And virtual Wednesday, for example today there was a modification to the schedule that first period starts, I think it's around 10:00, 9:15, maybe a little bit later than that. Is that right Mr. McHugh?

Mr. McHugh:

Yeah, I would have to look up just to see...

Mr. Simons:

But it was a time adjustment to ensure that the teachers, because they're teaching in a different manner with technology and teaching different groups of students on different schedules had appropriate time to plan and to collaborate among teachers that teach the same courses. So that was an agreement and adjustment that was made on virtual Wednesdays. On remote days, depending on the level, there is a different schedule. So at the elementary school level, there are time periods in the schedule where students are expected to be engaged in Google classrooms with teachers. They're not expected to be in those Google classrooms all day long for the entire instructional day.

Mr. Simons:

Then there are periods of time where individual students and groups of students meet with teachers, and then there is remote assignments, and projects, and work that the students need to do at the elementary school level. At the middle school and the high school level on remote days, students are completing remote projects and assignments, and in several cases are able to participate in the class through virtual live instruction. So even on remote days, the kids can participate in many of the classes. So it would depend on the individual student, the child's schedule, and what I would do is encourage the parent to contact the principal, to get more information about that situation.

Mr. Buono:

I think there was one more about the teacher's ability to mute individual students...

Mr. Simons:

I believe they can do that. Can they mute, Peter?

Peter:

That's correct.

Mr. Buono:

Director of IT is nodding, he said yes. The teacher does have the ability.

Ms. Wager:

And then a final right now is an email from Laurie Marchiony, as it is a comment that she has asked me to read to the Board of Education. "My name is Laurie Marchiony and the parent of a 10th, eighth, and fifth grader. I want to express my gratitude for the tremendous amount of work by so many people that has gone into the process of bringing our kids back to school. With a student at each level, I'm incredibly grateful that the district focused on making things equitable across all grade levels. All of the students

regardless of their age, need in-person time with their teachers. I know that the committee worked to maintain the integrity of all the academic programs and to continue offering all honors, AP and elective courses. The hard work put in by so many has reflected in the current plan, so it gives as much in person time as possible at all levels while keeping our children and staff as safe as possible.

Ms. Wager:

While I understand that many parents wish to have their children, particularly the K-5 kids in school every day, I appreciate that our District remains committed to the safety and health of our community. The social distancing measures in place now will potentially allow our District to remain in person, should the number of COVID cases rise dramatically. Our students are just beginning to get into the routine of AB day, and I don't believe it would be well served by changing that at this point. Bringing students in for every other Wednesday would in fact reduce the amount of contact K-5 students have with their teacher, and bringing half of the one group in to combine with another group will create an absolutely impossible teaching situation for our already overworked teachers. I know that I may represent a smaller group, but teachers are not meant to be babysitters. Teachers are educators, our East Greenbush teachers are doing an amazing job in an almost impossible scenario. Please give the teachers more time with the current plan before you consider any changes. This plan is working, our students are safe, they are learning. They are in school."

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Any more Linda? Thank you for that.

Ms. Wager:

That's all at this time.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. Very good. And we appreciate those comments and we'll take those things to heart. So we are now going to the Board forum and Superintendent report, I'd like the Superintendent first to do the presentation on this update on school reopening in K-5 instruction delivery plan and some of the options.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you, Mr. Buono. I'm going to ask Mr. Goodwin if he has the slides that we prepared for this evening to make sure that those slides are presented on the screen, so members of the public and the board members can see the slides. I'm going to start with some information that's not included in the slides. So Peter, various times I'll ask you to move the slides forward, and I will appreciate you doing that. The questions and concerns that we received from parents over the course of the last few weeks, primarily parents from the kindergarten through fifth grade level, relate to trying to ensure that we are aware of some of the experiences of the students during remote learning days, as well as on virtual Wednesdays and asking the district to work to bring back students to in-person learning five days a week. When we weigh that decision, the first factor we have to consider is are we prepared for responding to a circumstance which may cause our district because of COVID-19 to have all of our students K through 12, five days a week in either remote learning or virtual instruction.

Mr. Simons:

So in accordance with the guidance that the New York State developed and gave to the districts in the third week of July, we are to be prepared to operate under any models. In person, remote, and hybrid. Our plan provides a combination of those three options to our students.

Mr. Simons:

The second consideration is what is happening with our districts and other school districts experiences regarding COVID-19, and I want to take just a minute to explain what is going on in our district and in other school districts related to the cases and the contact tracing that is required of the County and the schools to give you a better sense of some of the health and safety concerns that we are monitoring and managing. Right now, the district has done very well from health and safety standpoint.

Mr. Simons:

We've had five students indicate and test positive since really August. There were two of those five students who were prior to the school year opening. Their quarantine lasted into the beginning of the school year, so they were reported as two positive cases, even though the district may not have been required to report those at the time, we weren't sure so we reported those two cases. Additionally, since school opened, there've been three cases, one at the middle school level and one at the elementary school level and two at the high school level, excuse me, three at the high school level and one at the middle school level, and one student that was on the remote program. So in terms of five cases, that sounds pretty good. We have had no cases of teachers and staff. However, we are reporting a number of children and staff with symptoms who've been referred to a medical care provider or to the County as part of the reporting requirement for the state.

Mr. Simons:

One of the pieces of information that we don't have to report, but which we are informed on a weekly basis, sometimes a daily basis, are the number of students at the county department of health has included as a contact to somebody who has tested positive or somebody who has traveled to one of the countries and or states currently on the list of states or areas which require individuals to quarantine when they return to New York State. As of today, we have had 29 students listed as contacts to a positive case. Now those students, when they are considered by the County to be a contact are immediately placed on quarantine for 14 days. And those students are shifted to a remote learning. In the case of the elementary school it is tutoring, in the case of the middle school and high school, the remote learning is the virtual live stream into the classroom.

Mr. Simons:

All those 29 and there goes an additional six students who are on a travel advisory. They can't come to school for 14 days because a parent or a family member traveled to one of those areas that United States has indicated require quarantine. Our current hybrid model presents us with a situation whereby we are limiting the number of children that are in school every day. In part, that has done to manage the requirements for social distancing, the number of seats we can fit in every classroom. It has also turned out to be advantageous because there are situations with our cases that have occurred, which have not precipitated us having to close the school. So for example, the five cases that we've had, we've had situations where the County will call us, they will let us know that a student has tested positive, and when we look at our student attendance, that student has not been in the school for at least 48 hours.

Mr. Simons:

When an individual becomes symptomatic, the County department of health will look at the individuals that came in contact with that person within the last 48 hours. So they backtrack 48 hours to try to determine the number of contacts. We have been fortunate that we haven't closed schools, we haven't had to close a class, and in part that is because of the way that we are managing the number of children that come into our school and staff that are in contact with one another each day, as part of our hybrid program. It's very important to keep that in mind, that we don't want to wait for a situation whereby we have an outbreak. Now in my conversations with the County health department, which I have every Wednesday with other superintendents, there is no community spread in Rensselaer County. However, the number of cases in New York and the number of cases across the country and almost every state, but two are increasing.

Mr. Simons:

And we have been advised that New York State as Mr. Mann said at the last meeting, now has a program that would immediately target certain areas of communities in the event that there is a COVID issue. As part of that targeting plan, if the threshold of cases reaches a certain level, schools have to be prepared to go on what's called a yellow status and close. We are not near that level in Rensselaer County. We hope not to get near to that level in Rensselaer County, but the health and safety considerations associated with making sure that we do what we can to make sure that we don't have students and staff coming into contact with infected people, is an important factor in why we operate under a hundred. That being said, I think I speak for all of the members of the administration and the board that we are sensitive and concerned about the impact of all of this on learning.

Mr. Simons:

I don't know a school district in New York State or across the country that isn't talking about making sure that we can assess the overall impact on what might be happening with our children and their educational progress as a result of this pandemic, going back to March of last spring. So we are not insensitive to the impact of the hybrid program on our students, and particularly our kindergarten through fifth grade kids who are getting two days of in-person learning and in some cases doing well and other cases, struggling, and we are certainly not insensitive to the burden and the impact that that two day a week schedule has on our families. And as I have talked to many parents or emailed with many parents over the course of the last couple of weeks, I have tried to explain that our district is doing what it can to manage the health and safety circumstances of COVID-19, but limited in its options to be able to respond to increasing in person learning at the kindergarten through fifth grade level.

Mr. Simons:

And the primary limitations are space and staff, as parents have brought to my attention, going back to August that other districts were able to provide five days of impersonal learning. Other districts may have different considerations than East Greenbush. East Greenbush is a district that has grown in enrollment and continues to grow in enrollment. Some of the neighboring districts that are referred to have leased out their buildings to other agencies because of the number of vacant classroom spaces they've had over the course of the last several years. Our district readjusted its attendance zones because we were overcrowded at Bell Top school, and we are projected to have increasing enrollment for the next several years. So we don't have a lot of extra classroom space. Additionally, when we considered the concerns of the parents back in the summer, we looked at every available space that we

had in every building, including our art rooms, our music rooms, our libraries, our gymnasiums, our cafeterias.

Mr. Simons:

We looked at similar models that will be implemented in other districts. And we were willing to go in that direction. We simply couldn't because we don't have the classrooms. And so that's why we decided at that time to go with a hybrid, and we committed to the community that we would continue to look at these issues as we eased into September and see how we were doing. So we've had ongoing discussions within our district administration, with our teachers, with our faculty, and we have, in various times surveyed our stakeholders. We surveyed our parents at the kindergarten through fifth grade level regarding virtual Wednesdays. We knew that we were having some issues regarding connectivity and student learning on virtual Wednesdays. We surveyed our grade six to 12 families regarding virtual Wednesdays as well, because we wanted to get a sense of what the experiences are of students in the home.

Mr. Simons:

In some cases we could address those and we have, and Mr. McHugh reported on that at the last meeting. In some cases, there are issues that we work through as a district, we provide additional technology. If there is a wifi issue, in some cases, for example, today, I know some students were experiencing some issues. It could be an issue with spectrum or the provider that is providing internet access in the home. So we've done what we can to make the virtual Wednesdays work better based on surveys. We also have surveyed for remote students families recently, to try to determine how many families anticipate having their children come back to school for in-person learning and participate in the hybrid come second marking period. We have to permit students to come back if their families make that choice. There is no law indicating or state regulation indicating that we can prohibit families at any point from coming back to participate in our in person learning.

Mr. Simons:

We are going to show you some data regarding that survey, that survey will close by the end of the week, but the numbers continue to go up. There were 65 as of last evening, there were 11 or 12 additional that came in today. So there are families who are intending to have their children come back. And when those children come back, that increases the enrollment in our kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms and creates even bigger challenge to make sure that we can manage the social distancing requirement of having the students in our classrooms, six feet apart, as well as the procedures. So there are many children whose parents feel that based on the fact that the program is going fairly well, from a health and safety standpoint, they want their kids to opt back in to the hybrid model. We are committed to maintaining our compliance with the New York State department of health and the New York State education department requirements, regarding health and safety of students the faculty staff, and community.

Mr. Simons:

And I want to go back just for a minute to some of the conversations that occurred in the spring, as we were trying to figure out with our staff and with our parents and with our board, how we were going to reopen safely. We had to balance the educational needs of our students, which are primary with the safety needs of our students. But we also have considerations for safety and health of our faculty and our staff. Many faculty and staff, no different than any family have family members that have health

conditions that make those family members more vulnerable to serious complications from COVID-19. Many of our families of our children have grandparents and other relatives living in the home who also have fears and concerns that their children will be exposed and come back and potentially expose an older relative or a relative with an underlying condition.

Mr. Simons:

So as we've moved successfully into reopening, it's important not to forget that the health and safety of everybody, including the health and safety of the community is an important factor that the school district is responsible for doing its part on. That is again, why we chose to ease into this in September and into the fall with a plan that only involved two days of in-person learning. Virtual Wednesdays were critically important so that the students and the staff could be prepared in the event that the numbers go up in the state or the numbers go up in the region, and we are forced to go for remote. There are many districts, in fact, the majority of the districts in New York State right now are operating on somewhat of a hybrid. And yes, those districts may be operating differently, but the fact is they're operating a hybrid due to some of the various same concerns that we've had as part of our reopening plan.

Mr. Simons:

Importantly, we have also heard from our families, why did we not put our middle school students and our high school students on five days a week of full remote instruction so that our elementary students could come in five days a week and perhaps use the middle school and the high school. First and foremost, we had discussions within our reopening committee and within our board about that very issue, and I believe many people believe that the experiences of our elementary students, our middle school students and our high school students should be equitable. And when I am met with concerns about middle school and high school, I have to say that our experiences of the spring support what we're doing, and even our experiences now support what we're doing. We have concerns about some students who were not connecting to remote learning and virtual learning in the spring.

Mr. Simons:

We have students that fell off the radar, so to speak, they weren't connecting with teachers. We've done home visits through our social workers, our administrators, and our counselors. And we are responsible to make sure that regardless of what grade level students are in, that they are engaged in education. And we are responsible to ensure that we are meeting their social, emotional needs. And as kids move up from the elementary school level to the middle school level and to the high school level, those social emotional needs change. And particularly for probably three years now, our board and our administration has talked a great deal about and put a lot of systems in place to deal with the mental health issues that our school districts are faced with. Those mental health issues got compounded and magnified by the shutdown during COVID. And in particular, our middle school students and our high school students need the benefit just as much as the elementary students need of connecting with their peers and connecting with their teachers and the benefits of in-person learning.

Mr. Simons:

Additionally, as our students progress through the K-12 system, the rigor of the coursework gets more difficult. Students want to take accelerated courses for example, in the middle school, so that they can take other options for courses and electives as they go onto high school. Students want to take AP courses and college credit courses and courses that are specifically related to electives that they are

interested in taking. All of those programs require the delivery of instruction in ways that involve at least two days of in person learning. So if there's a sense that some of our middle school and high school kids would be just fine by being at home and in remote learning five days a week, it's our experience in the district and the experience of many others that that is not the case. And even under our current hybrid, we are concerned and the Board has been concerned about student attendance.

Mr. Simons:

We have some students that we still don't know whether or not they are enrolled in our school or whether they have enrolled in another district. I think we have about 11 at the high school that we're doing home visits. We're trying to find out where they are. So we tried to balance the academic, social, emotional needs of every child. From the children that were coming into kindergarten at the beginning of this year, whose families were markedly disappointed by the fact that we weren't able to provide them with the typical kindergarten experience, to the high school freshmen. Freshman year being very difficult, to transition from middle school into high school. The freshman year is very difficult to provide some level of support for our freshmen who are transitioning in and just starting their high school careers, to the juniors and seniors who want to take rigorous courses and are beginning to think about, and their parents are thinking about where they might want to go after graduation.

Mr. Simons:

So every child's need is important and our district tried to put in place a plan that would consider those needs equitably across the district and balance the academic and social needs of all of our kids. That doesn't mean that we are not focused on what we can do to improve the situation at the kindergarten through the fifth grade level. As I indicated earlier, based on a survey that closes on the 23rd of October on Friday, right now, this morning's data suggested that 65 children, their families are planning to have them come back and participate in the hybrid. The breakdown of that is changed. There was about 11 more that came in today. But based on this morning's data, seven of those students are in kindergarten, six of those students are in grade one, six students are in grade two. We have one individual who has indicated that if we go from two days in person to three, they will continue on remote based on a fear and the concern regarding exposure. Seven students at grade three, one at grade four and five at grade five.

Mr. Simons:

And again, those numbers have changed. Those numbers have to be added to the numbers that we shared with the community last week, regarding how we figure out the number of children that we can safely place in every classroom, six feet apart, utilizing every space where we can. However, we are reviewing the options. And one of the important considerations for me as the superintendent of the district and I think for our administrative team including Mr. McHugh and the principals is, we want to be able to do this in a thoughtful manner that preserves the educational flow that we're currently... We have in place with our kids in a way that is smooth and not disruptive of the current educational model. We've met with our kindergarten teachers a couple of weeks ago, and the kindergarten teachers and other elementary teachers have indicated to us, they're just feeling that the students are getting confident in the plan that is in place.

Mr. Simons:

The students in many cases are benefiting from the small group instruction that they're receiving on the days that they are there because the student teacher ratio is much lower. That doesn't discount some of

the experiences of the students who are having some struggles with remote or the families. We are looking at options that would change the A week and B week schedule, and potentially put half of our B kids in on A days and half of our A kids in on B days. However, it has a particular challenge in terms of some of the issues that Mrs. Marchiony brought up in her public comment in terms of continuity of instruction. For example, students in the B group would be there with eight kids one day and would be with the other B kids the next day, it's almost as if you're teaching three groups of students and it challenges the teachers.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:33:04]

Mr. Simons:

It's almost as if you're teaching three groups of students and it challenges the teachers in terms of differentiating. If we were to go with a model like that, we really need the input of our teachers to see whether or not that would work in a way that will continue the growth of our kids. We have also had some conversation about starting with kindergarten as a priority grade level and seeing what we could do within our administrative team to offer the kindergarten kids five days a week of in-person instruction. In that case, as we've looked at the data, we think we can do it, but again we want to do it thoughtfully and we want to do it in conversations with our teachers.

Mr. Simons:

In some schools, there is sufficient space. In other schools, there is... particularly at Bell Top and Genet there are some challenges regarding the number of slots that children would be able to go into in the existing classrooms, in the existing kindergarten classrooms. So in the case of Bell Top and Genet, a different model might be required. And that might be the model that involves breaking those sections of kindergarten up into an additional section and staffing that section with a teaching assistant. Okay. And we still haven't worked out exactly how that would occur, but we're striving to move in a direction of trying to get our kindergartners in, more days. Additional considerations include moving the furniture. It includes designing the space to make sure that the challenges of each building are addressed. Classrooms at Bell Top don't necessarily look or aren't necessarily designed in the same shape or have the same capacity as classrooms at Genet, for example, or at Green Meadow, the building we're in right now. The instructional delivery, how would that be impacted?

Mr. Simons:

Okay. The loss of virtual practice. Okay. Maybe for some kids and for some parents, the loss of virtual practice is less of a consideration than the concerns about their children struggling right now with the remote learning and the virtual learning piece. And we understand that, but for others, including our district, we want the kids to be prepared in the event that we are forced to go full remote, and that is a possibility. I'm hoping that it doesn't happen, but that is a possibility. In the last several weeks, if you have followed the remarks of the governor, the governor is cautioning everybody to make sure that we have plans, for implementing if we are a district that is in a zone that is identified as a cluster by the state, we are going to have to test 50% of our students and 50% of our staff. I can tell you locally there's not a plan to do that yet, but we will have to be monitoring the situation.

Mr. Simons:

And we have to be prepared in the event that we do wind up going full remote. There are some districts that are still full remote now in the state and only scheduled to open next week, with some level of in-

person learning. So loss of virtual practice is an important consideration for the district. It may not weigh as heavily on some of our parents and our kids as the concern about the support needed for more in person learning and we understand that. At grade one, it becomes more challenging because we have less space at grade one. In fact, as we talked about implementing the A-B week schedule change and putting more kids in on A days and B days, it's important to remember that we had six seats, available but now as we've monitored the number of kids that want to return, there are at least six in that grade level that want to return so those seats are basically taken.

Mr. Simons:

The additional consideration regarding virtual Wednesday that we're not certain everyone understands, but we want people to understand it, is we have talked about eliminating virtual Wednesday at the early elementary school level. However, in eliminating that, that would involve half of the students coming in for in-person instruction for a third day, one week. And the other half of the students coming in the following week for in person instruction, meaning the half that isn't coming in for the additional day would have an additional third day of remote instruction every two weeks. So they'd be home another day. And that could cause problems for learning, could cause problems for our parents and could cause childcare problems. And we just want people to be aware of it. If in the event we go in the direction of reducing or eliminating virtual Wednesday, reducing it at some grade levels or eliminating it entirely at the kindergarten through fifth grade level.

Mr. Simons:

We want people to understand that, yes we pick up an additional day for kids in person learning every two weeks, but we also pick up an additional day of remote learning every two weeks. So the trade off might not be as advantageous as, first considered. Option B and option C, which were presented last week are very challenging because of the number of seats that are available right now in our classrooms. And we have similar concerns in grade two through five. If you look at item number three, under grades two and five, at grade two... and we're looking at this across the district, across the entire district, all five buildings, we're 19 seats short, and we have about six more kids right now scheduled to come in at grade two, we would be 25 seats short. Grade three. We have the ability to be able to bring students in under that model, which is the elimination of virtual Wednesday and B group coming on... Half of B group coming on A day and half the A group coming in on B day, for grade three we can do that.

Mr. Simons:

We are short seats in grade four, and we are short seats in grade five. Now, one of the things that's become... I've become aware of in the last several days as I've fielded emails and responded to emails of our concerned parents is, parents may have a perception of space that may not be accurate in all buildings. So for example, if you walked through Red Mill or you go through Green Meadow and you're an active parent, you may know that there's seven students in a class on any given day A or B day. Our plans and our numbers to try to accomplish this project to move those students up to 14 or 15 in some of the classes, but it may not be the case in every single building at that grade level that there's only seven kids in the class. And it is not the case that we are able to put as many kids in each of those classrooms at that respective grade level across the district to make it equitable.

Mr. Simons:

So for example, we have situations where yes we could fit a grade... more kids in a grade in one building, we can't necessarily do that in all of the buildings. So is it equitable to increase in person learning for the third graders, for example, at Red Mill, but be unable to do that at Bell Top. Okay? We want to have consistency across the grade level. So that's a challenge for our district because not every classroom has the number of kids that a particular section may have, in a building and may not have the space available to do it. So, as we are looking at all of these issues, it's my recommendation that we start with looking at the kindergarten and that we work with our kindergarten teachers to see what we can accomplish, to increase in person learning. And hopefully we can develop something that the board could take a look at and shall implement by the second marking period or a little bit into the second marking period by November.

Mr. Simons:

I think it's November 16th is it? Jim [crosstalk 00:41:32] It was the day we talked about. Right? We're also going to continue to evaluate virtual Wednesdays. Now I've heard of some experiences of children on virtual Wednesdays that have become very difficult for the kids and very difficult for the parents. I visit the childcare at GCC at Genet and at St. Mary's. I've been to each of those programs three times since the school opened. I was there again today, and I see some students being very successful and I saw many students in Google meets with their teachers, ranging from music class, the Phys Ed class to other situations where I saw teachers utilizing the new document cameras and doing a math lesson. And the kids were right there with them filling out. I saw other spaces where the WiFi wasn't working all that great. And there were connectivity... And kids weren't able to connect to their PE class, for example.

Mr. Simons:

So there's a range of things happening. And when we know those things, we try to address them. And Mr. Goodwin's helping me with the WiFi issue. So we're taking steps as we considered evaluating whether we eliminate virtual Wednesday to look at the individual experiences of the kids and try to adjust to their needs and to provide more support. Additionally, I've talked to Mr. McHugh and the principals about needing to look at the experiences of the kids on their remote days. Okay? There might be a range of things going on because we do hear from parents that say, "My child's doing great in the remote program when they're on their A day or their B day." We hear from other children whose parents are indicating that they're struggling with it. There are things that our teachers could do, there are things that our principals could do and there are things that our central administration could do, to try to adjust those situations and make them better if we have a complete understanding of what's going on.

Mr. Simons:

So there may be some surveying and some other assessment being done, including some observations and things, and what's happening with our... not with our lights, but with our remote experiences of our kids, where we can make it better as we evaluate these options. The bottom line with all of this is we want to do what we can within the resources which is primarily space to help the kids where we can. I think there is a presumption that we can do it all, and that we can provide kindergarten from fifth grade with in-person learning five days a week. Right now under the New York state department of health guidelines and under the space and capacity of our district elementary schools, we are not going to be able to do that. The only thing that would enable us to be able to do that K through five, would be if the

standards for the New York state department of health changed, and I'm not advocating that they could change.

Mr. Simons:

However, we've done the analysis based on the real count of kids in our classrooms right now, based on the number of desks that we can fit in there. We've taken furniture out. We've shifted spaces to make music rooms, for example, special ed rooms. We've done a lot of different things to try to make this work. And we are trying to make it work in the best interest of everybody, but the expectation that we can make kindergarten through fifth grade right now at this point in the year five days a week, we won't be able to meet that. And I just want to be honest and upfront about it, [crosstalk 00:45:09] and that concludes my report.

Mr. Buono:

Yeah. So this is the... Excuse me, this is the Board forum part. Is there any questions, the Superintendent regarding the material that was presented? Comments, questions? I can start in our virtual attendees. John, do you have any questions or comments or... Good thumbs up from John. Michelle anything? No she's good. Jennifer?. You good? Okay. Thank you. Frank any comments at all? Okay good. JoAnn? She's good. Kathleen? You're good. Deanna? And Mark? No, good. I think Mr. Simons presented very well the issues and challenges, understanding that we had heard the concerns, looked at the options, continue to look at the options and feel that we can... this Board will look at the recommendation the Superintendent understanding the concerns that have been expressed. And I think based on the due diligence and the hard work that has been presented, you look at the total picture. And I think moving in the right direction in terms of providing those more in person learning opportunities for our younger learners.

Mr. Buono:

So, we appreciate all the work and we know it's going to continue. Again like you said, the health and safety of our faculty, our staff, our students, and our families has to be at the forefront when we consider all these things, the demands on school district as I think I mentioned before in previous board meetings are tremendous in terms of keeping our kids safe. And that's important to us. I do want to also say thank you for the tour. We had a tour again of Green Meadow you may notice that we are here at one of our elementary schools. We visited Red Mill last week. We are at Green Meadow today and it looks wonderful. I appreciate all the hard work, that's going into upgrading our infrastructure. Again, the community support for all that, we'll take our buildings and our classrooms into the future with the technology needs, the infrastructure needs. And then as we continue with the project next year in phase three, improving the classroom environments for our students. So with that, we will then move to our discussion items. Give Mr. Simons a break.

Mr. Simons:

I hate to interrupt you, I know people get tired very fast and I appreciate. I have something really important to do that I want to do right now. This is Board member appreciation week, and I would be remiss if I did not extend my thanks and appreciation for our East Greenbush Central School District Board members who volunteer to serve the community as advocates for education and, board members are... again I emphasize volunteers and they participate in more than just two meetings a month. They participate in discussions with the administration. They serve on multiple committees and they really are advocates for the children, but for everybody within the educational community. And there is a

token of our appreciation for our Board members, several, just some small gifts to recognize you and appreciate what you do for the East Greenbush School District.

Mr. Simons:

I personally feel very blessed to have this Board of Education. I work for you and you are always looking at everyone's interest. You're always looking at the overall educational quality of our District, but you are also pushing us forward all the time to try to make sure that we are as progressive and innovative and safe as we can be as a school district. So personally for me, I appreciate everything that the Board members here do and all those Board members that are participating remotely for the school district.

Mr. Simons:

And I want to thank Linda Wager and my secretary Stephanie for arranging the small gift of appreciation for the Board. I'm sorry, Jeanne. Jeanne was part of that too. So I apologize for overlooking you, Jeanne, but thanks to the Board members, they do a great job.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks Mr. Simons we appreciate that. I know it's a... many of our Board members here are longstanding Board members who have given unselfishly of their time and we appreciate our families for allowing us to do this really excellent work on behalf of our district because we know it's important for the district, for our community and our family believing its important work for us, and they support us on this late nights and all the other work that we do in terms of helping the district, and I want to say too it's an honor to serve the district, I've been here through my whole life and I feel and appreciate all the work that goes into building a strong community... A strong school community as well and like I have said many times before that I'm very proud of this district and proud of this community. And we take to heart the things that you're going through and we understand it because we're going through those as well.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

We will now move to our discussion items, we have two discussions tonight. We have a cashflow analysis, so we will turn that over to Ms. Wager.

Ms. Wager:

Thank you, Mr. Buono. I provided the Board tonight an updated cash flow analysis with actual cash receipts and disbursements for the month of September. So through September 30th. I might emphasize that a cashflow statement is simply that, it's cash coming in and going out during the month, it has nothing to do with fund balance. It has nothing to do with accrual basis or modified accrual basis. Accounting is simply cash in and cash out. So during the month of September, some of the receipts I just wanted to notice is that our taxes, our tax collection takes place during the month of September and October. I projected, as you might remember that we would receive \$10 million in tax collection and to my delight we received over 21 million in the month of September. So I did adjust the projected amount for October. Another item that I wanted to point out is that we did receive our lottery aid as we expected. As you might recall I indicated that that classification of aid, we did not expect to be reduced by 20% and it was not.

Ms. Wager:

You will notice that in blue, there is an item, a [inaudible 00:51:47] saying the blue items on the cash flow statement indicate items that are State Aid that are reduced by 20%. So these items in here in blue are reduced by 20%. There are actual items that have already been reduced and we have received 20% less. And the projected items are taking our revenue estimates from the budget and reducing them by 20% and indicating the month they're usually paid in. There is a category there that indicates other revenue that I classify all of the other revenue together. Those are Medicare subsidy payments that we received from the government as well as, some payments that were made by parents online for student fees such as AP exams. As far as the disbursements go from the month, you will know that the payroll was significantly higher in the month of September and that's because all of our staff was returning to school. And we also had three payrolls during the month of September, two full payrolls and a half payroll for our teachers.

Ms. Wager:

We had a small debt service payment that was interest on one of our bonds associated with our capital projects. And we have our regular health insurance and service support. The service support is higher than was originally projected. We had a lot of bills come in, in the month of September for items that we received and those things were paid. One final thing I would like to note is that at the very end, I talked about the projected restricted cash at June 30th. I adjusted that from the last report and I adjusted down by \$900,000 to account for the \$900,000 that was part of our budget that we're taking from our ERS reserve. And, then I actually put in the actual amount that was calculated for our LR reserve, which is our employee benefits and liability reserve.

Ms. Wager:

So that's where we stand right now. As I said to Mr. Simons, when we reviewed this, our district is very fortunate in that we are... we have gone into this pandemic strong financially. We are also not as heavily dependent on state aid as some of our surrounding school districts. That being said approximately 25% of our budget, our estimated revenues is State Aid. So that 20% will affect us. So I'm being cautiously optimistic, and I am hoping that, there is talk about in January, possibly something happening where future State Aid payments will not be cut, but I think it's best to be on the conservative side right now. Are there any questions on that?

Mr. Buono:

Any questions for her? I see a lot of notes all right. I think it's important for the community to understand like we've said before that we're committed to transparency. We want to make sure they understand that the impact of any potential aid cuts could have on the district. And we just want to be prepared to share that information on a regular basis. So we appreciate the report Linda, to keep us in mind what we could potentially face as a district on the longterm, which has been something that we've always strived for is longterm financial planning for the district. And there's a lot of districts out there that are going to be in a difficult position, over the course of this year and we don't want to be one of them. Good. Moving on to the next presentation and discussion that would be the strategic plan scorecard. So the business in the district does continue. We are in the midst of a pandemic and even all things are consuming are related to COVID. It seems like in health and safety and instruction.

Mr. Buono:

This district has prided itself in the last few years on presenting to the community a scorecard and word goals are very important to us between as a board and superintendent and the other team here and Mr. Simons is gonna review those tonight.

Mr. Simons:

So as Mr. Buono said, a few years ago, the Board and the administration, through our retreats, decided that we needed a system to track progress towards the Board of Education's goals. And also to ensure that the Board's priorities, the vision of the Board, is reflected in the day to day work of the leadership team of the District, including central office and principals, but also in the instructional work and other work going on among our non-instructional employees.

Mr. Simons:

So the scorecard is really a tool that looks at primary objectives and strategies and timelines and success ratings for, making sure that we are on track with what the Board wants to see in terms of progress in the District. Last year, we accomplished a lot prior to COVID and I want to give the members of my central office team, a chance first to prior... Highlight some priority projects that they were in charge of that we accomplished last year and explain what they were and how they were impacting the district and the results. And then I will spend some time talking about a few that I was directly involved in. We'll go with Marisa Cannon, first who is our Director of Human Resources.

Ms. Cannon:

May I borrow your microphone?

Mr. Simons:

You may borrow my microphone.

Ms. Cannon:

Thank you.

Ms. Cannon:

I'd like to touch upon Board goal number two, objective three, continued revision and maintenance of effective job descriptions. This is an ongoing project. One that we look at year to year and it's important to review job descriptions position because they see that either with resignation or retirement, because job descriptions really set the expectation and the relationship of that new employee. And it sets the foundation for performance evaluations. So it's important that we review these to ensure that the responsibilities in that job description accurately reflect the present day duties of that job. So we sat Camdale up for success when they were reviewing that and making sure they feel comfortable coming on board with those job descriptions and expectations. So one of our revisions and this year was in our payroll office. We had an employee serving our district for over 40 years under the title of the Principal Account Clerk.

Ms. Cannon:

And that Principal Account Clerk was responsible for a lot of our insurances. They're also responsible for attendance portion for staff. So in collaboration with our payroll office, we looked to see what the

original draft description had in place and what were the present day responsibilities of that role. And so we instantly changed that title to Insurance Technician, and we worked in collaboration with the Rensselaer County Civil Service commission to get that approved on their end and then we also worked in collaboration with our SRP unit to establish the new position and also establish a pay scale. What are the other positions that we would use this past year was our Assistant Superintendent for School Business and Finance retired after 20 years.

Ms. Cannon:

And we took that time to look at where do we want to redesign this position? And what is it going to look like moving forward? And we had decided to classify that position under civil service as a Director of Business and Finance, which is now the position Linda Wager is in. And we were able to appropriately set job responsibilities, realign them with current day practices and responsibilities, and also set them for a minimum qualification.

Ms. Cannon:

The other objective I'd like to talk about is under Board goal two, objective C. Developing collaborative partnerships with local colleges. This past year 2019/20 we welcomed 53 student teachers interns into our school district and provided them with real world professional opportunities to help set their foundation and their career in education. We had a number of students in a variety of content areas, specializing in math, social studies, English, science, technology, elementary, special education, speech, school social work, school psychology, music, guidance, PE, physical therapy and occupational therapy. So I think we have almost done everyone. We also had the pleasure of pairing over 30 nursing students to observe our school nurses throughout the year. Those students came from SUNY Albany, SUNY Potsdam, Saint Rose, The Sage Colleges, SUNY Oneonta, Maria college, Nazareth, SUNY Oswego, Siena, and Parks near the Capital Region. So I would like to thank all of those colleges for partnering with us in 2019/20.

Ms. Cannon:

It's not only a benefit for our District but it's a benefit for our community and for our students because of these partnerships we all learn and we're all growing. Additionally, I was able to attend the mock interview day at Clarkson at the Capital Region campus in February of 2020, and even with COVID, some of our colleges got very creative and they developed a virtual education ASCO, which occurred in April. Lastly, on Board goal two objective D. Developing a comprehensive plan for improved human resources management. One of my goals was to review the recruitment practices for our part time teaching assistants.

Ms. Cannon:

We have a challenging time filling some of these roles. The roles are either 3.5 hour position in the morning or 3.5 hour position in the afternoon. And sometimes a lot of individuals are looking for the full 6.5 hour day. So this year we filled eight part time teaching assistant vacancies and eight full time, for a total of 16. And one of the ways that we've begun to attract more candidates, even though it is still a challenge is helping some of our candidates who don't have that teaching assistant certification required by education law, providing them with the tools in order to get the certification.

Ms. Cannon:

So we've created this year, a step by step guidance document on how to obtain your level one teaching assistant certification. It is a challenging process, but as long as my department is able to walk through a candidate on how to achieve their ultimate goal which is becoming a certified teaching assistant. We are seeing the process become a little bit easier for individuals. So a lot of it's just, where do we start where do we begin? We've been provided all of the tools to assist us on that. Does anyone have any questions?

Mr. Buono:

No? Great job. Thank you Marissa.

Ms. Cannon:

Thank you.

Mr. Simons:

I want to thank Marissa for all that she's done and accomplished as the Director of Human Resources. You did a great job, many things in addition to the objectives that you highlighted. Next, we'll go with Mr. McHugh who's our Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Instruction.

Mr. McHugh:

The highlights... The strategic plan that I'd like to talk about are all under Board goal number one, achieving academic excellence through reflection, innovation and opportunity. First, item eight which is a very important item is under the every student succeeds act, ESSA, all seven schools are schools in good standing. All seven schools remain in good standing. I just want to note that Red Mill elementary school, Columbia high school were also recognized by the New York State Education Department as recognition schools.

Mr. McHugh:

Those are schools with high academic achievement, strong progress, but also perform separately well for all sub groups for which they are [inaudible 01:04:58] that's about 13% of New York state public schools. So congratulations. [inaudible 01:05:04] in the faculty at all seven other schools, but it is nice recognition for both Red mill and Columbia high school. It's the second consecutive year of Columbia high school. That data... just so folks really understand is that principals received their building specific data. And they look for those areas that are identified as a level one indicator, needing improvement, building needs assessment. And that also includes root causes. So why is it a level one indicator, digging a little bit deeper into it, full administrative teams, engaged in ongoing data meetings throughout the year last year. Those reports are important because it's really where we put our resource allocation. Right? So looking at the areas that we need to improvement. And then that's where we're making sure that our resources are spent wisely and purposeful. Our level one indicators [inaudible 01:06:03].

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [01:06:04]

Mr. McHugh:

... First of all, our Level 1 indicators [inaudible 00:00:03], center around student growth for some of our subgroups, for students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students. The other one that we're really watching closely is chronic absenteeism. Again, students with disabilities, economically

disadvantaged, so you can see how some of those results go hand in hand. So once these are chronically absent from schooling you see student achievement also take a hit.

Mr. McHugh:

Two things I really want to point out that are important, is in the previous year, Goff Middle School had a Level 1 indicator for chronic absenteeism, ELA, math, academic progress. And this past year they had no Level 1 indicators. So that's a phenomenal job [inaudible 00:00:46]. Genet Elementary School, another one just for example, they had a Level 1 indicator for student growth, for economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities. And those Level 1 indicators were also successfully addressed and removed the following year. The second highlight is under E, [inaudible 01:07:10] continue to support curriculum updates based on [inaudible 01:07:14] decision making, program reviews. And those programs reviews had a very important role.

Mr. McHugh:

Currently, we have a program review underway in science, special education, and related services in English. Those updates, from each of those subcommittees, are shared out at our monthly CCS meetings. And our summer curriculum writing really is completed based on a needs assessment that's part of those program reviews. We'll talk about sort of the curriculum writing that was completed last summer. But also drives for tactical purchases, K-5 consumables recently, for both social studies and next generation science standards. Just some of those things that came out of program reviews [inaudible 01:08:00] are new courses.

Mr. McHugh:

Our computer science class for college credit, introduction to video game development, which was an amazing endeavor at our high school. It really came out of a student exit survey of things that they were interested in. Introduction to literature, college credit, introduction to psychology, college credit, [inaudible 01:08:20] for college credit, [inaudible 01:08:22] financial management for college credit, curriculum equivalent math topics, are some of the new courses that are currently running.

Mr. McHugh:

We also had introduction to analysis of public policy, and that would go along with participation in government. That was supposed to be run this year for college credit. However, the required training that was supposed to take place this summer was canceled because of COVID. We are running it as an honors section this year, there's three classes running, and hopefully next year we'll be able to run that course for college credit. Also, want to point out that the teacher that teaches that class, voluntarily goes for five days of training [inaudible 01:09:02] on that class. So it's another great example.

Mr. McHugh:

A lot of technology that has been integrated into our instruction on a daily basis. And just another highlight, is that, in our business department, we currently have three New York State program of study approvals. So that's quite an undertaking by [inaudible 01:09:26] business department, but we have New York State approved programs in accounting and finance, computer applications for business, and business administration. The last highlight, under [inaudible 00:03:38], under G, continue to work and revise and update the K-5 report cards. There is a new standards-based report card in Kindergarten and Grade One. We piloted it last year at Genet Elementary School. This year it's fully rolled out.

Mr. McHugh:

[inaudible 01:09:54], one of our teachers at Genet Elementary School, volunteered to provide training to all of our K-1 teachers today because that report card now is through PowerSchool. So it's automatically generated through PowerSchool. And we were in progress and making some good gains with our Grades Two and Three report card. That currently ended once we went remote last year. And we are ready to engage in that work again, but we have some other things that our teachers are focusing on right now. And once we get our feet under us, and those schools are ready to pick that work back up again, we will complete those reports. Thank you. Any questions?

Mr. Buono:

Thanks Jim. Questions? Again, thank you for all the work. I think a couple of comments, the K-5 report card, standards-based, is a tremendous undertaking. I think that demonstrates, really, that the focus of the learning and can show to our parents, really, the curriculum aligned with the standards and the progress that they're making. They can really make informed decisions around how their child is doing, get support. And also recognizing the schools, once again, as you mentioned. All schools are in good standing. And then the recognition schools, and I would like to recognize one elementary, Red Mill, that's the same staff. It's the folks that are doing it on the front lines, who are taking care of your kids in the past, and they're still going to take care of your kids during [inaudible 01:11:29]. You want to keep that in mind. So thank you for that report. Who's next?

Mr. Simons:

Although she was not in her new role at the time we developed this, she has carried forward the responsibilities on many of these initiatives. So, Linda, do you have some information you'd like to share this time?

Ms. Wager:

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Simons. I would like to review Board goal number two, some of the objectives. Board goal number two says, effectively deliver educational, human, and physical resources to enhance student achievement and to ensure sustainability [inaudible 01:12:07] future growth of the school community. The first objective I'd like to review is objective 2E, and that is to align the long range financial plan with the current educational goals of the school district.

Ms. Wager:

In May of 2019, the board received a presentation summarizing long-range plan, which basically came about as a compliance document, which resulted out of controller's offices audit. They were citing school districts for not having a long-range plan. So long-range plan is put together by Mr. Edson [inaudible 01:12:42] who quit the board in May of 2019. And as I was reviewing that presentation for tonight's summary, one of the slides that was included in there talked about factors that may affect the long-range plan and change the projections. Some of those items included enrollment growth, changes to state aid, grant funding, logic line changes, and state mandates. One of the things that was missing from that, that we never expected, was the word pandemic. So due to COVID we needed to take a close look at how does the pandemic affect our school district.

Ms. Wager:

I wanted to mention that when we closed back in March, we made a concerted effort to start purchasing supplies and equipment that we needed because we knew there would be a shortage on

some supplies. We spent approximately \$100,000 between March and June on PPE supplies, including disinfectant supplies, masks, face shields, gloves, and gowns. And this current year, we have found the need to shift our manner of spending in order to prepare for the reopening of school and the continuance of school. To date, the district has spent approximately \$450,000 on PPE equipment and supplies. Plus we have projected an additional \$810,000 in salaries and benefits for hiring extra TA's, teachers, and a COVID coordinator. And we have spent a lot of money on preparing students and teachers for the reopening in the hybrid plan.

Ms. Wager:

We have spent significant resources on technology, including providing Chrome Tabs to K-1 and Grade Two. We have provided [inaudible 01:14:44] hotspots to allow for better internet access. And we have also purchased document cameras and web cameras to assist with instruction. For these reasons, the board and the district determined that we would maintain a higher than usual undesignated fund balance and carry that forward. We typically, by state statute, carry forward 4% of our unappropriated fund balance, and that is 4% of the subsequent years budget. So we take this current year's budget of [inaudible 01:15:19] and we can carry forward 4% of that as undesignated fund balance. This year we will be carrying forward approximately 6%.

Ms. Wager:

And the Board will receive audited financial statements for the year ending June 30th 2020 in November. And we will also have a new treasurer starting at that time. You will be receiving updated revenue and budget reports monthly, and we will continue to monitor our cashflow as we are doing. I will provide a fund balance projection for the board in January of 2021, and continue to look at this long-range plan and what adjustments we may need to make. We may also need to make changes to our upcoming budget process and voting process. So we need to keep that in mind as well. The next objective that I'd like to review is board goal 2G, which is to utilize our consultant's population estimates and enrollment projections for the community, to inform the district's long-range plan.

Ms. Wager:

The district has contracted with the Capital District Regional Planning Commission, and I've already been in contact with our planner to make sure we're on track to receive a timely report, which is usually in January. There is a slight delay, right now, in information that they are receiving from the Department of Health, which naturally is due to COVID, they're very busy. However, they do expect our report to still be on time in January. And the last objective is board goal number 2L, and that is to ensure completion of the new budget and expense reporting by building, as New York State and [inaudible 01:17:07] requires.

Ms. Wager:

A transparency report, as you may remember, we reviewed back in July. That is the process of taking the current year 2020, 2021 budget and allocating it by building to a [inaudible 01:17:22] allocation. That was submitted back in July and reported to the board. In December and January, we will be doing the ESSA reporting, which is the process of allocating our actual expenditures from last year, 2019, 20, and allocating them on the same basis by building and by student. And I'll report to the board in January on that. Are there any questions?

Mr. Buono:

Any questions for Linda? Thank you, Linda, for stepping in and...

Mr. Simons:

I want to thank, Linda, for her report. Linda, having only been appointed just prior to this year, as Director of Business and Finance, is doing an outstanding job in her role. And I will say to the Board, because we don't have a full-time treasurer right now, she's really doing two jobs at once, and still doing a great job at it. So I want to appreciate that, Linda...

Ms. Wager:

Thank you.

Mr. Simons:

... You've done an excellent job. So...

Mr. Buono:

Thank you Linda.

Mr. Simons:

Our treasurer has not started yet. So we're getting some BOCES services help where we can, but Linda is really focusing on a lot of things right now.

Mr. Buono:

I think, again, it highlights the first objective that you talked about, around long-range financial planning. And sort of the tremendous cost involved with having to reopen, in terms of the PPE, the training for staff, the technology needs. And making sure, again, that we're a district that has resources that can provide that. And make sure that this hybrid plan works successfully, and protect our staff, and our faculty, and our kids. So thank you [inaudible 01:18:58]. Mr. Simons.

Mr. Simons:

So I have a couple of important initiatives that really grew out of conversations that the Board has been having for the last several years. One of the points of emphasis that our Board has made, well, really, since I came here, was not every student wants to go to college. And there are jobs available for kids that may require some level of technical training, but there are pathways to very good well-paying careers that may not involve going to a four-year college. And are we as a district providing those pathways for our students and exposing them to opportunities? So the Board really has had a view that we should make sure that we're taking care of all of the kids, and that we have a range of different goals for kids, as well as aspirations.

Mr. Simons:

So last year, in conversation with our board about this concern, we put in objectives specifically in the plan, ensure that we are engaging students in career exploration, particularly that was located under goal number 1J. Jennifer Massey, who is here remotely, Jennifer, you can hear me, I hope, had some contacts that she brought to our attention, that really helped us address this goal. Jennifer brought me into contact, and Mr. Harkin, the high school principal, with an individual named Dan Paris, who runs the New York State Apprenticeship Program for the Department of Labor.

Mr. Simons:

So Jennifer was kind enough to bring him to a meeting with us, to talk about what we could begin to do as a district, to talk with our high school kids about apprenticeships, about career pathways in the trades. And Dan Paris was an excellent resource because he got us in contact with many of the local union trade shops and leaders who were very generous of their time. They came into the District, they did presentations at the high school. As well as we organized some experiences with BOCES through Jim Church, who is their director of strategic initiatives, to bring some of our kids to those training centers, including learning about what it takes to become an electrician, a sheet metal worker, the guide rail and steamfitters union.

Mr. Simons:

And really provided a great opportunity for our kids to learn about those programs. It gets even better. We connected with Martin Electric to be part of our efforts to expose kids to those trades. And we brought some kids from a high school over to a job fair that was being sponsored by Zones, which is a large technology company that also has a Microsoft 365 help center. And from talking with Mr. Harkin, that exposure has led to one of our kids, who was in last year's senior class, getting a job. And is working for Zones as he is going to Hudson Valley part-time. So we had a lot of activities prior to COVID, and we're going to pick this up this year, where we were involving our kids in learning about the trades.

Mr. Simons:

It is a big concern across the state that a number of individuals in the trades are either close to retirement or retiring. That field, along with manufacturing, are looking for people who can fill those roles and they're paying good money. We've also worked in situations, individually, for kids to take part in coursework to become welders. And some of those kids have gone on to good paying jobs as welders. So I want to thank, Jennifer, for giving us that opportunity. I want to thank the Board for emphasizing this critical aspect of our educational goals.

Mr. Simons:

I've got one other, actually, two others, to highlight the advocacy committee, which was Kathleen Curtin's idea on the Board. Kathleen said, at one of the Board meetings, and I'll paraphrase, the legislators kind of get tired of listening to your Superintendents, maybe you ought to get some other voices in the room. She didn't really say it that way, but that's what she said. So we formed a committee of Board members, students, staff members, both instructional, non-instructional. And we went even further, we invited other districts in our area that have similar concerns regarding state aid to join forces with us.

Mr. Simons:

And through a lot of conversations, we were able to put together an advocacy forum at Columbia High School, which was very successful, involving our district, Guilderland, New Lebanon, Schodack, South County, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake, Scotia-Glenville, Voorheesville, Averill Park, Bethlehem, and Taconic Hills. And we had three student representatives on the committee. In fact, one student, who is now graduated, Kason Romanowski, served as the moderator. It was very well attended by both the community, representatives of all of the districts, as well as our legislators. And while we were advocating at the time for ensuring that we would no longer receive the minimal state aid increases that we received, we certainly didn't anticipate that COVID would take us in a backwards direction.

Mr. Simons:

However, I still think the advocacy forum had a benefit because it gave the legislators a different perspective. The focus had tended to be on just the high needs districts, which they do have significant needs because they're more reliant on state aid. But the impact of minimal state aid increases on our districts, who are average wealth, and how it encroaches on our ability to be able to continue to provide programs without overburdening the taxpayers, is a message I think they left with from our forum. So, Kathleen, thank you for your idea, and for helping us to put that together. And also, Karen Curran, who was our former Board member, was also part of that process.

Mr. Simons:

I got one more, and this is under goal number one. It's right before item J, I'm not sure that we put a letter on it. The board was aware of that last year, we were invited by Questar III BOCES, to participate in an initiative with other districts called Students First. That was a professional development experience that involved every single one of our principals and our central office team attending sessions with Wynantskill School District, at Questar, facilitated by the former Bethlehem superintendent. To take a look at how we can become more focused on data and how data could be utilized better within our district to make instructional decisions.

Mr. Simons:

So, Les Loomis, took us through a process, beginning in August through November, where we were asked as an administrative team to really take a look closely at some data sets and develop some objectives for improvements. The process also involved teachers looking at data at the classroom level, in terms how their students were doing on various standards-based assessments. We targeted a 10% decrease in chronic absenteeism. And so when I talked earlier about the importance of monitoring the social-emotional needs of our middle school and our high school kids, and connecting to school, absenteeism is a measure that we have to take a look at. We want kids to be in school.

Mr. Simons:

Chronic absenteeism is defined by state and national standards as missing 10% or more of the days of instruction. So on a typical school calendar, if you miss 17 or 18 days, that's considered to be chronically absent. Decreasing our course failures. We look at the number of students, particularly in the middle school and high school, who were failing two or more courses, and how we could improve in that area. A 5% increase in the percentage of kids that were proficient on state tests and Regents Exams. Our performance there is already high, so the 5% made sense in terms of a benchmark that we could increase to.

Mr. Simons:

And the level of mastery, meaning students meeting the cut-points on Regents Exams and state tests, who have considered to be not only proficient, but mastering the content. And we had discussions of putting in place, in our schools, something called AAA data meetings. Where we really asked our teachers to meet in teams with our administrators to take a really close look at data through a structured process. I think our participation in Students First, first of all, it was shortened because of COVID, was very beneficial. Not only the time that we spent at the BOCES, but the time we spent within our administrative teams talking together and collaborating around student achievement.

Mr. Simons:

And we hope to continue that process this year, and maybe even as we work on our scorecard and our strategic plan for the coming year. To have some of our objectives be a little more targeted in terms of percentages and data. So we did a lot of work on student achievement last year and also in areas to connect the kids to other career paths and career fields. And we're going to continue that work this year.

Mr. Buono:

Excellent. Are there any comments from Board members as we wrap up the discussion on the Scorecard?

Ms. Curtin:

Actually, I have a comment, Mike.

Mr. Buono:

Yes, Kathleen.

Ms. Curtin:

I should have said it earlier when Mr. McHugh was speaking, when he talked about the career pathways that we now have for our business and finance. In my time at the Board, we cut all those programs for financial reasons. And so bringing them back to the level that we are now is really a huge accomplishment. And, thank you, because I know there's a lot of kids that, that is a pathway that will enable them to get their degree or get their diploma. So thank you very much. It's definitely been appreciated.

Mr. McHugh:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Anyone else? So I think we had some previous, John?

Mr. Dunn:

Just a quick comment. First of all, I would like to thank the team for putting the work to keep us up to date with the scorecard, with all the other things that you have going. The scorecard is very useful in reminding us what our positions are as we go through the year. Because as far as there's so much going on in school it has a real value on a lot of levels. And I would also encourage the public, if anybody's listening, to actually sit down and read the scorecard because it will really help frame the direction that we're trying to move in these difficult times. Because I think one of the things that happens with the folks is they get fixated on a singular issue, and it just needs kind of an oral reminder that there's a lot of different things that make up the direction of the school district. So thank you for the effort and it was a great review.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, John. So, Jeff and I, were talking a little bit during our agenda review that development of the 2020, 2021 scorecard, letting his team take a look at the results, [inaudible 01:31:04] ideas around

goals, objectives. I think the goals that we worked on last year are still very valid right now. And, I think, considering the circumstances, we can make some adjustments in our objectives. And one of the things I know that we talked about too was understanding what's happening with our students with the current hybrid plan, remote instruction, live instruction, in-person instruction, and where there may be gaps in learning. And how we can address those throughout the school year to support our students who may have had some challenges with this. As well as those students who were very strong academically and [inaudible 01:31:48] learning experience themselves, and they may also need support. So more to come on the development of those. If there's no other comments I want to move to committee reports, and we'll start with Marissa. She needs a microphone.

Ms. Cannon:

Can I borrow your microphone again, John? Thank you. Last week we had reported on the elementary school student attendance data, so this week we want to take a moment to discuss these attendance data at Goff Middle School and Columbia High School. The data used to develop the attendance reports regarding student absences is provided through PowerSchool, which is the district student information system. At Goff Middle School, we had 76 absences on any day, I should backtrack for a moment, this for the same time period we discussed last week. So it's from September 14th through October 2nd. So 76 A Day absences, 55 B Day absences, 76 Virtual Wednesday absences, and 133 Remote absences. So I know Jill Barker is at the meeting virtually tonight. So I would like to turn this over to Jill at this time, so she can discuss the implementation of attendance procedures and interventions that Goff middle school has put in place.

Ms. Barker:

Good evening. Thank you Marissa. We are continuing to evaluate the validity of our absenteeism. When we first started to figure out how to take attendance [inaudible 01:33:36], we initially started with, if the student on [inaudible 01:33:41] submitted an assignment, we wouldn't them as present for the day. And then the teacher would go back to their attendance and they would correct their attendance. This became a very cumbersome and tedious activity for a teacher to do, and we found that there wasn't a lot of accuracy in that. So based on that scenario with you modulating Google attendance form, which we have now put into every student's Google classroom. And they get to get a reminder every day, to say, if you're on your remote day, please click, yes, I'm in attendance. And that way we can capture students that are participating on a remote day in school. The problem that is they're middle school kids who are 10, 11, 12, 13 years old, and they don't always do that.

Ms. Barker:

So we have, as of this week, we started to call down students when they would come in person, they didn't do their attendance on a remote day. We called 130 students down, this week, and talked to them about the importance of making sure that they fill out the attendance forms so we can have accurate attendance. [inaudible 01:34:51] has been instrumental in trying to look back at attendance to see if the student didn't fill in the attendance form, did they actually participate in classes throughout the day? So that we can say, okay, the student was actually in attendance, but didn't fill out the form. So we are looking at a number of different ways to make sure we can capture accurate attendance, but it is tricky. And we'll continue to evaluate our process and analyze it so that we can make sure that we are capturing a correct attendance for students who are participating, but also capturing students who aren't attending.

Ms. Barker:

So every week we have our [inaudible 01:35:30] team meeting and we review the attendance of all our students. We've done over 25 home visits to students who aren't anticipating on a consistent basis. These are our [inaudible 01:35:40] students. Or even if they're not participating on their remote days, we are actually visiting their homes and talking to them to find out, is this an internet issue? Is this a lack of understanding on how to engage through the computer and to Google classroom? We're learning a lot as we do these home visits, that many parents were unclear about what they signed up for when they said they were going to do remote. We found out there were some internet issues, we found out they just had a lack of understanding about what the schedule look like, and how they should participate in our model. So we're continuing to gather more data and review our process to make sure our attendance is the best that it can be.

Ms. Barker:

But, overall, we have a 94% attendance rate. And we obviously we want to improve that. Teachers are reminded kids each and every day, make sure you do your attendance. Teachers are being very diligent about student joins late, since we do our first period attendance as our daily attendance. And the student shows up late, and they're five minutes late, we make sure the teachers go back and mark their presence. So there's a lot of components and logistics to having accurate attendance. And it's just not very straight forward. And we'll just continue to work through the process, and we're improving it each week, as we learn more about what are some of the obstacles to having the best accuracy in terms of attendance. But we will monitor it closely and we're continuing to review our process.

Ms. Cannon:

Thank you Jill. Turning to Columbia High School. For A Days, we had 99 absences, and in our CTAEP Program, we had 12 absences. On B Days, at Columbia High School, 105 absences, and for the CTAEP program, 26 absences. Virtual Wednesday at Columbia, we had 157 absences, and CTAEP, 13 absences. And then, lastly, our remote absences at Columbia were 143, and at CTAEP, [inaudible 00:31:40]. And as Mr. Simons had indicated before, Columbia High School administration is working to locate about nine students who may have left the district, but not yet sent in a transfer request. And at this time I'd like to turn it over to Mike Harkin, to talk a little bit about the implementation of the attendance procedures at Columbia High School.

Mr. Harkin:

Thank you Marissa. [inaudible 01:38:03] we are still working to make sure that we are taking accurate attendance. It has proved to be challenging [inaudible 01:38:09] students. And it's difficult for the teachers. We're asking a lot of our teachers to take attendance for kids in front of them, kids remotely. Some kids come on a few minutes late [Inaudible 01:38:19] administrative team. And the social workers that we [inaudible 01:38:32] on virtual Wednesdays. For whatever reason some kids were just taking Wednesdays off. [inaudible 01:38:37] social workers. We had home visits [inaudible 01:38:40] probably about 30 or 40 home visits so far this year. And we're still [inaudible 00:32:45], as Marissa said, on nine students who we believe have left the district, but have not enrolled in a school. Those nine absences are [inaudible 00:32:55], that's right, our numbers are high though. And for the most part, we feel like we're getting a good, accurate representation [inaudible 01:39:02] improving our numbers...

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:39:04]

Mr. Harkin:

... have the representation of what's going on. Where we've been proving our numbers, we really need more and more students. So I really want to thank my social worker and my administrative team, and we're each skating through, and we hope to improve that and engage all of our students [inaudible 01:39:14]. Thank you for this time.

Ms. Cannon:

Thank you, Mike. Does anyone have any questions about the student attendance at all for the high school?

Mr. Buono:

No questions. I think it's just important, and I want to thank the efforts of the middle school and the high school to make sure procedures are clear, and work through some of the obstacles, like you said. And then to get our students to be present, I think, because that's so important at that age. To be present, to be learning. We know how if they're missing any of that time, it could set them back. And it's interesting about the remote absences. Kids are fully remote and still not present. So, interesting. So we'll see how this evolves over the course of the next reports. Thank you, [inaudible 01:39:59].

Ms. Cannon:

Next I'd like to briefly report on our vacancies. For instructional, we currently have two full-time teaching assistant anticipated vacancies at Bell Top. We have two very seasoned teaching assistants that we are sad to see retire right before Thanksgiving. They're moving on with the next chapter of their life. We have nine candidates for those two positions, and Mr. Mahar is working on building an interview committee for next week. Additionally, we have a part-time teaching assistant at Bell Top, a part-time teaching assistant position at Goff, and a five-hour teaching assistant position at Columbia. Those part-time TA roles will be posted tomorrow on our district website and on OLAS.

Ms. Cannon:

We have still a challenge finding classroom coverage for our teachers that are on approved medical leave and are working from home, and so we're working to make sure we have the coverage. We have substitutes in those roles right now, but myself and Mr. Neumann at Goff are going to be interviewing 15 candidates next Monday so we can go ahead and get the rest of those positions filled in a more permanent manner.

Ms. Cannon:

For our non-instructional positions, we have a bus aide resignation. That posting is closing later this week. We also have a food service position at Bell Top closing on October 28th, and a typist position at Bell Top due to retirement also closing on the 28th. So, we'll be working on getting those filled.

Ms. Cannon:

And then lastly, our Appendix D Committee met earlier this week on Monday. It was the first meeting of the school year, and attendance was Drew Romanowski, Alison Hosier, JoAnn Taylor, Jim McHugh, and myself. What we did was, we reviewed the language and the memorandum of agreement with the EGTA regarding Appendix D compensation. We started off the meeting looking at what are the deliverables, and what are those timelines? So one of the items that we're working on is creating a new matrix for

determining the level of compensation to be provided for co-curricular activity advisement, and realigning that compensation schedule to something that is a little bit more relevant to what those clubs are doing today. Additionally, we are tasked with creating an evaluation tool, and also an application and an interview process.

Ms. Cannon:

So this is going to be something that we will be continuing to look at throughout this calendar year, and we have created a meeting schedule for the future. We're going to be meeting again on October 29, November 9th, November 19th, December 3rd, December 9th, December 15th and December 21st to ensure that we're able to meet all of the timelines needed for the successful arrangement of Appendix D moving forward. We had a lot of good ideas during the meeting. We are going to be starting off with the evaluation tool, and the application and interview process as a starting platform, and then we will be getting into the development of the new matrix. And I don't if Ms. Taylor or Mr. McHugh want to add anything.

Ms. Taylor:

I really don't have anything else to add, but I wanted to thank the union for allowing board representation to that committee. It is a lot to process. Sitting in that meeting, you really don't realize all the intricacies of the positions and the salaries. I'm looking forward to the remainder of the meetings, and I think we've got a lot of work to do, but I think it's all headed in the right direction.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, JoAnn.

Ms. Cannon:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

[inaudible 01:44:10]. Good. No comments. Thank you, JoAnn. I echo what JoAnn said. I appreciate EGTA for working with the district and having a board member present, as it has been an area that we talked about quite a bit. I think this will help the Board in terms of its information flow and education about how this process works. Thank you, JoAnn, for participating. I think John Dunn said he will be your backup just in case. Right, John? Thumbs up. Thanks. All right. Moving to Mr. McHugh.

Mr. McHugh:

Just the committee report for Committee for Curriculum Study. We met October 7th, 2020. It was through Google Meet. I do want to note that even though it was in Google Meet, we still had 41 participants. So, that's pretty good. October's always a great meeting, because it's when all the summer curriculum writing is presented to CCS. Some of those highlights was that there was a development of a common midterm for Living Environment and Physics. That's needed, because that midterm grade is 5% of the final grade. We want to make sure that there's equity and that our students, regardless of teacher, they're taking that same midterm that's counted as 5% of the grade.

Mr. McHugh:

Another highlight, Global History. It was really a needed project to ensure that students are ready for the new common core exam. If you look at the foundations of the project, a couple of them, we're really integrating the enduring issues and having those discussions, those meaningful discussions about challenges and problems that society is faced with. Things that are being debated and discussed. Also, if you look at number four, creating visual lessons through Edpuzzle. I just want to note that folks are taking advantage of the platforms that our technology department has rolled out. Edpuzzles really allows for interactive video lessons. It allows for teachers to build the context. So they're using YouTube, things like that. They're able to edit. They also can embed their own questions within the video using that. So, it's great to see that the technology that's being purchased and secured is being utilized. You're seeing that in a lot of the curriculum writing.

Mr. McHugh:

Some other highlights. Just a lot of work in grades six through eight in English Language Arts. Sixth grade incorporated a new novel. So all sixth graders are reading that book, Fish in a Tree. And really, it touches upon diversity. There's a lot of diversity amongst the characters is embedded in that novel, and it really focuses on empathy. We know that that is something that's really needed.

Mr. McHugh:

Some of the other things you see that folks are talking about. What they have realized in the middle school is that comprehension is so tied to vocabulary. So there's an increased focus on vocabulary and making sure that we're enhancing student vocabulary, which will improve that student comprehension.

Mr. McHugh:

If you look on the Next Generation Science Standards, there's a lot of work. Currently high school continue to do some work really transitioning to Next Generation Science Standards. Really making the units of instruction more reflective of Next Gen. Goff Middle School did Next Generation Science Standards for grade eight. What's really neat about that is if you look at that, all of our eighth grade science teachers were involved. We had a high school science teacher that was also involved, because of that transition year. We had a math teacher and a special education teacher. So it was a good collaboration, a professional collaboration on some of those projects. And [inaudible 01:47:43] was there as well. Folks were pretty excited to present that they felt like that was one of the more worthwhile initiatives that they engaged in.

Mr. McHugh:

Again, K-5, we continue to do some curriculum writing. And in K-5, we have two to three consistent units of instruction that are reflective of Next Generation Science Standard's appropriate level. So, that's great. It's accessible through our K-5 Curriculum Corner. Then, same thing with our social studies. That program, the review came out. And over the last three years, we've done some summer curriculum writing work. So K-5 has a consistent unit in 2018. They did a consistent unit for Geography in K-5. In 2019, Culture, and then last summer Economics. We are hopeful to tackle Government and Civics in the summer of 2021.

Mr. McHugh:

So, that's it. Any questions regarding any of that? But if you look through the work, you see it's pretty impressive. The other thing I will say, this is what's really important, is that we're archiving Google

Classroom. Google Drive has really been helpful. A lot of times this work is taking place, and it sits on a shelf somewhere. And this is really important, that the way we're rolling it out is successful to our teachers. We've made sure that it's part of our onboarding when we have new hires. That they're aware that this work exists, and it's made it a lot easier through Google Classroom. Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks, Jim. No questions for Jim? No. Okay. Mr. Simons?

Mr. Simons:

I just have one item, and it's an important item. I want to thank the teachers and the principals for the recent open house. Open house had to take a different format this year. A combination of virtual meetings as well as recording presentations at different levels for the families. I myself was able to participate after the fact, because I wasn't able to get on for the high school open house until this morning. I did participate in the meeting and the presentations of the teachers as a parent, and I was very impressed. I was impressed by the organization of the accessibility of the content for the course, the goals for the course.

Mr. Simons:

Anyone can go on there now. So for example, if you're a parent, and you're listening to this, and you weren't able to do the open house at the high school level, you can go on right now on our website and you can watch your teachers present. There's a grid that you open up and you can go to. For example, if you have first period English 10, you can click on English 10 and you can watch a video of the English teacher explaining what the course objectives are, how the course is organized within Google, how the kids know about the assignments. Every single one of the teachers talked about office hours. I was very, very impressed by having that accessible to the parents, and I want to thank the teachers for the work involved in that. There were some that were really just easy to access, and well-done, and well-delivered.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you.

Mr. Simons:

Yeah.

Mr. Buono:

That concludes our committee reports, and we will now move to the minutes of the October 14th. Any corrections or revisions to the minutes? And I have, Jennifer, you were not present. So seeing no comments, revisions, I need a motion to approve those. Frank. Second, Kathleen. All those in favor? All those abstaining? Jennifer. Approved.

Mr. Buono:

Approval of programs for Resident Children with Disabilities. Any questions or comments? Seeing none. I need a motion to approve that. JoAnn. I need a second. Deanna. All those in favor? Approved.

Mr. Buono:

Moving on to second reading on policies. Mr. Simons?

Mr. Simons:

Yes. This is the second reading of the policy that was reviewed by the policy committee. It's a change in the acceptable use agreement for student use of our technology network and our computers. It involves the inclusion of a statement that was agreed to by the teachers and the administration that prohibits unapproved recording of lessons. This does not apply to teachers recording their lessons. There's lots of teachers recording their lessons and posting them in their Google Classroom, which is a good practice for kids to go back and review. And it does not preclude a parent or a student from asking permission to record a lesson in the event that that request comes forward to the teacher. So, it's really to protect the appropriate use of the technology as we are conducting a lot of Google Meets.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. So there were no comments or questions, revisions on that?

Mr. Simons:

No.

Mr. Buono:

If not, I need a motion to approve that. Frank. Michelle. All those in favor? Approved. Moving on to tabled motions. I have none at this time.

Mr. Buono:

Old business. I just have one comment. Based on our timeline of the superintendent's evaluation, Mr. Simons did submit his self-evaluation. Thank you for that. Lots of good information there. We are going to do a session, myself, Deanna, and Frank, hopefully, to go over super eval. So it is open, it's ready for a review, and I just encourage everyone to pop in there and start working on their evaluation that we do have planned for November 4th. I figure around 6:00 to 7:30. Virtual for everybody. Does that work for folks? No? Nod. Yes? Virtual? I think so. Okay. So we'll do that, and I'll send some information about just timeline, and I'll put together a Google Meet or Zoom for that.

Mr. Buono:

Any other Old Business, Board members? No? Okay. Moving on to Consent Agenda. Any questions or comments on the Consent Agenda? Mr. Mann?

Mr. Mann:

The Niagara Mohawk easement. Can you give a little background on that?

Mr. Simons:

Yes, I can. Okay. The question from Mr. Mann was regarding the request from National Grid for an easement. There is some underground cabling, and replacement, and new cabling that needs to be put in by National Grid on this property. Green Meadow. I believe it's on this side of the property. I'm not 100% sure of that, Dan, but I believe it's over this side.

Dan:

I think so.

Mr. Simons:

Okay. We received that request from National Grid, and we had Kelly and Heinrich review it. I don't know exactly the timeline of the work. I don't think we've been informed of the timeline of work, have we yet, Linda? But it'll be digging into the ground and laying some cable.

Ms. Wager:

Yeah, that work won't be completed until the spring time.

Mr. Simons:

Until the spring.

Mr. Mann:

So, we're not giving them this property.

Ms. Wager:

No.

Mr. Mann:

We're just allowing them to come on it.

Mr. Simons:

Yeah. Permission to come onto the property. It protects them and it protects us.

Mr. Mann:

Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Any other questions on the consent agenda? Good?

Mr. Simons:

I don't think so.

Mr. Buono:

I know Marissa mentioned some retirements, I think, were coming up. So, congratulations to our future retirees. I always like to mention our gifts. Thank you again to Hannaford for some support for our elementary schools. Lastly, I think there was the grant request for technology. Ms. Barker, I believe you were involved with that. So thank you for pursuing the grant, and the \$20,000 will go towards the purchase of additional Chromebooks for the middle school. So thank you for taking that on, and getting that grant for the school district.

Mr. Buono:

Seeing no other questions or comments, I need a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, items A through L. Kathleen. I need a second. Jennifer. All those in favor? Approved.

Mr. Buono:

Moving on to New Business. Anyone? Board members? Mr. Simons, any new business?

Mr. Simons:

No new business.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. So we have a link to our Public Forum#2, Linda. Are there any emails?

Ms. Wager:

Yes, there is. We have two emails.

Mr. Buono:

Two emails. Okay.

Ms. Wager:

The first is from Tys Bailey Yavondit. She is disappointed that I allowed what she interpreted to be a political statement to be read during open forum tonight, that she interpreted as being for asking questions. She's concerned that it spread misinformation indicating that the K-5 parents are looking for babysitters, when that is not the case. Most K-5 parents, especially K-2, are looking for an equitable education. That was continually emphasized at the beginning of the school year. East Greenbush elementary students are not receiving an equitable education this year compared to the high schoolers and other school districts that looked out for all of their students. You keep bringing up the middle and high schoolers, that can read and operate a computer themselves, needing to receive an equitable education. Those students have the ability to read and use a computer themselves, and K-2 students do not. Could you please explain how the current plan is equitable to K-2 students that can't read or operate a computer themselves?

Mr. Buono:

I think we can take that email ... Mr. Simons, you can think about the information content. You can just answer that directly at the Board meeting. Is that acceptable?

Mr. Simons:

Yeah. I think I'd like to take the contact information. We have been having a lot of discussions about reading at the K-2 level, and I'd like to talk to the principals a little bit more so I can respond in detail to that concern. Because I know one of the concerns is not only working independently on the computer, but the reading aspect of it. So I will respond to it, but I want to take a little bit more time to have enough details regarding the reading experiences that the kids should be having through the computer and have a complete answer for her.

Mr. Buono:

All right. Another one, you said?

Ms. Wager:

Thank you. One more. Email is from Breanna Miller, and I have responded to her in writing. She would like to know each of the Board members' names, and how each of the Board members are selected, and are the members paid. I responded to her by referring her to the section of our website, Board of Education, Meet the Board, with your names, your pictures, and your bios, and that the Board is serving as volunteers.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. And is this a committee member, or is this a parent?

Ms. Wager:

It's a parent.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. So the information's on the website. We all run for elections every year, putting in our terms. We are unpaid, and we are grateful to serve our community. Anything else? No?

Ms. Wager:

Let me just check.

Mr. Buono:

Okay.

Ms. Wager:

Nope. That's it.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. So that concludes our second public forum, and then I'll just turn over to the Board members for comments. We'll start with Mr. Mann. Want to grab a mic? Is that one working? That's good? Thanks, Mark.

Mr. Mann:

So we get a lot of information from the New York State School Boards Association, and I don't know if anybody read the information that they released around 6:00 tonight.

Mr. Buono:

Yep.

Mr. Mann:

About roughly in New York state, there's about 7,000 schools. And out of that 7,000 schools, 62%, almost 63%, are doing a hybrid model. 20% are doing in-person, and 17% are doing fully remote. So our

district is in line with a lot of the school districts. 62% of the school districts in New York state. But one of the things that the state is going to be asking school districts is, they want us to look at and conduct a survey on how many of our kids don't have a device at home, or don't have available internet. We've already done that. We've already done that, and we've issued them. Give me the term, Linda, that you use. Hotspots, or whatever Kajeets? That we're giving families to use that are having internet issues.

Mr. Mann:

So East Greenbush Central School District is ahead of the game, and we're in line with what the state is asking us to do. We're in line with the majority of the school districts in New York state. I just want to thank you, and your team, and Jim for all the information and how you looked at everything. I've given Mike few suggestions of some things that may help, that he's going to pass on to you. But thank you for everything that you do, and how you continue to look and address the concerns of the parents. So I know you get inundated with emails, and you do your best to answer them all. Yes, we missed one, but that's because the power went out. But thank you for that. Thank you for getting back to folks. I encourage people to ask questions, and we're very transparent with all of what we are doing. So, thank you for that.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Mark. I think you said it though. When Mark said a lot of times, if parents will connect with their teacher, connect with their principal, and the resources that are available through their elementary school, middle school, or high school, they can get a lot of the answers that they need and the support that they're looking for for their children in school. So thanks, Mark.

Mr. Mann:

Yep.

Mr. Buono:

Deanna? Kathleen?

Ms. Curtin:

I just want to mention on the consent agenda tonight, we also had three tenure appointments for three of our teaching assistants. They work very, very hard, and I really wanted to congratulate Ann Howe, Courtney Mahar, and Shawn Wyman for achieving their tenure.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks, Kathleen. Very good recognition. JoAnn? Nothing? Frank, do you have anything? You're good? Jennifer Massey, anything? Want to give her the microphone, guys?

Ms. Massey:

Sorry. I was eating. So I just want to [inaudible 02:03:27]. And also [inaudible 02:03:32], because there are other things that are happening, and [inaudible 02:03:39] things that are happening in the district.

Ms. Massey:

I would also like to say that ... This is for all the district, and all the districts across the country. It is a very difficult and challenging time. There is no one perfect solution. As we, I think, as we're probably making

headway through this process, all of us together, there's no perfect solution that is going to fit every single person's needs. We are trying to work very diligently together to navigate all of our growing changes, as well as providing the best level of service that we can in very unprecedented and difficult times.

Ms. Massey:

And I want to thank all of the families in the community, all of our partners in the community, for really pulling together as best we can. I really encourage people to reach out, ask the questions, make the suggestions and the recommendations. We will continue to partner together to look at those for consideration, and attempt to make the best decisions to keep everyone in the district safe, and continue to hopefully remain with our schools open for the school year as best we can. So again, I just want to thank everyone in the community, administration, for all of your diligence and support. We will get through this, but it's going to take us getting through it. [Inaudible 02:05:24] So, thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Jennifer. Michelle? Good? John?

Mr. Dunn:

Just a brief comment. Again, we've covered a lot of ground this evening. I think we're reaching a point where we keep spending a lot of time and resources on studying how we can try to implement certain things. We're all suffering COVID fatigue right now, and I think as a community, we have to come together to serve the interest of the whole. There's two ways that we're doing this. One is, as individual families have problems, as Jennifer just stated, being available for them to try to help them individually as they move through this with strategies and resources.

Mr. Dunn:

But the overall thing is, as we review what we're doing with, we'll use the hybrid model as the example, we have to at some point say, "How can we make the hybrid model better? How can we serve the people we're missing in this model?" We're asking our staff to do a lot of things that are outside of the norm. Our administrative team is putting a huge amount of hours trying to come up with solutions. And I think at some point you have to recognize that there is no simple solution, but we can take our energy and our money and put it into making what we are currently doing better.

Mr. Dunn:

I think you're starting to do that, and I think with your report tonight, it recognizes that. And I just encourage the community to try to work with their individual schools and teachers to get the services they need, as we all have lost a little bit of something through this. And just be mindful of that when we're frustrated. We're very mindful of that when we read the emails and frustration, and we appreciate their position. So again, thanks, and let's get back to work. Oars in the water. We still have some rough seas ahead. So, thank you for the time and this opportunity to speak to everyone.

Ms. Skumurski:

And Mike, can I just add in a comment too?

Mr. Buono:

Sure.

Ms. Skumurski:

Sorry. I was on mute.

Mr. Buono:

That's okay.

Ms. Skumurski:

It's really a challenging time, and I could echo everybody else who talked earlier. It's really important that we try to stick together as a community. I don't think any of us know what the right answer is, but we know that we have to be mindful of the safety. The worst possibility is to be out, completely remote again, for the main part of the year. So we have to really keep that in mind, and keep our safety protocols critical. But honestly, it's heartbreaking that we can't have school. Everybody on the school board, and sitting in this room, and sitting through the school district feel the same way. We don't want this. We want the kids to be in school five days a week. And I just can't believe this is where we are now. But nobody has the right answer, or the answer that's going to satisfy everybody. So try to work with us as much as you can, and please keep open communication. We really welcome the suggestions. They're looked at and brought up. We appreciate all the emails. Just please understand that I think everybody is trying to do their best.

Ms. Skumurski:

I also want to give praise to all the people in school district. The administration, the teachers, the staff. I mean, this is all new grounds to them too, and they're doing an amazing job keeping our students safe, and the faculty safe, the people in the building safe. We have to make sure that that is recognized, and that we try to, again, come together as a community to try to do the best we can for this year.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Michelle. Great comments from everybody. Any concluding comments, Mr. Simons?

Mr. Simons:

No. I appreciate everybody's understanding of the complexity of what we're challenged by this year. Again, we'll continue to look at everything in terms of the feedback we get from parents. We're going to continue to look for solutions within the model that we have. The discussions that we need to have with our teachers that I referred to earlier will continue to occur, and we'll continue to look at this. There is always opportunity to make what we're doing better, as Mr. Dunn said.

Mr. Buono:

Great. That concludes our board meeting tonight. We do not have need for an Executive session tonight, so everyone has a ... not a long night ahead of us. So, I appreciate your time. A lot of information tonight. With that, I need a motion to adjourn. Kathleen. Second, JoAnn. All those in favor? Approved. Have a great night everyone, and thank you.

Mr. Simons:
Thank you, Mike.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [02:11:26]