



The City of New York

Queens Community Board 11

Serving the Communities of Auburndale, Bayside, Douglaston, Hollis Hills
Little Neck and Oakland Gardens

Michael Budabin Chairperson / Joseph Marziliano District Manager

TO: All Board Members

FROM: Justin Chew, Education Committee Chair

DATE: July 28, 2020

RE: Reopening of Schools

On Monday July 27, 2020, a meeting of the CB11 Education Committee was convened. The meeting was conducted via Zoom teleconference. Present during the meeting were Justin Chew, Committee Chair, Michael Budabin, Board Chair, Henry Euler, 3rd Vice Chair, Board Members Eileen Miller, Adriana Aviles, Rosemarie Guidice, Stephan Popa, Carin Bail, Lander Bravo, Ben Turner, Chris Scherer, Yosef Lee, Steve Pivawer, and Lana Bind. CB11 District Manager, Joseph Marziliano and staff members Christina Coutinho and Jane Bentivenga were also in attendance. State Senator John Liu and his aide Amber Yoon along with Susan Seinfeld, representing CM Barry Grodenchik, were also present. Representing the Department of Education (DOE) were Adrienne Austin, Deputy Chancellor, Division of Community Empowerment, Partnerships, and Communications, and John Shea, CEO of Facilities. Dave Waltzer, Dino Sferrazza and Mary Vaccaro, teachers and UFT representatives also joined the meeting as did Danielle Giunta, and Danielle DiMango, District Superintendents. The meeting was also attended by other various DOE employees and parents.

The meeting commenced with Mr. Chew introducing John Shea who spoke about cleaning and disinfecting protocols. Mr. Shea said all rooms will be cleaned every night and labor will be reallocated during the day to constantly clean frequently touched surfaces. Rooms that do not have adequate ventilation will NOT be utilized.

Deputy Chancellor Austin then spoke about DOE's reopening plan. She shared her screen and reviewed 5 different possible models of teaching; 2 will be for District 75 schools. DOE is hoping for 33% in-person learning but expect a combination of blended learning (in-person and remote). Walk-throughs have been conducted in order to maximize space. Ms. Vaccaro added that 20 chapter leaders walked with the principals. Staffing options and the results of the parent surveys will have to be looked at. The deadline for parents to opt-in for their preference is August 7, 2020. Ms. Vaccaro also said that the American Federation of Teachers has been

holding webinars every Thursday which has provided many useful ideas for going forward through this process.

At this point in the meeting, Mr. Marziliano introduced State Senator John Liu. Mr. Liu wanted to keep all up to date with what is happening. Officials are trying to keep everything as simple as possible. He stated there will be more clarity in the next 2 weeks.

The meeting resumed with Dino Sferrazza speaking. Mr. Sferrazza is the Chapter Leader at Benjamin Cardozo H.S. He has been working closely with the principal to figure out how many students they can accommodate at one time. Cardozo is very overcrowded; there are 3,300 students which is 165% over capacity. Due to this, the proposed DOE models will probably not work there. They are proposed that students come into the school once a week for enrichment, tutoring or counseling and have four days of remote learning. They can't fit more than 975 people in the building at one time. He also stated that Bayside High School and Francis Lewis High School are submitting the same plan to DOE.

Mr. Chew opened the meeting to questions. Mr. Popa inquired about school buses and public transportation. Ms. Austin said they are still assessing transportation issues as there are also IEP mandates. They have ordered PPE and will implement all recommendations for social distancing on school buses. Ms. Austin also added that there is a family and student information session scheduled for Tuesday, July 28, 2020, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. The Chancellor and Executive Superintendents will be joining. Registration is required at schools.nyc.gov. Mr. Budabin thanked Mr. Chew for putting this meeting together. He inquired as to what DOE's thinking is regarding what must be done to get in-person learning back to 50% or even 100% or what would have to happen to decide schools may have to close again. Ms. Austin stated they are working closely with the Department of Health. The medical experts will tell DOE what they can do, what the science is telling them is safe. Right now, they have been advised it is safe to begin school in September using social distancing. However, she added this is an ever-changing environment. Parent, Melanie Ingenio inquired about how children with an IEP will be accommodated. The DOE Office of Special Education has been working on this. Every class will have 2 teachers; one will be a licensed special education teacher and one will be a general education teacher. Something should be announced this coming week regarding what the approach will be.

Mrs. Coutinho asked when if a parent opts out when can they opt back in? Will students eat lunch in the cafeteria or their classrooms? Will middle school and high school students be changing classes? Ms. Austin replied there are no dates yet for the opt back in program; they first must determine which program model will work for an individual school. It will most likely be in late Fall. Regarding lunch and changing from class to class, their goal is to minimize movement as much as possible. Therefore, lunch may take place in the classroom and teachers may transition from class to class rather than students. A final decision has not yet been made. Mr. Shea said that most schools will have a grab-and-go option; breakfast and lunch will be offered at the beginning of each day for students to take to their classrooms. Some cafeterias will be repurposed for instructional space.

Parent, Meghan Rha raised the issue of what measures will be taken regarding the health screenings; will it be required each day? Ms. Austin replied that the protocol has not yet been determined. Mr. Shea added that if a case of COVID-19 is suspected, there will be an isolation room separate from the nurse's office or any other space where that child will wait for someone to pick them up. If COVID-19 is confirmed, there are steps that will be taken for the disinfection of that room.

Mr. Lee asked if there will be any difference between in-class and remote learning materials, how will the teacher/student engagement be for those who opt for 100% remote learning and if a student is identified as COVID-19 positive, will that information be disclosed to other parents? Ms. Austin stated that the medical status of a student is never disclosed; it is federal law. She also said that instruction will look different in the Fall as opposed to the Spring when the remote learning began. As a result of parent feedback, there will be more synchronous instruction. Ms. Vaccaro added there will be flexibility so that all the students can be engaged during synchronous learning. The DOE is working on a digital curriculum for each grade and each subject. Mr. Sferrazza said many teachers have been preparing their lessons for on-line learning. The students also must be engaged; there was an issue with this in the Spring.

Mrs. Guidice inquired if the DOE has continued to work with any child services regarding suspected neglect or abuse. Ms. Austin said yes, they have continued to work closely with the Administration of Child Services (ACS). DOE employees are mandated reporters. Unfortunately, the remote environment has changed their ability to notice any changes to some degree. They worked very closely with ACS regarding attendance/signing in for remote learning as that could be an indicator of a problem.

Cathy Grodsky, President, SD26 Council (all PTA presidents in District 26) looked for clarity regarding the opt-in/opt-out options. She stated she has heard that if you opt for fully remote you may not get spot for live instruction if you want to opt back in to blended learning in the quarterly timeframe. She also discussed the need for more live interaction. A letter from the Chancellor also said that most students who participate in full-remote learning will be taught by teachers from their school; the letter does not say the same for those who opt for blended learning. Parents need to know who will be teaching their children. Ms. Austin said they are still working with DOE's labor officials to make this determination. Things will look different from school to school. More clarity is expected in the next week or two.

Mr. Waltzer said they are preparing for either scenario. They have created a reopening committee at the school regarding remote and blended learning, entrance and exit procedures, the best way to move people through the hallways, social distancing and more. The logistics are huge, and the conversations are ongoing.

Ms. Bail stated that she is a teacher who works in an annex. She asked about custodial staff as her school does not have a dedicated DOE custodian. The school does have some building and

maintenance issues. Ms. Austin will refer her to DOE Health and Wellness Division. Mr. Shea said he will also follow up if he is informed of the issue.

Parent Cecilia Venosta said that the results of a survey done at her school were that 37% of teachers do not feel comfortable going back into the classroom. Do teachers have the same options as families? Ms. Vaccaro replied they would have to apply for a medical accommodation under CDC guidelines to be approved by DOE for themselves; it cannot be due to a family member with an underlying condition.

Mr. Popa asked how State testing and certification will be handled and how DOE is handling the impact this has and will have on disadvantaged students and what accommodations are being made for them. Mrs. Vaccaro stated that until the State Education Department releases their results, they do not know. When the results are released, Mrs. Vaccaro will forward them to Mr. Chew. She also said that DOE has made sure all students have been provided with devices for remote learning. Teachers, guidance counselors and social workers are helping to whatever degree they can.

Ms. Ingenio asked if the DOE would consider letting parents volunteer to conduct temperature checks or distribute hand sanitizer before students enter the school building. Mrs. Vaccaro said that the DOE's occupational hygienists have been discussed the most efficient way to get this done. She does not think parents will be permitted to do this due to exposure concerns, but no decisions have been made yet. Mr. Shea agree.

Ms. Venosta asked if there will be a curriculum night prior to school starting. Mrs. Vaccaro replied it will not happen before school begins. She is not sure curriculum night will even look the same under the present circumstances.

Lastly, Mrs. Vaccaro announced that Dr. Fauci will be joining Randi Weingarten on July 28, 2020. Those who are interested in joining the discussion should go to AFT.org to register. There will also be another discussion later with the President of the National Education Association regarding the safety of schools and what PPE will be necessary. Mr. Chew asked for the links to those meeting.

The meeting continued with Mr. Chew, Mr. Budabin, Mr. Euler, Mr. Marziliano, and Mr. Pivawer. Discussion ensued and it was decided that a follow-up letter will be sent to DOE regarding the issues and concerns talked about earlier. No formal vote was taken.

Respectfully submitted 7/31/2020