



Torrington Public Schools

SUSAN M. LUBOMSKI
SUPERINTENDENT

SUSAN B. FERGUSSON
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Board of Education Special Meeting Tuesday, August 25, 2020, 5:30 PM 355 Migeon Ave.

Minutes

1. Call to Order: 5:40 P.M.
2. Roll Call: Ms. Cappabianca, Ms. Todor, Ms. Hoehne, Ms. Fappiano, Mr. Kissko, Mr. Maniccia, Ms. Richardson
Also Present: Ms. Lubomski, Ms. Ferguson, Ms. Herold, Mr. Arum, Ms. Klimaszewski, Ms. Schulte, Mr. Barlow
3. Public Participation:
The Chair read all the written comments:
Carmen Kocovic - Voiced her concerns about reopening the schools safely.
Carrie Cassady – Voiced their concerns about the staff being in the buildings on Wednesdays which is at the same time the buildings will be deep cleaned.
Marcella Olson – Concerned about the safety of the staff and students with the change of having staff in the buildings on Wednesdays.
Erika Pratt – Voiced that she is pleased that the school will start in the hybrid model. She also voiced concerns about the staff being in the buildings on Wednesdays – the same day of the deep cleaning.
Erin Benedict – Voiced her concern about the staff being in the buildings on Wednesday – the same day of the deep cleaning. The hybrid model is difficult for teachers to teach at home with small children.
Samantha Verbickas – Voiced her concerns about staff being in the building on Wednesday. It makes her nervous for her children to attend schools Tuesday and Thursday if the schools were not properly cleaned on Wednesdays.
Sharon Golder – Voiced her concerns about cleaning protocols and proper ventilation. She believes that there should not be staff in the buildings on Wednesday for the proper cleaning to take place.

These minutes were approved by the Torrington Board of Education on September 21, 2020.

Lorraine Ferrante – She wants to know why there was a short notice that staff now must be physically present in the building on Wednesdays – during distance learning?

Chantel Tarbox – Pleased to hear that the year is beginning with the hybrid model. She has concerns about being in the building on Wednesdays during deep cleaning – she has migraines and is concerned about what will happen to her on Wednesday.

Mary Lee Quinn – Shared her concerns about staff being in the buildings on Wednesdays during deep cleaning.

Melissa Ferrucci – She said that she is happy to start with the hybrid model. She also shared her concerns about the staff being in the buildings on Wednesdays during deep cleaning.

Donna Merritt – Thanked the BOE for beginning the year with the hybrid model. She stated that she has an underlying health condition and she hopes we reconsider the decision of staff being in the buildings on Wednesdays.

Jennifer Fernandez – She is pleased to hear that the school is beginning the year with the hybrid model. She is questioning why the decision was made to have teachers be physically present in the buildings on Wednesdays during the deep cleaning.

Dan Dunaj – How are the teachers supposed to come up with childcare on Wednesdays with only a 3 days' notice?

Jennifer Traver – Advocating for Fall sports, in particular Football. She stated that depression, anxiety, and these conditions decisions can stem from no sports.

Rick Dubois – Asked the Board to reconsider that the staff be present in the buildings on Wednesdays.

Maggie McGillicuddy – Voiced her concerns about the teachers being in the buildings on Wednesdays during deep cleaning. She questions if the cleaning and disinfecting can be done properly with staff in the building. All people in the building would need PPE.

Barbara Oles – Voiced her disappointment that all staff will be required to be in the buildings on Wednesdays during deep cleaning. My presence at home will be helpful for the son during his hybrid learning.

Erin Sullivan – Shared her concerns about the staff being in the buildings on Wednesdays during deep cleaning. What rationale is there for the teachers to be physically present in the building during remote learning?

Meg Dubois – How will only receiving 30% of the emergency funding impact the reopening plan?

Christina Avigne – Shared her concerns about staff being in the buildings during deep cleaning.

Kelly Hagymasi – She is glad we are starting the school year with the hybrid model. She has concerns about the staff being in the buildings on Wednesdays during deep cleaning. She is in a nearly impossible position of finding daycare, so will be forced to take FFRCA leave on Wednesday.

Martina Martin – She has concerns about the staff being in the buildings on Wednesdays during deep cleaning. She is unsettled and worried about her family's safety.

Christine Chapin – Concerns about the staff and student safety if the staff is in the buildings on Wednesdays.

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Catherine Clinksacales – She would like to encourage the BOE to have all sports. Sports are good for mental and physical health. The teams have been conditioning since July 6th without any negative consequences.

Stacey Deloy – Shared her concerns about staff being in the buildings on Wednesdays.

Veronica Gelormino – She wanted to address that staff is required to be in the buildings on Wednesdays. She believes it does not serve a purpose and learning is not bound to a physical space. She asked for the reasoning behind this decision.

Nicole Gaynor – She shared an article regarding hybrid options. She and her husband work full time and her kids need much more stability and structure than this plan offers.

Carmen Kocovic – She wanted to voice her concerns about staff being in the buildings on Wednesdays. She has concern for her family and for the second cohort.

The following people dialed in for their comment:

Jason Lafreniere – He shared his concerns about staff being in the building on Wednesdays during the deep cleaning. He spoke about the recent COVID cases being reported. Does the new outside time follow the safety and security system?

Communication from all sides must be consistent, clear, honest, and transparent as possible.

Eva Kaminski – She wanted to clear up the misconceptions about distance learning.

Nearly 80% or more, students showed growth. Many students were more successful and gained confidence. Most students became better problem solvers and learned technology skills. She shared more positives she experienced with her students during distance learning.

Heather – Advocated for fall sports. She has been very active in the football community.

Her sons have adapted to all the changes and have been patient. They have a short amount of time to play the sport they love. How will these kids get their athletic scholarships if they cannot play their sports?

4. Discussion/Next Steps:

a. COVID-19 Expenses and b. Reopening Torrington Public Schools:

Ms. Lubomski presented a PowerPoint presentation. The Governor and Commissioner revised the plan to consider operational considerations.

Disadvantages of in-person to being the school year: not an optimal situation for daily functioning, in class eating, fewer recess times and no mask breaks and long arrival and dismissal times, impacting instructional time, virtual electives, specials and unified arts; less opportunity for cleaning and disinfection and more people; social distancing was compromised; more students on busses, not socially distanced. Hybrid model: K-12 will be a rotating day schedule – 50% attend in person – two days per week. When the students are not attending in person, students attend via distance learning. Distance learning will be real time and live streamed.

The benefits of the Hybrid model:

- Healthy and safety: fewer students allow for CDC recommended social distancing. It also provides adequate time for cleaning and sanitizing between cohorts and more opportunities for mask breaks;
- Allows time for students and teachers to adjust and be trained;
- No disruption to course offerings at grade 6-12: electives, unified arts;
- Integrity of the cohorts will be maintained, grades PreK-7;
- Permits use of café for lunch time;
- Students would be able to remain in cohorts or smaller groups, which is easier for sanitizing, cleaning, and smaller number of students;
- Daily operations will be streamlined: arrivals and dismissals, meal distribution, and hallway passing;
- Interventionists/instructional support staff service in their role;
- More parents are comfortable sending students: 67% to 79% with hybrid;
- More options for mask breaks in class and outside class;
- Reduces number of students on busses.

Deep cleaning will occur every day. Six sanitizers will work from lunchtime and into the evening for a total of 8 hours (1 per building). Eight more sanitizers will work the night shift for 8 hours (overlap: 2-3 building). On Wednesdays, our custodial crews will be working on further disinfecting between cohorts. Bathrooms are high traffic areas will be cleaned throughout the day. On Wednesdays, we will be asking people to stay in designated areas.

Downside of the Hybrid:

- Childcare – working with local agencies to provide families with additional childcare options. Posted on TPS website and emailed to families and staff.

The goal for remote learning: Hybrid & Distance Learning:

- Blended learning experience, which includes daily live-stream interactions between teachers and students on remote days;
- Developmentally appropriate independent work time;
- Allows for screen breaks;
- Teachers will conduct targeted, small group instruction via the virtual platform, as appropriate.

Special Education:

- Each student with a disability will be provided the special education and related services identified in their IEP developed under IDEA;
- Students who are educated in alternate out-of-district placements will continue to follow the schedule of their attending schools;
- Additional PPE will be provided as necessary to ensure safety of staff and students.

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Transportation:

- Masks: to be worn at all times by the driver, bus monitors and students;
- Bus Cohorts: families limited to 1 bus per student for pic up and drop off;
- Hybrid phase: 50% of students each day; fewer students on each bus and in each seat;
- Buses will be cleaned and disinfected after every run.

Food Service:

- All students will be provided breakfast and lunch every day, even when they are participating in remote learning;
- Students will be able to eat in designated common areas while social distancing;
- Students will be separated by Plexiglas table dividers while eating and seating will be socially distanced;
- Allows for a more varied menu.

Funding for Hybrid Model – The district received \$804,299. The estimated additional expenses are \$1.9 million. Staff needs: bus monitors, custodians, sanitizers, nurses, teachers, and techs; PPE; Technology: software and devices; transportation for special education bussing as needed.

The first day of school will be September 8th. Professional development days for staff, including preparation for the needs of 2020-2021 school year will occur August 27-September 4. Districts now have a 177 day requirement. Ms. Ferguson reviewed the sample hybrid learning schedules. It is posted for on the website under:

[Sample K-5 Hybrid Learning Schedule](#)
[Sample TMS Hybrid Learning Schedule](#)
[Sample THS Hybrid Learning Schedule](#)

Ms. Lubomski stated that we may need to go from hybrid to a 100% distance learning without much notification, depending on notification of a positive case. She will share the information as quickly as possible.

Before school started, the district has tried to accommodate the staff that needed accommodations.

Health Considerations: Temperature checks are not required by the DPH and CDC at this time due to unreliability. Hepa filters are for smaller air filtration systems, not large ventilation systems at our schools. MERF 8 filters are required for our district system to work at maximum efficiency. Our ventilation company experts have been changing the filters throughout August and will continue to do so every six months. The company is also performing maintenance checks to ensure that our systems are functioning at maximum efficiency.

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Mr. Barlow clarified the cleaning schedule in detail. Sanitizers will be at sites on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. On Wednesday, the regular custodial shift will occur, and there will not be sanitizers present. The night custodians and sanitizers will continue cleaning the high touch surface areas. “Deep clean and clean is the same thing. Clean is clean.” A special pressure washer machine will be used in the bathrooms on Friday night. All the cleaning products we use haven’t changed from any of the products we used last year. The list is posted on our website. Our cleaning products are eco lab or green seal certified. The disinfectants not green products, they are different than cleaning products. Mr. Eucalitto asked Mr. Barlow if he would be comfortable if his family were to go into the buildings. Mr. Barlow stated that yes he was comfortable, and he knows we have done the best we can for the safety for our staff and students.

Ms. Cappabianca wanted to clarify that the Board did not make the decision for the staff to come in on Wednesdays for distance learning.

Mr. Fappiano wanted to hear what changed to make the staff come to school on Wednesdays? Ms. Lubomski stated that with the new cleaning schedule and given the number of people cleaning and sanitizing the building, we are now able to open the building to staff on Wednesday. Ms. Lubomski said some staff felt more comfortable teaching from their classrooms, since they have everything there. Having staff in the building, also allows for in-person collaboration and interaction, socially distanced, of course. Ms. Richardson expressed concern that we told staff one thing and now we are telling them another. She loves the idea of giving teachers the choice of coming in on Wednesday or staying home to do distance learning. Mr. Kissko stated that teachers have been warned that things change quickly. Mr. Maniccia stated that ever since March things have been changing. He does not see anything wrong with teachers coming in on Wednesday. He said we cannot accommodate everyone. Mr. Eucalitto stated that no one questioned the change how the parents were going to feel when we switched to hybrid. He stated that daycare is available for teachers through Ed-Advance. If it is safe, he thinks teachers should be in school on Wednesday. Ms. Fappiano stated that parents are supposed to work from home and help their kids with distance learning with a strict schedule from home. She asked now that Wednesday is not a “deep cleaning day”, can the kids go back to school that day? Ms. Lubomski said they would look into this for the future, but not at this point. Mr. Barlow stated that we would have to increase the sanitizer days to include Wednesdays, which would increase the cost.

The Chair stated that for the first two weeks we really need to see what will happen. On Wednesday afternoon for the month of September, there is teacher professional development. She does not understand the daycare issue. If parents are working 5 days a week (from home or office), then parents should have daycare already established. Mr. Eucalitto agreed. He does not understand how

teachers will not be distracted from home by their own children. Ms. Fappiano stated that you're asking parents to utilize daycare and expect them to afford it. Ms. Hoehne stated that even if the parents are teaching in school or teaching from home, their own children would need to be in daycare. It is challenging for teachers to instruct while their children are at home. Ms. Richardson stated we shouldn't judge what people can and can't do. The biggest issue is that we have been asking the teachers to give more and more and making teachers come in on Wednesday poses an unnecessary hardship. Mr. Eucalitto stated that decisions should not be made on emotions in the moment, decisions should be made based on what is best for the students.

The Chair stated that this is not a Board decision. We are not telling the Superintendent what to do. If the Board is not going to put faith in what the administration does, there will be dysfunction. You cannot continually question the decisions that were made and ask administration to change those decisions. The Board is not allowed to be involved in the day to day decisions. Ms. Lubomski stated that this is very difficult situation, I do appreciate everyone's input. Ms. Fappiano asked how often will we hear from the Superintendent? Ms. Lubomski stated similar to the March to the present there have been weekly, sometimes daily updates, these will continue as information becomes available.

- c. Fall Sports: Ms. Lubomski stated that CIAC wanted all fall sports to begin. However, football and volleyball are still in question. Reasons for the limitations: Football because of the proximity and volleyball because of proximity, occurs indoors and the yelling of plays without masks. Soccer was never in the limited category. Soccer leagues have been going on all summer. At this point, this week, we are not going back to conditioning and practicing until the CIAC and DPH come to an agreement. The district stopped practices due to a directive from DPH. Next week, the CIAC is allowing every sport could go back into practice and conditioning to get ready for the season. The CIAC and the DPH have not made a joint recommendation yet.
5. Comments for the Good of the Order (The following comments have been paraphrased:)
Mr. Maniccia and Ms. Richardson - "See you tomorrow night!"
Mr. Eucalitto - "Thank you to the administrators and Ali."
Ms. Hoehne - "Thank you to everyone."
Mr. Kissko - "See you guys in 20 hours."
6. Adjournment: Mr. Eucalitto mad a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Mr. Maniccia. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:10 P.M.