

**Board of Education Meeting Minutes
March 24, 2021**

Mr. Buono:

I want to call the East Greenbush School District Board meeting to order. It's seven o'clock. All members present except for Mr. Dunn, he will not be here tonight. We have 5 Board members present in-person with me, and virtually I have JoAnn, Jennifer and Michele who are virtual. So with that please rise and join me in the pledge of allegiance.

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.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you. So we'll start with our Columbia Student Council. I see Ryan and Katie are next. How are you?

Katie:

Good. Thank you very much.

Mr. Buono:

Peter, make sure we can hear them okay, all right?

Mr. Goodwin:

Yep.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you. Go ahead.

Ryan:

Hi, so we just finished up our March hot chocolate sale and we're updating everyone now, and we raised close to \$400 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. And after that we began talking about the award ceremony and end of year functions. With that, I hand it off to Katie.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks Ryan.

Katie:

Other than those, at our meeting next week, we're planning to set up a food drive plan to help collect items for the backpack program with Mr. and Mrs. Taylor. And just another quick thing, I want to mention on behalf of the seniors that we have been super grateful for the little things that staff and parents have been working on, like the March goody bags and the 100 days till graduation sign. And even though it's not a normal year, those little things are really helping. So we just wanted to mention that and we really appreciate everything.

Mr. Buono:

Great. Thanks Katie. I appreciate that too. Anything else?

Katie:

That's all we have tonight.

Mr. Buono:

All right. Countdown's coming right, for the seniors.

Mr. Buono:

All right. I want to, with the Board's approval, I do want to make a slight adjustment in the agenda. There's a lot of obvious interest on a few of the topics, which I think our public would be interested in hearing before we go to the public forum. And those are items 5A about the in-person learning days, 5B the 6 to 12 and learning pods and 6A which is related to the State requirements regarding in-person learning and the efficacy around that. But I think that if our community can hear the Superintendent report about those areas, then we immediately answer some questions that could potentially come in for the public forum, if that's okay with the Board members. Just need a nodding, if that's okay. Mark, you're good. JoAnn, Michele and Jennifer. Great. Thank you. So with that adjustment, we'll move to Mr. Simons with the report.

Mr. Simons:

So good evening, everyone and welcome Board members and members of the community to our Board meeting this evening. We want to take a few minutes to discuss and update the community regarding the District's efforts to bring more students back to school for in-person learning for more days than what are currently being provided within the hybrid.

Mr. Simons:

I'll start with talking a little bit about the CDC decision that was communicated to everyone in our country last Friday. Our CDC issued changes to their operational strategies for K-12 schools, changing some of the requirements that they would recommend states and schools implement for precautionary measures for preventing COVID-19 spread in schools.

Mr. Simons:

While this has been reported in the media, it may not have been reported fully and completely. And we're going to put this 18 page report on our website tomorrow so that our public can read the report. We encourage people to read the report. The majority of our discussion regarding this has been around the idea that the CDC has studied the issue of social distancing and schools.

Mr. Simons:

They have looked at very low transmission from student to student, student to staff, staff to student, within our schools. And they have recommended under certain conditions that the social distancing requirement that we've all gotten used to, which is six feet could be reduced to three feet based on some parameters.

Mr. Simons:

One of those parameters is the way that the CDC calculates the community transmission rates across the country. They use a different formula, different metric than New York State does currently. And they classify areas of the country as being in blue zones, yellow zones, orange zones, and red zones based on community transmission rates.

Mr. Simons:

And it may come to us as a surprise to many people because it did to me that the majority of the counties in New York State, according to the CDC formula for calculating transmission rates are in a red zone. So when schools under the CDC guidelines are in red zones, it's not only that we can reduce the social distancing from six feet to three feet, there are other aspects of these guidelines that we have to think about.

Mr. Simons:

One of those requires at the middle school and the high school level if you're in a red zone, requires you to cohort students, and there are currently discussions regarding what does that mean. So a little bit more difficult to move from six foot to three feet at the middle school and high school level. As you recall, we are offering a full complement of our courses. Our kids are not cohorted currently in the middle school and the high school in a sense of all the same kids being in each of their classes.

Mr. Simons:

There's also the definition of cohort in which we have cohorts of students coming on A days and cohorts coming on B days. And we feel that we want to work in this area at the middle school and the high school to see what can be done to bring more students in for in-person learning at the middle and high school level, even though CDC has indicated that you have to cohort.

Mr. Simons:

At the elementary level, cohort is recommended but not required. And so we feel very confident and comfortable that with some time we could implement that three feet social distancing requirement and have sufficient space to provide any of our students whose families wanted them to come in five days a week to restore full in-person five day a week instruction at the K-5 level.

Mr. Simons:

The big issue right now, which is a subject of discussion across our state is will New York State Department of Health accept the CDC guidelines and incorporate those guidelines into their regulations, which school districts are required. There has also been a great deal of variance in different regions of the state regarding the County Department of Health and the County government's determination as to whether or not they feel that individual counties have the discretion to advise schools to implement the three feet social distancing.

Mr. Simons:

Our county, as of today has indicated that that is a State decision, not a county decision. And I've asked that they put that in writing to us and we have not yet received it. We are aware of other areas of the state who are planning to have based on their counties, determinations moving from the six foot to three feet, we are ready to move to that standard.

Mr. Simons:

We have done our research in terms of classroom space. We have researched the availability, the types and sizes of barriers should that not change. And we need to do that in accordance with what the current New York State guidelines indicate. But we're being told by our county that this is a State decision and that Howard Zucker, the Commissioner of Health and his staff are reviewing this and that they were optimistic that the state would be hopefully making that decision in short order.

Mr. Simons:

The CDC has no governing authority over New York State schools, actually has no authority over any schools. The CDC only issues guidelines and best practices based on their research and their health considerations. At a press conference at the end of last week, Governor Cuomo was aware, indicated that he was aware of the CDC recommendations and that Dr. Zucker and his staff were looking at it.

Mr. Simons:

We are anxiously awaiting the State to adopt those standards so that we can implement them and bring our kids back at the minimum at the K-5 level with further considerations regarding how we might do that for more kids at the middle school and the high school level, but we are ready to go. And we are as frustrated as some of our families and our parents regarding this concern.

Mr. Simons:

Additionally, you are aware that we have made changes. Our first graders will be coming in five days a week effective March 29th and our second graders will be coming in five days a week effective April 13th, right after the April break. In order to do that, we have had to hire additional teaching assistants, additional monitors.

Mr. Simons:

And we are in the process of doing that, there two additional staff numbers that were added to the agenda tonight. We have still a need for two TAs at the Bell Top School due to the number of candidates that applied or accepted the position. So we're still working on that and investigating potential use of substitutes. The questions have come up regarding space.

Mr. Simons:

I'm going to ask Mr. McHugh under 5A to share with everyone, a chart that he and the principals have put together. It's important to note, they bring the first graders, the second grader and our kindergarteners back effective April 12th, excuse me, April 13th, we will have all of our K-2 students whose families want them to participate in in-person learning and five days a week.

Mr. Simons:

In order to affect that change and that shift and our program, we have had to use more than one classroom to abide by the six foot social distancing. So there are no extra rooms currently to follow a similar model for grades three, four, and five. In order to bring three, four and five in we need the change in the social distancing requirements. So I'm going to ask Mr. McHugh to go over the chart that is attached to agenda item 5A. And I'm going to ask Peter to bring it up if he could.

Mr. McHugh:

Thank you, Mr. Simons. So I'll try to walk you through this as quick as possible. Our first set of slides are each of our five elementary schools, kindergarten through second grade, each classroom, the current classroom teacher, the assigned room, the room capacity with six feet social distancing and the total enrollment in that section. So when you go through it, you notice Dana Monk, she's now going through room, or she's utilizing room 60 and 70.

Mr. McHugh:

Each of those rooms have 10 student capacity under six feet social distancing. So we needed that additional classroom to accommodate all 20 of her students. The same for Mrs. Richardson using rooms 30 and 40. And then if you go down, I'm not going to read the whole thing to you, but when you go to second grade, it forced us to use not just her classroom, but she's also using the music room.

Mr. McHugh:

And that gave the room capacity each room of 12, which accommodates her 23 students. What I will add, while we're going through some of these slides, you see Donald P. Sutherland, is that several of our teachers in the elementary school no longer have a teacher station. So there is no teacher desk in the classroom, no teacher station in order to accommodate the students in the class.

Mr. McHugh:

When you look at Donald P Sutherland, you'll see some examples highlighted in the yellow in grade one with Mrs. Treiber, rooms 40 to room 34 and they've removed the student cubbies and that allowed 10 feet to 15 feet, which allowed her to have all of her students back. Same thing in grade two, Mrs. Gardinier moved from room 43 to now using rooms 37 and 40. That gave 12 and 12, which accommodated all of her students.

Mr. McHugh:

When you go to Genet Elementary, you see some examples highlighted. You can see that we're using the band room. So there was a lot of moving for Genet in order to accommodate the students' full return. You go down to Mrs. Pagonas, who's also changed rooms. And then Ms. Bradley in grade one, again, no teacher station, no cubbies in that room to get that room capacity to 19 so that all 17 students could return.

Mr. McHugh:

Again, continue Genet. You see some examples in grade one and two. Moving along at Green Meadow, you see Mrs. Maney in kindergarten utilizing two rooms. They are connected, but it's another area out of the main classroom area. So they are connecting rooms, but utilizing both of those rooms allows all of our kindergarten students to return. And then again, you see examples toward the bottom where Green Meadow is using the band room, the computer lab, and some teachers have had a change in location again, in order to accommodate K-1 and two.

Mr. McHugh:

Moving on to Red Mill, you see that there has been some movement in some of the classroom locations. Also, what you do notice is that we have some full remote teachers that are working from locations, such as the PE office, some of the remote teachers are working from home so that we could utilize their classroom for students that are coming in in-person.

Mr. McHugh:

Again, in Red Mill, you see the changes. And then when we go to Bell Top, back to Bell Top, this is for grades three through five. You can see that the assigned room, the room capacity, and just starting right at the top, the room capacity is 12, there's 20 students enrolled in that class. Same thing for grade three. You're seeing a section that has a room capacity of 12 with 16. As you move down to grade five, you see room capacities of 15 with 24 and 27 students enrolled in that class.

Mr. McHugh:

Again, we utilized all building space in order to accommodate K-1 and two. As you move along, Donald P. Sutherland, the example in the yellow, grade four, Mrs. McDonald room capacity was 12, there's 20 students. Why did we move to the art room? We moved her to the art room because we are making exceptions for students. There are students that are attending K-5, four days a week, our English language learners, students with disabilities, other students that are having some other challenges in that hybrid model.

Mr. McHugh:

We've made those accommodations to try to bring students back case by case situation. Again, Donald P. Sutherland, you saw the room capacity and you see the student enrollment both over. Genet Elementary, you're looking at the same types of situations. You will notice some grade levels that the current room capacity would allow all of those students to return, but we can't do that district wide.

Mr. McHugh:

We may be able to do that in a class or two. We may be able to do it at one particular grade level in the district. But again, when you're looking for equity and trying to justify why all students at a grade level are not returning, that becomes problematic. Again you see, we just don't have the room capacity based on total enrollment. Genet, there's Green Meadow, grades three through five. Red Mill.

Mr. McHugh:

So just a couple of the comments that I want to make is that the uniqueness in our district, we do have these five elementary schools that have been historically neighborhood schools. And we've enjoyed that luxury. Even walking around with the engineers and construction crews, they find our elementary schools to be very unique in design, you have your initial build, you have additions that have occurred throughout different bond proposals.

Mr. McHugh:

And when you go into a school, typically you see one classroom size that's the same throughout the building. And we don't have that in our buildings. We also had the challenge of furniture that was permanently adhered to the walls and to the floor of our school building, that involved a little bit of time to see if it could be removed safely or if it involved an asbestos abatement in the cases where it involved asbestos abatement, we could not do it at this time.

Mr. McHugh:

But we have classrooms right now where the students are back full time. There's some obstructed view for some of our students that is not the perfect situation for the student to see the ViewSonic boards and the Promethean boards. We also have several classrooms that the classroom capacity will allow that

class to return, but now it's resulted in specials being delivered in the student's classroom, as well as lunch. And again, the removal of learning centers, teaching supplies, everything's been taken out at this building for these classrooms to maximize room capacity. Any questions? Thank you.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you. So the only point I want to reemphasize is in order to bring third grade, fourth grade and fifth grade back five days a week, we need the social distancing requirements to be changed and adopted by New York State, which leads me to say, I want to stay at the elementary level for just a bit.

Mr. Simons:

And then we'll talk about middle school and high school. Under 6A, I have listed and posted several things that artifacts regarding what the district was trying to do to advocate for changes at the state level that would permit our district to bring all the children back five days a week particularly at the elementary level.

Mr. Simons:

Last week, I sent a letter to all of our elected officials, a representative from the Governor's office and Commissioner Zucker and our Commissioner of Education, asking them to revisit the school reopening requirements, adopt new guidelines that would enable us to be able to under state law, bring our kids in and not have the impact of the six foot social distancing.

Mr. Simons:

That letter went out. I did receive a response from Assemblyman McDonald, and he has communicated with his contacts at the New York State Department of Health. And he is awaiting a response. Additionally, we have been working with an advocacy committee that has been formed within our district a couple of years ago. Mrs. Curtin, our Board member is on it. We have students from our high school on that committee, and we've invited many more parents that previously served on the committee or concerned about this issue.

Mr. Simons:

And we are working with Questar BOCES including all of the component districts to put together a forum, hopefully in April, based on the availability of the commissioner of education at which we are inviting our elected officials to hear about what's happening in our schools during the COVID pandemic and to advocate for changes that could come into place this year and next year in the fall, so that we can get back to full in-person instruction.

Mr. Simons:

That forum has been reviewed with all of the superintendents in the Questar BOCES. Dr. Cruz and I have met she's our BOCES District Superintendent to discuss the forum. She contacted the Commissioner of Education and the Commissioner of Education is actually excited about it and would like to attend and make it a model for the rest of the state.

Mr. Simons:

So we're just waiting for her staff to confirm a date, and we will then have a virtual forum involving our region to advocate for changes to the reopening guidelines and enable our kids to come back full time. Later on I will talk about an additional communication that was put together through Questar.

Mr. Simons:

Going back to the middle school and high school discussions. I posted on the agenda for the Board and the public description that was provided from principal Jill Barker at the middle school, and principal Mike Harkin from the high school regarding efforts that have been made to bring students back for at least four days of in-person learning.

Mr. Simons:

We could not, at this point, given the guidelines, bring all of the students back at those levels. So we've had to identify a criteria. We've looked at students who were struggling academically, failing, for example, two or more courses. We looked at students that require smaller instruction for core areas under our special education programs and services.

Mr. Simons:

We've looked at students who have social, emotional and mental health concerns and who are not fully participating in the virtual Wednesday or remote learning days. And we are bringing those students back. We've identified that space can be provided in classrooms. In the event that the space cannot not be provided in the classrooms, we have a model we're using called learning pods, which those kids cohort together, come here to this space or to other spaces in the building, and either receive assistance from the teaching assistant to catch up on remote work and assignments, or they stream into the classroom.

Mr. Simons:

But rather than having to stream in from home, they can stream in from within the building, but they're attending every day and they're coming in, and that has an impact on their motivation and their completion of assignments. So K through 12, we're doing everything we can under the current regulations to bring more kids in full time.

Mr. Simons:

We've been advocating for changes in the state guidelines now with the COVID-19 infection rate has declined in our region. And all of these efforts are intended to make sure that we restore some normalcy to the kids and the families as we approach the end of the year. One of the things I'd emphasize to our administrators is while we are probably well through the school year, after the spring break, there's still 10 weeks of instruction left.

Mr. Simons:

And if we can get these changes made, 10 weeks of instruction is a lot, we can get some kids back on track who are maybe falling behind, we can address some of the learning gaps now, rather than wait for summer or next school year. And so we're doing everything we can to get these changes made and to do it safely. We're not going to encroach upon health and safety considerations in order to make these changes happen. And we feel that we can do it safely and we're ready to move forward.

Mr. Buono:

Excellent. Thank you Mr. Simons. Any questions Board members? No? All right, thanks for the presentation. As you can see the district and the administration, Superintendent Simons, Mr. McHugh and everyone else is as planning for that adjustment, and we'll move as quickly as possible to get things in motion to bring our kids back. And that's important I think for the community to hear that we are prepared, we'll do what it takes and we'll make it happen.

Mr. Buono:

And we just need that final guidance from New York State and then through the County too, to work through it. So I know it's been challenging and difficult as Mr. Simons said, we're doing it right. We're making the plans and we'll move like he said, as quickly as possible. So with that I will move back to the public forum.

Mr. Buono:

And again, there's an email that we've been using throughout the whole virtual process. Residents, students, employees, and business representatives of the East Greenbush Central School District may address the Board on matter concerning programs, and or operations of the District other than matters involving personnel.

Mr. Buono:

Members of the Board do not directly respond to citizen concerns during 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 to the district or business.

Mr. Buono:

While the Board does not wish to infringe upon free speech protection, it must be stressed that the visitors' forum is not deemed to be an open forum. The Board president will conduct the forum for an orderly and efficient operation for Board business. In addition, any remarks would be considered defamatory or stigmatizing or prohibited will be declared out of order.

Mr. Buono:

So I'm sure that the conversation raised questions and comments. I would ask that if you have individual student or family questions that you would reach out to your principal directly for those, and while we would welcome any comments that we have email and I'll look to Linda Wager to help us out.

Mrs. Wager:

Thank you, Mr. Buono, there is only one question and that is from Monica Nicholson. She is the parent of two elementary students, which you have already addressed. She was asking what were the current issues contributing to not bringing back that grades three through five full time. And that's it.

Mr. Simons:

So just to respond to that and reiterate some of the information, currently we have used all of our classrooms that are appropriate for general classroom instruction and all of our elementary schools to accommodate the change that permitted us to bring our kindergarten through second grade in five days a week.

Mr. Simons:

In order to bring third grade, fourth grade and fifth grade, we need the change to occur in the New York State regulations to produce the guidance regarding social distancing from sixth feet to three feet. With that change at the State level, we are prepared to bring the third grade, fourth grade and fifth grade full-time to join their K-2 peers. And we are prepared to do that, ready to go. We're just waiting for the State to adopt the new CDC guidelines.

Mr. Buono:

Very good. Nothing else this time?

Mrs. Wager:

No.

Mr. Buono:

So public will have an opportunity also to continue to email. We have a second public forum later in the meeting. I do want to say too, I appreciate the efforts of the teacher administrators at the different sites, Columbia and Goff. It's important as we talked about a lot in the meetings across this time about the importance of addressing the learning needs, students who have not been back in a school since last March and the anxiety and the issues that they may face in terms of returning and providing those supports as critical like Mr. Simons said so that they can at least catch up, get to a better place and be ready to return full-time themselves.

Mr. Buono:

So I appreciate all the efforts and our principals identifying those needs. The other item in the Board forum report are the music program guidance changes. Do you want to do this?

Mr. Simons:

Mr. Halliday, I believe is on virtually. Scott Halliday, are you out there?

Scott Halliday:

Yes, Mr. Simons, I'm here.

Mr. Simons:

Very good. So a few weeks ago, the Superintendents representing districts within the suburban council had an opportunity to hear a presentation from someone in a similar role that Mr. Halliday, our music chair, chair of our music department is here. This person was from Shaker High School, North Colonie. Mr. Halliday asked if this information could be presented to the Board. He asked for the District to consider some changes based on research that had been made, has been done on playing of musical instruments and vocal performances and practices ...

PART 1 OF 5 ENDS [00:31:04]

Mr. Simons:

Instruments and vocal performances, and practices. Since the guidelines came out from New York State in August, I think it's very interesting research. I think it is on point. We wanted the Board to have a

chance to hear the information directly from Mr. Halliday. And then the Board would weigh and deliberate whether or not we want to implement this change, that Mr. Halliday is going to share with us now. So Scott, go ahead.

Mr. Halliday:

Great. Thank you, Mr. Simons. So the key to this particular point again, we're talking about social distancing. And last summer, when many of us set on a lot of tests course meetings, and the guidance was pushing all instrumental ensembles. So, not to assume anything, instrument ensemble was going to be banned course... sorry, your ensembles are going to be your band course and orchestra, the instrumental ensembles are a band and orchestra. And as it stands right now, the functionality of the orchestra students, can sit now six feet apart. They don't need to use their mouths for their instrument, and they don't need to use their mouths to sing. So the orchestra folks are already seated at 6 feet, and that's allowed them a lot of opportunity in all of their orchestra classes, from grades five to 12. What we're looking to do is that the all of the band students, and all of the choral experiences, are currently required to sit at 12 feet apart.

Mr. Halliday:

And that makes a very challenging year for us this year. At the high school level, we've been able to make it work because we do have some larger spaces where we can fit students in there. At the middle school level, we have not really had an opportunity for any singing or any wind playing to take place. So no band is taking place. And at the elementary level, we're able to do small group lessons for band, but not in an ensemble. And there is no seating able to take place at the elementary chorus level. So chorus hasn't even really been able to function as what you would think is a chorus. And a key component in our general music classes in grades kindergarten through fifth grade, is that of singing, and the teachers are not allowed to have the students sing as part of the instructional time.

Mr. Halliday:

They've been very creative and come up with a lot of other opportunities and activities, but the heart of what they do really lies in the ability to love students the same. So the proposal is to see if we can get that's 12 foot spacing reduced to six feet for all of our musical experiences in these remote... some school district. Mr. Goodwin was kind of scrolling through all of the different points and the impact that it has, if you have an opportunity to see it, right from the kindergarten through fifth grade. I highlighted ones that I think are really important, as far as the ability to sing. We also understand that there are going to be guidelines that we have to follow. And those are outlined here, what we expect to do as the responsible adults in the room, as far as not just spacing, but how we deal with, I'll use the term, condensation.

Mr. Halliday:

Some of you out there know that I'm really talking about the spit comes out the instrument and has to be dealt with in a specific way. So that's outlined in this document, and that's a big component. So taking care of that. And then there's these bell covers, so it's basically a mask that goes over the end over your instrument, and that will help reduce condensation spread, or spread of moisture or spit. However, unless you want to get hit with it. And that's a part of what we do. And our 12 feet, I know who I can speak directly to this. And my students are seated 12 feet apart, they're going to ask us off while they're playing. And then when they come into the room, they put their mask on. There was no bell cover currently taking place in my ensemble.

Mr. Halliday:

But when we reduce to the six feet, we understand that we'll have to purchase these bell covers for our students. So that's a big component, students who would be seen at all levels, grades five through 12, actually kindergarten through 12th, they would be singing, again with a mask on. And of course at this state, they would now hopefully be able to move to a closer distance of six feet. I already spoke a little bit about our general music program, but right now, you've just heard a presentation where classroom space is at a premium, and many of our general music teachers are not always teaching in their classrooms. Sometimes they're pushed into a regular homerooms to teach their class. And it would be an excellent opportunity if those teachers were able to tap into their curriculum, and have the students that they're not meeting with, in whatever room, be able to sing and continue with their curriculum in that way. If go towards the end of the document, it looks, actually that page right there, Mr. Goldman, is great.

Mr. Halliday:

The updates as of last Friday, as you know with the CDC, I guess, is not what we are going to necessarily move everything toward. But their recommendations were just that, to have students go from six feet to three feet in a general setting, but activities like singing, wind playing, and more vigorous physical activity, would be able to reduce to six feet, so that is what we're hoping to be able to start doing as soon as possible. I have some very anxious colleagues who are looking forward to the potential of that happening, in the near future. It has really been a burden to our program, to be so restricted in what we can do. We are doing all of our small group lessons still, but it's all done virtually, it's online. In the middle school and high school, we would plan to continue that at this point.

Mr. Halliday:

But the big thing is to have the ensembles be able to meet at a six foot distance. For many of our students, that would be the first time that they're actually able to play in an ensemble this year. And for some students, it's the first time that they would be able to play in an ensemble in over a year's time right now. As the textbook, as I said, we've been able to work some opportunities to play. But one of our bands, and our chorus, and Chamber singers would be able to rehearse in a more respectful rehearsal ring. Where the acoustics are much more appropriate for what we want to do, and what we want to be able to teach students. The initiation of this was by Ms. Keogh from the Shaker School District. And a lot of her findings are at the end of the document.

Mr. Halliday:

So we'll start with suburban council music. You can see that document, I think the next page there. Yep. So all of the research is done in there. And as far as aerosol spread, if you want to get really scientific about it, you can see how it's broken down, and how singing with a mask, that brings down a great deal of the aerosols that are being spread. Similarly, the elbow visit example, probably the most difficult instrument as far as this goes. So there's a lot of spread particles, but when you put about a running, it reduces it greatly. So the safety really goes up with those bell covers. And then, I believe, that is all that I have as far as my presentation of that. If there are any questions, I'd be happy to field any questions about this.

Mr. Buono:

Members, any questions to follow up from Mr. Halliday? I don't see any questions. Mr. Simons, any comments?

Mr. Simons:

No. I support this recommendation, and I know that other districts have implemented it. Niskayuna, Bethlehem are coming to mind. I think there were four or five that I was aware of that had implemented this change, the boards received the same presentation. So I'd recommend doing it, unless the board had reservations about it. If there are reservations, maybe we can talk about them, but the more we're comfortable with this recommendation. It is grounded in a lot of work and research that's been done, and is supported by the CDC. New York State has a recommended best practice regarding this, but not in requirement. And so I feel that we do have the discretion, provided board approval, to implement this change and we'll monitor it. And we'll make sure that it worked with Mr. Halliday and the department, and administrators to make sure that it is done in accordance with everything that's being proposed, so as far as we're comfortable. I didn't put a sample resolution on here, and you can choose to go into the regular agenda, or the consent agenda. If you choose to vote on it tonight.

Mr. Simons:

If not, you want more time to think about this, that would be fine too.

Mr. Buono:

So I don't have any questions. I absolutely support the move. I see a lot of nodding heads here in the room, and then virtually. So if we could place it on the consent agenda? Make that adjustment and make that item J, and then the approval of consent will be item K. I'm just going through my...

Ms. Taylor:

Mike, I would like to thank Mr. Halliday and the music staff. Music is so important to children, and it brings back some degree of normalcy to our kids to be able to see them in that setting. So for all your work, and the work of your staff, we appreciate it. And we thank you for doing that.

Mr. Halliday:

Thank you, yes. I would also like to add that our goal, and this is not a reason to fill the auditorium with people and have performances. We realize we're a long way away from that. But our goal really is just to kind of restore some normalcy to our program, and to get kids to be able to play together, and sing together. So that as we move forward to that new opening that Mr. Simons was alluding to earlier, that perhaps next fall, we can hit the ground running and be really strong. And have students who have had some experience in a performance group before they come in for that first rehearsal in the fall. So thank you everyone.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Mr. Halliday, we appreciate it. So again, that was added to the consent agenda, that resolution that Mr. Simons provided. Moving back to the agenda. You've gone through five, A, B, and C. We moved to six A, we already did that. And then we have discussion item, approval of in person club activities. Before I do that, I do want to give the Board an opportunity just to go around, like we always do to see if there's any general comments that you would like to make. So I'll start virtually with Jennifer. Anything?

Ms. Massey:

I'm good, thanks Mike.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Jennifer. Michele?

Ms. Skumurski:

No, I'm good. Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you. JoAnn?

Ms. Taylor:

I would just like to quickly congratulate Mrs. Chrissy Blake over at Goff, for her WYNT Top Teacher. I watched it last night, and or tonight and if her presentation didn't provide positivity, resiliency, working in the situation their working in, and I don't know what did, and it's just a nice view of what's going on in our schools. So thank you, Chrissy. And thank you to all the other teachers who are equally doing the same things.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, JoAnn. And on my right, we will start with Deanna,? Good.

Mr. Buono:

Frank? All set, Kathleen?

Ms. Cannon:

Good. Mark?

Mr. Mann:

I'm good.

Mr. Buono:

I still have one comment, generally that I appreciate the highlight of the Woman engineers, the technical screening was excellent. I have a young daughter, I'd hoped she'd be in engineering, but took a different path. But I think encouraging young women to STEM fields, and engineering in particular, is so important. And one of the things that we saw recently, I don't know if I want to steal your thunder Mr. Simons, about the P-TECH program, that's coming to Hudson Valley. Opportunities for our students to also participate in STEM opportunities at the P-TECH and early college, high school program that will be housed in Hudson Valley. So great opportunities for our students, and to our young women who want to go in those fields. Moving on to our next agenda item, six B, approval of in-person clubs and activities.

Mr. Simons:

When the discussion started at our level with the Board, regarding the approvals of high-risk sports. And the situation regarding COVID-19 started to improve, we've had some of our faculty and staff ask if they could have some in-person activities with the kids. And those activities range from some of the clubs being able to operate in person, or enact, such as passing out certificates or an award event of some kind, to some in person drama and musical preparations. So I received a number of emails regarding

principals, and from advisors, could we start to have some of our kids come in? And I wanted to create a consistent process for that. There are no State guidelines for extracurricular clubs, or these types of activities. So what we did was working with my secretary, Stephanie Jorgensen, as we look at the requirements for sports, we looked at the requirements that were available on New York forward's website.

Mr. Simons:

And we created a Google form that the advisor could submit, which would require them to describe, or check off, that they would implement social distancing. For example, that they would implement temperature checks when the kids come in, that they would make appropriate arrangements for any additional disinfecting, or cleaning, that would be necessary. That they would appropriately space students during the rehearsal, or manage appropriate group sizes. So you're not bringing all the kids in that might be involved in a musical all at once. What would they do in regard to audience members, or spectators, would it be two-per, like sports, or would it be virtual? And so I created a consistent process, so that the Board supported approval of these, and that I would have the discretion to approve them.

Mr. Simons:

But that the Board approved the criteria. So I provided a sample of a form. I received a number of these in already, they've all been complete. Holding their approvals until, or had a chance, to look at this criteria as process. I think we can manage it very well. And I think I would ask the Board to consider giving me the discretion, based on these requirements, to approve these activities.

Mr. Buono:

Any questions for Mr. Simons, on the format and process that he's put together? I think this is another opportunity for our students to engage in more in-person activities. I think if we met the items that are listed here, Mr. Simons with his discretion, can make sure that those conditions are met, and our students in clubs can be meeting more in person.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you, Mr. Buono. The advisor signs off on the form, the principal signs off on the form, and I sign off on the form.

Mr. Buono:

Okay, excellent. So everyone's involved in knowing what is going on.

Mr. Simons:

Today, I talked to the principals about making sure that they check dates on names. So you're not having three or four groups in the building at the same time, so that you don't have that group size concern.

Mr. Buono:

Okay.

Mr. Simons:

And then the fact that you did have a case in the building, we'd be limited in the number of kids that will be traced and put in quarantine.

Mr. Buono:

Exactly. Any concerns or questions?

Ms. Skumurski:

No. Mike, can I just know that... All the good news, so it's nice to hear the music and now the extracurricular. It's really exciting. And we know we're far, as I heard earlier, from being back to normal, but we're at least trying to hit a new normal.

Mr. Buono:

Right.

Ms. Skumurski:

And allowing the students, and the faculty to start getting a little bit back to what they had enjoyed in the past. So thank you to everybody.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks, Michele. Any others? Good. All right.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you very much, I appreciate the support. And I know our advisors do as well.

Mr. Buono:

Now, we move into the reports and presentations. We have a couple guests presenters tonight. We are doing our programs review, and Mr. Simons, Mr. McHugh?

Mr. McHugh:

Yeah. Tonight's kind of an exciting night, in the sense that we get to talk about something besides the Department of Health, CDC, and COVID-19. So it gets back to the heart of why we're all here. A part of our committee for curriculum study, each curriculum area is reviewed on a five-year cycle. Tonight is the final program review for English, language arts, and science. It is remarkable what has been accomplished in these two areas, and that is due to the support of this Board of Education. So it's a little boost in the arm to see what's been accomplished under your leadership and guidance. I applaud our department chairs. You can ask the Meagan Asenbauer and Tom Ross, as well as our grade level content coordinators that are also joining us, virtually. Rachel Mathis, and Nicole Maney, for English Language Arts, Sandy Crall, and Lisa Mahar for Science. These folks are integral. Making sure that things happen and things get done. They're boots on the floor. So with their support and their talents, quite a bit has been accomplished. So I turn it over to Meagan.

Ms. Asenbauer:

Hi everyone, thank you for having me here tonight. And I'd like to thank my counterparts, Rachel Mathis, and Ms. Maney, they'll be joining in, in a bit. We decided to divide this up by the levels of the curriculum. So the first thing that I would like to point out, is the quote that we chose to introduce the program review, while we feel that this quote encompasses what English language arts is really all about, we also just wanted to start with saying, we appreciate your time. And that for once, I will try not to be very... For both, and we'll keep it brief. So with our mission, we've decided that after focusing on...

Looking at our program for K-12, we thought that there were three main components that would be the best to focus on.

Ms. Asenbauer:

The first, our goal is to design and to teach curriculum that fosters educated, literate students who will go out and help the world. Then, we hope to continue to encourage students and teachers to be creative and critical thinkers, no matter what they are doing. And last but not least, we hope that we can help our students to become adept at learning, to communicate however best they do so, and to become more familiar with all the skills that are necessary for effective communication as they go throughout their lives.

Ms. Asenbauer:

We decided that looking at the programs, there was one overwhelming accomplishment that came through, and we thought it only fair to point out that this is K-12. This is everyone within this school community who can attest to how strong the ELA skills are, all of our students when they leave our buildings. So if you were to look at the rankings for the suburban council and even across New York state, you'll see grades three through 11, or the high school exam at the end of 11th grade, that we consistently are among the top scores. And that's very appreciated, and we thank everyone who has anything to do with that, K-12. So with that said, I'd like to turn this to Nicole, Maney at this point. Who we'll go over the accomplishments for kindergarten through fifth grade.

Ms. Maney:

Hi, everyone. Thank you for having us again here tonight. So, k-5 is an interesting beast. We encompass five different buildings, and I've been proud to be a curriculum coordinator there, worked for a couple years, working to tie our k-5 group together. So one of our big accomplishments over the last five years has been our curriculum mapping. Again, being five buildings, we're very spaced out. And having a map that we know everyone is able to follow our standards, has really allowed us to create a very comprehensive program, that's utilized in all 5 of our buildings. We are also able to access that curriculum through a new avenue, with our curriculum corner, it can be found on the East Greenbush website. And with a click of a button, a teacher could go to any curriculum area to find the most current apps, find links to activities to updated information.

Ms. Maney:

So we're really proud, of that curriculum corner, it's live and updating all the time. The other area where we've made some great gains K-5 has been by in creating universal benchmarking, for our at-risk students in our AIS department, and actually currently have an AIS coordinator, who is an elementary teacher, so we even have a really nice connection there.

Ms. Maney:

So K-five has really worked hard to create a strong foundation, and they have done a lot. I'm going to turn it over to Rachel Mathis now for the next one.

Ms. Mathis:

Thank you, Nicole. And also, hello everyone. Thank you for having all of us. I think the biggest thing, kind of an echo, but Meghan and Nicole said, was spent through doing this evaluation of our program. It really helped us to crystallize what things we do well, and then areas where we would like to continue to

grow. So it's been wonderful. And for the grade six through eight level, I would say the accomplishments we're the proudest of, are the fact that last year, we completed some summer projects, and we've adopted those this year and they're working very well. We're very happy about those. We've got a reading strategy program based on the notice of note signposts. And we also updated our vocabulary program for grades seven and eight, and really enhanced that. We do plan to expand and build upon those, and take the vocabulary program down at the sixth grade level, as well. And continue with our reading strategies as well.

Ms. Mathis:

Over the last few years, we've also developed common assessments for each grade level, and also grading practices that are much more consistent. And that's helped us, again, to just be more aligned and cohesive. We've really updated our curriculum mapping, and we've kind of looked a lot at also making sure that we feed well into the high school. So that's been really the whole circle, for in-vertical alignment. We implemented a couple years ago, a non-fiction literacy curriculum, which we're also very proud and that's given our students are really strong foundation in sixth grade, but we're building upon seventh and eighth grade. And as Nicole mentioned, just having the content coordinator position for grades six through eight, has been extremely helpful. It's really just enhanced communication between all of the buildings, and made sure that everything that we do is just kind of ties together with the grades before and the grades that follow. So with that, I will turn it back to Meagan.

Ms. Asenbauer:

So it'd be remiss to say that we wouldn't have the success that we do at Columbia, if we weren't able to rely on our colleagues, K-8. One of the things that we consider to be an accomplishment at the levels of nine through 12, are the various curriculum writing process, or program curriculum... I'm sorry, curriculum projects that we've accomplished over the last few years, including several of the courses that have been listed here. These are different courses that impact various groups of children. Regardless of their interests, regardless of what their goals may be after they leave Columbia. Perhaps the most helpful ones has been the introduction to video game development, I know you've heard about that course. We have been working with Vicarious Visions, and Jason DeFries, and Valerie Gordon, our co-teaching math class right now, through the English department and the art department.

Ms. Asenbauer:

It's a very popular elective. We were able to offer one section this year of 24 students. And that's the plan for next year as well. I was speaking to Jason about it, and he said that the mantra that they've decided to go with, which I think really makes sense for everyone, is fail forward. And that is you go forward by failure, you're learning. So not stepping backwards, but continuing to learn. And I think that's something that we can embrace throughout our program, overall. One other thing that we have introduced this year is a partnership with Siena College, for a college course called Intro to Literature. Many of you might remember it, some of your children have gone through a course called Think Tank. That was the nickname for what this course was. Emily Shatraw is an adjunct professor at Siena, and we gave the approval to work with Siena. So this year 85 students have been able to gain three college credits by sitting for this course. Our goal is to offer a minimum of two sections of this course as well next year.

Ms. Asenbauer:

One other thing that I wanted to mention, and while some people might not consider this to be an accomplishment, I think that it speaks to our district, that we're able to offer an opportunity for the students in a learning resource center. So during the traditional year, not right now, throughout the day, each period an English teacher, means what we call the LRC. The mathematics department has a similar one. And that's a place where the students can visit with an English teacher, have help with essays, projects, just guidance that they might need through curriculum. And when speaking with my counterparts within the other districts, we're the only district that offers that. Some people are exploring writing centers, but we really are ones who really can individualize helping our students. So, I just wanted to point that out as what I think is an accomplishment, that throughout the years, we've been able to maintain that.

Ms. Asenbauer:

Then you'll see it listed, are our assessments. Throughout the years, we've continued to become even more familiar with the standards, and we'll continue to do that with the next generation standards. Our scores for the common core exam have been consistently high. The kids are ready. I think one of the reasons why we have gained success, is that several years ago, we instituted testing during January rather than the traditional districts who test most of their students during June. And this has been a positive thing for those students who, with the guidance of their teachers, feel that they'd be more comfortable taking the exam in January, so that is something that we hope to continue in the future. The results for our AP courses, we offer two of them at Columbia, have also been quite solid. Which then leads to students being able to, hopefully, earn college credit at the school of their choice.

Ms. Asenbauer:

So then we move on to a few of the things that we wanted to focus on for our next program review. One thing that became obvious, as we spoke to teachers and staff at the various levels, was that we could benefit from maintaining and improving, or increasing, more consistent release time. Which we know isn't always easy to do. But being able to have that consistent and common planning time, is something that can really help with increasing communication, and help us with the vertical and horizontal alignment as we go throughout the grade levels. So we wanted to just suggest that for the future. Another thing that we intend to rely on, is continuing to use CCS, the Committee for Curriculum Studies, to run ideas by our counterparts, with the other faculty within the district, about how we can bring more contemporary pieces and more diversity.

Ms. Asenbauer:

We'd like to offer our students a chance to listen to different experiences, different voices, in a changing society, in a changing world. So we'd like to be able to continue to count on the conversations that occur at CCS. And then, last but not least, we'd like to continue having that opportunity for additional professional development, particularly as we go forward with the next generation learning standards. Jim has been instrumental in helping us do that, this year in particular, when there are so many different things going on. And we actually had the opportunity last week to work with Karen Coler, and talk about the next generation learning standards. And we focused on a few things that the Goff and Columbia teachers felt we wanted to just gain some more experience and familiarity with.

Ms. Asenbauer:

So where are we headed? It goes right back to our accomplishments and to our recommendations, we'd like to explore diverse texts. We'd like to give our students the opportunity to hear other voices, to...

PART 2 OF 5 ENDS [01:02:04]

Ms. Asenbauer:

Our students, the opportunity to hear other voices, to travel outside of the classroom, through literature, if possible, and through non-fiction text. We're hoping to make them even more familiar and comfortable with reading non-fiction since, they may not necessarily be as comfortable with that. Again, we'll target professional development that can better all of us in so many different ways. Again, we'll be working with Jim on that. The other thing that we wanted to mention our appreciation that within the districts, we have the opportunity to really work with teacher created curricular. While we are working on creating more consistency across all the buildings, it's also greatly appreciated that we do have academic freedom and that English language arts is a strong foundation for that, for us to be able to offer that to our students. So with that said, does anyone have any questions for us?

Mr. Buono:

Any comments or questions? Board members?

Ms. Asenbauer:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Kathleen is grabbing the microphones.

Ms. Curtin:

I wanted to say thank you for the LRC, because I know that I actually had that at my high school growing up and years ago, and it's a fantastic resource just that students know that they can go there and I'm very proud of the fact that East Greenbush is a leader in that, and keep it up.

Ms. Asenbauer:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Jennifer, JoAnn, Michele, anything?

Ms. Skumurski:

I just wanted to also say thank you. It was a great presentation. It's always nice to bring you guys in periodically and hear what the new ideas are, and the improvements and a look back of what you've done. So, it is also nice to go back to the real world and focus on what we really enjoy doing, which is academics. So thank you again for the presentation. It might have been the first one we've had in a while.

Ms. Asenbauer:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Anyone else? Thank you Meagan and thank you team. Very impressive. Going through the full review and the detail strengths, we use the recommendations. I'm sure you work, like you said several times, with Mr. McHugh, the PD and other opportunities for at least time to get together and very impressive as the district has looked to continue to align the K-12 curriculum so that students, the consistency, as they move from the elementary school to the middle school to the high school, that there's that continuity that we've liked to see. I appreciate that more and I think that be so important to go through their vertical/horizontal working together and continue that progress. So great job.

Ms. Asenbauer:

Thank you. Thank you all for your support.

Mr. Buono:

Jim?

Mr. McHugh:

Thank you Meagan. Our second program review is going to be presented by Tom Ross, who is our department chair for science. It is quite remarkable to see all that's been accomplished over the recent years under Tom's leadership and also Sarah Hoffman, prior to her change to the AP at Goff Middle School, but some incredible accomplishments over the last five years. Tom.

Mr. Ross:

Thank you, Mr. McHugh. It's good to be here. Thanks everybody for listening to us this fine evening. It is nice, right, to be listening to some of these things and it is just six feet, 12 feet, three feet barriers. So it's nice to share for all of you, especially that there is still school happening. All right. So my name is Tom Ross. Mr. McHugh introduced me. I am the 6- 12 department chair and with the help Sandy Crall and Lisa Mahar. We were able to throw this thing together for you. It's anything but that. It is a humongous process. We're taking 13 grades and all these perspectives and trying to see this tapestry that is the science curriculum of East Greenbush Central School District and let me boil that down into a 26 page document.

Mr. Ross:

Then we try to boil that down even further for something that's bite-sized so that we can show it to you tonight. So we hope we do it justice, but certainly if you have any questions and I don't get through everything that maybe you have questions on, feel free to let me know at any time and there we go. I was super impressed when we started this process about how many people were willing to be involved. It speaks to the caliber of people that we have in this district, representation from every single building, multiple people from most buildings and people willing to email, throw out ideas. We had a Google Classroom dedicated to this and people would post on it, throw out ideas and it worked really well.

Mr. Ross:

Mr. McHugh was very helpful in organizing days before for shutdown and stuff, where we could get together and spend some time to meet face to face and hash out things in person real time. That was an integral process in this. It was so healthy for us to be able to do that and to be able to work through some of these issues that we have for it, to give people a voice, right. So that they can talk about some of the issues that they've faced. Some of the things that they see in their classroom. That meaning gets lost in the shuffle some time. It was a lot of work, but so worth it in the end.

Mr. Ross:

All right, so we're going to start off with talking about our accomplishments and for that. So just that, again, 26 pages each grade level, each level K five middle school and high school has an entire page dedicated to things that they've done in the past year. So we just want to highlight here, just for a few minutes, some of the highlights of those highlights, but be sure please, to go through all of those amazing contents. So Lisa, are you there?

Ms. Mahar:

Hi everyone. Can you hear me?

Mr. Ross:

Yep.

Ms. Mahar:

Okay. Good evening. My name is Lisa Mahar and I am K-5 Science Content Coordinator. I like to say that I am the reason that the K-5 science program has made remarkable strides, but I can't, because I have to say it has been a collective effort, like Tom has said, on behalf committed, talented and dedicated individuals and I personally have to just thank a few people because I really feel like the science program, at the K5 level has [inaudible 01:09:01]. So first and foremost, I'd like to thank Mr. McHugh for prioritizing the elementary curriculum and programs, Mr. Simons and the Board of Education for your continual support every year. Ms. Jane King. I don't know if anyone knows her, but she is the presto of science specialists, that Mr. McHugh has acquired for us, that has been working with us for the past four years.

Ms. Mahar:

She's been instrumental at the K5 level and the department chairs, Tom and Sarah Hoffman-Prior, Sarah was instrumental in coming to some of our K5 meetings. I know that in that time involved with us, a future, hopefully science fair someday, and the summer curriculum writers, those K5 teachers. If you're out there, any of you and are we teachers that every year have becoming and are devoted to our new curriculum, they're the ones that have made a difference and our teaching assistants and the teachers that have come together to help us assemble our science kits and last but not least, our K5 principals, they have been unwavering in their support in creating spaces for us in our individual buildings, so that we can have collaborative areas and places where we can create science and engineering practices and places where we can just have all of our science supplies at one elective spot where we put all of our kids. So thank you to our principals at the K5 level.

Ms. Mahar:

Let me get right into our accomplishments. One word that describes it everyone, consistency. We have five elementary buildings and we are consistent with our science programs. We have a Science Content Coordinator that everyone reaches out to. They ask questions. They come to me with concerns. They asked me for supplies. They want to know about a book. Sometimes they even come to me and they give me a resource that they know I'm going to get out to the k-5 curriculum corner. We have content coordinators at all subject areas of K5. We've come together and we created this amazing K5 curriculum corner, that Nicole Maney mentioned, is a one stop shopping for all of our K5 buildings. We have five buildings.

Ms. Mahar:

They all have one place to go to find all the resources, all of the curriculum needs, all of our maps, all of our assessments standards. We have links to everything, resources. It was the best place to have. If you have a chance and you want to click on that K5 curriculum corner, you can actually see what it looks like. The other thing I just wanted to point out, consistency. Jane King, Mr. McHugh has acquired her for the last four years and she has really helped us create science units of study. If you know anything about the past of the K5 level, we used to rent science kits. Well, East Greenbush has their own now. We have at a minimum at every grade level, K5 at least two of our very own science units of studies, with overviews, link, supplies. We have kids assembled and they're in every building, in all the buildings, at every grade level, at least two have been created, and we're hoping to get third and maybe fourth one created this summer.

Ms. Mahar:

Consistency, I can't emphasize enough, professional development, going to workshops. We look at that picture there and we've got 15 plus staff K5, that went to a Cole Anderson workshop on the next generation science standards. I can't say it enough, our teachers are devoted to this and those sites, units of study. They are exemplar. Well, we can sell them actually. I just want to also mention consistency amongst the buildings. We all partner with our local businesses. Many of them are working the top class, world-class now, Regeneron. They for doing good, they have a day where they come in. It's actually a week and they come in and we have real scientists teaching us about science. What better way to be inspired, right?

Ms. Mahar:

The only other thing I wanted to say again, all of our buildings are making a concerted effort to create STEM labs, maker spaces, collaboratories. Some of the buildings are having STEM fairs. We're hoping to get one going for a district wide, one someday. We have supply inventory. We are growing and all I have to say is you wouldn't think consistency would be so instrumental and important, but it is what transforms average into excellence and that's what I want to say about K5 science. If that's where we're headed. Excellent. Now over to Sandy for middle school.

Ms. Crall:

My name is Sandy Crall. Thank you so much for letting us all speak with you this evening. I have the pleasure of serving as one of the sixth grade science teachers, as well as the middle school science curriculum coordinator. It really is a pleasure working with our entire department, not just that clock, but reaching out to the elementary school, especially with Lisa, who's worked with us on different things and Tom in the high school. So, you know, as we worked toward not just alignment and working together as a building, but we really are extending out throughout the district. I can see the difference already with our sixth graders as they come to us from the fifth grade, there definitely is a difference. I would like to just start by highlighting some of the many, many accomplishments within our department. A major accomplishment is that we've developed a greater consistency, there is that word again.

Ms. Crall:

It's like the word of the day, but there is a greater consistency across all grade levels, as well as within each grade level. From when I started working here till now, it's so much more uniform. It used to be each person did their own thing, addressing the curriculum, which is fine. It's really nice to get all of our

students a much more consistent, similar experience when we all share and benefit all of our skills to make it better for the kids. Some things that have helped us get here are having those different curriculum coordinator positions working with the elementary, even within our building, with the other curriculum coordinators, just trying to bring everything it together to one cohesive unit. Our department has had a participation in a lesson study. Jane King was spearheaded that, supported strongly by Mr. McHugh. We've gone to many workshops and conferences. There's been a lot of introduction of technology into, not just the whole school, but our department especially.

Ms. Crall:

We really learned how to use it and embraced it. I think it's really, really good for kids. Our administration supports us so much, especially with professional development. For anything we want or ask for, they're there to support us. I really think that has helped make us a stronger department. Over the past few years, we've done a lot of curriculum writing, curriculum mapping, we've been aligning curriculum to the New York State Science learning standards and next generation science standard, not an easy task and it's definitely ongoing, as we learn more and more about it.

Ms. Crall:

Our teachers have attended, you saw pictures earlier, of one of the conferences we went to. Our Science Olympiad team continues to excel, which increases student interest in Science and engineering. Goff now even has an after school homework club which is helping some of our learners who need some more help. We offer accelerated Science in grade 7 and Earth Science regents course in grade eight, we had 82% proficiency, the last time New York state science test was offered in eighth grade. That's when the students not, not counting the ones who in the Regents, with taking the Regents, which has a 100% proficiency with those kids. We had a teacher selected to participate in a library of Congress

Ms. Crall:

teachers workshop, we had special events, at Goff. Star gazing events, earth science celebrations, we even have our kids interested through a teacher encouraging that outside of school participation. There's a good number of our students who participate in Albany based, rocks, and minerals club even. So that's it for me for now. On to you , Tom.

Mr. Ross:

Highlights of the highlights. So at the high school, right. By the way, I don't know if you noticed any similarities between the formatting of Meagan's, total totally by accident. I don't even think it defaults to this blue either. So there's a few things here we have at the high school, two high school science teachers have been selected from the New York state master teacher program, which is awesome. We recently, about three years ago, called the local charter of the national honor society student, the science national honor society. Since that time, we've inducted nearly a hundred students into that, it's hugely cool thing. We've developed that club, it's pleasing to myself and we bring in scientists from the local community.

Mr. Ross:

Usually, we actually are in this room a few times a year, we try to do once a month. We've been super impressed by how receptive the local community is to coming in and talking to our students. Typically, they talk about how they got to their career, how they chose it, what it was like in school. So those real boots on the ground, kind of questions. They remember it, like, what did they do? How was it? Was it

hard? Those kinds of things. We actually had a local doctor from Albany Med come in and talk about the process of actually applying to medical school, going through medical school. What do you need to do? How do you get yourself through it? Those are huge things and we invite everyone and we fundraise so that we can buy pizza for everyone for encouragement.

Mr. Ross:

It's a nice time. It's usually about a two hour event and kids come in the evening and it's great. Almost all of those people are found by our students. So this is what they want. So it is driven by them. It is directed by them and these are our best and brightest kids who go on to do amazing things. So they're helping other people along the way, which is so awesome. Our science Olympiad, we all know about it, right? State championships, local championships and medals and medals and medals and metals. People know about Columbia High School and East Greenbush because of Science Olympiad, placards on the way in, right. It's an amazing thing. We continue to do amazing things. Unfortunately, Mrs. Prout retired last year, but her shoes are attempting to be filled and Mr. Amos, and we're working on that. We'll see where that goes.

Mr. Ross:

I can't say nothing either about science research. It's entering 21st year here. It's an amazing program that offers students up to 12 student college credits and the things that these kids do are just incredible. We're going to be able to run our science symposium this year, in person. We're pretty sure the auditorium will be available. Check your mailboxes and invites coming soon. All right. Just look at some of the places that these kids have worked in high school. We had students, that were published in prestigious journals, in high school. It's an incredible program run by Mrs. Gleeson, who also helps out at the K5 level. She's a great teacher and you're saying master teacher, and she's a real asset to our program.

Mr. Ross:

So I'm going to hit that last point. We've worked really hard as a science department here at the high school to utilize our flex science periods, which is the way we've structured our schedule. So we have time to individually work with students. We were not afforded the luxury of news department. Math department had an AIS, a time where we can work with students who are behind or challenged or need a little bit more to feed that brain of theirs. Right. We've reached out to those kids and we've improved our testing scores and what we're looking to do and we'll get into that in a minute is to actually couple that with some more teacher collaboration as well. So I won't get ahead of myself, but cool.

Mr. Ross:

I always talk about future Tom. Future Tom would be confused by this. That's future Tom's problem. All right. So goals. so this will just be a snippet of sort of our direction about where we'd like to go for our next program review. So at the districts level, these are the broad, big picture. So I'll just touch on this last bullet point here and then I'll turn it over to Lisa.

Mr. Ross:

We are certainly motivated to align our curricular across the grade levels, so that we have a better understanding about where students are coming from and where we want them to be at the end of that year. So that we have an increased level of communication between grade level teachers and between our content areas. We're so often siloed right in the science department where you're a bio teacher,

you're an algebra science teacher, but there's so many common themes between those and the next generation science standards really highlight those. So this has been a great opportunity for us to organize or critically look in that way. We've done amazing work, right? We really have in the last five years and now we need to leave that together. We need to make sure that we're all singing the same song, right? So that's a big goal for us in the coming few years. So Lisa.

Ms. Mahar:

Thank you Tom, but shout out to Heidi Gleason, also. She has been working at the K5 hall for the summer. She's been really great. It's been excellent having her. So I was going to quickly go over our K5, basically what we're asking for or where our goals are for the future are to have a K5 science fund so that we can refurbish our science kits. We want to continue to get support with the next generation New York State science learning standards. We're hoping to see Jane King stay on with us as a science expert. We're hoping to incorporate new science resources, we're always looking for something new. One of the things that we can use is mystery science. So maybe other teachers are always finding new resources. So keep abreast and stay current and to create consistent and meaningful K5 PD. So I'll talk a little bit more of that into the needs and assessment of our recommendation section.

Ms. Crall:

All right. So just quickly on goals we're shooting for hoping to accomplish in the future, is we would like to review and find, incorporate some newer up to date resources, textbook materials to really reflect the New York State learning standards to the next generation science learning standards. We would also like to continue using common department and grade level planning time increased as possible with our virtual Wednesday, that has been instrumental in providing us time to really work together within our grade levels and department and eventually we would like to look at, perhaps at some point in the future, adding a post-op primary instruction science pause, work for learners, really to choose the course, talk a little bit differently so that they too can be increasingly successful. That's it for me now. On to you Tom.

Mr. Ross:

So at the 9- 12 level, there's a few things I want to touch on before we get to our youth assessment and then any questions that you guys might have. The first one is, we really like to explore some college credit courses in the science department. It's something that we've been dabbling with looking into over the years, is this going to fit? Is that going to fit? We've looked at Syracuse, We've looked at local colleges.

Mr. Ross:

Currently I'm talking with John Christakis over at Siena college. He's a physics department chair. So he's a cool guy and we're discussing maybe implementing a college based business course. Their course is implanted a few districts around the area. So we're interested in that. That's just one avenue, but we would like to give students more opportunity to receive more college credit from the science and the science department. The last bullet there goes back to what I was finishing up on the district or talking about flex. When you were talking about accomplishments, we've had science flex for about eight years and it's been amazing. It's been a really useful tool for science teachers to connect with students. One of the original goals of flex was to also increase teacher collaboration, which it largely hasn't been able to do because of the complexity of the schedule.

Mr. Ross:

So currently I'm working with Mr. Harken and Mr. Kilmartin, to see about how we can kind of massage the schedule a little bit with no impact on anybody else. We have a plan and we're just making sure there's no issues. So that we can align teacher schedules using the flex to allow teachers to have some common planning time at the high school, right? So just to give you an idea, science teachers are spread out all over the building.

Mr. Ross:

So my room is on that end. The other physics teacher is on that end. We have basically no free periods together. We can't even talk till I see him, this year, just Wednesday mornings. So I'm like, "Hey, how are you doing" and it's really tough for us to collaborate, at least during the school day. So we're really hoping to take this flex model and just kind of massage it a little bit and make it even more useful than it is. That's a big goal so far. So lastly, we have our needs assessment here. So areas of improvement and how we're going to rectify them. So, back to you Lisa.

Ms. Mahar:

Thanks Tom. I'm just going to highlight the one that says professional development, maybe because I have a vision of whatever you'd like to see it look like. So I would like to see it look like a day where [inaudible 01:28:31] we actually get together and we have K2 teachers together and we actually do science, we actually get materials out and we get excited and there's nothing like showing teachers how exciting and how we can build that curiosity. I think if we can get the teachers on board, then they're going to want to bring it to the classroom, because it really gets children. Any child, even your struggling students. You can get hooked by science. It's amazing. You show me an experiment and even if I'm doing something, building something, anything science, I really believe that you can help a lot children. That's where it starts.

Ms. Mahar:

Like everyone's been saying you want to build that vertical alignment and where we can start going down with that. So designated annual PD for us is what we're looking for. If there's other needs and recommendations that we can read in the plan. Thank You.

Ms. Crall:

I'll do the same thing that Lisa did, I'll just highlight maybe one of them, because it really ties into the goals that I first spoke briefly about. So I'm going to just talk about the resources. That's something that I've been working on a little bit more recently. Right now our textbooks are over 15 years ago and really outdated, definitely do not reflect next generation science learning standards at all. So I've been looking into that. I've been talking with different textbook companies, reading resources, contacting local schools to see what they're doing. We had one representative from a group of us on Friday to show that that some samples that we're looking at to see what is out there and if it's relatively new.

Ms. Crall:

A few years ago, it didn't really even make sense to look for something new because the standards were so new companies hadn't really caught up, and now it's amazing quality material out there available, that we're looking at and we'll see what happens from that point. Really exciting, just looking and seeing what's out there and getting the input, not only from the teachers in my building, but reaching out in our local community to see with the other schools, like when we looked at, this past Friday. So reaching

out to see their thoughts of it, so that as they're actually implementing that. So I just wanted to touch base on that. They're all very important and I'd love to do on everything. Thank you so much. On to you Tom.

Mr. Ross:

All right. So I talked about two of these already and so I'm just going to touch on the last two. One is, we really need the high school to finish aligning our core sciences meaning, our physics, our living environment, or our science and our chemistry to the NGSS or the nysllis some New York state version of it. So we have a little bit of work to do with that. Mr. McHugh, I'm sure you can expect a few of those, appear on your desk late Friday night. You don't have a due date. No big deal. All right. 'Science teachers'. All right. So the other one is professional development. It's been great working with Mr. McHugh. He's been very supportive of basically, we say we need this and he says "I'll make it happen".

Mr. Ross:

So it's a need, right, because we still need it, but it's been happening and I expect it to continue to happen, but I thought it was important to mention there for those reasons. Again, I'd like to thank Sandy and Lisa for all their help and all their effort, not just with this program review, but throughout the years that they've been working. I'd like to thank Mr. McHugh for his support over the last five years and all of his years of service in the district and the board and Mr. Simons for your continued support. Any questions?

Mr. Buono:

Any questions? Excellent job JoAnn, Michele or Jennifer? Good. Excellent. I just want to thank again, Tom, Sandy and Lisa for the presentation and the entire committee for, the work that very impressive two great presentations, Mr. McHugh.

PART 3 OF 5 ENDS [01:33:04]

Mr. Buono:

Two great presentations, Mr. McHugh. I took some notes about your needs and wants. Those are the things that we need to hear about as a board as we develop the next couple of topics here, we're talking about the budget and the resources that we need to provide the best opportunities for our children, the courses that they need to be successful, whether a career or college. Science is important, and it touches every part of life as well. So love the enthusiasm. Miss the presentations for the kids. Lisa, in science. We been to some of the elementary schools. Hope we'll be back for that and seeing some of the work in person by the students. So thanks again.

Speaker 3:

Thank you.

Mr. Buono:

Okay, guys. Thank you.

Speaker 3:

Thank you.

Mr. Simons:

I just want to comment briefly. I don't know whether everyone's going to stay on virtually or not, but I'm going to be presenting the budget in just a few seconds and I can't think of any better evidence of the quality of our teachers and what has been presented tonight in both the English Department and the Science Department, at all levels, are doing an extraordinary job, continuing to reevaluate what we're doing. And it's very important that that quality shine through because we present a budget that is not only in dollars and cents, but is a reflection of the commitment that everyone is demonstrating in the district to achievement and excellence. I can't think of any better message. Maybe I don't need to do the budget presentation because Tom and Megan, they have already taken care of it. And Lisa and Sandy and everybody. Nicole and everybody. Super job that was done. I left off somebody and I'm sorry. The middle school...

Mr. Buono:

Rachel.

Speaker 4:

Rachel.

Mr. Simons:

Rachel at the middle school presenting the English curriculum. So, great support for the budget by presenting your excellent presentation.

Mr. Buono:

Great job. So, as Mr. Simons said, the next report we have is the 21-22 budget. This is our second, really, budget hearing. So we hope to have some more news. We know the state budget is still out there, but at least we have some ideas where we're going to go. So we'll turn it over to Mr. Simons and the budget presentation.1:35.32

Mr. Simons:

So, good evening everyone. The good news is that my presentation is shorter than it was on March 10. And I'm going to try to be as succinct as possible. Hope everybody can hear me out there. This is our second budget workshop for the proposed budget for next school year. At the last board meeting, we talked about some of the academic highlights in our district in various areas of the board's goals. Today, we're going to represent more of a dollars and cents and where we're at as a progress report to the board and the community regarding developing the final budget recommendation to the board, which hopefully will be adopted on April 14th. So through the agenda tonight, we're going to talk about the changes that we've made since our March 10 presentation, both on the expense side of the proposed budget and revenue side. We're going to highlight portions of the budget that relate to salary benefits.

Mr. Simons:

We're also going to talk a little bit about trends over the past five or six years. Budget to budget trends. Where has the budget gone? Where are we going with the budget? And how does that budget trend compare with where we've been able to bring the tax levy in for our community. Each year, over the course of the last several years, the board is aware that we have a vehicle replacement schedule, which we use a reserve to purchase buses through a process that sets aside money to buy buses and

reimburses that reserve through state transportation aid. We'll also talk about vehicle replacements, where we've purchased some vehicles for the Maintenance and Grounds Department. We're proposing to purchase one for next year. We're going to talk about things we've done long-term and short-term to save money, and future considerations regarding our budget and some important milestones in terms of dates for the board and the community to be aware of regarding the budget vote and the board election.

Mr. Simons:

So at the last meeting, we projected that our revenues would be approximately \$102.4 million. We made some adjustments to our revenues. One of the things that the board supported last year was we went about going about calculating and documenting and submitting expenses related to students who require extra services in the district for which we can be reimbursed by the state through aid category called Excess Cost Aid. Questar BOCES is now doing that for us. And through that process we're achieving an additional reimbursement able to project our revenues \$661,203 increase. Those are expenses such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, special education services, that cost a lot of money within the budget that are reimbursable for a category of expense driven aid called High Cost Excess Cost Aid, which is increasing in our projection because of the submissions that have been done through Questar BOCES.

Mr. Simons:

So we're revising our revenue projections to about 103,098,971. When we look at the expenditure side of that budget, we were at 103.9 last time we presented the budget. We made some changes. We clarified some of the support you've heard about tonight from Questar started regarding professional development. We are able to continue to provide BOCES services and the support that's going on, but we are moving that estimate down \$45,000. We took a look at the teacher retirements that we've received thus far in the district. And we've also adjusted some of the budget to incorporate some of the administrative changes that we made in prior year, which I'll talk about just a little bit. So we're able to bring our projected salaries down almost 390,000 because of retirements and also some of the administrative changes that we'll talk about.

Mr. Simons:

Equipment. We reviewed equipment that's been purchased over the last several years. We're able to find ways to bring those expenses down almost \$120,000. 118,422. And we put back into the budget summer learning opportunities that Mr. McHugh is going to present later on. So our expenditures from March 10th to today have been decreased and we're at approximately 103.6 and we reduced projected expenditures by a pretty significant amount. So where we stand right now on March 24th... And again, we're hearing good news about state and federal aid. We are projecting a gap between projected revenues and projected expenses of about \$542,000. And while that is a lot of money, we are at a better point than what we anticipated at the beginning of this year. And we're at a better point in time then we have been in previous years at this point because we've confirmed a lot of information earlier.

Mr. Simons:

And I want to thank Mrs. Wager for moving forward the process. We expect, given what we're hearing, that combination of federal monies and increases to our foundation aid based on what the assembly proposed, the Senate has proposed, we expect that we will be able to, between now and April 14, close that gap through a combination of continuing to look at the expense side of the budget and bring our

expense projections down even further, but also through revenues we expect to receive in the form of state aid. 2% of our foundation aid is being discussed right now. It's a general parameter increase of 2%. And, Linda, that would bring approximately how much?

Mrs. Wager:

\$350,000.

Mr. Simons:

\$350,000 just in that change. Also, both the Assembly and the Senate have indicated that they do not support the services aid, the consolidation of expense driven aids. That will also increase our state aid. And the removal of STAR was likely to happen, which we talked about before. So we think we'll be in a position not only to close that gap, but also to say to the board any additional revenues that come from the state would be used to reduce the 1.28% tax levy proposed right now, which is at the cap down to as close to zero as we can. So we're pretty confident where we're at right now with the budget that this gap will close, we'll be able to bring the tax money down even further. This is a good year to bring it as close to zero as possible because of the impact of COVID on our community.

Mr. Simons:

One of the things we want to emphasize is where does the budget go? It's important that everyone understand that about 78% of our budget is salaries and benefits of the people that provide the services to our students. And we are a people business. Instructional salaries are about \$40 million. Our support salaries are about \$12 million. And our benefits are about 28. Over time, we have done a staffing analysis annually to make sure that as enrollment has changed the number of positions that we have in both the instructional category and the non-instructional category is adjusted. So periods when enrollment has gone down, we've reduced staffing mostly through attrition. And in periods when the enrollment has gone up, we've had to adjust staffing to respond to class sizes and the services. But 78% of our budget is in the people.

Mr. Simons:

Additionally, we track both the changes in the budget, as well as the changes in the tax levy. You can see from this graph during the period of time from 2016 to 2019-20 our average budget increases were about 2% in part because we were responding to the gap elimination adjustment, we were coming back off of a very difficult period, but we were kind of incrementally managing our budget and our staffing. During that same period of time because of the revenue concerns, we were one of the districts that was receiving the lowest amount of state aid. Even though the budget stayed relatively within a 2% range, we had to raise our taxes pretty just less than the cap in each of those years to make up for state aid loss. So now we see that our tax cap will be bringing the tax levy down and it was 1.5%. This year, next year, it is projected right now at 1.28.

Mr. Simons:

We're going to bring that down even further. But people might ask, "Well, why did the budget go up from 1.76% increase from 18-19 to 19-20? And why did it go up 4% into this year?" There are a couple of factors that contributed to that. We've settled our contracts with our employees, but more than 1% of that increase of 4% was associated with the refinancing that we did with some of our capital debt. And that was a large payment that was made this year, so that the long-term scheduling of the debt was

actually a long-term savings. So about 1% of that 4.01 was associated with principal interest payments associated with refinancing. Linda, did you want to add anything to that?

Mr. Simons:

So really setting aside that payment, we would have been down closer to the 3% range.

Mrs. Wager:

That's right. We did a refinancing in December of 2019. So we did experience some savings last year. And then this year we started to make payments on that new debt. That's the 1% increase in the debt service.

Mr. Simons:

So now you see that where we are now at this point in time, and we expect to make changes between now and the 14th, our budget is projected to go up about 3.87%. Majority of that increase is associated with staffing. And we're projecting the tax levy at 1.28% with intent to use any additional monies beyond the revenue needed to close the gap to reduce that tax levy even further. The Board and community is familiar with how we use our bus transportation reserve. We are not proposing to borrow any money this year. We are scheduled to replace eight buses at a cost of \$757,000. Those monies have been legally set aside by the board, as well as voted on by the community to reauthorize the bus purchase reserve. Using a reserve is a good way of save on interest associated with borrowing. And the reserve is based on a schedule of replacing our buses, which can be seen by anybody in the community on our website.

Mr. Simons:

You can see what buses are planned to be purchased, replaced, and you can see the cycle the cycle at which district implements the replacement of the buses. We look at student safety, the mileage on the buses, the operation and maintenance costs, the fuel efficiency. For every dollar that we take out of the reserve to buy a new bus, \$0.67 on the dollar goes back into the reserve to be used for future replacement to keep our buses safe and efficient. It's a cycle that continually replaces monies within the reserve to keep our transportation fleet. I think we have approximately 102 or 103 buses in the district fleet currently. We have become more efficient in the use of our buses and maintain less spares than what we once did to adjust to financial circumstances. Additionally, we have a proposed in the budget at this point, the replacement of plow truck, that cost of \$40,800.

Mr. Simons:

As we get closer to the end of the year, likely in May when Mrs. Wager presents another fund balance report, we will determine whether or not we may be able to purchase this \$40,000 vehicle out of the current year's budget, which will reduce even further the expenses planned for next year, but don't know whether we can do that yet. Some things that we've got to save money. Over the course of the last few years, our board has asked me to continuously evaluate the administrative structure. Over the course of the last three and a half years we've gone and we've eliminated assistant superintendent positions in the areas of personnel and professional development, as well as in the area of business and finance. We replace those positions with director positions, excellent, competent people, but also part of that administrative organization, we've absorbed duties that were done by those assistant superintendents. Mr. McHugh has taken on more. I've taken on more. And we've tried to be more efficient.

Mr. Simons:

So the cost of our central administration has gone down as a result of this and is something that... And I believe that we are continuing to deliver very good supervision and services to the community. We mentioned the Questar stac service, which has claimed additional excess cost aid. Several years ago I asked the board when Peter was hired, Peter Goodwin, to replace 500 aging classroom and office printers with more efficient printers of multifunction and printing. We phase that program in and is not only saving cost on printing cost per copy, but it is also eliminating waste and copying caused by dysfunction of printers. And that has been a big savings for our district. We continually review our insurance levels to make sure that we are not over insured. And Mrs. Wager just completed a review for this year. And we are recognized by Utica National Insurance as a very safe district, which helps us to maintain low premiums on our insurance.

Mr. Simons:

Future considerations. We're going to continue to look at what may come to the district in terms of our final state aid. We have been informed by Senator Schumer's office that we're going to receive approximately \$2.8 million in federal monies through the \$1.9 trillion stimulus COVID relief package that was passed. How those monies can be spent and whether those monies will flow through New York State or directly to the district is not known at this time. We are planning not to spend all that money in one chunk. And we are talking about ways that we might be able to use that money strategically over multiple years so that we are not incurring a funding cliff around 2023 when that federal money is no longer available.

Mr. Simons:

Long range purchases of equipment, for example. Technology replacements in other areas that we might be able to use that money for if permitted. Additionally, we have to finalize our enrollment. We still have kindergarten registrations coming in and we are monitoring those. We finished up our formal kindergarten registration within the last couple of weeks, but we still have registrations. May 18th is a big day. It is the date on the calendar for the proposed budget vote. We'll also give the opportunity for our community to vote on purchase of the buses for the use of reserve. And we have four board seats up for election this time. And important dates for our incumbent board members and our community members to know. On March 29th, which is next week, our board candidate petitions will be available. On April 14, we're hoping that the board will adopt the budget. The deadline for anyone considering running for the board to submit petitions is April 19th. We will have a public hearing on the budget on May 5th, and the vote will be on May 18th.

Mr. Simons:

Those are the important dates to remember. That concludes my presentation. I went over what I intended to. But that is where we're at right now with the budget. We brought the expenditures down, we projected more optimistic situation regarding our revenues, and we're continuing to look at both sides of the budget. I have to say that Mrs. Wager has one of the sharpest pencils I've ever seen, and she continues to explore detail on the budget, see what we can do. We also have a couple of other items that we're looking at for potential expenditure reduction and we'll have further conversation with the board about it. At this time, I'll take any questions or concerns from the board.

Mr. Buono:

Any questions, board members, for Mr. Simons at this time? Lot of information to digest. Or general comments, direction? Maybe? Virtual members? Michele, JoAnn, Deanna? No? Thumbs up. So I would just like to say thank you for all the work, continuing to work on the expenditure side, the budget side, to move the tax levy to closer to, as you said, closer to zero, which I'm sure our committee would be very pleased to see going in to next year with all the issues that we faced. We know that we had the federal money, which is not counted in there, right?

Mr. Simons:

Right.

Mr. Buono:

... That also would assist in some things perhaps like summer school, learning gaps, which we're hearing about, and those needs for our students that we experienced during the COVID pandemic as they return to school. I think this is the right direction. We've seen the budget, but we've seen the size of the budget has grown, but a lot of it is as Mr. Simons said, driven by our staff. We're in the people business and that's what happens. But we're also providing the resources to our kids, the opportunities for them to prepare for the next phase of their life, and continue to provide high quality education to our community. And I think that's critical.

Mr. Buono:

And to go through these times, we've been able to do all those things, maintain what we have, and continue to grow as you saw some program reviews and very exciting things that they want to do to expand those opportunities for students here at East Greenbush which we just continue to make it more attractive for folks who move into this community. And we see a lot of growth. Regeneron was mentioned, other growth that we're seeing in the community. And I think that the quality of your school district also reflects on the desire to move into a community. And I want to thank our staff, administrators, everyone for working hard, and to continue to provide those opportunities for our kids throughout the school year.

Mr. Simons:

Thank you, Mr. Buono.

Mr. Buono:

So now we're moving to... there's any other closing comments before we go? Mr. McHugh's going to talk about the...

Mr. Simons:

Mr. McHugh is going to talk about, we are calling it the Summer Elevation Program.

Mr. McHugh:

So just a real brief history. We have run a summer school program in the past. It ran for four weeks compared to the six week extended 12 month extended school year program. The focus. Students currently not eligible for additional supports within the 12 month extended school year program. So we're looking at those students in particular. Both programs started in the past on the same date, which is typically the Monday after July 4th. This year staff and students would report on Tuesday, July 6 as

Independence Day is recognized Monday, July 5th. The summer 2021 Elevate K-12 program school day would tentatively run from 8:30 to 11:30 AM. That would allow students of the 12 month extended school year program to get in, to get acclimated before students participating in this program would arrive at school. District transportation would be provided based on hardship. We have approximately 41 buses that run already during the summer.

Mr. McHugh:

Again, we've had the challenge, like all districts, with drivers and just availability. But the K-5 focus for this program, we would target our student population that had been identified with the universal screeners that were implemented below the 50th percentile. Also, we would include teacher and principal recommendation. We look at factors such as attendance, engagement during this hybrid instruction. And we also look at social-emotional wellness. We also utilize the social-emotional learning screener. The design of the program would be one teacher to every eight to 12 students. And we would focus primarily on English, language arts, and mathematics, and support services as needed. K-5 academic screening data. This is looking at our students where they're currently placed at the grade level transitioning to the next grade level and just gives us a number of students that would be eligible based on the academic criteria.

Mr. McHugh:

So, we're looking at a little over 175 students that would be eligible. There's a lot of unknowns. We don't know how this would be perceived by our community. The COVID pandemic has taken its toll. So would parents embrace a program like this or would they stay away from it and want to have that summer vacation? Also, it's the same thing for our teachers and faculty. We have sent out a survey to see what the interest would be in participating and supporting a program like this. When we look at our K-5 support services, these students are identified through social-emotional learning screener, it identifies students who may need additional teaching, modeling, rehearsal, and assistance in one of the five core competencies, self-awareness, self-management, regulation, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Mr. McHugh:

Our 6-12 focus. We're really targeting our student population based on course values. We do a really good job monitoring course values, but we would take a look at the students that are failing one or more of the course. Also, we would also welcome teacher and principal recommendation. And again, we look at things such as student attendance and engagement during this last year. And we also look at the social-emotional wellness. So the design of that program is again to keep that ratio between teachers and student low. We'd focus on four core academic areas, English, mathematics, science, and social studies. And we provide those support services as needed. When we look at academic eligibility, this gives us an idea of the students that would be eligible for a program like this at each grade level, based on the core academic areas, as well as 6-8 support services.

Mr. McHugh:

So how these students are identified. They're identified using current case loads, looking at the instructional support team minutes throughout the last year, parent requests, parent concerns and students that have had a reintegration concern. So they've been out of school, they've been full remote. They need to reintegrate in. Or the students that are transitioning from their neighborhood K-5 elementary school and they have increased anxiety about transitioning into the middle school.

Approximate number of students who would be considered. We're looking at another additional 50 to 55 students. Some of the students, but not all, are eligible under academic eligibility criteria, but other students did fine academically, but they have those social-emotional concerns that need to be addressed. The delivery for the support services. Typically small groups, 3-6 students. There's individual check-ins and individual sessions. And our social workers and our guidance counselors push in some of the classrooms as well.

Mr. McHugh:

And they have pull-out groups based on need and grade level. Our 9-12 focus. We would continue using the APEX program. Those associated costs remain the same as in previous years. We've run that for several years. The students recommended for APEX would be capable students who didn't engage or complete the required work to pass during the school year. These students recover credit by completing our online program under the guidance of Columbia High School teachers. So APEX is a student responsive software. It really identifies where the student's needs are, gives them some additional practice to help them recover credit. We also want to add what is new to summer enrichment program and that's designed for students that have been identified with significant learning gaps. The goal of this four week program would be to teach those essential skills to recover credit, but it would be framed similar to summer school, but with the curriculum focused on reading, writing, and critical thinking. The courses that we would offer are Earth Science, Living Environment, English 9, English 10, Global 9, Global 10, Algebra, Geometry, and Fine Arts.

Mr. McHugh:

As far as support services, we would continue to use Alyssa Evans who is a licensed mental health counselor. She's employed by Rensselaer County Mental Health and Prevention Services and contracted by our district. Just a little background. Alyssa currently works with 26 students. And basically the students she works with, we have parent permission or it's the parent that generated the request to work with Alyssa. Self-referrals, teacher- principal referrals. And those are individual supportive counseling, small group, and universal intervention meaning that Alyssa proactively pushes into classrooms and really targets social-emotional learning, those essential life skills, better decision-making. Two school social workers. And they would work with students that have been identified through the Columbia High School Child Study Team, as well as staff recommendations. And that is really important because it's that continued connection with students throughout the year. The summer is the key where time away from school, we lose some of those students, but our school social workers are also the ones that are making those home visits that would continue throughout the summer. Again, focused on reintegration back into the normal regular school day-

PART 4 OF 5 ENDS [02:04:04]

Mr. McHugh:

Focused on reintegration back into the normal regular school day, relationship building stress management, coping strategies, and identifying supports within the school setting. That's really important for our students to have that trusted adult, somebody that they know they can seek out in difficult times. Estimated K-12 associated costs... this is a tough thing to really estimate because we're unsure what the participation numbers would be. Looking at student numbers that would be eligible based on the academic eligibility criteria, as well as students that would be eligible under social, emotional supports, we're looking at a total estimated cost of about \$168,833, and I broke it down by

item. There's a school nurse that we would need to have on staff, and there's a summer school administrator and teacher salary support staff salaries. Any questions? Comments?

Mr. Buono:

Board members, anything? No?

Ms. Skumurski:

Jim, is the, \$168, is the max that you are thinking, or the conservative side?

Mr. McHugh:

I'm sorry, I didn't hear that question.

Ms. Skumurski:

I said is 168 like the maximum amount you think they will be spending?

Mr. McHugh:

Yes. I took the total number of eligible students using the criteria that we established, and that's what I based that estimate on.

Mr. Buono:

Is that the amount that's in the budget now, Mr. Simons?

Mr. Simons:

Yes, Depending on how the federal money flows will drive whether or not it stays in the general fund budget or whether it has to be separate. It would either be voted on as part of the budget, once we have complete information on that, or it could be voted on as a separate item. But we built the cost into the budget...

Mr. Buono:

... and you said you were surveying the staff about it?

Mr. McHugh:

Yeah, I sent a survey out to the staff last week. As of today at 1:45 PM, I had 70 responses and we have about 35 teachers that have responded that they would be interested in supporting a program like that.

Mr. Buono:

That's the challenge... You are hearing about people wanting to take a break, kids want to take a break, families take a break. But I think it's important at least to explore these opportunities for your students to make up some of those learning gaps that they've experienced in transitioning, as well.

Mr. Buono:

Any other questions for Mr. McHugh? All right, thank you. Okay. Committee reports, we'll start with Marissa

Ms. Cannon:

Our Appendix D committee has been meeting on a weekly basis. Most recently we've met on March 9th , March 16th, and March 22nd. Mr. Simons attended our March 9th meeting and encouraged our committee to continue working on a realignment of compensation. When we agreed to the memorandum of agreement with the EGTA, there was language in that I'm away with a January 1st deadline for that compensation structure, and we're currently beyond that deadline. The timeline was to provide our current advisers with appropriate time to evaluate whether or not they want it to continue with their advisor duties based upon the new compensation structure. Mr. Simons encouraged our committee to work within the budgeted parameters as there was no additional money to be added, and Mr. Simons noted that this work is very important to himself and the Board of Education and needs to get done in a reasonable timeframe. Our committee on the March 9th meeting agreed to a tiered structure from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest. We started with our Columbia High School clubs and identified all of the tier 5 clubs and the tier 1 clubs.

Ms. Cannon:

We moved to Goff Middle School and went forward with the same identifying tier 5 clubs and identifying tier 1 clubs. When we got to the elementary level, we did not have consensus at that March 9th meeting so as a committee, we did some homework. We did some research and looked over all of the end-of-year reports starting with the 17-18th school year. We re-reviewed those and we spoke with elementary principals regarding some similarities and differences between the clubs at the elementary level, and also reached out to the advisors, holding those positions. At our March 16th meeting, we discussed our research and we did come to consensus with tiering the elementary club is at the highest level, tier 5, and also tier 1. We noted that across the elementary levels, while they have the same club names, there are great differences between a lot of them in terms of the student involvement and the number of meetings.

Ms. Cannon:

So moving forward, we are looking to bring more consistency to those clubs so that all of our students at the elementary level have the same opportunities. To conclude that meeting, Mrs. Taylor suggested that we continue our conversations with administrators, so we know exactly what the clubs are doing in order to tier them most appropriately and determine the compensation level. Mrs. Taylor reinforced that the Board of Education needs to be fiscally responsible. At our most recent meeting on the 22nd, we filled in the blanks. All of the tiers have been identified, tiers 1 through 5 across the high school, the middle school and elementary levels.

Ms. Cannon:

We have agreed, at this point, to meet next week, and we're all, as a committee, reviewing that tiered schedule individually. We're going to be coming back and speaking about any concerns that we have regarding the draft tier levels and any additional information that might be needed. We have also invited our Music Department chair to our next meeting to talk a little bit more in depth about the music stipends, so our committee has a better understanding of the outside and evening commitments that those clubs are responsible for. Does anyone have any questions about Appendix D?

Mr. Buono:

Any questions? No, looks like we're good. Okay.

Ms. Cannon:

Then just a brief staffing update, in order to support our first and second graders coming back, we needed to hire one temporary monitor at the elementary level at three hours per day. We recruited for that position and selected one candidate who would be able to start on Monday the 29th. That individual's on the personnel memo tonight on the consent agenda. We have also been in search for three temporary teaching assistants. We've identified a candidate for the DPS position and we are still working on two temporary TA's for bell top. We are going to be looking to bring substitutes and while we continue to recruit for those roles.

Mr. Buono:

Excellent. Thank you, Marissa.

Ms. Cannon:

Thank you.

Ms. Wager:

Thank you, Mr. Bruno. March 11th, we had a health insurance committee meeting. We had a guest speaker, Mr. Chris from AmSurg insurance, which is the third-party administrator for health insurance consortium. He just explained to us the differences between our current CDPHP HMO plan and a plan that they offered through cache, which is the CDPHP EPO plan. We had all of the units and unions represented, and there were some questions about that. We've followed up with a meeting just last night about it again, and we have decided on an April 22nd deadline date as to be notifying the two. Are we going to move forward on this, or are we going to stay with our current HMO plan? Was it received well? The shift...

Ms. Wager:

Yes, there are some. There's a caveat to it, and that is that we currently have 152 CDPHP members, and all members from all units need to transition at once.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Linda. Moving on to

Mr. McHugh:

If there are two letters attached regarding 3-8 testing, in short, near state education departments determined that it will not be possible to administer any of this year state assessments remotely. Assessments must be school-based and given in person. There's one letter that is designed for remote families and 3-8, giving that information. We are only required to administer session one of the assessment, so the dates are included in both of those memos. We are asking our full remote families to contact us if they would like their child to take the Grades 3-8 ELA Math and Science test so that we can plan accordingly. For 3, 5, we plan on bringing our full remote students in on Wednesday at a central location at Genet elementary, utilizing the gymnasium. But we need to know how many students will be taking that test that are coming from full remote.

Mr. McHugh:

For hybrid families, we're actually asking the opposite. We're asking them to let their building principal or their classroom teacher know if they're not willing to take that test. So in previous years when students didn't take the test, we found them an alternate in that location. We had that alternate location supervised by one of our staff members or faculty members. We really need to know how many students will not be taking that test so that we can prepare because we don't have any additional locations or any additional staffing or faculty members. We'd like to get those two memos out tomorrow, out to the families and give them the information regarding the upcoming New York State assessments.

Mr. Buono:

Thanks. Do you have any questions regarding this? Mr. Simons?

Mr. Simons:

Just briefly, we've had several meetings this year of our Committee for Global Education. This is a committee that is focusing on areas of pedestrian that we can look at to continue to expand emphasis on diversity and inclusion as a sub group. We've had a book study going on that is voluntary, that is involving our teachers and our members in looking at these topics. We have focused on Professional Development. We have Online Professional Development that's available to everybody in the district related to various topics. We're trying to line up some speakers for next year, including an opening day.

Mr. Simons:

One of our committees has looked at tools that are available, that are research-based to review curriculum and instructional resources. That process will be one that we will embed within the program reviews, but also in our grade level meetings. We are also creating a website for new families to the district to take a look at what resources are available in the community, that we've identified students, staff, parents, who would serve as ambassadors in every building to welcome new families and help to orient them to the grade. Lots of work going on to be as inclusive as we can be. We're trying to be as thoughtful as we can about this topic. It's important.

Mr. Simons:

We're embedding some of the things we're doing on Professional Development Plan. Additionally, we had a virtual meeting of our Policy Committee meeting this Monday. We met through a Zoom meeting. That was the Board on the Policy Committee and myself to talk about three different policy areas. The first applies, you may recall that there was an interest last year, and revisiting our residency policy to see what would be involved in permitting a non-resident place to have their children come to the district, on a tuition-free basis. We looked at sample policies from other districts that permit that option, as well as Mr. Mann took a look at our current policy and made some suggestions for revisions. We talked about areas such as not incurring any additional expense through the policy, how that would be implemented in terms of class sizes, as well as looking at program offerings for our kids at the high school and the middle school level. We look at the area of extracurricular activities and athletics, and talked about some of the considerations regarding athletics.

Mr. Simons:

We plan to have our attorney take a look at some of the sample policies and come up with a draft, and then we'll share it with the board meeting as a discussion. But in general, the policy committee indicated that we should continue to move forward with us. Additionally, there was a recommendation. The

School Boards Association Policy Service to update our policy regarding board officers, and district officers and board members really made into a provision for conflict of interest to avoid any conflicts of interest related to the determination regarding the federal awards.

Mr. Simons:

The board had no concerns about that recommendation for changing. We'll move that forward to a first reading at our next meeting. We also advise the Board Policy Committee that we were coming into compliance with new requirement to make sure that any single-use restrooms within any of our facilities are identified as gender, for both genders. We have completed in that process as of Monday and all of our assignments is up, including the Central Administration building. We are in compliance with that requirement. It's a good meeting. I plan to have more, if Board Policy Committee is comfortable with it or real meetings, but to try to do that with consideration to the board's busy schedule.

Mr. Buono:

Sure. Excellent. Any questions for Mr. Simons on those two topics? Education policy? Great activities. That concludes our committee report section now we'll move to the minutes.

Mr. Buono:

Draft minutes for March 10th meeting, all Board members in attendance, whether they are present in person or virtually. Any questions, comments, or revisions for the minutes? Seeing none, I need a motion to approve the minutes. Kathleen, second, Jennifer, all those in favor... Approved.

Mr. Buono:

We'll be onto regular business approval of programs for residential disabilities. Any questions or comments? Seeing none, I need a motion for that? Michelle, second JoAnn, All those in favor... Approved.

Mr. Buono:

Extracurricular clubs, activities, resolution. This refers to the previous item discussed as form that gives Mr. Simons the discretion to follow through on those final comments or questions. Seeing none, I need a motion to approve that. Mark, Second?, Deanna, all those d favor... Approved.

Mr. Buono:

Tabled motions. I have nothing at this time, and old business... I don't have anymore. Do you have anything? Nothing? ok. Moving to the consent agenda as we modified earlier. It's A through-K. We added the item on a music program. Is there any questions, or comments, discussion? I know we have. I think I saw Lynn out there on the construction contract. Any questions on that?

Ms. Skumurski:

I just want to recognize, it looks like Staples gave us a fairly decent donation, so nice to recognize them for that.

Mr. Buono:

Yep. A couple of nice donations and also from 3M to Green Meadow for some supplies. It's great to see those efforts. We've got the Encore Course proposal that was presented last week by Ms. Barker. That's

also on the consent agenda as well. Seeing no comments or questions? I need a motion approve the consent agenda.

Mr. Buono:

Michele, one second. JoAnn Taylor, those in favor... Approved. New business, I'll turn it over to Mr. Simons regarding the letter to Dr. Zucker .

Mr. Simons:

Yes. This is an additional item to what we've been talking about regarding advocacy for changes in the state guidance, regarding social distancing and other guidelines that would permit us to bring students back into school for full in-person learning. The Questar BOCES superintendents have been meeting, really, two or three times a week since March of last year, virtually. This is a topic we've been discussing over the last three weeks.

Mr. Simons:

We were able to have unanimity within our districts through the Questar regarding this letter, which is not always the case. We all get along real well and we all have different considerations. Every superintendent and every district Dr. Cruz has signed off on this letter that went to Dr. Zucker today and to our legislators advocating for the same thing that we've been advocating for as an individual district, changes to the guidance.

Mr. Simons:

I want to thank Dr. Cruz, my colleagues in the Questar BOCES, as well as Dan Sherman, who helped draft the letter, who is the Communications Director at Questar. This letter has been sent off today.

Mr. Buono:

Let's hope for some progress. I really think that, Community members have reached out, I know I've reached out, Mr. Simons, the superintendents, a lot of you've done the advocacy as well. I can ask our parents and families to, "don't be afraid to reach out to your state representatives." and continue to ask for consideration because it is important, help us get our students back in person quickly. Any other new, business board members? No? Ok. Moving to our second public forum, Linda?

Ms. Wager:

Yes. We have one comment about Monica Nicholson to elementary school students. She said thank you for addressing her question earlier, and she appreciates the valued of efforts for bringing kids back to school full time. You mentioned tonight that you were working with Questar, and an advocacy group to all the forum with the Commissioner of Education. Is there information that you could provide to her on this advocacy group that you're working with?

Mr. Simons:

Yeah, so she wants to send me an email directly. I will send her information on how she could be part of that group and who's on that group and what we have done so far.

Ms. Cannon:

I will forward her comment to you.

Mr. Buono:

Excellent. Anything else, Linda? Moving to our second Board forum. I'll start in person. We'll start on my left with Mr. Mann.

Mr. Mann:

I have two things. In the interest of time, I do have some questions on summer school, but I'll email them. So to the board and you and Jim and everybody. We can save some time in that. The second thing is, and I spoke about it last board meeting too, is the budget. Well, I was hoping this year wouldn't be the year that we had that \$100,000,000 mark, but unfortunately it is. I just want to make sure we do everything in our power to mitigate our expenses.

Mr. Mann:

We got to look at the new school taxes going up with what's going up in the County and the state, and everybody's trying to make up some expenditures for the previous year. But, we just have to keep in mind when we're really scrutinizing our budget on some high dollar items. Maybe this isn't the year, we look to do it next year when things are a little bit better. Hopefully, some of this federal money, we'll be able to use, but I just really want to make sure that we're doing everything possible to look at all our expenses and some of our high dollar expenses.

Mr. Buono:

Okay. Thank you, Mark.

Ms. Curtin:

I really want him to say thank you to Mr. McHugh for the presentation on summer school, and all the efforts that are being put forward to help our kids that are struggling now and are going to continue to struggle. I think this summer school program is excellent. I believe it's going to be money very well spent, and it's going to help us in the long run because this is going to be a long-term problem.

Ms. Curtin:

I also, reading the six to 12 pods when they were talking about breaking the students up What I really noticed there is all the efforts that we're putting in now to help the students and the amazing roles that our teaching assistants are playing in that. When you see Operation Launchpad and you also see at the middle school, how much our teaching assistants are stepping up and filling in all of those little gaps that are coming in, as we have to keep six foot distance and everything. I know everybody's really working hard this year but I think sometimes, that is a group that they are kind of the unsung heroes that really hold a lot together. I just wanted to give a shout out to them tonight.

Mr. Buono:

Frank? anything?

Mr. Yeboah:

Those presentations were a big one. Yeah.

Mr. Buono:

Thank you, Frank, Deanna?

Ms. Muth:

Yeah. I wanted to say the presentations were excellent, and brought a little bit of normalcy back to our meeting.

Mr. Buono:

Good point. Jennifer? You're good. Okay. Thank you. JoAnn? And Michele?.

Mr. Buono:

Thumbs up, All right. So I think, Mark said it very well. We talked about the budget. The meeting had a lot of information tonight. In the past, we have combined the budget hearings with the regular business since it's separate. But I think even though it was a long meeting, the contents were terrific and talked about several very important topics for the district, the budget, the in-person learning, covering it, their advocacy, just a tremendous amount of information to share and shows.

Mr. Buono:

Again, the transparency we try to provide for our community on the issues that are facing us and the activities we're undertaking to make this a great place to send your kids to school and to live here in the student. So, appreciate all the efforts as well. One of the things I miss, Mr. Simons is about the budgeted and buses is they want to see that you are always in the green buses, electric buses, and maybe we can start going towards that route with some incentives to get some of the electric vehicles, and things like that to work our community with that. I don't have anything else. We do have meetings for executive session. Oh, Mr. Simons has a comment.

Mr. Simons:

Yeah. I just have a request. I mentioned this to Mike. Our bids for Phase 3 came in earlier this week and we haven't had time to review. It's Phase 3 of our current capital project. They're just being adjusted, were finalized and compiled today. The good news is that they came in well under-budgeted, but we didn't have a specialist. I'm preparing the information and having Lynn Ellsworth and our architects looked through it or tonight's meeting. I'm wondering if the board is available for a meeting next week to adopt the bids, prove the bids.

Ms. Cannon:

It depends for Phase 3 work and also might be a good opportunity for us to update you on the budget before we get to that April 14th day. Sorry to surprise you. By this point, we couldn't get all of this stuff done in order to really digest that we had. It's a very favorable bid. We want you to adopt it so we can start planning the work. So wondering if Wednesday and, you may have other commitments, but Wednesday would work for next week for a brief board meeting, and I promise you those would be the only two topics.

Mr. Buono:

So we're meeting Wednesday, March 31st 7:00 PM. A couple topics. So show of hands. Is that possible, Mark? So I think we get a quorum. The name show I hadn't seen.

Ms. Skumurski:

I know I can dial in late, but you will probably be done by the, I have to pick up my son at 7.

Mr. Buono:

I think we'll have a quorum. I got my second COVID shot, that day. So hopefully, it's fingers crossed that it may be virtual. That's maybe something we want to do. Virtual is going to be that quick. All right. We'll send that information out, special meeting to put on the calendar and then give feedback to Stephanie, if you want to be virtual or in person. Okay, excellent.

Mr. Buono:

So any other comments? Questions before we go to motion for executive session. All right. Any motion to move into executive session for the purpose of contractual and personnel items? Jennifer? I need a second, Kathleen. All those in favor. All right. We don't anticipate anything after the executive session. So we'll have Peter sent out the usual email. Peter, is that correct? Thank you, Good night everybody.

PART 5 OF 5 ENDS [02:32:14]