

WACHUSETT REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HOLDEN □ PAXTON □ PRINCETON □ RUTLAND □ STERLING

Minutes

Regular Meeting #1341

Monday, April 6, 2020  
7:00 PM

MEETING CONDUCTED REMOTELY, VIA GOOGLE HANGOUTS

*Wachusett Regional School District Committee*

Kenneth Mills, Chair	Laura Kirshenbaum
Christina Smith, Vice-chair	Matthew Lavoie
Melissa Ayala	Linda Long-Bellil
Scott Brown	Amy Michalowski
Michael Dennis	Benjamin Mitchel
Stephen Godbout	Karl Ottmar
Maleah Gustafson	Asima Silva
Sherri Haber	Megan Weeks
Jeffrey Haynes	Linda Woodland
Robert Imber	Adam Young

*Committee Members Absent:*

None

*Administration Present:*

Darryll McCall, Superintendent of Schools  
Robert Berlo, Deputy Superintendent  
Daniel Deedy, Director of Business and Finance  
Jeff Carlson, Director of Human Resources  
Brendan Keenan, Director of Social Emotional Learning  
Christine Smith, Administrator of Special Education  
Barry Sclar, Supervisor of Information Technology  
Rebecca Petersen, Executive Secretary to the Superintendent

*Student Representatives Present:*

Rianna Massoni-Nesman

Chair Mills called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

- I. Public Hearing
- II. Chair's Opening Remarks
- III. Student Representatives (R. Massoni-Nesman, L. Michalowski)

Chair Mills announced the meeting is streaming live on Holden TV, Channel 194, and is being conducted remotely, via Google Hangouts. Chair Mills extended his thanks to

HCTV for assisting with broadcasting the meeting live. Chair Mills announced he will be taking the agenda out of order, moving the Public Hearing to later in the meeting, with no objections from members. Chair Mills thanked Senator Gobi and Representative Ferguson for joining the virtual meeting.

Chair Mills asked members to observe a moment of silence in honor of and out of respect for Sarah LaMountain, a member of the WRSDC since 2012, representing the town of Sterling. Chair Mills extended condolences to Mrs. LaMountain's husband and daughter.

Chair Mills shared best wishes to all in the Wachusett communities as the nation deals with the uncertainty associated with COVID-19.

Chair Mills explained the format of the virtual meeting, explaining Superintendent McCall would have the floor, providing his update and plans for the next steps for remote teaching and learning, there will be a report from the meeting of the Business/Finance Subcommittee that took place immediately before this School Committee meeting, and that Senator Gobi and Representative Ferguson would be given the opportunity to address the Committee and share this input.

Chair Mills also took the opportunity to speak about local elections, which are scheduled for May 11, 2020, and the May Annual Town Meetings. If the Member Towns postpone their local elections, the School Committee will stay seated as is until the elections are conducted and current members' terms will not expire until the elections.

Lastly, Chair Mills asked members to be conservative when using the CHAT option on Google Hangouts, so as to not violate the Open Meeting Law.

Chair Mills turned the meeting over to Superintendent McCall. Superintendent McCall took a moment to echo Chair Mill's kind comments about Sarah LaMountain, who Superintendent McCall described as a strong advocate for all Wachusett students, a member who never took a vote of the School Committee lightly, and someone who always supported the Wachusett Regional School District.

#### IV. Superintendent's Report

##### A. Discussion of Report

Superintendent McCall's first report and update centered on the District's teachers and students moving into an "enrichment model" for teaching and learning. Focused enrichment is not the teaching of new materials, rather it is a review of previously taught lessons, while allowing students to dive deeper into the previously taught materials. Superintendent McCall acknowledged that teaching/learning remotely can be a challenge, and he commended students, families, and teachers for meeting these challenges. Superintendent McCall reported on the several conference calls and webinars he has participated in since the last School Committee meeting, including many opportunities for connecting with Commissioner Riley and his staff. He reported Commissioner Riley had sent some guidance about remote learning, and that the District and the WREA are working on developing on a plan of action to implement remote learning. Superintendent

McCall also reported on conference calls he and Director Deedy have had with DESE Associate Commissioner Jay Sullivan. Superintendent McCall reported DESE is asking all districts to be cautious when making decisions about paying, nor not, vendors during this time when schools are not in session. Districts need to be mindful about the services provided by these vendors, transportation for example, and that when schools are re-opened the services provided by the various vendors will be required and necessary, and it will be important the companies were able to remain open and viable during the COVID-19 shutdowns.

Superintendent McCall gave a thanks to Supervisor of Information Services Sclar and the IT staff for supporting technology and for coordinating and facilitating the distribution of slightly more than 200 ChromeBooks at families' requests. It is anticipated the next phase of this ChromeBook distribution will be to take ChromeBooks from the ChromeCarts that are in the classrooms/schools, and making those devices available for lending. The District shared with families that Comcast and Charter/Spectrum are offering assistance with wifi and internet access for those in need. While speaking about technology, Superintendent McCall reported students' accessing technology for remote learning should be on a limited basis. Superintendent McCall again commended the work being done by teaching staff, recognizing the vast difference from being in front of a classroom of students to connecting with and teaching students via a computer meeting.

7:25 PM HCTV broadcast is frozen.

Chair Mills invited Senator Gobi and Representative Ferguson to address the Committee and the public, after apologizing to them for the technology glitch that prevented them from joining the virtual meeting of the Business/Finance Subcommittee. Representative Ferguson thanked the Wachusett community for all that is being done during these unprecedented times. She reported on meetings and actions that have taken place since March 23, 2020, when she and Senator Gobi last addressed the Committee. Representative Ferguson agreed there are more questions than answers at this time. She spoke about a municipal relief package being debated by the Massachusetts Senate and House, also mentioning the likelihood of districts operating under a 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget come July 1, 2020. Representative Ferguson reported a waiver for spring 2020 MCAS testing is being considered, and she is hopeful this is something that is resolved and decided soon. Lastly, Representative Ferguson assured the Committee she and Senator Gobi would be looking into Regional Transportation reimbursements and payments and will report back when they have more information.

Senator Gobi reminded members of the re-scheduled Economic Summit scheduled for 10:00 AM on Tuesday, April 14, 2020, encouraging all who are interested and able to log-on to watch this important summit. Senator Gobi noted the economic outlook is not favorable, schools may not reopen again this school year, and that there are no known timelines. When asked by Chair Mills, Senator Gobi confirmed there are no planned 9C cuts at this time.

At the conclusion of Senator Gobi's and Representative Ferguson's updates, members were given the opportunity to ask questions, which members had none. Chair Mills

thanked Senator Gobi and Representative Ferguson for their time, their reports, and their continued attention to the Wachusett District.

7:41 PM Senator Gobi and Representative departed the virtual meeting.

Chair Mills invited members to enter their questions in the CHAT feature, and he would read them in the order received.

Member Young: Do we have a sense of how many families are unable to access the online information?

Superintendent McCall reported that a few emails/phone messages have been received from families with DSL internet service, which can have issues with virtual meetings, like Google Hangouts and Zoom. Supervisor Sclar confirmed parents contacting the Central Office because they lack internet access has been minimal, and when contacted, the District has provided assistance.

Member Lavoie: Do we have a measurement of participation in Enrichment Activities by students? i.e. 80% of middle school students have accessed and participated in enrichment activities?

Member Lavoie: Remote Learning is not just on-line. Has the District 'mailed' out enrichment activities to students? Are there plans to mail out materials as 'Enrichment Activities' become 'Remote Learning?'

Superintendent McCall explained remote participation is not being tracked, per se. Deputy Superintendent Berlo added that some teachers have shared anecdotal data, but he agreed that tracking participation is not a focus.

When asked by Chair Mills, Superintendent McCall provided assurance that Principals and Assistant Principals are making connections with families they may not be hearing from on a regular basis. Student safety and wellbeing are being watched very closely by District personnel.

Superintendent McCall commented that mailing materials to students is not a viable option, but providing access to enrichment materials to students is a high priority.

Member Kirshenbaum: Given that student engagement may increase when the learning becomes mandatory, what is the plan to identify the "most essential" curriculum for advancement to the next grade and what is the proposed date in which we can expect moving to the remote learning model?

Deputy Superintendent Berlo spoke about Power Standards/Essential Standards have been identified, further explaining that teachers will look at the time that is available this school year and will focus on what is essential.

Member Lavoie: As we dismantle ChromeBooks, what is the potential inventory? How many do we anticipate needing? Lastly, how many students do not have a ChromeBook issued by WRSD?

Superintendent McCall reported all high school students have District-issued ChromeBooks, plus another 200+ have been distributed since schools closed on March 13<sup>th</sup>. This district does not have sufficient ChromeBooks for 1:1 District-wide. Some

discussion ensued. The importance of determining which families need a loaner ChromeBook for remote learning v families who have computers/technology at home but might like additional ChromeBook for use needs to be carefully considered. When asked about a family being denied the ability to borrow a ChromeBook, Superintendent McCall explained the intent of this loaner program is not to provide every student with a ChromeBook/device, because such can be shared by students in their homes. Superintendent McCall reiterated Wachusett is not a 1:1 technology district, and he reassured the Committee that the Information Services Department is carefully monitoring and managing the lending of ChromeBooks to those in need. Member Lavoie questioned student participation in Google Classroom online opportunities, stating he believes student participation is in the 50% range. Member Kirshenbaum asked about servicing loaned ChromeBooks, if needed. Superintendent McCall said the IT Department is working on this, but it will be challenging.

Member Haber: Have our food distribution numbers increased? Is there a chance we would get better participation if we bussed food to each town? Do we think pick up at the high school is a problem for anyone?  
Superintendent McCall stated distribution in each town would be a challenge, explaining that ordering is being done for delivery to one location, preparation is done at one location, and the best way to continue is following the current model.

Member Woodland: Regarding student and family access - how are English Language Learners accessing materials?  
Per Superintendent McCall, ELL students are being looked at the same way as Special Education instruction is being provided. Deputy Superintendent Berlo and the ELL Director are working together to address and assist these students and families, with note being made that communication by text is proving to be the most successful way to connect with ELL families and students.

Member Michalowski: What is the plan for feedback on experiences related to remote learning to make sure the expectations (1/2 day or 3 hours total and not all online activities) are matching student experiences in their homes?  
Superintendent McCall explained ceilings for instruction are being set for certain grade spans, and he asked that if students are spending more time than the ceiling limit per day, the teachers need to be informed so modifications can be made, if necessary. Deputy Superintendent Berlo will have Principals follow-up with students and families about the amount of time expended.  
Member Michalowski noted it is important to know how students are spending their time on the various assignments, because if a great amount of time is being spent on a simple task, that is not good use of time.

Student Representative Massoni-Nesman commented that given the number of classes she takes and each class can have a one hour lesson connected to it, she can be working on her learning 5 – 6 hours per day.

Member Gustafson: The understanding is that aides/paraprofessionals are still being paid and the question was asked about what support they are providing, since these employees are unable to provide traditional 1:1 and other support while classes are not in session. Superintendent McCall reported Administrator of Special Education Smith is working on a model to have paraprofessional staff support classroom teachers and students with enrichment activities. He also reported professional development opportunities for paraprofessional staff are being pulled together. Lastly, Superintendent McCall explained ChromeBooks are being made available for loan to paraprofessionals who need this technology at home.

Member Ayala: Will remote learning continue to not be graded and will it continue to be optional through the district?  
Superintendent McCall voiced the importance of students being held accountable, and that using the progressing/not progressing, pass/fail system does make students feel accountable. Deputy Superintendent Berlo reported some teachers are feeling anxious about issuing grades during remote learning, and progressing/not progressing, pass/fail seems to be addressing teachers' concerns.

Member Weeks: Question regarding seniors from a constituent, can we get an update on communication to seniors? They understand plans cannot be made right now formally, but would love to have a general update on what may be happening next?  
Superintendent McCall will reach out to Principal Beando about the best way to communicate with the high school community.

Member Gustafson asked about moving towards a required remote learning model. If so, how would this impact students who are in the hospital receiving tutoring, etc.? Would they receive services?  
Superintendent McCall explained that once the move from focused enrichment to remote learning is made, these questions will be addressed.  
Administrator of Special Education Smith added to Superintendent McCall's comments, explaining students in hospital settings may or may not have internet capability. The District works with LearnWell to provide tutoring services for hospitalized students.  
Member Gustafson asked about tutoring in homes in consideration of social distancing, to which Administrator Smith responded tutoring is taking place and if a parent has questions or concerns, they should contact her.

Student Representative Massoni-Nesman, speaking for high school students, asked if there are any plans to manage the amount of time high school students are online with remote learning.  
Deputy Berlo explained there are no time constraints in place at this time. When time constraints are implemented, the District and the schools will follow DESE guidance and guidelines about the ceiling for time spent on remote learning.  
Chair Mills added that lessons and enrichment activities that are being provided to students to date are voluntary. As a process note, he commented that when remote learning is required, there could be a "change in curriculum," which might need School Committee input.

Member Weeks asked how high school students will be “graded” during this credit/no credit process? Will it be a 1-4 school or a simple Pass/Fail? If so, how does this impact GPAs, etc?

Deputy Berlo stated either the student is making process or not, and at the high school, students will receive credit or not.

Member Ottmar asked if there are changes in the grading systems, would the School Committee need to vote on this.

Member Weeks asked if special education students will be reached out to instead of them being expected to reach out to their teachers to ensure FAPE guidelines are being met. Superintendent McCall and Administrator Smith both addressed this question, confirming that students on IEPs are being followed and that BCBA's and special education teachers are reaching out to the families, noting the fine line between being bothersome/meddlesome but wanting to assure families the schools, classrooms, and the District are always available for support and assistance.

Student Representative Massoni-Nesman asked if graduation requirements will be adjusted.

Superintendent McCall asked that her question(s) be emailed directly to him for attention.

Chair Mills took this opportunity to bring forward a question about grading emailed to him by Sterling resident.

Member Woodland asked a clarifying question about students with accommodations on their IEP, but not a different curriculum, get linking plans.

Administrator Smith explained how linking plans work and how they are connected with a student's goals and objectives and teacher assignments. Administrator Smith clarified that not all special education students will need a linking plan.

Member Dennis asked the plan for providing guidance to teachers for standards and consistency for remote learning and what professional development will be offered to support it.

Superintendent McCall reported Deputy Berlo is working on tying back the Power Standards to curriculum.

Some discussion took place, with Member Dennis suggesting communicating frequently and transparently, with a focused and deliberate approach to rolling out remote learning.

Chair Mills opened the floor to members for additional comments.

Member Gustafson voiced her concerns about the consistency in accessing and the ability to complete curriculum/activities presented, when such is dependent on parental support, which varies, internet access, computer access, special needs, etc. There are a wide variety of needs and access ability across the District and having the ability to access remote learning with these inconsistencies might be problematic.

Member Weeks asked if families are accessing wifi in school parking lots, would this be an opportunity to provide meals at a location in each Member Town.

Member Kirshenbaum asked about utilizing the bus company to deliver F&R meals to a central location in each Member Town.

Member Godbout commended teachers and guidance counselors at the high school for the level of engagement and communication he and his sons have seen and received during these unsettling times.

Member Gustafson asked for further discussion about expectations for special education services, asking if Speech-Language and counseling services will happen remotely via video. If so, is it expected that providers will meet the frequency of their service grid, where possible. She explained that families are having experiences that vary widely and want to know what the District guidelines/expectations are.

Superintendent McCall and Administrator Smith reported on a conference call they had with District Counsel. It was reiterated that schools are not currently in session, the required hours of a school day are not being met, related service providers are not seeing students per services on IEP grid. Notification will be sent to families outlining what students and parents can expect to receive for services.

Member Haber asked about operating under a 1/12 budget and how that will impact Member Towns. Will the towns be asked to vote on the proposed FY21 WRSDC budget, as presented to the towns?

Chair Mills asked that Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair Dennis schedule a meeting of this subcommittee to discuss how to move forward, the impact on the FY21 budget proposal, the likelihood of the District and the state opening the fiscal year under a 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget.

Chair Mills shared comments made by Supervisor of School Nutrition Margaret Barton. Chair Mills extended his thanks to Supervisor Barton and her staff for all of their services.

Member Lavoie had questions about special education summer programs, as well as stressing the need for social-emotional support during this time of school closure. Administrator Smith reported this date was when teachers were to submit names of students who would be on the ESY (Extended School Year) list. She further explained no plans for ESY are yet finalized, and that compensatory services will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Superintendent McCall reported he and Director of SEL Keenan have been looking at SEL and support services, understanding the importance in this area.

Some additional comments by members were made.

9:10 PM Member Young left the meeting.

Chair Mills turned to public comments, referring to Public Hearing guidelines and explaining that this is not the opportunity for back and forth discussion.

Chair Mills then shared/read aloud questions and comments shared by email from members of the public.



Holden resident Geri Herlihy (attachment 1):

Sterling resident Nancy Terlato (attachment 2)

Sterling resident Carlton Grady (attachment 3)

Holden resident and WREA President Heidi Lahey (attachment 4)

Rutland resident Drew Weymouth

Sterling resident Colleen Ferrera (attachment 5)

Sterling resident Sheri D (attachment 6)

Sterling resident Bettyanne Hauver (attachment 7)

Members had additional questions about retrieval of student belongings, when students might be able to get into the schools to pick up musical instruments, the status of April vacation, if clubs that do not require in-person attendance might be allowed to move forward, if private music lessons can take place virtually, the status of A.P. exams.

9:30 PM Member Mitchel left the meeting.

#### B. Recommendations Requiring Action by the School Committee

1. To determine School Choice participation for the 2020-2021 school year

Superintendent McCall explained the deadline to notify DESE if the District will not be accepting school choice students for the 2020-2021 school year is June 1<sup>st</sup>.

Motion: The Wachusett Regional School District will not participate in the school choice program for the 2020-2021 school year, and the Superintendent is directed to notify the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, Office of School Finance that this district will not be accepting school choice students for the 2020-2021 school year.

(M. Lavoie)  
(L. Kirshenbaum)

Discussion about the motion and school choice participation began. Member Lavoie asked the Superintendent if he had sufficient class size information to help direct a decision about school choice participation. Member Dennis voice his opinion that addressing this issue at this meeting might be premature, given the uncertainty of school operations due to COVID-19 and taking any financial option off the table might not be in the best interest. Accepting school choice at the discretion of the Superintendent based on class size and enrollment numbers is an option the Committee might want to consider. When left to the

Superintendent's discretion based on numbers, not all school choice applicants are guaranteed acceptance.

As a process clarification, Chair Mills explained the motion on the floor could be amended or action on the motion on the floor could be deferred to a future meeting.

Motion: To postpone action on the motion on the floor.

(M. Weeks)

(K. Ottmar)

Discussion ensued. Member Weeks stated she would appreciate the Committee having more information about school choice before taking an official vote on participation for the coming school year.

Chair Mills explained the motion to postpone is debatable, amendable, and requires a majority vote to pass.

Roll call vote:

*In favor:*

Christina Smith  
Melissa Ayala  
Scott Brown  
Michael Dennis  
Stephen Godbout  
Maleah Gustafson  
Sherri Haber  
Jeffrey Haynes  
Robert Imber  
Linda Long-Bellil  
Amy Michalowski  
Karl Ottmar  
Asima Silva  
Megan Weeks  
Linda Woodland

*Opposed:*

Laura Kirshenbaum  
Matthew Lavoie

*Abstained:*

Kenneth Mills

The motion passed 15-2-1.

Members were invited to email their questions about school choice participation to the Superintendent.

Chair Mills explained that the motion to be on a future agenda, under Unfinished Business, will be in the negative, to not participate in school choice in the 2020-2021 school year.

V. Unfinished Business

The motion on school choice participation for the coming school year will be on the next agenda under Unfinished Business.

VI. Secretary's Report

- A. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on March 9, 2020

Deferred

- B. Approval of #1339 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on March 9, 2020

Motion: To approve the minutes of the regular WRSDC meeting held on March 9, 2020.

(L. Long-Bellil)  
(M. Weeks)

Roll call vote:

*In favor:*

Kenneth Mills  
Christina Smith  
Melissa Ayala  
Scott Brown  
Michael Dennis  
Stephen Godbout  
Maleah Gustafson  
Sherri Haber  
Jeffrey Haynes  
Robert Imber  
Laura Kirshenbaum  
Matthew Lavoie  
Linda Long-Bellil  
Amy Michalowski  
Karl Ottmar  
Asima Silva  
Megan Weeks  
Linda Woodland

*Opposed:*

None

The minutes were unanimously approved.

C. Approval of #1340 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Wachusett Regional School District Committee held on March 23, 2020

Motion: To approve the minutes of the regular WRSDC meeting held on March 23, 2020.

(L. Long-Bellil)  
(S. Haber)

Roll call vote:

*In favor:*

Kenneth Mills  
Christina Smith  
Melissa Ayala  
Scott Brown  
Michael Dennis  
Stephen Godbout  
Maleah Gustafson  
Sherri Haber  
Jeffrey Haynes  
Robert Imber  
Laura Kirshenbaum  
Matthew Lavoie  
Linda Long-Bellil  
Amy Michalowski  
Karl Ottmar  
Asima Silva  
Megan Weeks  
Linda Woodland

*Opposed:*

None

The minutes were unanimously approved.

VII. Treasurer's Report/Financial Statements

Chair Mills reminded the Committee that if there were questions regarding the Director of Business and Finance's report that Members should contact the Superintendent; if there were questions regarding the Treasurer's Report, Members should contact the Business/Finance Subcommittee Chair.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. Management Subcommittee (K. Mills, Chair, C. Smith, Vice-chair, S. Brown, M. Dennis, R. Imber, M. Lavoie, A. Young)

This subcommittee has not met since the last School Committee meeting.

- B. Education Subcommittee (R. Imber, Chair, C. Smith, Vice-chair, M. Ayala, S. Haber, L. Kirshenbaum, L. Long-Bellil, A. Silva)

Subcommittee Chair Imber will schedule a meeting to discuss curriculum.

- C. Business/Finance Subcommittee (M. Dennis, Chair, B. Mitchel, Vice-chair, M. Gustafson, L. Long-Bellil, K. Ottmar)

Subcommittee Chair Dennis will schedule a meeting of this subcommittee to discuss the FY20 budget and the proposed FY21 budget. Subcommittee Chair Dennis also requested additional information about school choice.

- D. Legal Affairs Subcommittee (S. Brown, Chair, M. Lavoie, Vice-chair, R. Imber, A. Michalowski)

This subcommittee has not met since the last School Committee meeting. Subcommittee Chair Brown reported negotiations with three bargaining units are underway.

- E. Superintendent Goals and Evaluation Subcommittee (M. Lavoie, Chair, A. Michalowski, Vice-chair, K. Mills, M. Weeks)

Subcommittee Chair Lavoie reported a meeting of this subcommittee is scheduled for April 27, 2020.

- F. Facilities and Security Subcommittee (A. Young, Chair, L. Woodland, Vice-chair, S. Godbout)

This subcommittee has not met since the last School Committee meeting.

- G. Audit Advisory Board (B. Mitchel, Chair)

No report was made

- H. Ad Hoc Subcommittees

- 1. Ad Hoc Subcommittee to Negotiate the Superintendent's Contract (K. Mills, Chair, M. Weeks, Vice-chair, S. Brown, M. Dennis, M. Lavoie)

Subcommittee Chair Mills reported this subcommittee has been meeting.

- I. Building Committees

- J. School Council Reports:

Central Tree Middle School (S. Haber), Chocksett Middle School (L. Woodland), Davis Hill Elementary School (K. Mills), Dawson Elementary School (L. Kirshenbaum), Glenwood Elementary School, Houghton Elementary School (M. Ayala), Mayo Elementary School (A. Young), Mountview Middle School (S. Brown), Naquag Elementary School (M. Lavoie), Paxton Center School (K. Ottmar), Thomas Prince School (A. Silva), Wachusett Regional High School (L.

No reports were made.

IX. Public Hearing

No members of the public had additional comments for the School Committee.

9:58 PM Member Lavoie left the meeting

X. New Business

There was no new business brought before the School Committee.

Before adjourning, Chair Mills extended thanks to Supervisor of Information Services Barry Sclar, Jay Brunelle of Holden Cable Television, all District students, families, teachers, staff, and administrators for everyone's continuing efforts and work during these challenging times.

XI. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

(M. Dennis)  
(A. Silva)

Roll call vote:

*In favor:*

Kenneth Mills  
Christina Smith  
Melissa Ayala  
Scott Brown  
Michael Dennis  
Stephen Godbout  
Maleah Gustafson  
Sherri Haber  
Jeffrey Haynes  
Robert Imber  
Laura Kirshenbaum  
Linda Long-Bellil  
Amy Michalowski  
Karl Ottmar  
Asima Silva  
Megan Weeks  
Linda Woodland

*Opposed:*  
None

The motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Darryll McCall, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

DM:rlp

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Email from Holden resident Geraldine Herlihy
- Attachment 2 – Email from Sterling resident Nancy Terlato
- Attachment 3 – Email from Sterling resident Carlton Grady
- Attachment 4 – Email Holden resident and WREA President Heidi Lahey
- Attachment 5 – Email from Sterling resident Colleen Ferrera
- Attachment 6 – Email from Sterling resident Sheri D.
- Attachment 7 – Email from Sterling resident Bettyanne Hauver



Attachment 1

Rebecca Petersen &lt;rebecca\_petersen@wrsd.net&gt;

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**Fwd: Questions**

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**Kenneth Mills** <Kenneth\_Mills@wrsd.net>

Mon, Apr 6, 2020 at 9:17 PM

To: Rebecca Petersen &lt;rebecca\_petersen@wrsd.net&gt;, Darryll McCall &lt;darryll\_mccall@wrsd.net&gt;

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Geraldine Herlihy** <mgherlihy@charter.net>

Date: Mon, Apr 6, 2020 at 12:13 PM

Subject: Questions

To: Kenneth Mills &lt;Kenneth\_Mills@wrsd.net&gt;

Hi ken - Forgive me if you cover this in your meeting and feel free not to ask my questions if you do. I have my board of selectmen meeting so I will have to watch your meeting afterwards.

1. I am hearing that as of next week education assignments will be mandatory? Is that true?
2. At the last school committee meeting Daryll talked about once we go back to school potentially doing extended days or Saturdays. Is that still on the table?
3. What is the status on April vacation? I didn't see it on the agenda, but I assume you'll talk about it.

Thank you - Geri Herlihy

Sent from my iPhone

--

Kenneth Mills

Chair,

Wachusett Regional School District Committee

*The contents of this e-mail, and any attachments, are the property of the Wachusett Regional School District, and subject to the Public Records Law, M.G.L. c.66, § 10.*





Attachment 2

Rebecca Petersen &lt;rebecca\_petersen@wrsd.net&gt;

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**Re: 3rd Quarter**

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**Kenneth Mills** <Kenneth\_Mills@wrsd.net>

Mon, Apr 6, 2020 at 9:17 PM

To: Rebecca Petersen &lt;rebecca\_petersen@wrsd.net&gt;, Darryll McCall &lt;darryll\_mccall@wrsd.net&gt;

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Nancy Terlato** <nterlato@comcast.net>

Date: Mon, Apr 6, 2020 at 10:56 AM

Subject: 3rd Quarter

To: &lt;linda\_woodland@wrsd.net&gt;, &lt;kenneth\_mills@wrsd.net&gt;, &lt;melissa\_ayala@wrsd.net&gt;, &lt;stephen\_godbout@wrsd.net&gt;

Dear School Committee,

I know there is a meeting tonight so I wanted to send at least some of you a message ASAP about the decision to close the 3rd quarter on March 12. I sent Mr. McCall a message on April 4th but realize he must be flooded with messages and he may not see the message today. I feel this is important and can hopefully be addressed. Please see my email below.

This is such a hard, difficult and stressful time for everyone including our children. So many kids were and are working so hard to achieve a good grade. Many have set goals for the semester, the school year, their middle school years, high school years, etc. Many have set goals for GPAs for college. To have the semester just end without a full assessment and opportunity to succeed seems so unfair. I don't even know what to say. In my son's situation he hasn't even had a test! To have his potentially last graded quarter in middle school just end like this when he has worked so hard for years doesn't seem right in the least. I'm worried how this decision will affect those with anxiety and event those who are not typically anxious. It's a big deal for many kids. I just don't see the point in doing this to them.

I'd really appreciate you discussing this tonight and also letting me know you received this message.

Thanks so much for your hard work and please, most importantly, stay safe.

Regards,  
Nancy Terlato  
Sterling, MA

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Terlato <terlato@comcast.net>**Subject:** 3rd Quarter**Date:** April 4, 2020 at 11:08:46 AM EDT**To:** darryll\_mccall@wrsd.net

Dear Mr. McCall,

First and foremost, I hope that you and your family are staying safe during this difficult time. I am emailing you in regard to the decision to grade the 3rd quarter up until March 12. I realize this is a small concern in light of everything that is happening but feel strongly about pointing out how this effects many of the students. My son, Sebastian (Chocksett), set a lofty goal of getting all As in middle school. He has been working very hard and has all As. This quarter, for all subjects, he too has As expect in math where he struggled with a few concepts in the beginning of the quarter and did not achieve his usual grades for 2 quizzes (all homework turned in for As). This was during the time my husband's sister passed away unexpectedly so I'm not sure if that contributed as we had a lot going on and were going back and forth to New York often. That said he pulled it together and studied like I've never seen him for the test which would

cover the topics in the quizzes that he had difficulty with and contribute significantly to his grade. He was prepared and ready to take the test that was scheduled for March 11. On March 9th the test was bumped to March 17th (I'm not sure why) which as you know never came. His final grade, based on NO tests, is an 87%. He is going to be devastated and I'm wondering what you suggest I tell him? In reality this is really not fair. This quarter grade is not based on a full quarter. It's not based on an accurate analysis of his knowledge of the key topics covered in the quarter. It is not based on a test that would evaluate his learning. It just ended!

I know I am not alone when I express my view of this decision. What are we to tell our children? They weren't given a chance to redeem themselves. I'm all for taken ownership if this in fact was a final grade that included all tests and assignments but to just cut it short seems so unjust. This is such a difficult time for these kids and now I am struggling with how to tell him he didn't achieve this goal he set 3 years ago because they just ended the semester. The only fair way to solve this problem in my opinion is to only include FULL semester grades for the Presidential Award and not include this 3rd quarter or to rethink this decision and have some way to assess their knowledge of 3rd quarter topics.

I'm sure you are inundated with emails but I would really appreciate a reply to this valid concern.

Thanks for all you do.

Regards,  
Nancy Terlato

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Kenneth Mills  
Chair,  
Wachusett Regional School District Committee

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Rebecca Petersen &lt;rebecca\_petersen@wrsd.net&gt;

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**Fwd: WRSD**

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**Kenneth Mills** <Kenneth\_Mills@wrsd.net>  
To: Rebecca Petersen <rebecca\_petersen@wrsd.net>

Mon, Apr 6, 2020 at 9:22 PM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Carlton Grady** <carlton@grady.cc>  
Date: Mon, Apr 6, 2020 at 7:36 PM  
Subject: WRSD  
To: <kenneth\_mills@wrsd.net>

Hello,

I would like to thank you and all the other school board members for serving on the board. I know everyone's life has been turned upside down, and I'm just now starting to think about the impact of this Pandemic on my daughters education. She is in 8th Grade at Chocksett Middle School, and is dealing with this as well as can be expected.

I have long wondered why we don't have online learning available to the students. I never thought about it in the face of a pandemic, but my daughter broke her leg snowboarding last year and was out for a few weeks. It was difficult, random, and chaotic to get her the assignments that she needed to complete. I think the current powerschool system was something that would be a good start about 10 years ago. With today's technology we should, in the case of a pandemic, or other major emergency, or just an individual student injury or illness, be able to continue our children's education remotely through technology.

So I would like to know, is anyone working on this, or is it we are looking into it? I don't know if we are still paying teachers, administrators, etc... But either way, shouldn't we be demanding this? Shouldn't all the 4th grade math teachers be working together to have a complete online curriculum available, complete with videos of each days lessons? At the grade school level there has to be 4 or 5 or more teachers available for every grade for every one or two subjects, one from every town's school? Similar at the high school? Can we try and get together with the school and make this happen?

I'm going to close this with this question, "What happens if we are still in this situation in September?" "What happens when the next pandemic, or natural disaster happens?" I feel that a complete remote learning experience is long overdue. If we are still paying people for our children's education now, then I think now is the time, like last week, not we are thinking about it, or we'll see if we can fit it into next years budget.

Please let me know you thoughts and if there is anything I can do to help.

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Thank you,

Carlton Grady  
Animal Shelter Inc  
17 Laurelwood Road  
Sterling, MA 01564

Good evening.

Heidi Lahey. President of Wachusett Regional Education Association.

I was deeply disturbed by some of the comments made by members of this committee in your last meeting. I am equally disturbed tonight. You demanded answers last time as to why we weren't replicating the school experience at home. Tonight you wanted detailed answers to a multitude of questions and brought forward complaints that we are requiring too many demands. The development of a learning model that is completely different in the middle of social distancing is extremely challenging.

The answers to all of your questions take time and planning.

I also want to remind the committee and the public of some of the factors that have contributed to OUR transition to remote education in Wachusett.

Wachusett has been and remains today, one of the lowest funded school districts in the Commonwealth. We lacked central administrative teams with the capacity for advanced planning for any kind of transition from Brick and Mortar to virtual learning, nor do we have adequate staff during a national emergency.

We lack 1:1 technology for all students and we lack adequate staff to support the technology. Our tech department has one network manager, one supervisor of information services, one information services application specialist, and 7 technology assistants- **a total of 10 people** to manage a network with 13 schools in five towns, more than 1200 staff members and 7,103 students. The district has 4,838 chromebooks- a shortfall of 2,265. Shame on the members of this committee who have forgotten how pitifully staffed and funded this department has been, yet in a global crisis, expect "bold" and "out of the box" action seemingly overnight. We lacked the funding and therefore we lacked the capacity. When a crisis hit, the district needed TIME to problem solve.

Wachusett has also lacked Professional Development sufficient to have allowed ALL educators to have a basic level of digital competence. Many are “self-taught” with a resulting range of skill & efficiency. It has been a very steep learning curve under intense pressure and scrutiny for many of our staff.

There has been much public criticism of our teachers- seemingly driven by the inconsistency of approach and outreach. That falls on district leadership-including my own. I told members to wait for district direction before starting outreach to students. The district needed time to address the hierarchy of student needs as recommended by DESE. A clear directive from the Superintendent to continue contacting families by any means you had customarily employed would have meant teachers could have simply continued what they were already doing...and using methods and technologies that had been vetted. That never happened. Principals went off in different directions, resulting in public outrage over the inequity...exactly what I was trying to prevent by asking teachers to “sit tight until we get some direction.”

Educators are mandated reporters without training or legal guidance around using Zoom and Google Hangout to enter student homes. That liability worries me, and it should worry you too. Remote learning raises student privacy issues, recording concerns, and the biggest concern of all-lack of equity in student home access, home resources and home support. The 15% of students on free/reduced lunch, the 16% of students on IEPs, and the 32% without a district provided device suggest that we have real equity concerns to address.

I truly was appalled to hear some members of this committee suggesting that it was unacceptable to hold back the many for a few weeks in order to address the needs of our most vulnerable students. The majority of our kids won't be harmed forever by a few weeks off...I dare say many of them do

little academic practice over the summer break without serious regression. Perhaps this committee was imagining that we would be resuming our regular programming in just a short while, and distrusted our educators to make adjustments upon the resumption of school. It was clear to me on March 12 that based on the timelines in China, we would most likely be closed for the rest of the year. To overcome the many obstacles to remote learning that Wachusett faced due to our abysmal funding would take time-more time than some of our neighboring districts.

Let me also remind this body that our staff are equally impacted by this virus in their personal and professional lives. Our members are single parents, caregivers of elderly parents, they have pre-existing health care conditions, mental health stresses, spouses on the front lines, financial burdens while we are also watching a global health and economic crisis unfold before our eyes that is truly terrifying.

Compounding the situation is a lack of consistent state and federal guidance that puts more pressure on local district leaders to craft their own solutions while the rules keep changing.

A crisis of this magnitude amplifies the systemic problems that already existed. Wachusett has struggled under routine conditions with consistent communication and implementation. How can anyone on this body be surprised that we are seeing the same issues now? Given your seats at the table where all these things are debated and discussed, I would have expected that members here would have offered some grace and mercy. This has been hellish for everyone- alone in their homes, staff are working very hard to make this transition. Nobody has been on a paid vacation.



Attachment 5

Rebecca Petersen &lt;rebecca\_petersen@wrsd.net&gt;

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**[WRSD Feedback] Q3 grades**

1 message

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**'Colleen Ferrera' via WRSD Feedback** <feedback@wrsd.net>

Mon, Apr 6, 2020 at 6:04 PM

Reply-To: Colleen Ferrera &lt;colleenstreet@netscape.net&gt;

To: feedback@wrsd.net

Good evening,

I am writing at the behest of other parents about the unfairness of Q3 grades. The way this is being handled significantly impacts students attaining honor and high honors. My son included. Students lost the opportunity to take the next test, turn in the next paper that could have made a difference between honors or not. And could cost students the presidential award.

I hope this is something the committee will be looking into .

Thank you

Colleen Ferrera  
Chocksett and Houghton mom

Sent from my iPhone

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## Attachment 6

ca Petersen &lt;rebecca\_petersen@wrsd.net&gt;



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**[WRSD Feedback] Grades**

1 message

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**sheri\_deotte3** <sheri\_deotte3@comcast.net>

Mon, Apr 6, 2020 at 6:05 PM

To: feedback@wrsd.net

I know this is an impossible situation. However I'm having a hard time with the grades closing on March 12th. One of my children now ended with a c+ when he could of made honor roll and he was working for that. I am not sure what the alternative is but I think it leaves a lot of kids who were worried and concerned to be devastated and us parents who do care about the grades too. I know we might have to let it go but it's hard. Thank you

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

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Attachment 7

Rebecca Petersen &lt;rebecca\_petersen@wrsd.net&gt;



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**[WRSD Feedback] Quarter 3 grades**

1 message

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**'Bettyanne' via WRSD Feedback** <feedback@wrsd.net>

Mon, Apr 6, 2020 at 6:18 PM

Reply-To: Bettyanne &lt;bethauv@yahoo.com&gt;

To: feedback@wrsd.net

Hello,

I know the schools are doing their best to accommodate everyone. The state emergency is an unusual circumstance. I have a middle school child at Chocksett Middle School. She has been an honor student throughout middle school and currently has a C+ in a class, which is out of character for her. She was struggling and was trying to work hard to get her grade up before the end of the quarter. She needed the opportunity to do well on more grades. If grades are given as of 3/12 this will negatively affect her and many other children. There should be an opportunity for those children who want to, to do additional work. Other schools are doing it. I feel the teachers are capable of giving work to be graded at home vs. just enrichment busy work.

I just felt it was important to voice my concern.

Thank you,

Bettyanne Hauver

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