

Croton-Harmon UFSD | August 20, 2020 Board of Education Meeting

Welcome, everyone. I would like to call to order the August work session of the Croton-Harmon Board of Education. Thank you all for joining us this evening. I'm getting playback.

All right, so we will move into recommended action that the Board of Education approves the agenda as presented.

Second.

Can I get someone to move it first?

Oh, move, sorry.

I'll second.

OK, sorry.

All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Oppose? Abstain? Motion carries. All right, so we will be starting up our meeting with hearing of the public. And sorry, I'm having a hard time getting my screen. There we go.

All right, so like I said, we will be starting off this evening with hearing of the public. Good evening, everyone. I will be reading some community members' letters, comments, and questions in alphabetical order, and then I will conclude with a letter from the Croton Teachers Association.

So our first letter is from Pamela Harrison. Has a final decision been made about reentry? I thought we were going with hybrid, but I understand now that there is a chance we may start the year fully remote. Is that the case? And if so, why? And her second question is, do we have a sense of how many teachers and in which schools will be opting out of teaching in person? What is the plan to back-fill these people, or will those classes simply be fully remote?

From Cassandra Hooper, her letter is, I applaud the work the Croton-Harmon School District and the Board of Education to make returning to school next month possible. I attended all of the

presentations and think that the hybrid plan is smart and compassionate. I have confidence that my own children will be safe on the days they are in school. Remote learning is a poor substitute for in-person teaching, and I appreciate all that has been done by the administrators and teachers to make excellent education a priority.

National, local, and social media are having a heyday with the school opening. Your visionary and strong leadership is not lost on me and the many other families in Croton who are in support of sending children to school. As a teacher delivering a full schedule of face-to-face classes this semester, I have your back.

And from Chris Cillian and Anne McWilliams, I'm going to read a portion of their letter. And the summary is with two questions. Based on what we've been told, CET's remote-only classes risk being too large to be effective, especially for younger children. Reduction of remote class sizes should be a priority for CET starting with kindergarten and working up as far as resources allow.

Remote learning is harder than in-person for most, harder still the larger the group gets and harder still as you go down in age and maturity. Efforts should be focused on making the remote class sizes as small as possible, given available CET resources, starting with K and moving up the line to older kids. We think this is more important than, for example, world languages being available this fall or even specials or anything else.

The tail risk here is a lost semester or year for this sizable group of kids. It has been noted in the parent sessions that there will be no AIS or enhancement. That is an unfortunate sacrifice to the needs of the situation and one that for both of our CETers used and will miss. But we get it. This is a five-alarm fire type of risk, and we need to focus on the core issues. At the absolute, total worst, the remote groups should be no larger than the typical class in the school.

And the second is the contingency plans for CET hybrid students are unclear, should be clarified, and need further work. The district and CET should determine and outline a solution for K-2 kids not able to be in school for extended periods that is more robust than packets at home and emailing teachers, given the enhanced risk of absence this year. The district and CET should clarify that kids in grades 3-4 have the ability to join their opposite Croton-Harmon cohort in the event of being unable to attend in-person learning.

And then from Karen McCormick Lyons and Michael Lyons, dear trustees and community members, thank you for your time and dedication as we move to reopen our schools safely during a pandemic.

This is an incredible challenge that comes with inherent risk. The cost of not getting this right is too high. One way to mitigate this risk is to begin with a phased reopening, as other districts like White Plains and New Rochelle are implementing.

This is a judicious move for a few key reasons. Bringing staff in first after folks have returned from vacations and college drop-offs would allow the district to monitor community spread. It would also allow the district to monitor and evaluate the safety protocols. Staff would have an opportunity to build whole classroom communities with whole groups of students, which is really important for the social-emotional component. As we know, Maslow comes before Bloom. It will also allow the staff to build the necessary dexterity with technology, which they will need as they move to the hybrid model, which would be phased in if all goes well.

It is really hard to navigate technology platforms, address the needs of students in front of you, and do the same for kids at home. A remote start would allow staff to also work with the groups of students on routines and protocols for using technology when in school and at home. This is an important pedagogical component which we didn't have in the spring. It would also establish a baseline in the event that we do have to move to remote at some point in the future.

Additionally, masks are non-negotiable. They are also cruel in the heat of early September. A phased-in start of a week or two would buy us some time as the weather cools down. This is going to be a very different school experience for our children. We want it to be as comfortable and as safe as possible.

We all want our children safely back in school, but we must be measured in our approach. We can't lose one community member in this process. We have to get this right. A phased reopening is a step in the right direction.

From Dana Moldovan, the Croton-Harmon school district is uniquely positioned in many ways to offer an in-person option this fall. Our plan is robust. Our facilities are in fantastic shape. Our ventilation systems are new, and our community's COVID cases are low. I hope we are able to take advantage of our strengths from the start of school and offer the in-person hybrid solution to our students who so desperately need to be in the classroom with their peers and teachers to the extent possible. Our district, the board, and our principals have done a tremendous job with planning and communications this summer. I thank them for their hard work.

From Lisa Tolepsy, what criteria is being used to determine if we will open full remote or hybrid? The infection rates are low enough for the schools to open. So if the administration decides to go full

remote, at what point will schools open for hybrid? What is the reason for doing full remote if that is chosen, and what needs to happen to get kids back into the buildings?

And from Shauna Usiak, as someone with over a decade of infectious disease experience, we have rightfully used data and science to successfully flatten the curve and have brought this virus under control in New York state. We have continued to see cases drop and remain low, despite reopening through four phases over the past two and a half months.

Reopening school is the next phase. Public health officials feel this can be done safely with appropriate precautions. We should take those precautions and continue to follow science and data, not fear and emotion, to reopen successfully.

I would like to say thank you to the community members who wrote to us for tonight's hearing of the public and to all of those who have reached out to us during reentry planning. Your feedback is greatly appreciated and has really helped inform our discussions. And lastly, I would like to read the following letter on behalf of the Croton Teachers Association.

Dear members of the Croton-Harmon Union Free School District Board of Education, since the spring, a task force committee made up of members of the board, administrators, teachers, staff, community members, and students has worked diligently to come up with three viable solutions for the reopening of school-- 100% in-person, 100% remote, and a hybrid of in-person and remote. Although governor Cuomo announced on August 7 that schools can reopen, it falls to individual school districts to decide which model their students and staff will follow.

Moreover, the state has put an undue amount of responsibility for health infrastructure planning and coordination on local school districts while failing to provide adequate time, guidance, and resources. School districts and task forces have expended considerable efforts to address and employ safety measures, even in the absence of substantive resources and support from either state or federal governments. Districts and local administrators have effectively been left to address these myriad problems on their own with predictably unhappy results.

Recent news reports suggest that there is a growing concern within the scientific community about the transmission of COVID-19 through exhaled air. As a result, even in schools with strict policies and mask-wearing and social distancing, staff and students have still contracted COVID-19. Such cautionary examples would seem to warn that if districts follow current plans, there will be a resulting spike in cases and schools will need to close again to contain the spread of the virus.

Make no mistake-- every teacher in our district longs to return to the classroom. We want to engage with our students, to see their faces light up with curiosity and understanding, to witness and celebrate firsthand their successes and their achievements. But we want to do so safely. And at the moment, our only true safe option for students and staff is to begin the school year with our state-approved remote plan.

As states have begun to reopen schools for in-person instruction, there has been a significant increase in the number of children testing positive for COVID-19, and it is still unclear what the long-term effects are for those children who recover from this virus. Furthermore, the adult teaching staff has a higher risk of succumbing to a case of COVID-19, as well as experiencing dangerous and lasting health effects.

In a survey conducted in mid-August, over 75% of the CTA members indicated that they do not feel safe educating our students in the hybrid model with in-person instruction, even if all safety measures are followed. As questions arise about safety protocols, teachers expressed increasing concerns that these protocols may not be diligently respected not through blatant disregard, but because we are expecting children to behave as perfect actors under very complex, difficult, and extraordinary circumstances when human nature dictates otherwise.

While we continue to engage in dialogue with school leaders on a list of building-specific concerns that must be addressed, we stand with our brothers and sisters from schools across Putnam and Westchester counties in calling for the following measures to be put into place to create the highest health standards for students and staff. One, all building-wide HVAC systems must be upgraded to a minimum of MERV 13 filtration. And if existing systems cannot be upgraded, portable units with HEPA filtration must be available for all indoor spaces.

In addition, buildings should meet all CDC air ventilation guidelines, including running upgraded systems 24 hours per day, seven days per week. There must be uniform standards for COVID testing to help monitor asymptomatic spread. COVID testing must provide accurate and reliable results within 24 hours in order to monitor asymptomatic spread. The current wait time can be as high as 12 days, which is not adequate to help prevent the spread of COVID by asymptomatic individuals infected with COVID in our schools.

Three, supply lines for PPE must be prioritized to deliver all necessary PPE to schools in a timely fashion. All schools must have an adequate supply of PPE at all times, including enhanced PPE for students and employees who require it.

Four, school districts must be able to guarantee that there is sufficient staff to supervise students and provide instruction, even as individual staff members are absent for illness or quarantine, childcare, or personal leaves. Five, there must be a 100% virtual option for students as well as for teachers who are medically compromised. Six, plans should require a minimum 14-day shutdown once closed for with COVID-19 issues.

Croton teachers take pride in and are committed to our profession, and we see it as the heart of our work to develop rich and caring relationships with our students. We are lifelong learners who are dedicated to nurturing those same qualities in the children of our learning community, and we do not want to place those children or our colleagues at unnecessary risk by being too hasty to return to in-person instruction.

We know that students thrive best in a classroom surrounded by teachers and peers, that many families have childcare needs to allow them to productively return to work, and that remote instruction poses particular challenges to students with individual learning needs. But until state and federal governments can provide the resources necessary to allow all members of the educational community to participate without risk of harm, our plan for remote instruction is the only one that most effectively preserves the health and safety of us all. Thank you on behalf of the Croton Teachers Association-- Jennifer Moore, president, Suzanne Lewis, vice president and PVC building representative, Sarah Wellman, chief negotiator, PVC building representative, John Bohanick, political action chair, Patricia Zamberlin, membership chair, Susan Brie, recording secretary, Phyllis Cobb, corresponding secretary, CHHS building representative, Craig Cabernero, CET building representative, Lisa Blatt, CET building representative, and Allison Rhodes, CHHS building representative.

On behalf of the board, I would like to thank our teachers for their outreach. It's very important to us that you share your thoughts and concerns with us and with the community. I'd like to also extend my appreciation and gratitude as a board member and a parent for your hard work and dedication on behalf of our children. And lastly, I would like to request that the board save our comments and discussion regarding these letters for the work session portion of our agenda. Thank you.

I will now move on to instructional personnel. Recommended action that the Board of Education approves the request for an unpaid leave of absence submitted by Key Song, foreign language teacher, Pierre Van Cortlandt Middle School effective August 31, 2020 with an anticipated reads return date of January 25, 2021.

So moved.

Second.

On the question? All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Oppose? Abstain? Motion carries. And now we will move on to the consent agenda. And recommended action that the Board of Education approves the consent agenda as presented.

So moved.

Second.

On the question. All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye. Oppose?

Aye.

Abstain? Motion carries. And we will now move into the work session portion of our agenda, and first on our work session is item 5.1, which is a discussion about the census. And I will turn this over to Andrea Fury, who is the chair of our advocacy committee.

Hi, I'm bringing the census forward on behalf of the advocacy committee because we recently received a message from Nisva reminding us, in the midst of everything, how important it is that everybody participate in the census and that the deadline is now September 30.

Just one second, please. Sorry, just had to quiet the troops. But anyway, so the present deadline is September 30. And it's really important for everybody to participate because that is what our representation is based on.

So in 2010, we lost two congressional seats of the state of New York because the numbers went down. There's been a lot of challenges with this Census because of COVID. There hasn't been as much door-

to-door work.

So our plan is to try and send this out. We're going to be sending it out to K-12 with some other advocacy information that we're presenting. And the big thing is Croton has a pretty high participation. But even if you can forward the link to the census to anybody you know, it's really important that we get the word out. And one thing I would like to suggest-- I was looking at some of the information that we received-- some school districts have made certain months census month.

So I'm wondering if we would like to call September census month and follow up in different ways with getting the word out. I just put that out there for discussion. And our other advocacy members, which are Sarah and Neil, I'm wondering if you have anything that you would like to add to the discussion.

I don't have anything particular to add, except I was thinking about this. And I was thinking that if-- and it's probably too late-- but if the parent information packets have not yet gone to each of the parents, since that's another way of communicating, if there was a one-page reminder that could be put in those envelopes, that would be great. But I have the sense that it's too late in the process. The administration can confirm.

Not necessarily, Neil. And I also want to comment that our principals were including census information in their weekly communications to families in the spring. So I don't think it's too late. So I've jotted down a note, and we can continue the conversation. And it's your lucky night because you have a few administrators here on the Zoom meeting tonight.

Thank you. The other thing I would add is that the issue for advocacy with this first thought about it was the fact that there were certain legislative initiatives that had been tentatively discussed to overturn any acceleration of those deadlines. And that, obviously, with Congress being focused on other things when they get back is not necessarily high on the priority list for Congress. But I think we should be prepared if there is any move towards that legislation that we should be prepared to support and advocate for that legislation.

Right. Yes, I mean, unfortunately, like many things, this has been politicized, the census. So it's just really important that everybody participates. Thank you.

Sorry, I had a problem unmuting myself. Did anyone else have any other comments on the census? All right, thank you, Andrea, for preparing this and speaking with us and reminding the community how important it is. As you said, Croton has a pretty good participation rate thus far, but it really is so

important that everyone participates and that everyone in the state participates so that we get accurate numbers. So now our second to work session topic of the night is on school reentry, and I will turn this over to Dr. O'Connell so that we can continue our discussion.

Tracy, do you have to stop sharing your screen so I can share mine? I can just share mine, and it goes over yours. OK, good. Well, good evening, everyone. Good evening to the board, and good evening to the community.

So I thank you very much for joining in with us this evening, and I'd like to start off by recognizing that I have members of the Croton-Harmon administrative team here. Of course, John Griffiths and Denise Harrington-Cohen but then we have our building-level administrators as well as Paul Gibbons with us. So we have Dr. Mojica, Ms. Bianchi, Mr. Plotkin, Ms. Dubak, and Mr. Gibbons joining us for the Board of Ed work session tonight. And I thank you for giving even more of your time.

So again, good evening, everyone. I hope everybody is doing well and enjoying these beautiful summer days. Tonight I'd like to focus in on a few things and, of course, continuing our school reentry discussion. So first, I'd like to talk a little about health and safety and some of the questions that I get on occasion.

The district continues to work closely with the Westchester County Department of Health and will continue to seek their guidance as we have any health-related questions or issues. I'd like to draw your attention to our web page, and there's the frequently asked questions document. In that document, I put a link to another FAQ-- frequently asked question-- document from the actual Westchester County Department of Health.

I find that particular guidance document very informing. So that's there for you. The frequently asked questions are there on the website. And within the frequently asked questions right at the top is another link to a resource from the Westchester County Department of Health. It's a very helpful resource for families, and I think it gives you an opportunity to look more closely at some of the health-related questions.

But one of the questions that I do receive is, what is the protocol should a student or staff member test positive for COVID-19? So I'll go through some of the steps, and then I have a visual to share with you. So as soon as we hear that anybody knows of a positive case for themselves and their staff member or student or family, immediately inform the school nurse of that positive result. The school nurse will alert the district COVID coordinator. Now, the district COVID coordinators is Mr. Griffiths. And then we have building COVID coordinators, which are our assistant principals.

At that point, we will also contact Dr. Mir. Dr. Mir is our district physician. And if we received the information, we would then contact the Westchester County Department of Health. If the Westchester County Department of Health receives the information, they will be contacting the school.

So with that said, it is at that point that the district collaborates with the Department of Health on contact tracing process. I'll talk more about that again when I get to the visual. And what that does is include notifications to families or staff members that they may have come in contact with somebody that has tested COVID positive.

The district will collaborate with the Department of Health on quarantine and isolation protocols and closures. With a COVID-positive case, building closure is probable. It could be for 24 to 72 hours or until further notice. Each particular instance is different and needs to be treated differently, but that is the purpose of being in collaboration with the Department of Health and Dr. Mir.

Once that is the point where we say we need to close a building or buildings, then I will communicate using K12 Alert to let families know that we need to close a building or buildings. The school district will then move to its remote learning plan during the closure.

Now, that's an important piece because I know many of you have been coming to all of the forums and the principal's coffees and you've heard me use the word pivot. We need students, families, staff. All personnel need to be prepared to move from one model, such as the in-person hybrid model, to a remote-learning model, should there be a need to close a school.

So that is a question I receive frequently, and I'd like to now share a visual. So hopefully this visual will come up as I share my screen. And it's a decision tree. And it was developed in collaboration between Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES, their safety team, and the Department of Health. So this resource was shared with all school districts because we really wanted to approach this in a very unified way.

So this is just a protocol visual that, as you're seeing here to the left, if we have a COVID-positive case, lab-confirmed positive case of students or staff, we're going to follow the row along. What is the immediate action? Well, I mentioned some of the pieces in my first comments. But the immediate action is to gather as much information as possible-- the person's name, the location, and lots of information. The more information we can provide, the more robust the contact-tracing processes are.

At that point, notification is of the COVID coordinator for us as well. It would be Dr. Mir, our district physician. So following the visual along, you look there, contact tracing begins. Well, let's pause there for a moment. The COVID coordinator, if the district finds out about the positive case, we would be informing the Department of Health, vice versa. Again, if they hear of the case, they inform the school district, and the contact-tracing process begins.

This process is run by the Department of Health. They take the lead on that. The school district serves in a collaborative way. What information they need we provide. And the Department of Health and the school work in a collaborative way. Following along, what goes on now? Following the CDC guidance documents, cleaning and disinfecting of any area that is impacted. Now, I have to move my people so I can see the rest of this. I have to move you over.

So now following it all the way to the right, action items-- and this is what I mentioned before. One, there's a probable switch to the 100% remote learning and site closure for 24 to 72 hours. Now, that's a wide range. It could be more than that. I doubt less than that, but I guess it could be, depending on the situation.

Now, that's an important piece because of time, and it's really dependent upon the contract tracing efforts that go on. And then, of course, before a person-- students, staff-- could return to the building, we would be following the New York State Department of Health guidelines on returning to a student to school or returning a staff member to work.

Now, what I like about the visual, it's very clear. It's very linear. And it shows you really step by step, procedurally what we're looking at. Now, if you look at the other two pieces there, they're in yellow. So let me just raise mine up a little bit. Hopefully you're seeing it as clearly as I am now.

So the two in the yellow, notice they're both numbered two. What if we know of a contact of a known COVID case and that is a person that is quarantined? So what are our actions then? So again, when you're looking at this protocol, what's the immediate action is once again, we need to get as much information as possible, communicate it to the COVID coordinator. And the COVID coordinator, if you look at that next piece, is really-- in this case, we do not really need to be speaking directly with the Department of Health at that time. We will be discussing, of course, always with Dr. Mir.

But the district would be maintaining logs. So if I know of a certain person who is quarantined, we have all the information about dates, et cetera, how long, the district would be keeping logs so that we could be monitoring the situation.

Once again, we are always following cleaning and disinfecting protocols. And if you keep going all the way to the right where it says Action, there's really no action that needs to occur there at that point. Now, things could change if that quarantined person then becomes one that tests positive, and that is why the district log and following up on folks is very important in this process.

But what I wanted to draw your attention to is right here. At that point, the guidance really says there's no reason to be closing schools and doing anything along those lines. Now, again, moving to the second number two there, when a person might have a COVID test pending. Again, following the process along and looking to the column of action items, no action is required at this time, when we're waiting to hear about COVID tests pending. The health care provider most likely would be telling that person they need to be quarantined, so that's the other number two, and keeping vigilant on watching for symptoms.

The third one there in green, this is one, I have to say, in the spring, we had put in numerous calls to the Department of Health just to ensure we were following what we needed to follow. So this was a common one in the spring. So a contact of a known COVID-positive person, another person is in contact with the contact.

So when you look at that scenario-- and again, as I said, we called the Department of Health often about that-- is that contact to a contact, no action immediately was required. So what the superintendents in the region liked about this particular visual-- and I think eventually, I'll put it in our reentry plan so you can see and look at it a little bit longer-- was the procedural steps and to ensure that as a region that we, as superintendents, were following similar protocols from school district to school district.

And if I continue on to the bottom, this particular area where it says students and staff presents with COVID symptoms on campus, this is a case where we might see someone. Part of our training for staff will be to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of COVID cases. So let's say we think there's somebody presenting with COVID symptoms on campus, at our schools.

One, we're contacting the nurse. If the person was in an area that was just about to be the change of period, the class, a movement, we might call a hold in place, which is a common term we use in schools to just say, everybody stay put for a few minutes. We then isolate the person. And in each building, of course, there's a nurse's office, but we also have a dedicated isolation area. And of course, there would be prohibited access to that area.

Once again, what are our actions there? Definitely notifying the nurse, the COVID coordinator, the

custodian, the custodial team, the safety team, et cetera. And again, what is the COVID coordinator doing? Definitely taking a lot of information-- where was the person, what time did this occur, et cetera. And then we seal a room off, and then we follow the CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting.

Now, when we look again, what does it say there for action? It says no action required. Because at that point, we just don't know if somebody is COVID positive. Just because they had the symptoms, we know there are a wide array of symptoms. It doesn't necessarily mean COVID positive.

And again, I really like the last column of return because it reflects and reminds us that we are following specific protocols on when staff or student can return to school or work. So this was one visual, as I said, I think I'm going to be putting in our reentry documents since it's really a nice, clear way to look at a very step-driven protocol when looking at the situations before us.

So now I'd like to move on to the opening of school and recommendations, as we could hear in some of the questions today in the hearing of the public. So first, I have to start by saying, we've been on an incredible journey, one that many of us would say we would never have imagined. Our Croton-Harmon task force, a group of volunteers, has and it has been an incredible asset, and this is a group that poses thoughtful questions to push our thinking of what is possible and what we can do. I thank this team for their continued service.

Over the past weeks, I think you can imagine, I have received numerous emails from the community sharing their thinking with one view or another. So I want to pause for a moment to say thank you very much because every email we read-- and I have to say, I'm usually good about responding to emails, but this was a time where I wasn't able to get to everyone. So I apologize. But thank you for your emails. Thank you for sharing your thinking with us.

And I'd like to just share one part of an email that a parent wrote. And I won't say your name so I won't embarrass you. But the person wrote, we understand the challenging position you are in and the immense pressure you are under. Thank you for all of your hard work, your concern for our children and your staff. Thank you for taking the time to read this. We hope you will consider the facts, and we wish you luck as together we begin the new school year.

So that last line, the words together we begin the new school year truly resonated with me. We may not always agree on an approach, but I do believe more than ever that together, we will begin our school year, and our community strength and partnership will be the wind in our sails.

So the emails I received tended to focus on whether we needed to choose one learning model over another. Early on in our process, we made sure that parents had choice. And that choice, they could make a decision on what was best for their family. And this is why we are offering a fully remote and an in-person hybrid option for families. Because we believe that choice is very, very personal to each family.

As an administrative team, our goal has always been to bring our students back into schools in a safe manner. And as we all know, there are so many complexities that surround this. But after careful deliberation, tonight I'd like to share with you our reopening plan.

So I'm going to start with another visual of a calendar, and I'm going to talk through the visual. So first and foremost, I want you to know, there's a lot on here, and I will be working with you as we discuss this. I know we're probably all looking at every box now, but I'd like you to focus on also the things that I'll be sharing.

The most important thing I want to start off by saying is that we believe this plan demonstrates a gradual reentry, which builds to the in-person hybrid model. So let's take a look and keeping the words gradual, reentry. So we all know that school begins on September 8, and the first thing I want to draw your attention to, if you're looking at the calendar, is that whole week is a week of half-days for students. So September 8, 9, 10, and 11 are half-days. Again, we're focusing on a gradual reopening.

So on September 8, we will have a kindergarten student-parent orientation. Students will be joined by their parent, and there will be a special schedule being sent out. That will be outdoors where parents and the kindergarten student will be able to meet their teacher.

You'll also note, right underneath that on the 8th, for the half-days beginning, we are bringing in our in-person grades one and two. Also, following that day, we will have students in grades 3 through 12 engage in remote learning. Going to the next day, the 9th, you see, again, a half-day. We're bringing in grades K, one, and two where those students will meet with their teachers.

Now, if you remember or have been to the forums, you know that in order to accommodate in person, we take each class and separate them into two different classrooms so that we can abide by and adhere to the social distancing pieces in the Department of Health Guidance. So grades K, 1, and 2 are coming in for the half day and then remote learning for grades 3 through 12.

Following suit, you will see the same thing for September 10 half-day again, in person grades K, one, and two, remote learning 3 through 12, and the same goes for Friday. So the week of September 8

through 11, again, is the beginning of our gradual reentry where we have some in person and some remote.

Now I'd like to bring you into the week of September 14th through the 18th. and That's why I said they're busy slides, so we'll take it slowly. But in general, during this week, we see in-person grade-level schedule. You'll see more grades there-- K, one, two, five, nine, twelve. But again, keeping with our focus of a gradual reentry, we targeted transition grade-level entry in this week, while remaining grade levels will continue in remote learning.

So what do I mean by transition? So if you look at grade five, those students are transitioning to PVC. If you see grade nine on there, you know they're transitioning to the high school. So those two grade levels have a building transition, and we've also included 12th grade because there are transitions associated with that grade level as well even though they've been in the school before.

So now let's take a look closely, drill down to those dates. On September 14, that Monday, you see we're bringing in K, one, and two. That's a full day now. And you'll see in person Croton grade five and in-person Croton grade 12. Now, again, from our community forums, you know that we have a Croton cohort, and we have a Harmon cohort.

Croton cohort students, letters of the last name A through L, have Monday and Tuesday as their in-person days. And Harmon M through Z, Thursday, Friday. So that is why here you see Croton five and Croton 12. And all other grades would be in a remote setting.

If you look at the 15th, we see a little change here where, again, still K, one, and two. That's consistent every day. We still have Croton grade five, but here we have Croton grade nine. Remote for all the other grades.

If you look at the 16 and if you recall back to our in-person, hybrid model, Wednesdays is a remote learning day for all in grades three through 12. So on the 16th, Wednesday, we have our K, one, and two group coming in in person. And then everyone else, grades three through 12, are on the Wednesday remote learning day schedule.

Now, looking at the 17, 18, this is where we see the Harmon come into play. Again, K, one, and two, Harmon. Grade five, Harmon, grade 12 and then remote all other grades and 18th, Harmon grade five, Harmon grade nine, again, along with K, one, and two and remote for other days.

So pausing there for a second, you can see the week of the 8th through the 11th, very small number of cohorts, if you will, grade levels coming in, half-day. If you look at the 14th through the 18th, we're

beginning to introduce more grade levels into the schools. And now, as we move to the week of the 21st, we are following our full in-person hybrid model.

Again, that model means K, one, and two are in school every day. And then depending if it's a Monday-Tuesday or Thursday-Friday, that's where it really highlights the Croton cohort and the Harmon cohort. So in this plan, again, and the focus of this plan was to look at a gradual reentry.

Now, I'm going to go up to the top for a minute, back up here where it says around September 2 and 3. People will remember in the spring, we had numerous times when we had people either dropping things off or picking things up, et cetera. So we're kind of like a well-oiled machine there.

We will have opportunities for families if they wanted to come ahead of time to get their supplies, their computer, et cetera. We will have opportunities to come in before school begins and to come by the school to pick things up. And again, I'd just like to also stress that if you didn't and/or couldn't, we could certainly make arrangements for families to get their materials.

So with that said, I'd like to just talk about that of course, we know that the reopening of this school year is very atypical. And we are in uncharted territory, but we do believe in the in this gradual reentry plan for the following. We believe that we will ensure the health and safety measures are fully operational and fine-tuned. We've worked very hard on the safety protocols, the procedures, et cetera as we were developing our plan, our reentry plan.

We believe it is respectful and representative of the needs and perspectives of various groups and the viewpoints of families that make up the Croton-Harmon school community. It will be essential to the execution of our instructional plans and provide teachers the time they need to acclimate to both the in-person and hybrid models. We also believe it will enable our students and help our students and families ease into the school year.

We believe this plan will assist in alleviating anxiety of people and students and teachers, parents that you may be experiencing as you're anticipating the start of the school year. We believe it will provide additional time to work on instructional technology best practices. And we also believe that it demonstrates that we've listened, considered, and deliberated on the very best way to transition back to school.

So this particular calendar really identifies each group as whether they are in-person and whether they are remote. And thank you for indulging me to take the time to go through day by day because it is a busy, busy calendar. And when eventually we send it out, we'll certainly put the text along with it

so you can follow.

Some challenges we face-- any decision or adjustment we make, it's really so delicate, and we need to be very, very aware that it takes a lot of time and thought and the implications of the decision. So for example, just thinking about changing a classroom, adding people to a classroom, the classrooms have been configured by a certain number with the desks being distanced, et cetera. Things we took for granted where we might just say, OK, let's just move that here and move that class there, well, those are things that, in this scenario, will always be something we have to pause and say, OK, what are the implications of this? Because we are not in the normal.

The second thing goes and connects with one of the statements from a parent in the hearing of the public. We continue to face many sides of the pandemic. Earlier this evening, we heard from a community member who posed the question about what is the plan to back-fill positions if teachers are absent or any staff, for that matter, are absent?

All school districts are facing this, and I want to be very transparent about that. Every single school district is facing these concerns, as districts will likely continue to receive requests from staff members for, perhaps, a leave. This falls under the federal leave that's associated with COVID, et cetera.

So there are and could be continued requests. And with each request, we review and respond as is required by law. If, for any reason, a teacher has a leave request and it's granted, the district will examine the possibilities of filling the position by posting the position, interviewing people for the position, doing a canvas in a search. And it may even include remote opportunities where a teacher might be remotely coming in if that is possible.

We are building our substitute pool, but we recognize that there are many districts competing for this resource. As we start the school year, our building teams have at least three substitutes each day that they will be bringing in on a daily basis for September and October. Not to say that we can't go beyond three, those are just three daily subs that we will be bringing into the building. And then that'll be three subs for CET, three subs for PBC, and three subs for the high school.

Our building assistant principals have also been working very hard to increase the number of people in general on our substitute pool. So what I'd also like to share where this piece is concerned is we are also inviting our substitutes in the week prior to school. So they are receiving the training and being part of discussions that are ongoing with our staff.

The other piece, which was connected to something that was stated in the hearing of the public tonight, is about the CET remote classes and absenteeism. So as we know, tomorrow, the commitment forms are due back in the district, and those are critical. We've been waiting. We did extend it because we wanted to give families a little bit more time to have individual questions answered by their principals, attend their principals coffees along with the forums.

So we did extend that a little bit. We extended it out. But tomorrow is the day that the commitment forms are due, and they're very important because we only have survey data of people just sharing their thoughts. But these now will give us information about the specific numbers. That's pretty much the key and the center to the work at CET at this point.

When we look at this, a question arises-- if my child is sick, can they join a remote class? So let me just start with it would be difficult for a child to join the remote class. And we pause there for a moment. If you've been following in the forums, we are dedicating one teacher per grade level to be a remote teacher. And I did hear something about numbers for that.

We are really is trying to stick with the guidelines we already have for what a class size should be. So that is our goal. So when we look at that, we have a teacher on K level one, two, three, and four.

So looking at that, we have a dedicated remote teacher for the students and families that have decided to elect for the fully remote plan, the 100% fully remote plan. They will be put in and placed with the teacher that is the teacher for the fully remote program on each grade level. So they would be they would be forming and creating their classroom. And they'll have classroom norms and culture, et cetera.

The grade three and four, even though they have the remote teacher dedicated to anyone remote in grade three and four, as you know, we also have the hybrid model running where Croton kids are in one day and Harmon kids are working remotely and vice versa. We dedicated two teachers, Ms. Rimoli and Ms. Lynch, to that hybrid remote. So I'll just keep those words-- hybrid remote.

So let's start from grades three and four and work backwards. With grades three and four, we do see that there could be a fluidity of moving a student. I'm, let's say, in one of my third grade classes, and I've become ill. And I cannot attend class in person. We see that there is a fluidity of that child being a part of the hybrid remote team with Ms. Rimoli and Ms. Lynch.

Moving backwards, this is where the key to numbers are concerned. So we need to look at the numbers. We need to look at the numbers in the whole building to see, is there a possibility of

allocating more staff? So I can't answer the K, one, and two very easily now without having a good look and exploration of the numbers that we're going to see come in when the commitment forms are completed.

So tonight, what I wanted to do was give the board at their work session and community, as we've been continuing the dialogue about school entry, a little glimpse at when we're faced with various scenarios, how the district will handle this. And that was the decision tree diagram. The second thing I'm sharing with you is the gradual reentry plan, which starts off on the first day of school, on the 8th. And then I answered some pieces from some of the things that come across my desk often about the CET absenteeism, what about our substitute situation, et cetera.

And my last statement is something that I say often. And that is, we are in a pandemic. We need to be functioning and thinking along those lines all the time. And that is why I've been consistently messaging that we need to-- as a system, as a school, as a family, as a student, as a staff member-- be able to move fluidly between the in-person hybrid model to remote, should the need arise. And we've developed these models so that they could be fluid. So that concludes the information that I was going to share.

Thank you very much, Dr. O'Connell. Now I'd like to open it up to the board see your thoughts, questions. Feel free to jump in. I see Neil in your hand raised. I will start off, as I sometimes do, frequently do just get the ball rolling.

I am impressed with the phased opening, as been described. Because as I looked at it and I listened very carefully to the CTA letter and also to the correspondence that was read during the hearing of the public and the correspondence we have received otherwise, talking about phased reopening or hybrid or remote and the concerns. I think, first off, that this really addresses as best as we can in an uncertain situation how to bring back our students as safely as possible and to bring back our staff as safely as possible.

I will add-- and this is something I know from reading some of the correspondence-- I had the opportunity this afternoon to stop by the transportation office. And I saw the work that Rachelle O'Mara has done to try to deal with all of the potential issues that will arise for transportation. And just thinking about and looking at how she has designed and determined bus seating and how she has created placards that are going to be in the bus so every child knows by name where that child is supposed to sit-- TET and other schools-- and to realize that changes cannot just be implemented to what she has done on a whim, you kind of get the sense of how difficult it is to put together all of the

pieces-- the transportation, the facilities, the instruction.

I think what we have here is a very measured and reasonable way of coming back to school with the understanding that we may have to pivot, as Dr. O'Connell said. There's one thing that I want to add, just as a matter of correction on Dr. O'Connell's chart for the month of September. I noted that on the last line it said Monday, September 24.

Yep, I have to pull up the correct one, Neil. Yes, yeah.

Right, because school is closed that day, and so I guess you should also explain it, perhaps. I know we've discussed this before. On days when there is a holiday or school closing on one of those weeks, how that's going to work with regard to the remote learning day, the Wednesday day as we have talked about before.

Right. Thank you, Neil. Denise has sent me the updated one, so we'll be sure to include that one moving forward. But with that said, I know our team is going to be looking very closely and counting up days. And should there be an imbalance, then we're going to most likely zero in on that remote Wednesday to level the amount of time. But more to come on that in another time. And thank you, Denise, for sending that to me. I'll make sure we include Yom Kippur on that day. Thank you.

Go ahead, Josh.

OK, I want to laud the administration for putting forth this is revision of the plan. And I really do appreciate the fact that to a great extent, we are building the airplane while it's already flying and that we will continue to be building and revising the airplane while it's flying throughout the year as conditions change and as we learn more. So I really do appreciate this.

One of my concerns is that even the hybrid model, 60% of student time is remote time. And for remote students, 100% of their time is remote time. And I think this addresses that and helps to address that. And it creates a solid foundation for the remote instruction, which is going to be so key this year. So I really do appreciate that. I think it'll help both students and faculty to get super comfortable with that before things really accelerate.

And I also like the fact that it does push back the biggest crush of population coming into the school buildings until just a little bit later. The difference between the first week of September and the third week of September is the first week of September has average high temperatures of approximately 79 degrees Fahrenheit. And the third week has average high temperatures of approximately 72 degrees Fahrenheit. And that's a big difference, especially for folks who are wearing masks. And also,

the relative humidity goes down significantly throughout the month. So I think that's wise.

Well, thank you. Thank you, Josh. And I also want to put another clarifier that the Croton group-- I used the wrong letters so thank you, Mrs. Dubak-- A through K and the other cohort, the Harmon, L through Z. So thank you, Mrs. Dubak. Hopefully I said it right now.

And on that point, this isn't a Deb O'Connell plan. Again, I hope that it's clear. We have a tremendous task force. We have the work of the administrative team. And as I mentioned earlier, they are here tonight. And you mentioned about Ms. O'Mara-- so incredible as a member of our team and the care and detail. I get to see that every time I'm in all of our buildings, how the building teams are just getting ready and putting things in place and our buildings and grounds team, our transportation team, our clerical. I could go on, so thank you, Josh.

Dr. O'Connell, to echo what everybody is saying, the reentry task force, the administration, the teachers, everybody has just been outstanding in terms of the amount of effort and energy and thought that's going into this. I have one question, which is at the beginning of the meeting, we heard a letter from the teacher's union. So even though we were reading that aloud to the public, that is something that we had a chance to see before the meeting, and we know that you've had a chance to see it.

When you were coming with this final solution, did hearing from the teachers shape your thinking in any way? Did you feel that it was some kind of response to some of the concerns that you've been hearing?

Most definitely. And again, I'm going to rely upon team here. Our team has been discussing the letter. I will tell you that we have a wonderful relationship with our teacher's union. I'm in conversation with the teacher's union president almost every day. We laugh, sometimes it's even more frequent than that. And we laugh even more when I tell her I think I speak to her more than I do my family members.

So I think it's very important, Andrea, to your point that yes, they did share their letter with me, I should say. Pardon me. And I shared it with our team. I will tell you that most definitely the comments, their statements, their passion has definitely informed the thinking of our team. And today, I had the good fortune, because I did not want to come out in public without having an opportunity to speak with as many CTA members as possible, so they were so gracious. I told them they let me crash their party.

So their executives team met at one point in the day, and I was able to share this thinking with them. And then they invited me to their larger CTA meeting, where they allowed me to share with a larger group. They definitely informed our thinking. When we look at some of the pieces in the letter-- being flexible, affording time. You're putting something in place.

But just like we want with our students and any learner, you get involved with something, and then you reassess. We're always asking our students to be metacognitive, think about their thinking. Well, we want our teachers, as they are engaging in this work, to have a moment to take a breath. How did it go? What do I want to tweak? Where do I need more support?

And we also want those protocols and procedures, where safety is concerned, to become part of muscle memory, and you need time for that. We want to give people time to acclimate to the building and many other things. I just highlight a few. So yes, most definitely an ongoing conversation and collaboration with our teachers.

And again, our administrative team is just a thoughtful body, and the wheels start turning. So hearing concerns push our thinking. Hearing questions pushes our thinking. Continuing dialogue in an open and honest way definitely continues to push thinking. So I would have to say yes, as well as the numerous letters that I receive or conversations I have had with parents and students, et cetera. So it's kind of a big area of information that has informed.

So would you say that the hybrid, that this phase-in is something that they're welcoming, this new idea of a phase-in?

Well, I would never want to put words in anyone's mouth, and I won't speak for the union. But I had very good meetings today, very good questions today. And again, I wouldn't want to be disrespectful and putting my slant on something. But it's always easier to have a conversation with the executive board because there's fewer people than over 100 in a Zoom. So yeah, they've been very positive conversations.

Great, thank you.

I guess I'll jump in. I just want to continue on that line. I kind of want to say, I'm really proud of our community for becoming engaged in this conversation and really sending us a lot of questions and a lot of things to help us think about. And I want to thank our teachers for the courage to come forward and say, hey, look, these are some of the things we want you to think about.

And as I was sitting and just listening to the proposal, the recommendation that you have, Dr. O'Connell, one thing that kept striking me is this is a pretty amazing community. And in other parts of the country, there might be issues or problems with a school reopening. But I think as a community, we have shown in this-- don't look like the rest of the country. The desire to keep our students and teachers safe, just as our teachers have at their heart the desire to see the students and to work with them and to help them achieve and become great lifelong learners.

So maybe I'm Pollyannish in my thoughts, but I believe Croton is special and that the parents will work with our staff and our students to support one another so that there's a layer. It's not just you're wearing your mask. You're seeing it from your teacher. You're hearing it at home. And if a kid has the sniffles, the kid will say, you know, I don't feel so well and teaches the same. I think we're all in this together is, I guess, my message.

And I think if we continue that spirit as we go forward, I think we can accomplish great things and maybe show the rest of the communities how you can go about moving forward in a time that's so uncertain. As Josh said, as you're building the airplane and flying it, some things you can do to be successful. So I'm encouraged, and I'm looking forward. And I'm here to support and continue to listen as people present questions and find solutions.

Thank you, Iris.

I just want to add one more item, minor thing, which is that I know that there are a lot of people out there who have questions about certain details, like contingency plans, certain contingency plans. And I'm talking about not if someone is sick, not if we have a COVID-positive student but if there's a student that can't attend classes at the elementary level and things like that.

These are all things I know that we're going to be able to work on. And I just wanted to say publicly that I hope that our public will understand that we are thinking about them and that some of these situations are sufficiently unique. We are going to encounter unique situations which are unusual for a particular student or which are unusual for a particular cohort or which are unusual for a particular class or classroom or a particular teacher.

And this is a case where I know that I would feel comfortable trusting the district to do a good job of it, and I also trust the district to let us know what's going on, right? It's transparent to the extent that it can be when you're dealing with a specific student, of course, within the constraints of FERPA and so on.

But it's something where there's been a lot of questions out there, and I know that everyone wants every last tiny little detail upfront. But I also know that we've got so many big things to get done first that those little things are going to come.

And that's a good piece that you make me think of how valuable our building-level administrators are. Your principal's coffees, if I could applaud you, have been so well attended. And that really is a great place, either through a principal's coffee, sending principals an email, picking up the phone and having a conversation, critical, critical. I like community forums? Yes and no. They're too big. They're too large, and sometimes it gets lost in the sauce.

But what's so nice about the principal's coffees and the outreach to principals is that's so close to where your child is. And they've been a tremendous, tremendous resource. And again, I want to commend the building leaders here with your openness, availability, and the hours you've been working to try and answer every question and get to folks so they could have a peace of mind because they had a question answered.

You know, Dr. O'Connell, I just want to build on that a little bit because I feel like one of the things that I want to thank you for is making it clear to the community and our parents. I think, unfortunately, there's been a narrative in the past couple of weeks about certain parents want some things, certain other parents on other things, one side is winning, another side is losing. And I just want to make it clear to the community that you stand with all of our children.

And what this modification to the schedule really reflects is the acknowledgment that it's not just our children, though. We're in partnership with our teachers, right? And you're working really hard to address the anxiety that we all have by modifying the schedule. And like Iris said, there are communities that are facing very different sets of circumstances right now as they start to go to school, teachers not coming. And building this into the calendar really helps demonstrate to our teachers how much we care and we value what they're doing for our community.

And so what I would say to the families out there-- and I know there are going to be some families who are feeling like, wow, how do I deal with childcare? Gosh, this date is going to keep moving. They're kicking the can. That's not what's happening. By making this change, we're committing to a partnership together. And it's a huge sacrifice. It is. It is a sacrifice for working families and our students who have special needs to get in the building.

And then I would say to our teachers, who I hope are listening, that they acknowledge that sacrifice, that the community is giving them the time and that they can use it to build comfort level and to be

ready to teach our children. And then I think we'll be really well prepared to do this together. So thank you.

I'm sorry, Andrea?

I just want to add one thing. And again, I'm talking to administrators who literally went to students' houses. They always go above and beyond. So I'm just mentioning this because I did today end up in a conversation with one of our families, a mom, English as a second language. And as much as I wish she was completely on top of the fact that tomorrow is the deadline, I spoke with her, and she didn't really know that.

So I know it's a challenge that we always face. I'm glad we have more time, too, to sort of work out some of these details before we're going to full-on schedule. So I am just raising that. I, indeed, actually had a conversation like that today.

Thank you. Thanks so much for--

But again, thank you so much for all your hard work.

Now you can go, Brian.

OK, well, I'm going to go in a slightly different direction here. The decision tree that you showed us, I think people are going to want to see that ASAP. I think it's valuable. I think it gives people at least some certainty of a vague, OK, if this general thing happens, then this is what we're going to do. It certainly doesn't cover every contingency, and that's not possible.

That'd be a big piece of paper.

Yeah, I don't even know what it would be, a phonebook. I am curious. The first bunch of things is kind of clear to me but the student, staff presents with COVID symptoms-- and then there's a bunch of stuff. And perhaps the student-- or the teacher, I guess, or the staff-- there's some protocol about time away from the school and closing various rooms.

What are the symptoms that may qualify for that? Because I have very much seen people saying, oh, well, every time a kid has a runny nose, the school is going to close or something like that. And I don't think that that's true. But I think if there's some more specificity on that, people will feel comfortable.

Because I actually think it's not the biggest thing on the chart, but I think that that's maybe the most disruptive is the, OK, every time your temperature goes above 100, you got to miss a week of school

or if your sibling has a fever, a whole bunch of different things. And that, to me, is a concern, more so I don't know what's going to happen with COVID. The numbers are quite low. But I think the fear of COVID is going to make those symptoms much, much greater and our reaction to them much greater. So I'm not expecting an answer now.

Well, I would like to respond to one piece of what you said, Brian, and thank you. We do have in our FAQ two questions relative to what you were just sharing. We have a list of COVID symptoms, And we'll be training staff if we're seeing this. Maybe there's a child or a staff member that now is extremely flush looking. And then we bring them to the nurse, and they have a fever.

Now, I want to be clear-- and I'm not a medical doctor, so this is just Deb O'Connell sharing-- that fever could be a result of numerous things having nothing to do with COVID. However, it is a symptom of COVID and could be COVID-related. So we do not say you need to stay home for 10 days, stay home for 14 days. Those dates, times are specific for isolation or quarantine. What we do say is please contact your health care provider.

Now, I might be a person that has seasonal allergies, so I might have a runny nose often. Now, my health care provider would most likely communicate to the nurse to say, listen, Debbie has seasonal allergies. It's her time to be having a runny nose. Everything is fine for Debbie to be in school. It's that kind of thing.

If you're presenting with symptoms, we do need to be vigilant over that because it could be COVID related. But we're not saying, you must now be out of school for 10 days because you have a runny nose, be out of school for 14 days because you have asthma or you had diarrhea or the other symptoms. I never thought I'd say that at a board meeting, so now I have reached another pinnacle.

But with that said, what's really important is, back to Iris's piece, this is a community piece. Are all in this. We're all looking out for each other. And by doing that, if we see something, we're going to alert the nurse to it, and so the nurse could have good conversation with the family.

We might bring something to the nurse that the nurse is already aware of and she will, in consultation with the health care provider, perhaps say, that is nothing we need to be concerned with at this point, et cetera. But it's all of us. So that's a great question, Brian. And again, the conversation with the health care provider, the health care provider saying, no, it's good, Debbie can go be in class, et cetera.

OK. The other thing I wanted to know about a little more-- maybe it's been released and I just didn't

see it-- but Neil had said something about meeting with transportation and finding out some of that information. I think that's going to be important for a lot of people to understand.

Like, OK, when are we going to get the bus schedule? What's the bus going to look like when my kid gets on it? And do I even want to do that, and what are the protocols surrounding that? So I think that'll be useful information as well.

So Denise, I know Rochelle is making a video, and I don't know if you have any of the specifics that you'd like to share. But it's part of a communication piece. I don't want to put you on the spot.

No, that's fine. Yeah, so we put together a little video this week, which essentially takes a few students through the boarding process. We tried to really lean on regulations and more or less to show the community, OK, this is what to expect. We expect the children to arrive at the bus stop after their parents have already completed their screening and temperature-taking. Then the students will board the bus.

They are supposed to be socially distanced at the bus stop. They will board the bus. Rochelle has it like an airplane setting. You're in, like, row A4, and every student will have their name listed on their spot. And I'm not sure if we're going to show it in the video, we haven't finalized it yet, but there will be multiple names in almost every seat because it accounts for multiple trips throughout the day.

We go briefly into the cleaning protocol after the students leave the bus where we'll spray down with a sprayer, wipe all high-touch surfaces, et cetera. And that will occur twice a day. We're trying to just put this out there so that people are more comfortable and they know what to expect. So that should be out in a week or so, maybe less.

OK.

I would just add from my visit to the transportation facility, looking at the schedules that Rochelle has prepared and the alternate schedules, depending on what grades are going to be on the bus and how many people and so on, she's got a lot of different things that are alternates, which I suppose once we get the information or the number of students who are going to be fully remote and once she's able to refine that, she will then be able to present that information.

But unfortunately, because of the time crunch, we can't do things necessarily as early in the late summer, early in August as we might have done in other years. But I have no doubt that well before the 8th, the information and the guidance, by the video and otherwise, will be provided to all parents.

Dr. O'Connell, can I just ask one quick question? So you're planning that the 21st is the first day of in-person instruction, and so that's the date people should start planning for, right? So the reason I'm asking is because there isn't going to be another delay to in-person unless there is some sort of COVID-related event, correct?

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Yeah, OK.

To your point, we will not stop monitoring the situation. Each and every week, the superintendents have a standing meeting with the county executive and his team where we continue to assess and hear information that may or may not have an impact on us on schools. So I'm glad you raised that, Beth, because it gives me an opportunity to say that it just doesn't stop. We're continually monitoring and assessing the situation.

And so this is our plan. So to your first part, should there be any need to change it? It would be based on some sort of stimulus that makes us react.

Great, OK. I think that would just help parents to know, this is it, 21st, OK.

And we also wanted to do this at this point to share our thinking and plan because it, one, will help families with their planning. Two, teachers and staff members will know what our plan is and what the impact of that would be and may or may not have on their decisions. And of course, the most importantly is our students, so they would see what's coming.

Thanks.

So maybe the final thing I'll ask about-- there's a certain orientation kind of built into the gradual reentry. However, we do know that we're planning for some number of people to be fully remote 100% of the time. And it wasn't mentioned specifically, but I don't know if there will be or is a plan for those students. Because no parents really want their kids home and working remotely, but some will either be forced to or will choose to make that decision. But is there an opportunity for them to be introduced in person to their teachers and maybe even some of the classmates who might be working remotely?

OK, so I'm going to ask our principals if they would like to share the thinking there. So I'll start with Mrs. Dubak on the thinking about our fully remote students and how we are making them feel part of our Croton community.

So what we are thinking for our high school fully-remote students is that during the first week of half-days, the week of September 8, on two afternoons that week we want to first have the 9th grade fully remote students come to the school probably at about 12:00, once the school day is over, and we'd have an outdoor socially distanced sort of meet and greet, do some activities getting to know their teachers.

And we wanted to separate out the 9th graders because they haven't met any of these teachers yet, and it's an important transition time for them. And then the following day, we would do something similar for the 10th through 12th grade fully remote students where they can come. And many of them already know their teachers or may have had them before but just so that they can spend time together in sort of a more social setting outside, spend some time with myself, Mr. Maxam, Ms. Fiorini, some of the counselors and some of the teachers who could join us.

Thank you, Mrs. Dubak. And Mr. Plotkin?

Good evening, everyone. We have a similar plan set up at PVC Middle School. It's four days. It's the 8th through the 12th and also at 12:00 in the afternoon. We will have, starting with the 5th grade, remote students meet with their teachers outside of the school. The purpose of this would be to introduce them to their new teachers, have the teachers provide them with any additional supplies that they need.

We also created a discussion protocol that the students can complete beforehand, so it's not like an awkward middle school experience for them. You know, half an hour or 10 minutes or 20 minutes is not a lot of time, so I would like to make sure that it's a robust conversation and that the kids can kind of let the teachers know exactly what they want them to know about them.

Thank you, Mr. Plotkin. And Dr. Mojica?

This is something that we've also been considering. Hello, everyone. As you can see, on our first day, we are going to have our kindergarteners have an opportunity for an orientation. Parents will have an opportunity as well to meet the teachers face to face, this being the only grade being introduced to the Croton-Harmon Union Free School District for the first time. We want to give them an opportunity to meet their teachers face to face and get an opportunity see the class before they start coming consistently and really put their minds in their parents minds at ease as well.

For our virtual students, our virtual students will also have an opportunity on that first day. We're exploring an outdoor setting where they can meet with their teachers and really start building that

relationship and start to get a better understanding. They'll have an opportunity to share with their teachers as well. And we're going to be working with teachers, and teachers have an opportunity to also develop an activity that really starts building that relationship for those children.

Great, thank you. I appreciate that.

Thank you.

All right, well, people may have some other comments, but I want to hop in too and just give a few brief comments. I'm not going to take too much time because I feel the same way that many of my other board members do. But I really do want to express my extreme appreciation and gratitude to our administration and to our building administration. I know that you have all been working tirelessly all summer, since March, and really looking to find every opportunity and make every improvement and continue to explore the ways that we can best serve all of our children.

And I also want to thank the community for reaching out to us, for your letters and your outreach and your questions. They have definitely informed my thinking. They've given me a lot to reflect on and all of us on this screen tonight. So I think that's been a very important part of process.

And I want to thank, again, the CTA for their letter. I think that this plan really takes into consideration all of these different things and the thoughts and the concerns of our students and our staff and our families and really puts together a plan that will give us time to see how things are working.

It will give us time to fine tune things. It will give us time to continue to make improvements and while it's going to be a very different school year, make it the best possible solution we can. So thank you to everyone who has put in so much hard work on this. Now, does anyone else have any questions with regard to some of the things that Dr. O'Connell has spoken about tonight?

Sarah, I just wanted to add because right above your head is Paul Gibbons on my screen. And it reminded me that I did want to mention, because it is something that was raised in the CTA letter, and it was a part of my point that Croton is unique. And I remember I watched Paul at one of the community forums. I think it was the health and safety one. Our buildings, with respect to the ventilation, Paul, could you just talk a little bit about the improvements and the reason why we're in a sort of unique and different position than other school districts with respect to our ventilation?

Sure. Good evening, everyone. Yep. A few years ago, we undertook ventilation improvements to our schools-- obviously, nothing due to COVID. Who would have known? But we had made improvements

to all three schools over the Summers of 2018, 2019, and 2020.

And the intent back before this all started as a result of our previous building condition survey was to basically bring all of our buildings up to current ventilation standards. And some of you I'm sure recall, were on the board at that time. We had gone through charts and whatnot with the engineer as to where improvements were needed, and we went to school by school and whatnot. And the bond was approved by the voters to make improvements.

I'd say about 50% of that \$20 million bond was related to ventilation improvements in the schools. And a lot of that work included cutting huge holes in floors in attics and putting a lot of equipment, exhaust fans, and air handlers so that all spaces in the school are ventilated. And it occurred over the summers of 2018, 2019, and 2020, and we're finishing up that last bit of ventilation improvements 2020.

So I think we're very unique that way. I don't know that any other schools in our area have undertaken a ventilation assessment. So that's a great thing. Who would have known, right?

Paul, can you just explain what that means when you say bringing the building up to code?

Well, it means there's certain standards, so many CFM per person. And they size each room, and there's so much outdoor air that each person in that room should get. So you can improve that amount of air that they get by either adding equipment to push air into the room or adding exhaust equipment to pull air out of the room. So the air is being pushed in and pulled out. So that's been done in every space, though. So that survey that was done several years ago literally went around to every space in each building and identified rooms that may have not been ventilated properly.

For instance, there were rooms in PVC, for instance, that was once used for other purposes. It might have been a maintenance shop or whatnot, and now it's classroom space. Well, at the time, the maintenance shop did not have ventilation, but now it's used as a classroom. So those spaces, ventilation was added. Or they may have had spaces that, in the past, there was ventilation, but it wasn't adequate. So the equipment was changed and sized appropriately for the current standard.

Thanks, Paul. And I just wanted you to speak to the age of the building related to current standards. So when you say, bring it up to current standards, how does that relate to building age, for example?

Well, we have buildings that go back to mid 1920s at the high school. And then PVC is a little newer, and then obviously there are various additions that were put on each of the buildings. And at that time, the standard was different.

There's also modifications that were made to buildings over time that may have altered that ventilation. And the result of this work corrected all of those things. For whatever reason, they were there.

Paul, if I could, one question about that. You mentioned a few minutes ago about depending on the number persons, there is an amount of air that should be drawn in and an amount of air that should be drawn out, as far as air circulation. If rooms are being used by 12 students and a teacher instead of 24 students and a teacher, does that have an effect on the amount of air that is brought in? We had talked in the past about, what, 1,100 CFMs per hour. Does it make a difference?

If you have half as many students, you're going to get twice the fresh air per student that they would have gotten with a full classroom.

So it is.

Yeah, but there is an exception to that, which is kind of a large spaces where we have what they call demand-control ventilation, where the system actually measures the amount of CO₂ in the space and adjusts the air based on that. But that's larger spaces, but we are also going to set that back to force ventilation. So we'll basically require the space to have a lower CO₂ level.

Paul, so I remember your presentation, which you gave us a lot of information back then. And people can go on our website and see it. But I'm wondering, it's part of our world right now, we've been hearing from a lot of parents who have concerns about what their child's room is going to be like. Who should they direct that question to? I'm asking you, Paul, but not to you. So would it be to the principal, to the teacher if a parent has a question about their child's specific room?

Do you mean about the ventilation in the room, Andrea? Or just the rooms, how it's structured?

Yeah. For example, one thing, Paul, you did say was that every room has a window in it, and the parents are really concerned about that. And you were also talking about the filters. We have those M-13 filters, right? Am I right about that?

Correct, right.

But I'm just wondering, if a parent has a concern about their child's classroom, who would you direct the question to?

I'd like to guess first through the building principal. Part of the reason is sometimes the building

principal can connect the dots between two different students. And it may not have to do with ventilation. It may have to do with something else. But I think they're in a good position to connect the dots if they had a concern from two students, for instance, where I would not be able to necessarily. Or they might be connect the dots between the teacher and the student. So I think that would be the best place to start.

Great, thanks so much.

And just to interject, I have to say, Paul keeps me up to date on all the stuff going on in the building, so I'm very aware of it. He was one of the first to correct me that a MERV 13 wasn't something that had anything to do with NASA.

Merv Griffin.

So Paul, I'm sorry, not to belabor this point but just so, again, we make this really clear for the community, the letter we got from the CTA mentioned MERV 13 filters. But we have those. So I just want to say, that was mentioned, but to the community and to our educators and our families, we have those filters, right?

We put in MERV 13 filters in our unit ventilators, our rooftop units, and our air-handler use.

OK. Great, thank you.

Unless anyone has any other questions for Paul about facilities, since the beginning part of the meeting, I started thinking about this is a little bit more. And that is that somebody that's going to happen this year is because of the heightened vigilance with respect to student health, we're probably going to have a larger number of students who are, quote, "homesick" than we ever have before.

And I know we've always had plans on how we deal with students who are out and how we make sure that they receive instruction. And I'm just wondering if there's anything more in the way of planning that's going on about that. And if not, I urge the administration to think about it.

It could be at all grade levels, right? Just because we're watching. We're going to notice those sniffles more. We're going to notice those high temperatures more. Kids who in any other year would have ended up coming to school and we might not have noticed, we're going to notice, and they're going to be home this year.

Well, I can respond to part of that because it does kind of link back to another point earlier. If a child is out sick, we start with grades 5 through 12, they would just access their class again, seeing that they felt well enough to do so, via the live streaming. Third and fourth, we feel those children could avail themselves to the Ms. Rimoli and Ms. Lynch hybrid remote teach.

And what we need to, I think, sort out a little bit more when we get our numbers tomorrow is how we can make that K, one, and two more fluid. But with any absence, whether short term or long term, it's definitely a conversation that we'd want to have on a building level to make sure we were meeting the needs of the student. The principals and assistant principals would be involving the appropriate staff so that a plan would be put in place for the child.

So again, a day here a day there, but I think what you're talking about is maybe something prolonged and that definitely building-level conversation to make sure we're meeting the needs of the child, the family, et cetera. And you bring up absentee rates, and that's a very important part of our protocols, will be to be monitoring our absentee rates not only in students, but in faculty and staff. So that's also a very important piece to managing in the time of the pandemic.

I'm sorry, just clarifying question. So the numbers are waiting for is the class size numbers for K through two?

What we're looking for is just, in general, the numbers for those choosing the fully-remote program. So if we're looking at CET, we would be looking at that holistically, on the whole school and then each individual grade level. Because will there be an opportunity for us to operationalize by moving staff towards the helping in the remote area for those children who might be sick and need an opportunity to avail themselves to instruction? That's what I meant by we need to look at the numbers. And it's really looking at the numbers in a broader sense, the whole school, and then by grade level as well.

OK, thank you very much. And I look forward to the details on that because I know there are members of the public that are very keen to understand that.

That's certainly something I know that the CET administrative team will continue to be communicating with their families.

Hey, Josh, I did want to tell you, though, I just heard a story today on the news that in countries where they have reopened schools, they're finding that this enhanced mask and washing hands and all this is really lowering the incident of other illnesses. So we'll see what happens.

And that'll be part of our protocols too, Andrea. You bring that up, and that's an important piece--

washing hands, wearing masks, social distancing. And again, going back to the word muscle memory, just trying to keep going over and reviewing our protocols and procedures to make it more of a muscle memory.

I'm sorry. Dr. O'Connell and Josh, you can tell me that we need to talk about this at a different time, but flu shots? I know we can't administer flu shots at the school. We're not a medical facility. Is this maybe something we think about from an advocacy perspective for our community? Because I know at least the medical community is starting to say, hey, a flu shot is crucial this year for our children. I don't know if we're allowed to advocate for a flu shot like the way we might be able to advocate for a census, but maybe that's something we research.

Right. I think that's a good piece, Beth. I would have to research that. I don't know. I've never advocated for that before. And when I say that, meaning I've never sent out anything to tell students-- I want to make sure I'm clear-- that they should get their flu shot. I will speak to the nurses first because they may have a protocol already in place that I'm not aware of relative to that, in terms of communicating that, and then, of course, Dr. Mir. And then I can certainly broaden it to the Department of Health and legal to see what--

Right, just for a discussion for our family, our community, our educators, everybody just to be like, hey, if we can, understanding what we are allowed to do as a school.

Right.

Yeah, thank you. Sorry to interrupt, y'all.

OK.

I was just going to say that I appreciate that there are a lot of dimensions. There a lot of variables in this complex system of multiple equations. And the solution will only totally present itself once we have more specifics about some of those variables.

Yes, yes.

So I do appreciate that.

Does anyone have any other further questions for administration? OK. All right, well, thank you Dr. O'Connell and all of our administrators and Mr. Gibbons for talking with us, too. Thank you for working with us through this work session. This has been one of several special work session-like meetings

that we've had regarding this, and I do believe we will then have one more on the 24th.

I believe so, yes.

So just again, my thanks for everyone's hard work in working through this and I think we're really putting together a plan that will do the best things for our students this year. With that, I will move us into the closing of the meeting.

So for our community who is watching, the board will be going into executive session, and we expect that we will adjourn immediately following executive session. So once I put this action forth, we will be saying goodnight to you all. So thank you for tuning in, and thank you for your outreach. And please, you can always reach the Board of Ed, boe@chufsd.org if you have questions, thoughts that you want to continue to share with us.

And recommended action that the Board of Education enters into executive session to discuss the employment of a particular person or persons.

So moved.

Second.

All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Oppose? Abstain? Motion carries.