

Central Parents Council Minutes: October 1, 2020

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Welcome, Call to Order — CPC Chair, Cristina Monterroso

Meeting called to order at 9:05 AM.

3. Approval of Minutes for September 10, 2020 Meeting — CPC Secretary, Jennifer Kornreich Cahn

Janene Keegan made a motion to approve the September minutes, and Lynette Simmons seconded.

4. CPC Chair Report — CPC Chair, Cristina Monterroso

5. CPC Status and Resolution Report — CPC Vice-Chair, Heather Morante Young

In addition to making her S&R report, Heather Young noted the BOE's approval of the next phase of reopening schools—i.e. a binary choice between 5-day in-person learning or a full-time remote learning experience—and provided a brief description of the protocols entailed.

6. CPC Treasurer Report — CPC Treasurer, Genevieve Cimino

Genevieve Cimino was not present at the meeting, but she submitted three documents: a status report that was read by the chair, a fiscal year report for 2019-2020, and the proposed budget for 2020-2021.

7. School and Club Organizational Reports:

Junior/Senior High School Parent Teacher Group (CHSPTG), West Side School Parent Teacher Group (WSSPTG), Lloyd Harbor School Parent Teacher Group (LHSPTG), Goosehill Parent Teacher Group (GHPTG), Cultural Arts Committee (CAC), Families of the Community United with Schools (FOCUS), Arts Booster Club (ABC), Special Education Parent Teacher Organization (SEPTO), Seahawks Booster Club (SBC), Cold Spring Harbor Education Foundation

8. Presentation (9:28 AM start time)

Our four school principals were on hand to give us their perspective on the functioning of their respective buildings and adjustment of students and faculty to the hybrid learning model. All of them had high praise for their faculty and staff.

—Mrs. Herschlein spoke about Goosehill’s efforts to make our youngest students comfortable in adjusting to school. She noted that the kindergarten and first-grade children had a chance to meet their teachers outdoors before the fall semester began, and they also had a peek at their classrooms. Children at Goosehill are engaging in community-building activities, memoir-writing, science experiments, and math games.

—Mrs. Massimo highlighted work done at LHS to help students learn more about the technology needed for remote learning (e.g., Google Classroom and Zoom) to ensure ease of learning. While parents are not allowed to drop off Chromebooks forgotten at home, there are always extra sanitized Chromebooks available to students without them. She also talked about the return of LHTV as well as evacuation drills performed by the students with the requisite social distancing.

—Ms. Hazut spoke about balancing safety protocols with school traditions such as morning assemblies. Student council elections are underway. Lunch and recess are happening outdoors. She noted that because students are staying with smaller cohorts, some are playing with classmates they might not have normally chosen.

—Dr. Bolen talked about the widespread cooperation of the students with safety protocols, which they are taking in stride. He reported that many after-school clubs are underway, and late buses are running as usual. He will be considering more decisions regarding intramurals. Science labs are occurring both in-person and remotely. Meetings regarding safe driving, applying to college, financial aid, and expectations for parents of ninth-grade students will occur via Zoom.

—Mr. Fenter expressed his appreciation for the principals’ hard work ensuring the safety, academic development, and social-emotional development of the students.

9. Parent Issues and New Business (9:51 AM—end of meeting)

—Lynette Simmons opened the Q&A segment of the meeting by conveying questions that she received from high school parents. The first was from someone concerned that some teachers seemingly check in with remote students too infrequently during class (for instance, the teacher might not realize the remote student could not hear the goings-on, or could not view the shared screen). Dr. Bolen acknowledged the challenges for teachers who are simultaneously attending to both in-person and remote students, but said that he would remind the teachers to check on remote students more often.

—Lynette Simmons also noted that a parent had expressed confusion about receiving information regarding after-school clubs. Dr. Bolen said that the daily announcements with information regarding clubs, including Zoom links, are on a Canvas page.

—Finally, Lynette Simmons relayed a question about how classes with thirty students will handle distancing requirements. Mr. Fenter said that he planned to meet with Dr. Bolen about accommodating classes with large numbers of students; one potential solution is changing the locale to a larger classroom where students can space out.

—There were several parents who voiced concerns about the current lack of a date for the full-time return of junior and senior high school students; they wanted to know what the timeline would be for putting such a plan in place, citing concerns about teens' social-emotional and academic needs. While Mr. Fenter noted that there is no tentative date for the full-time return of all high school students, he said that he, the rest of the administration, and the BOE are already working on plans and would be prepared to share more information later this month on 10/13.

—A parent mentioned that morning announcements at the high school are sometimes difficult for students to hear. Dr. Bolen agreed to remind teachers to please make sure students can hear that information.

—A long discussion ensued regarding ventilation in the schools. Several parents were concerned about rumored failures of ventilation in some classrooms. A parent opened the discussion by asking for information regarding audits of our ventilation systems, and what kind of measures are in place to correct and/or maintain proper ventilation for the upcoming winter. Mr. Stucchio opened his response by reassuring parents that if the district has any indication of inadequate ventilation in a given room, then neither students nor faculty are permitted to work there. He talked about the difference between natural and mechanical ventilation. He also announced that Brian Graham, the district's new Director of Facilities, will begin working on 10/13. Mr. Stucchio noted that a 20% sampling of the district classrooms have been assessed by our environmental consulting company (Enviroscience Consultants Inc. of Ronkonkoma), and he shared the report on-screen with CPC attendees. He talked about known areas with inadequate ventilation and what measures are being taken to rectify those issues. People wanted to know the timeline for corrections. Someone asked about whether windows would be kept open during the winter. Mr. Stucchio said that the administration is putting together a plan for ventilation during the winter, but also pointed out that even with closed windows, rooms with working Univents meet building code. He encouraged parents with further questions about ventilation/HVAC to contact him directly (jstucchio@csh.k12.ny.us) rather than asking the building principals.

—A parent requested more information as to what remote learning will entail from mid-October onward for students who go remote full-time. Mr. Fenter replied that the remote model will entail several Zoom sessions and periods of independent work daily. He also underscored that the district will hire teachers specifically assigned to to all-remote learn-

ers. Depending upon the numbers of remote students, two grades may be assigned to each teacher, and that for each grade, students from both LHS and WSS may be in the same remote classroom.

—A parent asked for clarification that henceforth remote students will be removed from their current teachers and cohorts, and Mr. Fenter said that was correct—that remote students will be their own classroom community with their own homeroom, specials, etc.

—A parent asked how reversible the decision to send a student to school in-person or virtually would be. Mr. Fenter indicated that overall, parents should view their decisions as binding through 2/1 due to constraints regarding staffing and stability of cohorts.

— Several parents expressed either concern or outright dismay about the rapidity of the transition from hybrid to 5-day models. Many said that they were comfortable with the way that the hybrid model has been working for the past three weeks. Some raised concerns about lessened distancing given the rise in COVID-19 rates around the country and scientists' predictions of increased outbreaks during the winter. Mr. Fenter observed that schools currently open five days a week to all students and distancing 3 to 6 feet do not, so far, have greater rates of positive cases. All students will have sneeze-guard barriers at their desks as before. Moreover, he noted, mask breaks will be fewer throughout the day, and only when students can be spaced a full 6 feet apart. Nonetheless, several parents felt that the lessened distancing requirement in the classroom was potentially unsafe given the upcoming likelihood of increased infection numbers. Mr. Fenter noted that the parent population has differing opinions regarding how fast or slow the district should be in transitioning back to full-week in-person instruction.

—On a related note, some parents protested the quick turnaround of the survey asking parents to commit to one model or the other through 2/1, and asked for more time and more information before making such an important and irreversible decision. The administration explained that decisions need to be made quickly in order for the district to figure out staffing, scheduling, and transportation decisions.

—A question arose regarding the credentials of teachers hired to teach the all-remote-learning students. Ms. Campbell assured the parents that such teachers would have appropriate teaching certification and credentials. She said that new staff hasn't been hired yet, but the district is aware of individuals who would meet qualifications.

—Somebody expressed concern that older remote learners in cohorts that span two grades may suffer a negative impact on learning. The administration explained that some learners in a remote cohort may do independent work while others are getting a lesson.

—A parent inquired how busing will be affected by more in-person students. Mr. Fenter said that all riders will be masked, but the district cannot guarantee distance as before.

—A parent asked whether a child who attends school in-person but becomes ill, would be allowed to attend remotely. The parent noted the importance of removing incentives for parents to send children with questionable health to school. Mr. Fenter and Ms. Campbell indicated that while the hybrid option will no longer be routinely available since it necessarily divides the attention of the teachers, efforts will be made in the event of medical illness to allow children to keep learning with their class, even if remotely.

—A followup question was why, given our capability to live-stream classes, families can't choose a continued hybrid model or retain the same class/teachers for remote learners. Mr. Fenter said that the hybrid model is great when necessary, but it is not as effective for teachers to provide instruction and support to in-person learners and to distance learners simultaneously. Live-streaming into a class should be “the exception rather than the rule,” he said (as with the aforementioned example of a temporarily absent student).

—A parent asked whether our schools might begin testing so as to be more proactive than reactive to a rise in cases. Ms. Campbell said that there are certain criteria that have to be met to become a testing site; the district has no plans to become a testing site.

—A parent asked if, in the event that the district needs to go fully remote again due to a spike in cases, would we reopen again via the hybrid model. The administration did not have an answer to that at this time.

10. Important Dates

Next BOE meeting (virtual): Tuesday, October 13 at 8 PM

BOE work session (virtual): Tuesday, October 27 at 7:30 PM

Next CPC meeting (virtual): Thursday, November 5 at 9 AM

11. Meeting Adjournment — Cristina Monterroso

Jennifer Cahn motioned to end the meeting, and Lynette Simmons seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 11:35 AM.