

Quincy, MASSACHUSETTS – April 1, 2020

Special Meeting of the Quincy School Committee

A special meeting of the Quincy School Committee was held on Wednesday, April 1, 2020 at the Coddington Building at 6:00 p.m via teleconference.

Special Meeting

Superintendent DeCristofaro called the roll and present were Mayor Thomas Koch, Mr. Paul Bregoli, Mr. Douglas Gutro, Mrs. Kathryn Hubley, Mrs. Emily Lebo, Mr. Frank Santoro, and Mr. Anthony Andronico, Vice Chair.

Vice-Chair Presiding

Also present were: Dr. Richard DeCristofaro, Secretary; Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk; Deputy Superintendent Kevin Mulvey, Mr. Robert Cavallo, Mr. Michael Draicchio, Mr. James Mullaney, Ms. Maura Papile, Ms. Erin Perkins, Ms. Madeline Roy, and Mr. Keith Segalla.

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Mayor Koch opened the meeting with an overview of COVID-19's effect in Quincy to date: 117 confirmed cases, 7 deaths, and 30 residents have recovered. Mayor Koch thanked the Superintendent, Leadership Team, Principals and Teachers; Commissioner Ruth Jones and the Health Department staff, as well as Quincy's first responders. Rental assistance is being made available to residents through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund; Community Development Block Grant funding will be expanded to assist food pantries; and stimulus funding may be able to be used to purchase technology for student use at home.

City of Quincy COVID-19 Update

Mr. Gutro and Mr. Santoro thanked Mayor Koch and Commissioner Ruth Jones for keeping everyone informed.

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Dr. DeCristofaro opened his report by expressing his pride in the Superintendent's Leadership Team, Principals, Assistant Principals, Academic Classroom and Program Teachers, and the Academic Support staff for their support of our students and families and each other during this unprecedented time. Communication to staff and families on COVID-19 began on January 28 with a general advisory on health and hygiene during flu season and continued with another eleven communications to date. In the two and half weeks that school has been closed, the Instructional Technology department has assisted over 1800 students in accessing Google Classroom. Dr. DeCristofaro is in constant communication with principals, staff, and families. We are learning as we go, and trying to be mindful of students' technology issues, learning needs, and family circumstances as we plan to expand remote learning. On Thursday, March 30, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley

Superintendent's Report

released new guidance to school districts on remote learning and planning is underway to launch on Monday, April 6.

Elementary and Middle School Report Cards for Term 2 will be published on Aspen on Friday, April 3 and Kindergarten through Grade 8 parents will be notified and assisted to access the report cards as needed. Term 2 ended March 6 and teachers were in the process of posting grades in Aspen before schools closed. Dr. DeCristofaro will be meeting with the High School Principals and Assistant Principals to discuss the 3rd quarter (scheduled to end on April 3) and 4th quarters.

Mr. Gutro asked if high school students will have the opportunity to make up missing assignments to raise their grades, especially for students who may have been on the verge of failing. Dr. DeCristofaro said those are important considerations, and will keep in mind to make sure this is as fair as possible.

Mrs. Hubley shares Mr. Gutro's concerns about the high school third term.

Mrs. Lebo asked if DESE is recommending that we not grade students for remote learning assignments as we usually do, noting that we have to be careful about equity and still make the work purposeful, especially for high school students.

Dr. DeCristofaro continued his report by noting that for Spring 2020 MCAS testing, the Federal waiver to the state has been granted. It is now up to the Legislature to act on this and waive the testing requirement. For the Student Opportunity Act, confirmation of a new deadline is still pending. For accountability, Chronic Absenteeism will be calculated based on attendance through March 2 and be compared with similar period previous year.

Mrs. Lebo is concerned about the Grades 9 and 10 Biology students if the MCAS is not administered in the year they take the course.

Dr. DeCristofaro said that all school buildings, offices, and buses have been deep-cleaned and disinfected by a team of custodians during the week of March 16. Custodians will continue with regular spring cleaning tasks at the eight school buildings open daily as food distribution sites. Staff members are scheduled to enter school buildings to pick up curriculum materials in a way that upholds social distancing protocols. Custodians then clean and disinfect after staff members leave. Social distancing recommendations for students on school grounds and in city parks will be emphasized in the next advisory.

Mr. Bregoli asked if Quincy Public Schools is considering having an outside company come in to assist the Custodial staff. Dr. DeCristofaro said that it was considered, but once the schools closed there was enough staffing across the school system to team up for the deep cleaning. Dr. DeCristofaro said outside contractors can be a future consideration.

Mr. Gutro asked about teachers going into schools and whether we are inquiring about symptoms and family members with symptoms. Dr. DeCristofaro said that at this point, he would assume that staff members know to stay home in either of those circumstances.

School Nutrition began distributing meals on Monday, March 16 at four initial school sites (lunch and breakfast for the next day): Lincoln Hancock, Snug Harbor, North Quincy High School, and Quincy High School. On March 30, Clifford Marshall was added and on April 1, Atherton Hough, Montclair, Parker will be added. To date, 6,500 meals have been distributed thanks to School Nutrition Director Sara Dufour, assisted by her staff and members of the Leadership and Principal Teams at each site. Enrichment packets are available at the lunch sites as well. Beginning next week, the enrichment packets will be distributed on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Mr. Bregoli asked about personal protection equipment for food distribution; gloves and masks are available, along with wipes. The distribution sites are set up to reinforce social distancing.

Mr. Santoro asked about the enrichment packets and the relation to curriculum and pacing at this point in the year. Dr. DeCristofaro said these are broader enrichment and developmentally appropriate, but not curriculum specific.

Mr. Andronico asked for clarification on the number of families who have taken packets, 840 Pre-K to 2; 713 Gr. 3-6; 246 Gr. 3-5; 96 Gr. 9-1. This is the total number of packets, not the number of individual students and families. Mr. Andronico asked about gathering more detailed data, Dr. DeCristofaro will look into, being mindful of student privacy as these are at the food distribution sites.

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Mr. Andronico moved to take the Agenda out of order and moved to Item V, Quincy Public Schools website: Academic Continuity and Resources.

QPS Website: Academic Continuity

Dr. DeCristofaro noted that the content on the website has grown from some very general suggestions that were posted on March 16 to the depth of the content available today, thanks to the incredible work of Directors Erin Perkins, Madeline Roy, Maura Papile, the Curriculum Team Administrators, and many teachers throughout the school system.

Special Education Director Erin Perkins reviewed that the Family Resources section of the Quincy Public Schools website, which includes a sample schedule for each grade band in an attempt to provide structure for students and families. The many links to outside resources have been collected by academic classroom and program teachers along with academic support staff, close to 300 options to

support all grade levels and special education and English Learner students. The next step is to create curriculum-focused blogs for ELA, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies.

Mr. Gutro asked for clarification on where to access the resources on the Quincy Public Schools website, under Family Resources top tab on the main page of the website.

Senior Curriculum Director Madeline Roy reviewed the Professional Development resources on the Quincy Public Schools website shared to support professional staff in completing 2 hours from 60 options total in 11 content areas; 800+ staff members are participating this week. Additional Professional Development options will be shared beginning the week of April 6, including support for digital and remote learning.

Senior Director of Student Support Services Maura Papile reviewed Student Support and Health Services content on the QPS website to support social-emotional wellness, including mindfulness and support for the COVID-19 crisis. Guidance counselors and school nurses have been reaching out to families and providing resources to supplement.

Mr. Gutro said the connection with students is so critical given the state of anxiety, how is outreach happening for all students, not just students who were previously receiving support. Ms. Papile said the QPS website are resources for a starting point, teachers are communicating with all students, and Guidance Counselors will have “office hours” to support students. Outside virtual counseling resources are available from some of our partners and through several generous donations, Stop & Shop gift cards have been provided to many families.

Dr. DeCristofaro said that the Quincy Public Schools website has come a long way in a short time, thanks to the work of Superintendent’s Leadership Team and Instructional Technology team members.

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Mr. Andronico returned to the order of the agenda, item III. DESE’s Guidance on Remote Learning.

DESE Guidance on Remote Learning

Dr. DeCristofaro said this transition to remote learning is implementing a paradigm shift; staff are at Coddington Building working daily from 8:00 am and 6:00 pm. Offering office hours from 9:00 am to noon on Saturdays and Sundays as well if parents have questions and want to call. Emphasizes that Quincy Public Schools is totally devoted to the students and managing this transition.

Dr. DeCristofaro said that in the recent guidance, DESE Commissioner Jeffrey Riley has said that all districts must create a remote learning model. Quincy

Public Schools and the Quincy Education Association have created a detailed Memorandum of Understanding to define the parameters of what this model will look like. Planning is underway and implementation will begin on Monday, April 6 and we will be looking for feedback on the rollout. It is recommended that students spend three hours per day on academics, enrichment, and physical activity to keep learning alive. At all levels, this will begin with review of where students were on March 13 and move forward. For elementary and middle school students, the assignments will receive feedback but not formal grading. At the high school level, assignments may be given credit/no credit. This is about individualized and personalized remote learning opportunities. Dr. DeCristofaro said that we are looking at loaning Chromebooks to students without access to technology, beginning with high school students. Online assignments with asynchronous, teachers will not be live teaching classes knowing that technology is shared within families. Families will receive suggested schedules for school levels (Pre-Kindergarten, Grades K-2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, and Grades 9-12).

Mr. Bregoli is concerned about learning gaps, especially if school is not resumed before June. Mr. Bregoli asked about the possibility of summer enrichment, noting that for Science, laboratory work cannot be replicated. Dr. DeCristofaro said that the whole nation has the same concern about students falling behind, and it is up to the Governor ultimately to make the decision. For Science, Dr. DeCristofaro said that these teachers are looking to connect with students through remote learning, hopefully our talented teachers will find a way.

Mr. Gutro asked if there will be a follow-up call from all principals to remind families that this is beginning April 6. Dr. DeCristofaro said initially, he wished for all communication to come from his office, but in this past week Principals have been reaching out to parents. SLT will work together with the Principals to help frame the message. Mr. Gutro asked about the interactions each week, Dr. DeCristofaro said we are looking for three points of contact per week. Mr. Gutro asked about how we are assessing student needs for technology. Dr. DeCristofaro said that ordering new Chromebooks have at least 4 weeks lead time. We can look at the 1,500 Chromebooks we currently have to be loaned out concentrating first on high school students.

Mrs. Hubley asked about high school students in AP classes, Dr. DeCristofaro said it is the same for Advanced, Honors, or CCP classes. Mrs. Hubley asked about graduation, Dr. DeCristofaro said as of today, graduation is still scheduled. There are many issues to be resolved, this is where the Guidance staff is integral to assist in the transition from high school to college, working, and military plans. Dr. DeCristofaro said the Guidance Counselors are already working with students in Grades 8, 9, 10, and 11 on finalizing their course selection for the 2020-21 school year. Dr. DeCristofaro said we are working on expanding the school staff directories on the Quincy Public Schools website so parents will have email addresses for academic classroom, program, and support staff.

Mr. Santoro said this is quite an undertaking and thanked Mayor Koch for addressing technology needs, and the QEA for the ease of negotiating, and the SLT for the professional development opportunity.

Mr. Andonico noted that the AP website says they are developing free online prep courses and an online testing protocol, with more information to come. Mr. Andronico said that families who have technology may be looking at sharing with parents who are working from home, urged the distribution of the existing Chromebooks as much as possible. Mr. Andronico noted that DESE's guidance prior to March 26 was markedly different that it is now.

Mr. Gutro said that the College Board has notified students directly that the Advanced Placement exams will not be given in person at school sites. Ms. Papile said the high school counselors had a webinar this week about the changes for SAT, ACT, and AP tests. The counselors will be working on developing a common message for students in Grades 11 and 12 and there will be a meeting tomorrow to plan out how to share that information.

Mr. Gutro asked about the APP Grade 5 program. Dr. DeCristofaro said that we haven't addressed this issue yet. Students who were qualified through their Grade 3 MCAS scores were not yet notified before school closed on March 13.

Mrs. Lebo thanked the Superintendent and the Leadership Team, so much work is being done. Mrs. Lebo said that the interaction between students and teachers is so important. Mrs. Lebo said the Professional Development will be important for teachers to have the tools to use the interactive platforms.

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Ms. Perkins spoke about DESE's guidance on Special Education, which tasks school districts to provide services and resources remotely, similar to general education students. In an effort to maintain FAPE (free and appropriate public education) and assisting with support for daily functioning, Special Education teams have been meeting to plan small group and whole group and individual instruction. There are over 1,800 students currently receiving services and will require notification prior before the resumption of services. Over 300 Special Education teachers, guidance staff, occupational, physical, and speech therapists are collaborating on how to best support our families and students.

DESE Guidance on
Special Education

In addition, IEP meetings must be conducted virtually, including annual reviews. There are many logistical issues including signatures and translation that are yet to be determined. There is another conference call with DESE Assistant Commissioner Russell Johnson for further discussion.

Mr. Bregoli asked about service delivery for PT, Speech, and OT, how will that work. Ms. Perkins said that teletherapy requires 10 hours of Professional

Development and some staff have already completed. Ms. Perkins said creating videos that model activity or providing instructions are other options.

Mrs. Hubley asked whether we have been able to assess the number of Special Education students who need technology assistance. Ms. Perkins said that principals and families have been reaching out and Chromebooks have been provided to some families already. Ms. Perkins said the most high-needs students have been receiving BCBA therapies.

Mrs. Lebo asked about the educator resources provided by DESE. Ms. Perkins said that we are looking at all of the options and providing support to the teachers as they adapt to new tools.

Mr. Andronico asked whether DESE has released guidance on English Learners. Ms. Perkins said that except for where translation is required, we haven't seen anything. Mr. Andronico asked about compensatory services and Ms. Perkins said those are mandated when there is evidence of substantial regression. Ms. Perkins said that the goal of starting check-ins for CARES and Learning Center students immediately was to address areas for potential regression. Ultimately, the Special Education summer programs may need to be adjusted to provide compensatory services if a team meeting determined the need.

Mrs. Lebo noted that parents may have computers, but they may not have printers. Ms. Perkins said that we are printing materials for pickup at lunch sites where needed.

Mr. Bregoli asked about the level transition meetings that guidance and special education staff have when students move from Pre-K to K, Grade 5 to 6, and Grades 8 to 9. Ms. Perkins said the staff will conduct these virtually if needed.

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Mayor Koch noted that the Superintendent, Leadership Team, Principals, and staff are working so hard. COVID-19 is affecting families across the country and overall, the schools and the city's response has been incredible. Mayor Koch reiterated that technology is a priority and noted that our teachers are at home with their own families in many cases. Mayor Koch reminded all listeners that social distancing is so important, families must take this seriously to flatten the curve. Mayor Koch also noted that completion of the Census is very important to the City and urged all parents to complete this. Closing Remarks

Dr. DeCristofaro said that we will continue to assess the Chromebook needs to immediately assist families as well as long-term planning. Dr. DeCristofaro thanked Vice Chair Andronico for organizing the meeting, a few technology glitches, but well done overall. Dr. DeCristofaro thanked School Committee for their input and leadership.

Mr. Santoro thanked Mr. Andronico for chairing the first virtual School Committee meeting in history, very well done.

Mr. Gutro requested weekly School Committee meeting and that video capability be utilized. Mr. Gutro requested that Open Forum be part of every agenda and would like to discuss the two Memoranda of Agreement executed since March 16.

Mrs. Lebo agreed that School Committee should meet more frequently and utilize video technology.

Mr. Andronico said that this meeting showcased some of the challenges with technology during these interesting times. School Committee and the Quincy Public Schools will continue to check in on the evolving plan and ensure that the needs of students and families are met. Mr. Andronico urged parents to reach out to Superintendent DeCristofaro, Mayor Koch, and any member of the School Committee to share concerns.

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Mayor Koch made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 pm. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bregoli and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.

Adjournment

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