

**Transcript of Board of Education Meeting
November 18, 2020**

Mr. Buono:

I'd like to call the meeting to order, it is 7:06 P.M. Tonight we have all members present except for JoAnn and Michelle at this point who I expect will log on shortly. And in person we have Mr. Mann and Ms. Curtin. So with that if we could please rise and join me in a pledge.

GROUP:

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. Thank you. Ryan, Katie, how are you?

Katie Asenbauer:

We just have a few quick updates. So this week we had spirit week. So Monday & Tuesday, were pajama day, which was very exciting. And today everyone's been wearing their class shirts for our virtual Wednesday. And each day students have been sending in pictures to our Columbia Instagram. At the end of the week, we're going to have a drawing and all of the entries are going to be entered for a raffle prize that's going to be provided by the PTSO. And then we'd also just like to mention that students being back in person, especially these past couple weeks, has really helped us both mental health wise and has really boosted morale throughout the whole school. So we're really grateful for that. And with spirit week being such a success this week, we're so excited to plan more things with the rest of the school year.

Mr. Buono:

Great, thanks, Katie. Ryan?

Ryan Seely:

Thank you. We have launched our apparel website and it will be open until November 30th and we are selling sweatpants, crew necks, sweatshirts and more. And after Thanksgiving break, we're going to start planning winter activities, however we don't yet know what it will look like and what we will be able to do. But we will keep you apprised.

Mr. Buono:

Sounds good. Can you guys hear me? I think I froze.

Mr. Simons:

Peter, is Mr. Buono on?

Mr. Goodwin:

No. He dropped off. I don't know what happened.

Mr. Goodwin:

I hope he can get back in.

Mr. Goodwin:

Do you want to text him to see if he's able to get in?

Mr. Simons:

I am doing that. I just did that.

Mr. Simons:

That was Michele. I just texted her the right link. Okay.

Mr. Simons:

Is Mike back on?

Mr. Simons:

Mike, we have you back on Mr. Buono. We've just noticed that you're muted. Can you hear us now Mr. Buono?

Mr. Buono:

How about now?

Mr. Simons:

Very good. Awesome. Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

I'm switching back and forth here with the Board Docs. Okay, so now we'll move to the public forums. So thanks Katie and Ryan. Sorry about the technical difficulties. And as always we'll be doing the virtual world even through emails. So if you have any comments for the Public forum, please include them in the email.

Mr. Buono:

Residents, students, employees, and business representatives of the East Greenbush Central School District may address the Board on matters concerning programs and/or operations of the district, other than matters involving personnel. Members of the Board do not directly respond to citizen concerns during the Public Forum. If a response is appropriate either the President or Superintendent will contact the individual in the near future. Those persons wishing to address the Board will be recognized by the chair of the meeting and should state for the record their name and address, or affiliation with the District or business. While the Board does not wish to infringe upon free speech protections, it must be stressed that the "Visitors' Forum" is not deemed to be an "open forum". The Board president will conduct the forum for the orderly and efficient operation of Board business. In addition, any remarks which may be considered defamatory or stigmatizing are prohibited and will be declared out of order. All comment shall be limited to five minutes. So Linda, are you going to turn the...

Ms. Wager:

I am, Mr. Buono, but there are no public comments at this time.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Okay. I'm just going to shift myself to middle screen here. All right. Moving on we have Board Forum. In my grid view, I can start with Michelle, Frank...

Mr. Buono:

Mr. Dunn, are you good? Deanna, JoAnn. Thumbs up. In the virtual world, we have Jennifer. And Kathleen and Mark.

Ms. Curtin:

Nothing from either of us.

Mr. Buono:

Okay.

Mr. Buono:

All right. The next part would be... Mr. Simons, do you have anything?

Mr. Simons:

No, I'm going to save any comments I made until we talk about the K-5 in person, and then we'll talk about the reopening plan at that time.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. So now we'll move our discussion with 2020-2021 Board goals. As you know, we're in November already. But we want to have a conversation really about where do we go for the rest of the school year, and Mr. Simons you can kind of key this up for us.

Mr. Simons:

Sure. May I ask Mr. Goodwin to share the screen and show the draft scorecard for just a minute so that members of the public and the administrative team and Board members participating remotely can see it? This looks a little different than the last score card document, which was shared and reviewed by the Board at the last Board meeting. We are entering into a little bit of a late start with this process, but this process of reviewing the Board's goals and some of the primary objectives of the District and the Board has been established and been occurring for the last four years. This will be the fifth year.

Mr. Simons:

And we usually start with a general conversation with the Board discussing their goals. Do they want to make any changes or revisions to the goals? And is there anything within those goals or other areas of the District's operations that you would like to see addressed during this current school year? We would then take that information back to our administrative team and refine some objectives and strategies and measures that we would bring back to you for your review. Ultimately with the Board adopting the scorecard goals and objectives for the year. So we just kind of wanted to open up the conversation tonight. We anticipate that there'll be perhaps some more time at the next meeting to continue the discussion. But just in general, would the Board like to see any changes or any additions to the goals as written currently?

Mr. Buono:

Do we have any comments? I think for me, just, I guess to kick it off, the challenge is where. But the concerns I have really is... And Board goal number one, is how do we just look at the gaps in academic... In the learning that may have occurred since we've been remote?

Mr. Simons:

Well, I'll support what Mr. Buono is saying, one of the things that districts are being asked to take a look at this year and really going back to last spring is, how can we identify some of the impact on academic progress that the COVID-19 adjustments have had to have had on our students at all levels? And then talking about what we might be able to do to address some of those learning gaps. I would support that as an important priority within the District. I know that Mr. McHugh, the principals and some of the staff have already identified, through some of the screening that we do, as well as the first quarter marking period grades that there are some issues out there that we're going to have to address and adjust to, in response to the student needs. So I was support Mr. Buono's recommendation that that'd be a priority area of the District under goal number one.

Mr. Buono:

Anyone else? Comments?

Mr. Mann:

Yeah, I do, Mike. Under one, "Achieve academic excellence through reflection, innovation, accountability", I'd like to put in the word review. We talked about last year about reviewing some programs to see if they were something that we wanted to continue with. So I would like to see that added to our goal to get the review in of some of those classes that we talked about phasing out.

Mr. Buono:

Can you please speak a little louder?

Mr. Mann:

Can you hear me now?

Mr. Mann:

It's right up next to my mouth so I can't go anymore. So my goal for Board goal one, I want to put the word review in there to start reviewing and possibly phasing out some of those programs that we talked about and replacing them with something more viable. So if we put in that Board goal review, then we could look at some of those programs... And we listed them out at the retreat last year, so I'd like to see those looked at and incorporated into this year for goals.

Mr. Simons:

We're good.

Mr. Buono:

Sounds good.

Mr. Simons:

I do recall we had a discussion of certain classes and certain programs and we did some preliminary work, but we didn't do a full study and we definitely are prepared to do that. And we've been talking with some of the other spread of council districts about the courses they offer in their program of study. So I think that's a good thing that we could pick up on and do this year, and I would support that.

Mr. Mann:

Thank you. That's all I have Mike.

Mr. Dunn:

Mike, I have a comment. I agree with your position in regards to goal number one. And Jeff in some way, shape, or form, in the score card, if we could make a reflection of COVID and the different strategies that we've had to develop, and try to track how we've improved as this progress goes through, as we get better at the virtual learning. I would like to see some measure as to where we started with this pandemic and then where we ended up so that we can kind of track it. So that for next academic season, we will be prepared to address any potential shortcomings.

Mr. Simons:

So you'd like to see really an evaluation in the progress report in what we have improved in terms of our remote learning program, our virtual instruction, and what we've learned from that and how we're going to implement some of those improvements now and in the future?

Mr. Dunn:

Yeah, I think that would be a good... If it ties into... If we make a reference to the situation. Because there's going to be a shift in our data. There's no doubt, based on what we have gone through. So I think if we recognize that shift, we identify the cause of this shift, and then we track it, we can use the data that we collect from this year's goals to really be creative for next year. I think it will help us in our plan.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you, John.

Mr. Buono:

Anyone else? Board members?

Mr. Buono:

I think if I were to get some more comments... We want to continue on the path. We talked about some of the HR processes and things like that. Continue on that path of where we were this past year. Just continue to shape that and broaden that, as well as similar notes.

Mr. Buono:

That was a big one for me and then continue to build those relationships with our families as we have during the COVID... learned a lot from engagement and the challenges that presents in how we can keep to communicate and be close with our families and ensure that they're meeting their needs.

Mr. Simons:

Good. Very good. Excellent.

Ms. Taylor:

And that area also... or goal three, I'd like to showcase the Food for Families Program, and the Backpack Program's, because there's tons of work being done by those groups. And I just want to make sure that's included in the goals.

Mr. Simons:

Yeah, there's a lot of work being done by, honestly, you JoAnn, your husband Steve, Mike Leonard, Audra Di Bacco, and many others in the community to provide for that need. So I do think it needs to be captured...

Ms. Taylor:

[crosstalk 00:16:49] Department has been working weekly with us. There's a lot of effort going on by the staff.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you, JoAnn. Thanks for what you're doing, and Steve, to help with that program. I appreciate it very much.

Ms. Taylor:

What we're doing is low compared to what everyone else in the school is. The school working together with guidance counselors, social workers, they're doing a remarkable job at reaching these families.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

I think just one more comment for me. I found my notes. Just under Board goal number four, continue to work towards a safe environment, culturally. The diversity and a lot of challenging things coming down the road, I think that we've seen kind of nationwide and throughout the state. Just continue on that, looking at the school climate, through our surveys, and making them one of our priorities.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

You think this is a starting point?

Mr. Simons:

I think it's a good starting point. We'll bring this back to our team, and we'll try to write some things up and we'll provide at the next meeting in December for you to take a look at it as a draft. I appreciate everybody's input.

Ms. Skumurski:

And Jeff, I just wanted to say that, given the year we're experiencing, I don't think we need a lot of significant goals. We have to really narrow in on the ones that we really want to focus on because you guys have so much on your plate that it just seems unfair to give you 50 goals. It's just not realistic, for the year that we're living in.

Mr. Simons:

We appreciate that. And I can feel my blood pressure going down right now. So I really appreciate that comment, Michele. We'll bring that back to our team and we'll try to narrow it and have them be focused on the areas that you just identified in this discussion.

Mr. Buono:

Yeah. I agree we should keep it tight and we know that your number one priority right now is keeping our kids safe, keeping learning going on, working with our staff and other areas, we'll probably think things that will address, but also see carried over to the next year as well.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you everybody. We'll go back to the... Be able to see everybody Peter.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Okay. So now to the second discussion, on the update on the kindergarten in person learning, Mr. Simons.

Mr. Simons:

Yes. I'd like to start with current events of the week, which are directly related to the district's decision-making regarding whether or not we can make changes to our current hybrid instructional model. As the public is likely aware, the number of COVID positive cases is going up in the state. It's going up in our region and it's going up across the country. And just since the end of October, we have reported four student cases and one employee case today. And we've been fortunate that the timing of those individuals becoming symptomatic in the District has been such that we weren't required to shift to full remote, although we're prepared to do that. In the case of the student today, that was reported positive, the individual became symptomatic within a time period in which they had been in the school within 48 hours. And so that metric triggers a significant amount of contact tracing required by the District in coordination with the County.

Mr. Simons:

So we made an announcement late this afternoon that the high school would be operating under a virtual live instruction model tomorrow. So that the contact tracing that started this afternoon with the administrators and some of these staff, including busing could occur accurately. That is going on right now. At this point, we have potential for 35 to 40, maybe even more students who may be quarantined as a result of one case. We do have rosters and seating charts and other information available to us to be able to provide to the county and Mr. Harkin and his team, and the high school had been doing that since this afternoon. We hope that that process would be completed tomorrow. And then we would open under our normal B day schedule for Friday. There is a possibility that we might need to do further work on that, in the event that we do, we want to make sure that everything we do is accurate and all the families are informed that their students may need to be quarantined.

Mr. Simons:

And that may enter into Friday. If that does, we will have a virtual live day on Friday as well. And all the communication with the families and the staff is occurring right now. I bring that up because we are also studying options to address the concerns of our elementary parents, which we are aware of and sensitive to, regarding their request to consider in person days being increased from the current two to five at the kindergarten through fifth grade level. At the last board meeting, we reported that we had done the review of the number of children and families who wanted their students to return to school for in-person learning from the full remote program. Those students are now returned to our classrooms and we have to account for the space that we need to have social distancing in place in every classroom with the desks remaining six feet apart.

Mr. Simons:

After doing that review, we determined that we do not have sufficient space to implement increased days of in-person learning in first grade through fifth grade. Well, we also determined that we could accommodate an increase to five days a week for in-person learning at the kindergarten level, if we added two additional classroom sessions in person, one at Bell Top and one at Genet. And we started conversations with our teachers at the kindergarten level with our principals, as well as our teachers association about how we could go about doing that. And we're still having those conversations. We are able to do this from a space standpoint. We are tentatively preparing to be able to do a shift in the kindergarten program. Unfortunately, with the planning that's been occurring in the District, this is occurring at a time when the COVID-19 cases are increasing for districts and many districts and schools are shifting to full remote.

Mr. Simons:

We read about cases, for example, in our neighboring district of Averill Park, with more than 200 children who have had to quarantine, and we are challenged by the social nature of our high school kids. And now we have our college kids coming home for Thanksgiving. We have all read about the concerns regarding gatherings, and we all have different views on that. But nonetheless, the more contact that families and or students have outside of school increases the probability that those students could come into contact with someone who has the COVID-19 infection that could come into our schools. And one thing I want to emphasize, we've talked about this among all of the superintendents in the [inaudible 00:25:37] and with the County Department of Health over the last few weeks, the schools are not the source of spread for COVID-19. In fact, because of the rules we have to follow, we have had no cases where we could identify through contact tracing or any other information that a staff member or a student contracted COVID-19 in the school environment.

Mr. Simons:

It's the outside activities that are increasing the contacts, which in each case that we've had, we've done the contact tracing and we've determined it was an outside, either social activity, or a family contact that occurred. For example, a parent who contracted COVID-19 through their work responsibilities, and then it was in the family. So we feel that, given the number of kindergarten kids that would be in our classrooms five days a week, if we went to in person, we feel that we could do that right now based on the COVID data in the region safely. But things could change. Things can change in a hurry as we've seen over the last couple of weeks. There was a Times Union Article today that accounted for a significant increase in the percentage of cases in schools, just in a two week time period. Now we're entering into the holidays.

Mr. Simons:

So we're cautiously approaching this. And what we would like to do, to address the concerns was to continue to work on plan, which does involve rescheduling classes, rescheduling some teachers, both in-person and remote, involve some shifts of students on class lists in order to be able to accommodate the class sizes that we need to maintain. The kindergarten sections would generally be between 14 and 16 students maximum. I'll ask Mr. McHugh, to check that. But we want to wait and see what happens over the course of the Thanksgiving recess. We would like to have, if we can do this safely, we'd like the implementation date to be around December 14th, we'll have to make a decision by December 7th.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:28:04]

Mr. Simons:

We say December 14th, because initially we were talking about a November 30th date, and then the cases started to go up. November 14th... Excuse me, December 14th gives us a 14-day period that the CDC and the New York State Department and the County Health Department looks at, that it generally would take a period of 14 days to know whether or not an individual came into contact with somebody and contracts COVID-19. It is typically around the fifth or the seventh day, according to the County Health Department, where symptoms would begin to show up. So that December 7th to make a decision on whether or not we can move forward with an increase in kindergarten in-person learning seems to make sense for us, but we want everyone to know that this is a fluid situation. We want to be able to respond to the needs of our kindergarten kids and our elementary families.

Mr. Simons:

We're just being asked to make this decision at a time when the COVID-19 situation is increasing, and the state is talking about, and school districts are talking about a cluster model, micro cluster model that would involve schools having to be classified in a yellow zone, an orange zone or a red zone and we're talking within the quest [inaudible 00:29:36] about the fact that if we are identified as a school district in the yellow zone, how we could implement a testing program for students and staff to remain open. We would be required to test 20% of our students and 20% of our staff on a voluntary basis, on a rotating basis with different groups of students and staff being tested. We're talking about the logistics of how we might do that with a regional approach through quest [inaudible 00:30:10] because we feel strongly as an administrative team that we should take every step possible to continue to offer in-person learning for all of our kids, elementary to high school, if it's feasible.

Mr. Simons:

So we want to wait and see what happens after the Thanksgiving recess. We'll continue to keep the Board and the community informed. We can't announce a date right now that we would implement this because the situation continues to change every day, and we just want to wait and see what happens. But we do have a plan that would bring Kindergarten back, whether or not we can execute that plan safely is something that we're going to have to continue to monitor regarding the cases within our own district, as well as the cases within our neighboring communities. Because our kids also interact with each other, and our families interact with one another, and that is something that just happens and we have to monitor the circumstances. So if anybody has any questions or concerns about the K5 program as we're currently operating it, or as we're trying to increase in-person learning, we'll take any questions or concerns that Board members might have, or later on in the public comment, if there are public questions about it, we'd be happy to respond to it.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks, Jeff. I mean, we just heard from New York City Schools, right? About them. I think if we had this conversation few weeks ago, we'd probably would have been on a different path in terms of the date, to be able to do something like this. But I think we have to be very cautious right now, and I think that is the direction I support to continue to make sure this is done safely and make sure that the districts can still provide, like you said, at least some in-person learning and then try to avoid to go overboard and focus as much as possible. And I think everything that we are ahead too is the fact that many of our surrounding districts when they go remote, that impacts our staff and their ability to fit their children into the school districts, being able to get to work and having to be remote is like that. So there's a lot of different challenges besides just within the [inaudible 00:32:28].

Mr. Simons:

Mr. Buono, I appreciate your comments about the staff being impacted. For example, we've had, I think three teachers impacted by their children's school district going remote, and we've had to shift those teachers to enable them to teach remotely. We have concerns about transportation and busing employees. We have had and talked about a shortage of bus drivers for some time now, for many years now. We are at a pretty concerning threshold regarding the impact of quarantines, for example, on our employees within the bus department. Not that we have cases in the bus department, but we have individuals who may be associated or in contact with a case who are quarantined and needed to stay home and can't report to work. So these things may not be generally understood by the public, but our ability to staff our schools and our ability to staff our busing is an important factor that would play into our decision to be able to continue to offer in-person learning within our hybrid model. Yeah.

Mr. Buono:

And I know that with the testing too the ability to get an appointment and then the delays in results also impacts the ability for staff to return to work based on the token and the things we have to follow to make sure that people come back to work safely as well. Any other comments Board members in terms of the plan and the [inaudible 00:34:13]? Questions?

Ms. Skumurski:

Sorry, Jeff I just have a more general question. When does, and I don't know if you know this answer, but when does it come to a point that we have so many that we have to sadly talk about going virtual? I don't know if you want to talk about that here or not, but let's say we may have 35 or so, where does this Department of Health come in and say, or is it them? Or is it state ed? Or is it us that say, "Okay, we're going to go virtual for a while."

Mr. Simons:

Well. I think it's a combination of all three. The state measures that would force our district into a yellow zone, I don't have those numbers available, but it's in the neighborhood of three and a half percent infection rate, and that there's a measure of the increase on the daily number of cases. There's two separate measures. So that metric would trigger the state of say your school is located in a yellow zone and therefore you have to implement a testing program if you want to resolve it. So we would immediately have to go to a virtual, remote learning in that particular school that's in the zone. It might not be the entire district, it could be just a school or two within a particular zone, depending on the state's determination as to what circles are affected by that classification. Once we've implemented the testing program and the infection rate was below the rate of the region or the cluster, we would have

permission to open as long as we get the assurances of the County and the State that our program for reopening is safe and within their guidelines.

Mr. Simons:

So that's one set of considerations that could cause us to go for remote with the state identifying our school is within a yellow zone, orange zone, or red zone. The second would be in the event that we have so many cases amongst students and potentially staff that the contact tracing requirements would require us to close the school, operate remotely, and could extend over a period of time. So you've seen some districts locally shift from "We're going to go to virtual learning for a day." Then it became, "We're going to go into virtual learning until the weekend, we're still working on contact tracing," and then it went to, "We're going to remain in remote learning until November 30th or after Thanksgiving because the cases continue to come in everyday, and it became a management issue to track the students, track the contacts, and assess the number of quarantine employees, and it hampered the district's ability to operate in person."

Mr. Simons:

The third set, we could make a local decision that we are going to shift to full remote because the challenges of COVID-19 are to the point where operating our schools safely is so burdensome that we can't do it. We're not at that point. I hope we don't get to that point. I will say that I know that within our administrative team and among the superintendents and rest of their County, we want to make every effort possible to offer in-person learning to the kids as long as we can. But it could come to a point where metrics aside, the capacity of the districts to be able to staff classrooms, to be able to run buses, to be able to have meals would become so difficult that we would have to shift for remote. The other factor affecting some districts, I don't believe it would affect us, is if the governor does have to implement a 20% reduction in State aid. Some districts anticipated that and already went to full remote because they would save money.

Mr. Simons:

That savings only occurs if you reduce some of the employees that generally would provide services if you were offering the program in-person. We hope not to get there. We hope that we are able to maintain all of our employees and staff to deliver a hybrid model currently, and to get through this in a way that we move through the holidays and we're still offering at least two days of in-person instruction to the kids. It's a daily assessment to be quite honest about it, and we're all talking about it. Marissa, you can just give some data points about staffing and some of the challenges regarding staffing on quarantine.

Ms. Cannon:

I think Mr Simons you've hit on two good points. One being, we can't control who's quarantined. And the quarantines are for 14 days, which has a huge impact on our transportation garage, on our teachers, on our support staff, and when we have three employees out for 14 days each all at the same time, we're not necessarily able to provide the same types of services in our bus garage if we have more than that out. So we have to assess every day to make sure we do have enough staff within our transportation department. We have to assess every day also our substitute teachers, and to make sure if we are allowing our teachers to work remotely from home to be home for their children while their schools are shut down, we still have to have a substitute as the adult coverage into classrooms supervising the students.

Ms. Cannon:

So I'm in constant communication with our principals daily to make sure, can we approve of the remote? Does it make sense? But also, do we have a substitute that we could put into that classroom to make sure the committee and boards are on so the streaming services are occurring, and we monitor daily. So we will continue to do that, and I will continue to provide updates to our principals, to our transportation supervisor, or administration team if we come to a point where we're not able to accommodate someone's request, or if we come to a point where we have too many people who are on quarantine. Right now though, it is manageable.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you, Marissa. One thing that we have done and we've made a decision on regarding in-person learning is we've made an adjustment to the middle school alternative program. So our sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, excuse me, our seventh and eighth graders who are in the map program are attending four days a week. We made that adjustment because the staff felt that students needed more in-person support that their academic and social emotional progress required it, and based on staff recommendation and Mrs Barker, we've moved in that direction already. We also have plans on November 30th to bring the students who are receiving consultant teacher services, co-teaching services at the elementary level, at the K5 level, in for instruction four days a week. That is due to the federal requirements being interpreted differently than they were last spring by the Federal Government. The state has been told that students who are receiving those services, that districts have to provide those services in accordance with the IEP.

Mr. Simons:

And if the IEP requires a certain number of minutes per day of instruction in those services, the kids need to be in-person to do that. So Mrs. McGrath has made adjustments and has worked with her staff to accomplish that on November 30th. I share those two things because we are trying to increase in-person learning for our most vulnerable kids or our kids who need more support. We recognize that that may not fully address all of the children and families, and we have concerns about this, but we are trying, and again, we hope to be able to make an adjustment to kindergarten. We just don't know if that will happen. That was a long-winded answer, and I apologize, but that's everything that's going on related to the district's assessment of trying to modify its program to respond to parent and student concerns.

Mr. Buono:

No, we appreciate the detail Mr. Simons, I think it's important that we continue to push that information out because as we learn more and have to deal with challenges, we just need to communicate with our families and our school community on the direction we're going and the various factors that are in that. So it's important that we spend the time on that and I'm [inaudible 00:44:03].

Mr. Simons:

Thank you.

Ms. Curtin:

Can I ask you a quick question of the staffing, Marissa? We're hearing that some of our other local communities need to go remote? Is there any way we can talk to them that while they're on remote maybe we can borrow a couple of bus drivers or maybe kind of pool the sub groups, because if they're

on remote, they probably don't need the substitute teacher or the substitute bus drivers, but we're still going. So is there any way we can to work with the other superintendents to talk about some of this?

Ms. Cannon:

I think that's a great idea and we will certainly look into that.

Ms. Curtin:

Thank you.

Ms. Cannon:

Thank you, Kathleen.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you. I also thought about, and I haven't done anything about this recent days, whether or not organizations such as [inaudible 00:44:52] would need to have a bus service, have availability, and whether or not we can make some arrangement with them or potentially CDTA for the drivers.

Mr. Buono:

Any more questions Board members? No? Okay. Let's move to committee reports? We'll start with Marissa.

Ms. Cannon:

We have met three times now as an appendix D committee. Our first meeting was on October 19th, our second meeting on October 29th, and our third meeting on November ninth. Our committee has been tasked with three objectives. The first being developing an annual application, developing an evaluation tool, and then lastly, developing a new matrix for determining the level of compensation to be provided to the co-curricular activity and realigning the current compensation schedule with that new matrix. These objectives need to be finished by January 1st of 2021. So we are working hard and diligently to meet this deadline. Our committee has very closely looked at an application and we believe at this point we have a final application ready, a couple of items on that application that I want to discuss would be having the advisor indicate how many hours that they plan to meet with the members and how many meetings per month at whole, also addressing the maximum number of participants.

Ms. Cannon:

So our administrators know exactly what to look for when observing. So based on the application, we have a good indication of how many hours it's going to run for, how many times per month, what is the number of participants? And then also they will need to provide the interview committee with a letter of intent about how they will promote the clubs, how will they go about fundraising, if fundraising is applicable, and what really the purpose that club serves for our students. So we really want to make sure that the offerings that we're providing are relevant, and that we also have accountability for our advisors. We looked very closely as an evaluation tool. We started with like looking at the evaluation tool for our coaches and Appendix C, and looking to see what works well with that evaluation and borrowing some of those ideas for the Appendix D evaluation.

Ms. Cannon:

So currently we have three categories that we're looking to evaluate on. The first is organization and management, the second being engagement and participation, and then the third being fiscal management. So our committee right now is still making improvements to the draft evaluation tool, but we are moving forward, and I do believe we want to have both the completed application and evaluation tool at the end of our next meeting, which is actually tomorrow. We ended our meeting on November 9th with really talking about the new POS matrix and what are some of the criteria that we need to be basing that off of.

Ms. Cannon:

Some of the criteria that we briefly discussed is the time commitment. That is vague, and we want to make sure that our advisors are compensated fairly for the time that they are putting into the clubs, and another component we discussed was complexity. So we left off that meeting, and we are all going to be bringing to tomorrow's meeting all of our own thoughts about what needs to be included in that matrix, and then combining our ideas and coming up with a solution to providing a fair salary segments for 2021, and again, that is due by January 1st, 2021. So I think we are moving forward in the right direction right now, and we've been working very, very well as a team. So I'm appreciative of that.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks, Marissa. Any questions for Marissa? Nope. I just want to say that I appreciate the hard work of the committee. I think this is the direction that we had hoped as far as the Board and the appendix D, and then I appreciate the work that the folks are doing on that. We move on to next committee, Linda?

Ms. Wager:

Thank you, Mr. Buono. The finance and audit committee met on Thursday, November 5th to prepare the financial statements for the year ending June 30th, 2020. Alan Walther shareholder with Bonadio Group was present. He reviewed the financial statements with the committee and answered any of their questions. I'm not going to get into the details of the financial statements right now as we will be presenting them a little bit later this evening. Michael Wolff, our internal auditor also joined us that evening. He gave us an update on his internal audits for 19/20. He is approximately 90% complete with the audits of risk assessment, cash, and payroll.

Ms. Wager:

He has completed the audit for the Education Foundation for the 18/19 school year, and he will be meeting up with the treasurer of the Education Foundation to collect the records for the 19/20 in December. And he will also be setting up dates with us and the office for December to complete his audits. And then finally, the year ending June 30th, 2020 was the fifth year of a five-year agreement for independent audit services with Bonadio Group. So in January, we will be issuing an RFP for independent audit services for the next five years cycle, and the committee will get together on that and make a recommendation to the board at a later date. Are there any questions? Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks, Linda. And we'll have other information in your report . All right. Seeing no questions for Linda, we will move to Jim, thank you.

Mr. McHugh:

Education committee met on November 2nd. During that committee, there was a brief presentation of the K5 curriculum corner, and that K5 curriculum corner was created by our six elementary grade level content coordinators, and really the value in that is that that site houses all of our most current curriculum work, our curriculum maps or units of instruction, our common assessments, and our instructional resources. But the value in that when you think about annually each summer, faculty engages in curriculum writing and curriculum work. We moved from that work being placed in a hard binder and stored on shelves, and wondering how new staff and new employees get that information and are able to access that information. So that website is a link that's right on our district homepage for our teachers, and it's really a way of archiving all of our curriculum work and allowing easy access for all faculty members to be able to access all of that information in those documents.

Mr. McHugh:

We also reviewed and had a discussion of the most recent school district data or ESSA reports that will be discussed a little bit more deeply later on this evening, and then during Good for the Order, we discussed of course failures for quarter one, the course failures for quarter one are quite high. They're higher than we've seen over the last couple of years, and we talked about the difficulty of students adjusting to the hybrid model. So we know the value of students being in-person. Those are the days that students are engaging in their work, but when they are on those remote days and the wide virtual days, we are challenged with keeping students engaged and active during that time. So we've increased the accountability for faculty and we made it clear that we were implementing our East Greenbush Central School District creating policy, but that increase of accountability works both ways where students have it as well.

Mr. McHugh:

And our students need to make sure that they're engaging and participating in their classes as they're expected to do so. We'll talk about that a little later, but we've done some work to do some suburban council comparisons, but it is kind of as expected when last spring we switched pass/fail during that time that that work could be used to help students, and it's a little bit of an adjustment period right now. So we are looking at that data. Our education... I'm sorry, our Committee for Curriculum Study met on November 4th. We had an update for our current program reviews are English language, arts, science, and special education, and related services. It was the due date for new course proposals, there were no new course proposals that were presented.

Mr. McHugh:

And then we started to talk about new textbook requests, our Envision Math K5, and our Envision Math six through eight is in its final year of the third year agreement that expires June 30th, 2021. We are looking at a new three year renewal. Pearson has switched to Savvas Learning. So we are dealing with them currently, and we would like to stay with that current math program at least through our next program review. There was a new textbook request for analysis of public policy. That is our participation in government class, that we were working with Syracuse University to offer college credit.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:56:04]

Mr. McHugh:

When you do offer college credit for these courses, you really required to use the textbook that the colleges use, so there's a textbook that accompanies that. All of these things were in our plan and they

were on our radar well over a year ago. And there was a middle school foreign language textbook proposal that we are reviewing. They put forth a five-year proposal which we were not comfortable with. We want to see a shorter proposal, but it's for Spanish and French. And then the last item was there was a lively discussion regarding offering accounting as a third unit of math credit. That discussion and the information, and things that were discussed, are included in the minutes. But we could not come to consensus at that point, so we kicked it back to Columbia High School for an item for an academic council to review, and to be brought back to CCS at a later time.

Mr. Buono:

Any questions for Jim?

Mr. Mann:

Jim. Jim, you said a Spanish and French proposal for five years, five years for what ?

Mr. McHugh:

It's digital access to digital curriculum for Goff Middle School. So in replacement of a textbook, it's a digital resource for our sixth, seventh, and eighth... Actually, grade seven and grade eight.

Mr. Mann:

Is that in lieu of textbooks, or?

Mr. McHugh:

Yes. Yep, and just a five-year proposal for that agreement was \$10,000, \$10,842. So CCS, we talked about it, the comfort level for any kind of five-year agreements is just not there. Things changed, the standards change, so the department chair is working to revamp that proposal and bring forth a one-year proposal, a two-year proposal, a three-year proposal, and we'll make that decision at that time. Well, we'll endorse something through CCS before any purchase is made and it comes back to the board for board approval.

Mr. Mann:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Any other questions? Jim, I just wanted [inaudible 00:58:20] the course failure is a little concerning there. I think just that's something that we have to just continue to monitor, like you said, and make sure that keep the [inaudible 00:58:32] about steps we're taking to help students and make this adjustment. It's not unexpected, but also it's concerning that... It would be interesting to see kind of where these things are happening, system demographics perhaps, and what are some of the reasons as you get that data.

Mr. Simons:

We have that data. We just didn't have it in time to put it on this agenda. Mr. McHugh And I have been discussing it, and I know he's been working with the principals. So we would anticipate we would be able to bring back a more detailed report on first quarter failures at the next board meeting.

Mr. Buono:

Okay, thank you, appreciate that. And then moving on, Jeff anything you wanted to add this evening?

Mr. Simons:

Yes. We held our first advocacy committee meeting, and we were pleased that four new students joined us from high school. And we had a good opportunity to talk about some of the statewide issues that we focused on last year, regarding state aid. We talked about the current situation with our state aid being frozen at last year's level, and the potential for a 20% reduction. We have a transportation aid concern now that transportation services were operating last spring, to deliver food as well as to meet other mandates. And yet the state has determined that those services, including I think a million dollars worth of salaries during that period, are not eligible for transportation aid. We're going to get you the impact of that on our aid, if it were to go through. Mrs. Curtin has requested that, and I think it's a good idea to talk about it.

Mr. Simons:

But we talked about state funding. We also incorporated some of the kids ideas regarding what they felt the impact of COVID-19 was. They all indicated that they understood that districts would save money if they went full remote, but they felt it would have an impact on their educational experience. We want to tap into the student's skills with social media, TikTok and other things that I don't know what they are, just know they're there, to see if they can't come up with some virtual platforms for advocacy. And we promised the committee that we would bring back some discussions that have occurred within our regional group.

Mr. Simons:

Advocacy groups through Questar as well as this past week, I was able on Monday to participate in the NYSBA statewide conversation. So the advocacy committee is up and running. We plan to try to put something together this year, maybe a virtual lobbying forum. We were asked to see if we might join with other districts, so I did reach out to you Superintendent Lori Caplan at Watervliet, who is the co-chair of the Cap Region Advocacy Group. And we're going to have a conversation together about how we might all join forces with our advocacy committee, and the groups that are a part of other districts in the area, to see what we can do to make sure that we either get federal funding to offset the state loss, or we adjust some mandates so that we can save on some of our expenses.

Mr. Simons:

But we're heading into a very dangerous and concerning fiscal forecast for school districts right now, given rising expenses for COVID-19 and reopening, and a looming potential for state aid loss of 20%. So it was a great conversation, really nice kids have joined us. We had a parent from Genet, and actually she's a Goff parent now, and we were joined by some of our principals and our representatives of our bargaining units, and it was a good conversation and we look forward to further meetings.

Mr. Buono:

Great. Important topics and I'm glad the students and parent were able to join. I just, like you said, the connection with continuous in-person learning, I heard from Katie & Ryan how important it is to our high schools as well. And I think, just going to reiterate what [Laura 00:01:03:09]... We came to have a hybrid model that serves our students and families, where they can at least have some in-person

learning that I think they're better off really in the long-term. So appreciate the work there from the advocacy committee.

Mr. Buono:

Moving forward, we have our draft minutes for the October 21st meeting. Any questions, comments, or revisions? So this is a little challenging for me, I can't see Mark or Kathleen. So there's a motion that need either a second or a vote, and I need some verbal acknowledgement from our live participants, if that's okay.

Mr. Simons:

Peter, maybe we can go back to the view.

Mr. Goodwin:

I'm trying.

Mr. Simons:

Okay.

Mr. Goodwin:

Yeah.

Mr. Simons:

Mr. Buono, Peter's trying to go back to take the agenda off and go back to the view of the Board members so you can get the tally of the vote. There you go.

Mr. Buono:

Yep. I can see Mr. Simons pretty well.

Mr. Simons:

He was trying to turn the camera.

Mr. Buono:

If there's no, any corrections or revisions? Hearing none. A motion to approve the minutes for October 21st? Jennifer, second? JoAnn? All those in favor? Yes.

Ms. Taylor:

Aye.

Mr. Mann:

Aye.

Mr. Buono:

Yeah, good. Thank you. Moving on to regular business. Approve a programs for resident children disabilities. Any questions or comments? If not, can I have a motions to approve that? John second? Frank? All in favor?Aye.

Ms. Taylor:

Aye.

Mr. Buono:

All right, thank you, approved. For the next part of [inaudible 01:04:46] they changed that work petition that came to the district from a committee member. Can you speak [inaudible 01:04:53] Mr. Simons?

Mr. Simons:

Yes, the Board received a petition on behalf of parents and others from a resident who happens to be a parent, April Meracle. The petition requests that the District offer in-person learning to all kindergarten and fifth grade students. Based on advice of counsel the Board should accept the petition into the record, at an official Board meeting, which the resolution attached would enable you to do, as well as there is a copy of the petition. By accepting the petition, the Board is not obligated nor indicating any commitment to respond in any way to the petition. For example, by approving this resolution, you're not agreeing to implement what the petitioner is requesting. You're simply accepting it into the record, formally, so that can be reflected into the minutes.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Any questions regarding the petition? I know that this is an issue that we have been discussing for several meetings. We understand and appreciate concerns, the outreach that parents have. So I want to thank you for reaching out, and continue to reach out. And I was encouraging parents to work with the teachers, work with their principals, and their buildings. If you think that there's some gaps in your student's remote experience, hybrid experience, so we can address those. And as a District, Mr. Simon said earlier, by well the concerns we have right now and how we're going to address things moving forward. So I hope that working together we can find a solution that sticks with the school community. So just as Mr. Simons said, a written resolution Board [inaudible 01:07:06] herby now has received a petition, they might even work out. Oh I'm saying that, right? Apologize. I need a motion to accept the petition and the resolution, Jennifer the second. anybody else? Michele? All those in favor?

Ms. Taylor:

Aye.

Mr. Mann:

Aye.

Mr. Buono:

Good. We acknowledge it and I think then, and [inaudible 01:07:35] worked on this issue as a school community. And now I'm going to reports and presentations, I think Linda, you're up,do you want to report on financial statements for 19-20?

Ms. Wager:

Thank you Mr. Buono. Okay, in your packet, there are three items in your packet. They are the required communications letter, the financial statements and required reports under Uniform Guidance, and the extra classroom activity funds. The first, the required communications letter, that is a standard letter from the auditors to the board, to make you aware of such items such as significant audit findings and their consideration of accounting estimates in the financial statements, as well as financial statement disclosures. They also document if there are any difficulties that they encountered in performing the audit, which I'm happy to say there were none. They document if there were any corrected or uncorrected misstatements, of which there were none. And any disagreements with management, of which there were none. They also talk about management's representation to the auditors. And if a district has consulted with any other independent accountant, which we have not. That's a standard letter.

Ms. Wager:

The thick report in your packets is the financial statements and required reports under the Uniform Guidance. The auditor's opinion is an unmodified opinion, indicating that the financial statements present fairly, the financial position of the governmental activities, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information for the district as of June 30th, 2020. Is this an unmodified opinion, and it is the auditors' highest level of assurance. After the opinion in the financial statements is the management discussion and analysis. That goes from pages four through 13. It's designed to provide an overview of the financial operations and changes from prior year in an easy to read format. One item I would like to note is that on page eight is the decrease in the total net position, which is primarily due to the effects of recognizing other post-employment benefits. Also, it should be noted that the lunch fund had a \$193,000 loss, resulting in a fund balance deficit of \$178,098 this year. This was a direct result of COVID-19.

Ms. Wager:

As we continued with operating expenses, we paid salaries and benefits, we provided meals, and we had a sharp decrease in revenue. On page 56 of the financial statements, page 56 indicates that the district carry forward an unassigned to fund balance of 5.68% this year, which is 1.68% over the 4% New York state limit. The district, with board approval and discussion, decided to carry this excess fund balance forward in order to address some of the unbudgeted expenses that came along with the COVID 19 pandemic. The financial statement pages 14 to 21 are a summary of the financial activities during the fiscal year 19-20, and as of year end on June 30th, 2020. The notes to the financial statements included on pages 22 to 50, they include in greater detail, the types of accounting policies, and procedures, and restrictions, that are all part of the district's financial operations.

Ms. Wager:

The supplementary information is included on pages 51 through 58. It contains schedules reporting revenue and expenditure amounts compared to budget, the changes in the budget, and the capital project activity. The required reports under Uniform Guidance is included in a pages 59 through 66. And this relates to the auditor's testing of grant funds, which are received from the federal government. Due to the amount of federal funds the district received, almost 1.9 million in the 19-20 school year, the federal government requires the auditors to perform a test of transactions, a review of the internal controls, and to express an opinion related to our compliance with grant requirements.

Ms. Wager:

That's my summary of the district financial statements. If there are no questions, I'll move on to the extra classroom. And then I also do have Alan Walther has joined us this evening to make his comments and answer any questions. The extra classroom financial statements are the smaller report that you have. This represents the financial statements of the clubs and activity at the high school and middle school. The board has financial oversight of these funds, by Karen Bauer, who does the treasury during the 2019-20 school year. The auditors issued an unmodified opinion on the financial statements, which again is their highest level of assurance. This is a significant accomplishment for our extra classroom activity funds. And I would like to commend Ms. Bauer, and the advisors, on their hard work. And finally missing from your packet is an internal control matters letter. And I'm happy to report that that's because there was no internal control matters to report this year. So at this time I would like to ask Mr. Walther, who's a shareholder at the Bonadio Group to join us and add his comments.

Mr. Walther:

Yes hi, good evening. Can you guys... I cannot see myself or my camera's on. You can see and hear me? Okay.

Ms. Wager:

Yeah.

Mr. Walther:

Okay, perfect. I jotted down some notes to report you, I believe that they really entered everything or mentioned everything that I had written down. The only thing that I'd like to add as well is we did complete the audit a hundred percent remotely, we did not come on the site, which we always do, we've been your auditors for many, many years, we've always come out. So that was a pretty heavy lift for Linda, and the rest of the staff and the school districts, so we'd like to thank them for their efforts in getting the audit done. As Linda said, an unmodified opinion on your financial statements, no total internal control findings, no federal findings. The only finding that we did have, which it did mention was the excess fund balance finding, with regard to the 4% rule that Linda stated regulations. Just to put that into context, you guys have not had that finding in recent years, that's a pretty common finding for fiscal 2020 when they're school districts.

Mr. Walther:

Because of the effects of COVID as school districts receive the vast majority of their revenue, but your expenses [inaudible 01:15:17] from their March 15th period to June 30th period, resulting in a budgetary surplus for fiscal 2020. At the comments before that surplus was getting [inaudible 01:15:29] pretty quickly. In for anyone with an excess cost that you're having with through COVID, there's still uncertainty with regard to state aid. So having a little bit extra fund balance this year is probably not such a bad thing. Other than that, I do not have anything else to add, unless there's any questions... We did meet, as Linda as well, we did meet with audit committee to work through the financial statements and reports in detail. Any questions?

Mr. Buono:

No, I appreciate the time Alan, and the time spent. It was great to hear that opinion, unmodified opinion. And I think the history of the district, in terms of its financial picture, is testament to Linda's continued hard work, and working with your team to find those areas that we need improve on, so thank you very much.

Mr. Walther:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

So Linda just want to welcome, I know Mary Ridzi started this week. The team is back to full compliment, right?

Ms. Curtin:

That is correct, and I'm very happy about that.

Mr. Buono:

I bet you are. And she's a wonderful accountant. Welcome to our district as our new treasurer.

Ms. Taylor:

And Mike I think we have to vote in the financial statement.

Ms. Curtin:

Yes.

Mr. Buono:

Okay, so we have motion to approve and accept the 19-20 all report and financial statements. Any motion from that? Michelle? Second? Deanna? All those in favor? Aye.

Ms. Curtin:

Aye.

Mr. Buono:

Very good, those are accepted. So thank you very much and continue our work in our business office for the district. And I think that one of the things that will come [inaudible 01:17:18] Jeff I think you mentioned [inaudible 01:17:23] looking to come to the district soon, right? Return to the [CR 01:17:25]?

Mr. Simons:

Yes it's been a while since our New York state comptroller sent us a letter, indicating that he was going to have his staff come and we've received that letter, we don't have a timeline yet. Do we Linda?

Ms. Wager:

We do not have a timeline yet. We received the letter in October, we expect to hear from them sometime in December. I believe they'll probably be coming the winter months.

Mr. Buono:

They can come in remotely?

Ms. Wager:

[crosstalk 01:17:48] That would be nice.

Mr. Buono:

That would be nice right? Well okay-

Ms. Taylor:

I'd be surprised... it probably won't be remote.

Mr. Buono:

Yeah I just think that the Board made a very wise choice, and looking at that excess fund balance to make sure that we can cover our expenses. We're going into a difficult challenging year, as prep for the budget pretty soon on the 21-22 year. And I think that we made the right decision on behalf of the school district, the committee, to make sure that we are watching our financial resources and planning the future. So with that, we'll move into the academic update and then will be [inaudible 01:18:38]

Mr. McHugh:

So with the academic update for 2020 there are things that we continue to monitor. We always monitor our student enrollment, our subgroups, our student disability population percentages, or economically disadvantaged or English language learners. We're constantly looking at attendance rates, we're looking at our homeless student rates. What we noted in June regions last spring. The data is really what we presented to the board at the end of last year. So we are looking at this data on a regular basis. And one of the goals is to best ensure that our students that graduate from Columbia high school and college career and civic ready. What we do know is that student engagement matters, and student attendance matters. So we want to provide opportunities for our students. We want to expose students to relevant curriculum, but we realize that student engagement and attendance are directly linked to student achievement.

Mr. McHugh:

With the regents data, just a couple of reminders where you're looking at that, it could include the same student more than once. So a student in ninth grade, 10th grade or 11th grade, we failed you at regents, they may take that regents again in January, they may take it in August. And that is all part of the overall academic percentage. So when you're looking at percentage and you look at failures in New York state regents, it could be the same student that may have taken that exam more than one time. The value of this data really is it starts with awareness. And I think as you review the slides, and you've seen these numbers in the past, I think it's important to know what we're doing with the data.

Mr. McHugh:

So we do compare our regents data. We compare it with our regional schools within Questar, we prepared with school districts within our [inaudible 01:20:38] regional information center. And then we compare it to suburban council schools. So when you look at a percentage and you see your passing grade is 94%, and your mastery rate, and you're looking at those percentages. To kind of put those percentages in context, we do a lot of comparisons. So we compare within suburban schools and just see where those numbers really fall. So what we do realize is that our passing grade is very strong, and all over our regents exams, but mastery rate drops a little bit.

Mr. McHugh:

So you take any courses where if you look at our geometry regents, we look at New York state average is 98% passing rate for Columbia High School, the last time we took the geometry regents. It was the highest in the suburban councils, so was algebra two. But then we started looking at our mastery rate. Our mastery rate drops us to fifth in the suburban councils. Our passing rate is high, but it gives us a new goal and a new focus to really look at those students, to bring them from passing to mastery grade. Again, you could go through global history, US history, seeing these numbers in the past. One of the things that our department chairs have done is we give them itemized skill reports for multiple years. So they're looking at skill reports of standards, reports on how well our students performed on the New York state's regents.

Mr. McHugh:

And we look for those common skills, or those common standards, that over a sequence of years our students have struggled with a little bit. So it may be questions that target a particular learning standard and over the last three years, the percentage of students that answered those questions correctly may be a little concerning. And then we look at where we really address those topics within our curriculum. So there are department chairs, facilitate a lot of meetings with their colleagues using those reports. We also look at some of our higher level courses on, and that's a kind of a philosophical balance. So a lot of times there are some prerequisites that our students need to have in order to take a higher level course. And there's a balance between really wanting our students to be able to challenge themselves and take these higher level classes, with a balance of looking at our prerequisites, and do our students have the right background, prior experience, in order to be successful in that class?

Mr. McHugh:

So always a fine line. We look at our graduation rate, which has continued to go up each year. And we look at our three through eight testing. One of the things that you will notice is that over the last few years, the math scores have gone up. I think that's directly tied to the fact that we've been curriculum mapping, and the fact that we have a consistent primary instructional resource with the enVision Mathematics. So we use that K through eight now. In prior years, we've used enVision Math, the old version of that, and in K five, grade six had no primary instructional resource. And then seven and eight used a completely different resource.

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:24:04]

Mr. McHugh:

So I just think tidying things up a little bit with creative consistency is a better productive step. In regards to chronic absenteeism, we monitor this all the time. We're constantly pulling reports from our data processing team, and we're looking at our absentee rates. And we're constantly calling students and calling families and trying to get them in. And that's been helpful to be more proactive and not wait until the student is chronically absent, but making those connections before a student has missed too many days.

Mr. McHugh:

In regards to course failures, you have our most updated data. The last year we looked at our quarter one. Quarter one typically, the course values are higher than any other quarter. Quite often, you look at your transitional years and you look at our ninth graders where they're typically more course failures that year. And that's basically students getting acclimated to a new set of expectations.

Mr. McHugh:

But, for example, in 2019 and 2020 at Columbia High School, 46. We look at our students, 97 students in grades nine through 12, failed more than one class. Out of those 97 students, we recognize the fact that a majority of those students are also listed as economically disadvantaged. And they're also listed as chronically absent. So we know that when students aren't in class, that they perform a little lower than we would like.

Mr. McHugh:

We are aware, the report cards just came out last week, but we do have our quarter one course failures, the first quarter, at both Goff and Columbia High School. We are working through that and I will be prepared to present that information to the Board at our next meeting. Any questions? Yes.

Mr. Mann:

What is, what's the passing rate and what's the mastery rate?

Mr. McHugh:

So the passing rate is typically 65 unless it's a student with a disability, and then it's a 55. And then the mastery rate, I believe, is 85%. I believe is the mastery rate. But also important is that the scoring is a really complex process. So it is based on the number of correct answers, the level of question difficulty and the skills each question measures. So grades are earned and they're on scale score. So raw scores are converted to the equivalent of a scale score. And it gets a little complicated, but I'll give you an example.

Mr. McHugh:

In algebra, the last time the Regents was given, 65% is passing, which comes out to approximately 27 credits out of a possible 86 credits. So they have it, the oldest statisticians have a formula and there's going to be a certain percentage of the students that pass, there's going to be a certain percentage of students that hit that mastery rate. And that's kind of a moving target for our teachers a little bit. So New York City Board of Regents, they want the Regents to have the same level of difficulty each year. And then they have to review it question by question and see how many questions they answered each question correctly, how many answered it incorrectly. That's why it's always a moving target. We never know what the magic number of questions that need to be answered correctly in order to hit that mastery level or passing.

Mr. Mann:

Thank you.

Mr. Dunn:

I have one comment. Jim, this is John . When we talk about the chronic absenteeism as it relates to the economically disadvantaged, and we know what that population is and as it relates to the failure rates. Is it possible, or has it already been looked at, is this the same? How is this group doing during COVID? It's challenging enough to get them to participate and perform during normal times. And are you capable of cross-referencing that list just to see what the performance level is or if it's even worse? And is this group part of the group that we have trouble even tracking?

Mr. McHugh:

So what I know and what the data supports is that that in-person instructional time is vital. And we've been advocating that there's equity, K-12, that all of our students deserve that opportunity to have that in-person learning. And we look at our course failures and we realize that it is, we have over 1300 students at Columbia High School, and we realized that 66 students account for almost 50% of our course failures.

Mr. McHugh:

So then we start to look to see who are those 66 students? And a lot of those students are students that have been also listed as economically disadvantaged. They're also chronically absent. They're not coming to school. So we have an attendance team. Our building administrators and our teachers have held Google Meets, constant phone calls, keeping phone logs, modified and adjusted schedules to try to help better accommodate our families.

Mr. McHugh:

We have made phone calls to CPS. And currently CPS really doesn't even want to take those phone calls. So we used to be able to go along the route of saying that it was educational neglect, but CPS has not been a tremendous amount of support to our districts. But we have an attendance team that was opt to make home visits. Some people at the houses answer the door and others don't, but we stay at it.

Mr. McHugh:

We've encouraged some students that chose to be full remote to come back to hybrid because it just wasn't working for them. Our school counselors and school social workers are addressing social, emotional wellness issues, providing counseling and making connections to the parents. We're utilizing our child study teams to come out with targeted interventions for these students.

Mr. McHugh:

But the reality of it is honestly, we know that we have 12 students at Columbia High School that haven't engaged yet. They haven't attended school for an in-person day. They haven't logged on during remote days or a live virtual days. And we continue to use our school resource officer and we're sending our counselors out to knock on doors and make home visits. And we're on it on a regular basis. We are aware of who those students are.

Mr. Dunn:

Okay. Thank you. Just something to think about, that we don't have enough to think about, but at some point in time, we're going to get back to normal. And I think when we do, that population is going to need some type of really specialized programming to try to gauge some of the effects of this pandemic upon their lives. So thank you for the update.

Mr. McHugh:

The other one thing I'd like to add in regards to academic data is that we've implemented the universal screeners in K through five. And that started two years ago and where we established cut points to provide academic intervention services. It's usually about 20% of our students that are eligible for that targeted intervention, that additional boost of English/Language Arts. If we use those same cut points

that we've used the previous two years, it actually captures about 70% of our K-five students, which isn't even a manageable number.

Mr. McHugh:

So when you talk about Board goals, we are already on those things and we're looking at loss of learning during COVID-19. And it is there and it's something that we're struggling with all the time and trying to figure out how to best support those students and families.

Mr. Dunn:

Thanks, Jim. [inaudible 01:33:07] We appreciate the efforts to reach out to all the students and we know how challenging that is. And I know that we, as a district, we chose to keep our AIS teachers available. Right, Jeff?

Ms. Wager:

That's right. Yeah we are providing AIS in the same form, whether that be cushion or direct services, in the same form that we have provided in the past. We're using the same assessments and screeners. And we really think that's important, particularly because of the learning loss that you've talked about. Mike and Jim just mentioned, we have higher numbers of kids who qualify for AIS than typically would as described by Jim. It's a serious issue. And I think we're a little ahead of the curve in the fact that we at least have diagnostic data to know who those kids are. And we're in the process right now of talking about what might we be able to do within our current resources to address those issues as we move into the second and third quarters.

Ms. Wager:

We've talked about such things as we can't bring in the kids every day, but could we have some extensions of extended day learning opportunities for kids where staff would provide additional instruction to what we can offer now. We just, we also want to, we also have those same academic intervention services issues at the middle school, in the fifth, in the sixth grade as the kids are transitioning from fifth to sixth grade. The sixth graders; there's some real needs in sixth grade.

Mr. Dunn:

I think John said it very well that this is a problem that's going to impact us for years to come. And we have to be prepared to address those and start that planning and be able to invest in those programs like we have in the past. In high school, middle school, but any increase, unfortunately, to get our students back on track. I think, Mike, that these are all really good points. And I guess my main point in keeping the conversation alive about reaching this population is because we have the data, we're collecting all kinds of data right now. And I think the data analysis will better prepare us to deal with these issues as they come along in a much more expeditious fashion, rather than trying to formulate something down the road. As we are looking at the data, you know, we have our immediate things, that we're trying to keep on target, and then our long term projections, you know, where we can go from there as, as things start to get back on track. So again thank you for everybody and their hard work.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you. If there's no more questions, we'll go on. On the agenda team of motions. I don't have anything on the agenda at this time. [inaudible 01:36:41] We'll begin on the next section is our consent agenda. Items A through H. Any questions, comments on those items? No? I just want to mention, yes,

we have more in donations of hand sanitizer from the county it's appreciated. If there's no comments or questions I need a motion from the consent agenda, Michelle, the second? Jennifer? All those in favor?

Jennifer:

Aye.

Mr. Buono:

Approved. Moving on to our new business. Any new business Board members?

Speaker 11:

Nope.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. Public forum number 2, is there anything, Linda, that came in since your leave?

Ms. Wager:

Yes, we do have a few questions and comments.

Mr. McHugh:

Questions and comments, okay. Make sure that they identify themselves?

Ms. Wager:

Yes they have. Yes, they have. The first is a question on two different topics and this is from Alyssa Blostein. She would first like to know why was the student's cohort not disclosed in today's COVID positive student announcement.

Mr. Simons:

Is there a follow-up to that? Is there another question to that?

Ms. Wager:

It's on a different topic.

Mr. Simons:

We didn't share the cohort. I assume what you mean by that was the student was an A day student or a B day student, because when we were notified, we were notified by the County. They requested that we began to look at the classroom level, the actual schedule for the student, the students that were in that classroom, each period of instruction, the staff members assigned the students, that are sitting at lunch with that student. They use a criteria, the students that are in the immediate area of the classroom, sitting near the student, the students that are, they use the 12 feet criteria in the cafeteria. They look at the mode of instruction. If there was a lot of talking in a classroom or more interaction in the classroom, they want us to describe that type of instruction.

Mr. Simons:

So those were the, those were the categories of information that were required to contact tracing. Whether the student was an A day student or a B day student was really not material to whether or not... It's really more granular than that. You know, where was this student? What classes did the student attend? Whether the students sit at lunch and it's really more specific than that. So we didn't disclose the day that the student was in person. I can tell you that the last day that the student was in attendance, based on our records was November 12th, which was a Thursday, which was an A day. And we just didn't think to disclose it because it was more granular what they were looking for was more specific.

Ms. Wager:

Thank you. Her second question is why are online math and science classes never allowed to be added to a CHS student's transcript? For example, a student taking the same pre-calc class at Hudson Valley online due to the pandemic that Columbia students take, taking honors pre-calc get college credit for is unable to have that class added to their CHS transcript. Ironically, the student taking the class that Hudson Valley will complete the course at twice the pace, because it will be completed in one semester versus one year at the high school. It should be noted that the student is not taking the class at CHS due to a schedule conflict.

Mr. Simons:

I know that Mr. McHugh and I have discussed this issue in the past, but I'm going to ask that M. McHugh respond in writing to that individual because it's like, it's really a complicated answer. And it's something that we have talked about in the past. Mr. McHugh will respond to that individual. If you could just forward the name and the contact information to Mr. McHugh.

Ms. Wager:

I will do that. The next question is again from Alyssa Bostein. She didn't see the driver's ed program for students whose program was interrupted in the spring on tonight's agenda. She's wondering if she missed it.

Mr. Simons:

It's something that we're currently discussing with the teacher's association and the Board. We will be discussing it and trying to come up with a program that would enable the students who were, were not able to complete the program in the spring to complete it and we're entertaining the possibility of a new course for a new group of students. And it's under discussion right now. It's simply was not ready for board public review and/or approval at this point, but we are discussing it.

Ms. Wager:

Thank you. The next question is from Amanda VanBuren, she is the parent of a first grader, a second grader, and fifth grader. And she wonders has there been a decision on virtual Wednesdays and if they plan on doing away with it?

Mr. Simons:

We discussed it. We decided that initially we would focus on in person learning for kindergarten. We still believe that given where we're at with the COVID situation, that we may be in a situation where virtual Wednesday might be five days a week. And we want to make sure that our staff and our students are prepared for that type of instruction. It is still under discussion, it is still under review. Given the rise in

cases, it's becoming more, more apparent to us that we may need to maintain that in order to make sure that the kids can make the shift in the event that we have to clear to remote learning for an extended period of time, but we're still, it's still under discussion.

Ms. Wager:

Thank you. The last comment is from Laurie Marchiony. She is the parent of a fifth grader, eighth grader, and a 10th grader. And she has asked me to read this email:

Ms. Wager:

Dear board members, I cannot stress enough how much I appreciate the monumental effort that has been made to bring back our younger students for more in-person learning. You have gone above and beyond what any person could expect. Please know that there are many community members who support the continued implementation of the hybrid model for all students at all grade levels. The A/B plan keeps our kids safe, and I believe will allow us to stay open longer than other districts that have different plans. Our teachers are doing an amazing job, providing our students with engaging and learning both in and out of the classroom. While I appreciate that K has special needs, how will you justify to parents of say, first graders, why Kindergarten is taking priority? By bringing one group of students in full time the separation of cohorts for contact tracing is eliminated.

Ms. Wager:

For example, a fifth grade B day student with a Kindergarten sibling will now be exposed through the kindergarten, through the kindergartner to both days. Has the district talked about how this mixing of the cohorts will affect the contact tracing? How will the change to the number of students on buses be handled with the increase in students attending on both days? Should the district decide to move forward with bringing kindergarten back full time, I hope this start date would be put off until after all holidays are over; not just Thanksgiving. We have seen what one social gathering at Halloween did to spread the virus in our community. I can only imagine the uptick we will see after Thanksgiving and all of the December holidays. I am concerned that the efforts to increase in-person learning for one group will, in the long run, disrupt the district's ability to provide in-person learning for all students. Thank you for your continued efforts on behalf of our students.

Mr. Simons:

I thank Mrs. Marchiony, for her comments on the hybrid program and the continued support for the district's teachers. We had a discussion within the administrative team and with our kindergarten teachers about all of those considerations, including the mixing of cohorts concern, as well as the concerns related to the fact that we were able to do it for kindergarten, but not for the other grades. We decided that we felt that the benefits academically and socially for our kindergartners were because we could do it and that it was feasible. And we could maintain the social distancing in kindergarten that we should do something for our youngest children. It was something that we heard about at the beginning of the year as our kindergarten parents, new children to the district were adjusting. And we thought that that consideration outweighed some of the other concerns. We also believe that in many cases, the kids are in mixed cohorts outside of school.

Mr. Simons:

And we have not found that to be as much of an issue. For example, if they're engaged in, you know, recreational activities or sports activities, the mixing of cohorts is seemed to be less of a factor as we've

implemented the reopening plan. The contact tracing enables us to know who's in what class and where they're at, so that won't be affected by the schedule. And our busing capacity is sufficient to provide the kids with the busing without compromising the social distancing on the bus. So, it's not a perfect solution to a complicated problem. We thought that where we could make some routes for in-person learning, we should, and we did weigh it. We did weigh in to discuss all of those factors. And we landed on the fact that we should try to do something to provide more in-person instruction for our youngest kids.

Ms. Wager:

Thank you. There are no other public comments at this time.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Linda. I appreciate your comments from the public, as always. And we'll come back to the one team member with her question. We'll go to the work forum. I'll just kinda go around the screen here, John and me. Michelle? All right. Comes up. Deanna? Jennifer? And our in person folks: Mark [inaudible 00:01:48:08]. Everybody's going to see Mike, right? All right, thanks. I think it was an excellent meeting a lot of information shared this evening. We have some work to do on our, our goals, objectives. So with that, that concludes our public portion of our meeting. We do have [the need for an executive session for purposes of personnel matters and superintendent evaluation. So if we don't anticipate returning to regular business from the meetings. Is that correct, Mr. Simons?

Mr. Simons:

No, we don't. We don't anticipate coming out of executive session and back in the public session. Mr. Goodwin has requested 10 minutes to send the new link to our board members. So we'll take a 10 minute intermission to get set for the executive session.

Mr. Buono:

So in your motion to executive session for a second, John, all in favor, yay?

Jennifer:

Aye.

Mr. Buono:

So have a great night everybody. Thank you and 10 minutes for Peter to reset.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:49:36]