

Croton-Harmon UFSD | August 31, 2020 Board of Education Meeting CHUFSD

Good evening, everyone. I would like to welcome you all to the August 31st special meeting of the Croton-Harmon Board of Education. We will be beginning our meeting this evening with an executive session. So momentarily, I will recommend that we go into executive session. At that time, we will be back in approximately 30 minutes and the live stream will resume at that time. So for any members of the public who are joining us.

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

So move.

Second.

All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Oppose? Abstain? Motion carries. Thank you very much, and we will see you in approximately 30 minutes. Yes, recommended action that the Board of Education exits executive session at 7:41 PM.

So move.

Second.

All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Oppose? Abstain? Motion carries. Thank you, everyone. And thank you for bearing with us a few extra moments. And we will now move into the consent agenda recommended action that the Board of Education--

Sarah?

Yes.

We do approve the agenda. Sorry.

Sorry. OK. So recommended action that the Board of Education approves the agenda as presented.

So moved.

Second.

Second.

All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Oppose? Abstain? Motion carries. All right. Now, we will move into the consent agenda.

Recommended action that the Board of Education approves all items under the consent agenda.

So moved.

Second.

Second.

On the question?

Can you just give me a second so I can--

Absolutely.

--double check it?

Stacy, can you move it down? Thank you.

Is that good, Andrea?

Yeah. Thank you.

OK.

I'm ready.

All right. All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Oppose? Abstain? Motion carries. All right. With that, we will move into the reports section of the meeting, and I will turn it over to Dr. O'Connell for her superintendent's report.

Well, thank you, Sarah. Thank you very much and good evening to the Board, and good evening to our viewing public. I do have an announcement that I'd like to make, and anything that I am sharing in my comment relative to this will also be sent out in a K12 alert this evening.

So yesterday, I learned that an individual tested positive for COVID-19 that was at CET last Friday, August 28. As required by privacy laws, we must maintain this person's confidentiality, which prevents us from further identifying the individual. Following our protocols, we were working collaboratively with the Westchester County Department of Health yesterday, as well as throughout the weekend.

The exposed individuals, we worked with the Department of Health to determine who they are. And that, again, if you go back to our plan, that is that those are the steps. When we find out something, we share it with the Department of Health. If they find out something, they share it with the District.

So we got to see the protocol in action. And we worked with the Department of Health identifying contacts of the person. The Department of Health then determines what is considered a contact. And they have their own protocol they follow working with the individual to determine what is a contact.

And that takes into consideration how much time they were with a person, and where-- was social distancing occurring and lots of questions that surround that. So again, the District worked with the Department of Health to identify what is considered a contact. The exposed individuals must then quarantine for 14 days from the last exposure date.

Also, in accordance with the guidance from the Center for Disease Control, we cleaned and disinfected the areas where the individual with COVID-19 was present. We will continue to assess the impact that this has on our staffing. Based on this recent information, though, we are adjusting our kindergarten, first and second grade schedule for the week of September 8.

All students, kindergarten through grade 12, will begin the year remotely. So I want to be clear. And before, we were bringing in K1 and 2 for a half day in person on September 8, 9, 10, and 11. Everyone else, grades three through 12 was remote.

Now, given this new information, all students, K through 12, will be in a remote setting for September 8, 9, 10, and 11. And I want to remind everyone those are half days. It is our plan to continue following the schedule we previously outlined for the week of September 14 through 18, barring any staffing issue or any other unforeseen matter.

So if you remember, the week of September 14 through 18 was specifically a gradual reentry piece. So that week we'll bring-- we are bringing in K1, 2-- OK-- grades 5, 9, 12. Those are transition years, and we wanted to give those students a little time in our gradually reopening plan.

And then all other students the week of September 14 through 18 would be remote. And then the week of September 21, that would-- that really brings us into our full plan where K1 and 2 are in every day. Then we really see the Croton and the Harmon play out. So the Croton group would be in person on Monday and Tuesday. And the Harmon group would be in person on Thursday and Friday.

So again, the week of 14 through the 18, the week of September 21 through 25, that remain the same. The only edit we have made is to that first week, September 8, 9, 10, and 11 are half days. Everyone will start out remote, K through 12.

So my final statement is, in closing, that we continue-- I've been very much on point with our messaging. And this is very important that I keep stressing. We've continually stated how it is important for our students, our families, our staff, be prepared to move between the in-person hybrid model to remote. And that your family plans are in place to help meet this need.

And of course, I thank everyone for their patience, and their flexibility, as well as their partnership as we navigate through these challenging times. So again, I will be sending this out in a K12 alert. The other piece I'd like you to also know is, we want to always be very thoughtful with our communications.

So that means when we're working with the Department of Health, we have to-- we, as the District,

have to make sure that we have the information. That's not rumor. That's not hearsay. That is in collaboration with the Department of Health is, in fact, the case. And so sometimes it takes a little time. But again, we need to be able to communicate and be accurate in our communications.

So I wanted the community to hear this from me in my report this evening. I thank the Board for putting this meeting in place for me to be able to do so. And again, I will be putting this in a K12 alert later on this evening.

And, Debbie, the orientation and the in-person opportunities that were supposed to go the week of the 8th, can you just give us a little--

Yes. Well, yes. The principals and the administrative team in each building, they are giving that consideration at this point. As I said, this unfolded yesterday. So we have been diligently working on the plans moving forward. They will-- the administrative team at each building will be communicating when those pieces will take place. But most likely, they're targeting the week of the 14.

And, Doctor, also--

No, you go ahead, Sarah.

I'm sorry. Just to clarify also, because I had seen a couple of questions in the community, that first week, those are half days and those are half days for the entire District and that includes the 100% remote cohorts as well.

Yes. So thank you for that clarity. It's a half day for students. So whatever plan and model you're in, it's a half day for students. The staff are working full days, but it's a half day for students. Thank you, Sarah.

And, Dr. O'Connell, I know this is a harder question to answer, and I know probably the DOH can't give you an answer yet. But do you have a general sense of given that this is our first case and-- but we might have more later in the year, like how quickly these communications can come back from the Department of Health? And how quickly we can communicate with the community? I know you can't say, oh, definitively, in this X amount of time.

But I'm just wondering is the lag like a day or two, do you think? Or just so we can prepare people. I just-- I want the public to be kind of prepared for like in case they-- and also I don't want the rumor mill to kind of blossom. So I'm just wondering, did the DOH give you any guidelines for when they're going to get back to you about--

OK. So thank you for that question. If we go back to our decision tree, that is on our website. And I think that's very important. Once again, we did not have students in session, right? So this is a totally separate scenario in one respect.

So if we go to our decision tree, when we find out we have a COVID positive person, whether it be staff, whether it be student. OK. Of course, if they are on the premises, not just in general a COVID positive person. So if you go-- that's the first line on our decision tree. I'm looking at it right now.

It's the very colorful document that is on our website. If you look at that first line, it does say specifically, the action items-- or the action required, it says, a probable switch to a 100% remote learning and site closure for 24 to 72 hours. So looking at that, that's a very important line.

Because once we find out, there's that buffer of time. Now, that buffer of time says 24 to 72 hours. Will it need to go beyond? Will it need to be less? That's just a general guideline. What that helps us do, Beth, is begin that collaborative process with the Department of Health.

Now, once we know we have a confirmed case, then-- and they were-- the person had been in our building, or buildings, then we would go to the site closure. And that would buy us a little time. So what would that communication look like?

That communication would look very similar to tomorrow, let's say, Croton-Harmon schools, or a particular school in Croton-Harmon will be moving to a remote, and the site will be closed as we have a COVID positive case. And we'll continue to work collaboratively with the Department of Health, et cetera. It's not in those pieces. I think it's in the bottom. I see, Tracey, you're looking-- or someone's looking for it.

Stop-- if you go to Put-- stop-- if you go to Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES COVID Safety Procedures Processes, that's the diagram I'm looking at. And we put it right there on the website so people can reference it. This is our guide. It is a guide.

Will there be nuances to things? Maybe. The Department of Health will be very much a partner in this, as well as Dr. Mier. I've spoken to Dr. Mier a few times this weekend. He's very much a part of the process, as well.

So back to your question, Beth. We use our decision-making tree. The communication would be to families that perhaps tomorrow we'll be on a remote until further notice, or something along those

lines. I will continue to keep you informed as per what I'm able to do, or something along those lines.

Great. And also, one thing just to note that is on the slide and that you had talked about is cleaning. And I don't remember just now you addressed cleaning. But about the facilities have been cleaned and--

Yes. The facilities have been cleaned following the protocols that are set forth. And being that we've been-- every night it has occurred, the cleaning, and then when we found out we had a positive case, then we followed the additional guidelines that are outlined by the CDC. Yes.

OK. Can I answer any other questions of the Board?

Yeah, just a clarification regarding the thing-- the materials that were going to be picked up in the coming week. This week.

Thank you. Thank you, Brian. So as part of our plan already was to have-- were to have materials prepared for pickup-- technology, et cetera, materials to be picked up. The buildings have a specific schedule that either they have communicated, or will be communicating. With that said, we're now going to increase the materials so that our K1 and 2 students can also be part of that process. And the building principals will communicate what the pickup schedule would be.

Excuse me. Sorry, I'm a little raspy. I was just going back to what Beth was talking about with the cleaning. If I heard you correctly then, so no one has been in the building where the positive case was since Saturday, other than for cleaning purposes, would that be accurate?

Correct. Our CET staff was not on site today. They will be returning on to site-- to the site tomorrow.

So the building has had a cleaning and an opportunity to just like air out?

Yep. Yes. Again, we follow-- Paul Gibbons and the buildings and grounds team follow the specific protocols as outlined by the CDC. OK. Well, thank you.

The other thing that I do believe there are some community discussion about, I'm going to turn to my colleague, John, is about our fourth grade class size in terms of remote. And just while I have the community listening, on our website, just along with our other surveys, is the executive summary of the last survey of choice between the in-person hybrid and remote. We've been keeping our surveys up there, and I thank John Griffiths for putting that up, as well. And, John, there were some community discussion about 4th grade, if you would speak to that for us?

Sure. I'd be happy to, Dr. O'Connell. Good evening, Board. Good evening, community. The Board will remember back to our budget conversations that as we were looking at the number of sections per grade level, the 121 enrolled fourth graders really warranted a placement into five sections. And that's what was allocated in this year's budget.

As we've been looking at the requests for hybrid learners and remote learners, the way that those five sections are currently playing out is that we would be having four hybrid sections. The class size of those sections would be 23 or 24 students. And that there would be one remote class. And that one remote class, it has a current enrollment of 27 students.

We did hear from our community, and did take a look at what a scenario would look like if we were to try to lower class size in the remote class. Obviously, the way we would do that is to make a second remote section. That would then reduce those two remote classes to 13 or 14 students per class.

Really, the ramification, which is going to really probably prevent us from doing this is that that would mean that we would have three hybrid classes. And those three hybrid classes would now have about 31 students in each of those classes. The problem with that is, as we know in a hybrid model, we are having half of the student body come in at a time.

With 31 kids in one classroom section, that would mean when we would go into the hybrid model, we would have 15 or 16 classes in at a time. The problem with that is the size of our classrooms. Our classrooms could not accommodate that many students while maintaining social distancing.

So as we have been looking at the scenario and speaking with the remote teacher, we are thinking that having the four hybrid classes of 23 or 24 students has us able to follow the hybrid model, maintain the proper social distancing. And in speaking with our teacher who would be our remote teacher to really look at the ways that we are going to be able to really meaningfully engage those 27 students in remote learning, and we feel very positive that we will be able to offer them a very engaging fourth grade experience.

Thank you, John.

So, John, just to summarize what I'm hearing you say is the reason you can't add a remote to break up the remote class, which is a large one, is because we don't have enough staff. Like this is a large class. This grade happens to be a large grade at CET, a little larger than average. And in order to break it up, in order to allocate another remote teacher, that means we couldn't properly socially distance for the hybrid classes, is that correct? Just to make it really clear for the public because I

think this is-- from the surface, if you don't know that answer, it looks inequitable.

When you look at the remote classes, K1, 2, 3, they're much smaller than this fourth grade class. So I'd really like to make it very, very clear to the public that the reason the remote class is going to be so large is because we don't have six teachers in the fourth grade. We only have five. And in order to be able-- and it's a large grade. So maybe we think about this for a future conversation around budget in order to make sure that there's proper social distancing for all of those kids who are going to be in person. We have to make this remote class large.

That is accurate, Beth. When we go through our budgeting process, we're always taking a look at numbers and class size so that we can make the best choice in terms of staffing. Through this year's budget process, we did say that we are going to allocate 5 4th grade teachers, and that would support class sizes that we felt were appropriate for fourth grade. And that is correct, then Beth, that in-- with those five teachers, if we were to allocate a second remote teacher, it would then be prohibitive. We would not be able to-- with the three hybrid classes have a small enough class size where we would be able to be socially distant when we are in the classrooms on those hybrid days.

John, can you give me some-- I know the teachers are still putting things together. But do we have some idea as to how the remote teacher will be managing the 27? Like what tools they may be using, or there is a second teacher assistant, or someone else that's going to be helping to manage that class?

Yes, we have been-- we have been speaking with the remote teacher. I know that our building administrators have entered conversations. I don't have the details, Iris, at this moment. But I know we have looked at staffing. We have looked at how we could have scheduling options that would have fewer people on at the same time, while still offering a lot of, obviously, contact time with the teacher.

So we have not settled on our definitive approach. But we are having a lot of conversations. And once again, in conversations with the teacher, there is a confidence that we will be able to really provide a very engaging fourth grade experience for those remote students.

One question on this. If, assuming that the budget permits, how hard-- I mean, would it be possible-- I think what I'm hearing is that we would actually have to hire additional staff in order to split that, the 27, is that correct?

Yes.

We would--

Yeah.

Right now, we can't do that with the staffing that we have.

Right. So-- oh, I'm sorry. My mic-- I was just verifying that my question is, could we afford it? I mean, aside from can we afford it, are there staff available for us to hire? I mean, I wonder if you could speak to that. I know that staffing is difficult right now because other schools are out there looking for staff, also. I wonder if you could speak to the difficulty of filling a position should we decide that to do that, should we find that that was absolutely necessary.

There are many competing interests regionally. So thank you for bringing that up. Competing interests for substitutes, competing interests for teachers, and competing interests for aids. So thank you for bringing that up. These are very, very challenging times. Budgetarily, also, there are so many other competing interests, as well, in terms of staffing needs and filling in for staff perhaps that need to be out. And the demands on the budget there.

So thank you for bringing that up. It is a pretty challenging picture. And again, our guide-- our class sizes, our guidelines, and we really reflect on this every year whether-- even when we're not in a pandemic on how best to allocate resources. And it tends to be a little bit higher as you get to third, fourth, fifth, sixth, et cetera. And again, just the way the numbers are falling right now, as John shared, it's driving up one area, and if we were to make that second remote section.

Thank you. Am I-- am I correct that the guideline number for that grade is 26?

I believe so, Josh. I'm not staring right at it.

Yes, I think so, too, Josh.

It is 26.

Thank you. Thank you for confirming that. And there are times we go over-- we do have this conversation-- I understand where what folks might share that it's-- but this is the remote class. I certainly hear you. But there are times we do go over our guidelines. And sometimes the way the cohort number falls, , it's under the guidelines.

Right. And I understand that this is-- that there is-- we've been talking about fluidity. There is opportunity-- while it might not be possible to split this class, I'm sure that-- I mean, I'm assuming that feedback is going to be taken about how the class is going on a day-to-day basis so that if things are

working well, those things that are working well could be amplified in areas that need work, that need assistance, can get assistance. So it could be adjusted.

Sounds just like a variable is what we'll go on.

I'm sorry for jumping back in, Debbie. I'm-- I recognize that as you get to the third, fourth grade, the class size get-- generally, will be a little larger than in the younger grades. So I know you can't compare, well, there's two sections in kindergarten. And the numbers are low to the two sections in the fourth grade, because they have a different-- there's a different learning atmosphere because of the grade. So you have to have different numbers.

What I'm-- wanted to ask is about the cohort. Usually, Kelly and Carrie are able to-- that each grade has a cert-- the cohort has certain characteristics, which they don't-- they change year to year. But sometimes there are some cohorts where you want to keep the numbers kind of small, because they may be-- you might need a little bit more intense one-to-one types instruction going on. And some cohorts, the way they work it's OK to have a larger class size.

Yes, we [INAUDIBLE] about that, right?

Yeah, I-- because this cohort was created not by the normal process, I would just ask if you could please go back with the administration at CET, and the teacher, to make sure that this cohort is-- whatever this cohort group looks like, if it's going to get-- I know our hope is that it will happen. We always want to be positive that the supports will be there, and that the teacher will be able to manage it.

But can we look at this cohort knowing they're trapped-- how they've come through CET to this point to make sure that they are-- this is a cohort that a group size of 27, they will still be able to thrive. And I realize we have severe budget constriction-- restrictions, I'm sorry. So to the extent that we can't necessarily hire another teacher. What are our other opportunities that we can use? I don't know, split the class within itself, with teachers doing it in thirds, or what have you. I don't know. I'm not going to pretend to have ideas there. But that's my request is for the administration to please just make sure this cohort-- and it's not the 27th, 24th, it's really on par, but it's really just the question of is this the type of cohort where we can do that.

Right. And you are correct, how many times throughout the years we've had that conversation about the makeup of a cohort and what-- maybe a number is a number, but there are nuances, et cetera. So, yes, that's an important piece you bring up. I'll bring that back to the team, like you said, this is an

interesting cohort because it was self-selected. And, yes, but I'll bring that back to the team, Iris.
Thank you.

And I'd just like to add, Dr. O'Connell, I mean, as you think about it, I'm sure consideration has been given. But if you could also note, again, because this is a self-selecting group is, are things like IEPs being addressed? I don't even know how that's going to work in a group of 27.

But anyway, you'll-- I know you-- I know you and Karen have thought through that. So I'm just, again, I'm trying to-- I would just echo what Iris said, but also with the extra consideration of there could be sets of students in this cohort that fall into categories where extra services need to be provided, and it is going to be another layer of complication, given that it's remote. So whether it's IEPs or English language learners.

Understood. Thank you. All right. I wrote that down. As well, I'll bring that back to the team.

I need to make a comment, too, on this. I would be-- and am very concerned about this. I think that our-- we're over whatever guidelines somebody has invented at some point. Those guidelines were made for in-person learning where students can collaborate next to each other. And the teacher can stand and look at everybody. And every piece of learning is done more-- done better in person as opposed to remote. And I just-- through no fault of the staff teachers, anybody else, I feel like this is going to be a really big problem.

And rather than try and figure out how to explain it and make it work, I'd rather try and figure out what can we do to actually split this class. And there's budgetary constraints, but there's also emergency funds. And I have no idea what they're for, and I don't know what the legalities are or anything else. However, I think that we should be exploring all of those things very rigorously.

Because if I had a fourth grader in this class, I would be very upset and I wouldn't know what to do exactly.

I agree.

Anyone else want to--

Those are all tough questions.

I was just going to add one thing, if I may, which is, I understand where Brian said and Iris said, but we do have something else that we need to consider, and administration needs to consider. And that is

that we are operating a system for 1600 students. And we've got to make sure that we have the staffing, and the money to be able to meet not only the challenges that we are talking about on the 31st of August, but the challenges that may-- and we can't anticipate probably will affect us in September, and October, and November.

And I am concerned about all of the things that may happen in the future where in a particular grade, or in a particular school, we may be going back and forth between remote learning and a hybrid. And we may have staff that become unavailable to us that we're not going to be able to fill those slots. My concern-- and I know we've talked about this word of flexibility.

And flexibility, we're talking about among all individuals, everybody in our school community. And I want to make sure that everybody is committed to that. And as we've said also, the time frame for someone's election of a particular choice that is to be in remote learning or otherwise, is not forever. It is for a period of time, and is also subject to adjustment by a discussion between the parent and the building administrators to see if we can accommodate one way or the other.

We may have a situation in which we have students who move from the re-- hybrid to the remote in the fourth grade. We don't know that. We may have students whose parents are more comfortable in a short period of time to have their children be in school remotely. This is not static. These numbers are not static for the 2020-21 school year.

But, Neal, my understanding is they are static for this first term, that--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

But, Neal, I'm going to-- but, Neal, at CET, you are not allowed to switch in and out of hybrid and remote. And while--

Until the end of a period.

Until an end of a period. At PVC, in the high school, you are. That's absolutely true. But for those families at CET, you cannot say, start hybrid and kick over to remote. You're not allowed to. And you're-- nor can you start remote and kick into hybrid. So there's-- there's the--

I appreciate that, Beth, except for I assume that could be a situation, that a student who is in hybrid must, because of things that are happening external to the school, may be in a situation where that student can no longer attend hybrid, right?

Well, we're being told by-- and correct me if I'm wrong, Dr. O'Connell, that that child is not going to be in a remote classroom. That child is going to attend-- so maybe this is an opportunity for you to clarify, Dr. O'Connell, because my--

Well, we did ask-- we did ask that families commit to, I believe it was the semester. And very importantly, I think you can see the delicate balance of the numbers. And it is a different model than we have at-- as you point out, at PVC and the high school. So the numbers really matter here.

So will there be an extenuating circumstance? Will there be-- I always encourage everyone to have a conversation with their principal. But we did ask for a family commitment so that we could set these numbers.

I mean, to your larger point, Neal, I agree. I mean, we are-- which is why I asked Dr. O'Connell and John to reiterate the fact that this is in essence-- and I'm going to say this maybe not in a way that administration likes, but just so the community understands. The remote class is taking the hit so the hybrid classes can be in person.

I mean, that's how this number is working out, because we don't have the staff. And I agree with you that going in to the rest of the year, we are going to have other staffing issues as people get sick. We already have someone who's sick. However, I agree with Brian that the public perception of this is when you look across the board, when you have PVC and high school, they have flexibility. They have the ability to opt in and out very fluidly. At CET, you don't. And every other class is a reasonable size in quotes for remote, and the fourth isn't.

And it's one grade and I-- and I'm going to second what Iris and Brian and John said, which is like, let's pay attention to this grade because I think--

I agree to pay attention--

Can I just get one clarification just one second? I just-- sorry, everyone. I just need one clarification. I know we have the hybrid in the fourth grade. There's 24 students. So two days, those 24 students are in person. But on that Wednesday, the teacher has 24 students, right?

Yes.

And then on the-- I'm beginning to-- it sounds like the fourth grade, each class is going to have 20 plus students at some point remote? Or am I--

Yes, that is correct. The Wednesday, they would be with their classroom teacher, and that would be the class size. So if their class size is 24, there'll be 24 children in that class.

And then on the hybrid day, they would have 12 in front of them, and 12 on remote.

Right. And then the remote piece. So Croton is in the Croton cohort or in class, then the Harmon cohort was at home. They would be working with an I-- Miss [INAUDIBLE] or Miss Lynch.

And will there be opportunities for the remote class-- so the class-- so we've got the four groups that are at about 23, 24. We've got the remote group that is at 27. Will there be opportunities for that class similar to the hybrid models to break out into smaller-- like smaller cohorts, smaller groups?

And if we see that this is an issue, are there-- do we have, perhaps, like an aid resources that we could help to utilize to help the teacher, so the remote teacher support in that cohort?

I'll let-- John, you mind? I know you've been working very closely with the teachers on how they use tools to break down one larger group into smaller groups. And that's really been your work. And I know there is also discussion about additional support with an aide. But I'll leave that up to you.

So, yes, so we're looking into both aspects of your point, Sarah, to look at a staff that could support that fourth grade remote section. So that is something that we are currently exploring and believe that we could allocate. We are also-- as to your point-- taking a look at how we schedule the remote classes to think about when it makes sense with the numbers to have 24 students together-- excuse me-- 27 students together.

For instance, if there is a classroom presentation and part of motivating a lesson is the viewing of a video, there's going to be a lot of times where you can manage a class conversation with 27 people. And so there are certainly instructional moments where it's not an issue. Of course, when you're talking about then, really, where class size really comes into factor is with formative assessment and giving the teacher time to really feel like they can spend time with students, get to know their work, assess their thinking.

And there are different ways that we can handle that. We can certainly handle that through scheduling where there might be certain live times, where there's that kind of time for teacher feedback and conferring. It can also be done technologically by, basically, having different groups grouped at different times within Zoom. So there are ways to handle it.

Certainly, 27 is a number that I understand why there's concern. In my mind as an educator,

especially having to start off with the Archdiocese and being a teacher where I had a lot more than 27 as a third grade teacher, I have a confidence that it's not an insurmountable situation to offer them a good educational experience.

I just also wanted to point out from an advocacy perspective, we just sent out our resolution, and we're asking families to pile on with the voter voice letters. Public schools that educate 90% of kids in this country have received no extra funding in spite of this very difficult time. And in fact, on a state level-- we're receiving no federal funding. And on a state level, we're looking at possible cutbacks.

So it's really a very difficult time. And we wish it wasn't like this. And financially, it's really tight.

I just would like to add one other thing about finances. So from what I read, the Governor announced that there would be a possibility that districts could borrow from their reserve fund to fund additional expense. If they borrow, they would be required to pay back that loan with interest over a five year period out of future revenues. Basically, property tax or wherever else.

The state made that offer a few years ago when retirement percentage contributions were very high. That is, to my mind, not a place that we should be going, because it is really a situation in which we would be mortgaging our future and our community's future. Because that would mean next year, we would have to take the money to pay back the reserve fund, or deplete our reserves which, as we know, is something we are very careful not to do.

And so we really don't have a pot of money from which we can draw from to increase expenditures. And as I think Dr. O'Connell said, we don't have staff we could hire in any event. I agree with what was said by Iris and Beth and others that perhaps with additional resources that are targeted to specific particular needs in that remote class, whether they are teaching assistants-- I'm sorry-- teacher aides or other support, we should try as much as we can to address the individual and collective needs of the students in that section.

Continuing that sort of, I started to read about borrowing from reserve funds, and I actually would definitely disagree that this is-- that is something that we should consider doing. What's the point of having reserves if we cannot access them in an emergency? And this is clearly an emergency, right? This whole entire thing is an emergency.

And we are squeezed budgetarily, and the people in the District are squeezed. Everybody's squeezed. I don't think that we are necessarily mortgaging our future, because it's our money. There's reserves sitting there doing I don't know what. And I think that we need to spend that money sometimes. And

now seems like a pretty good time for that.

What we've set ourselves up for in this fourth grade class is to be totally inflexible. If-- I understand the CET situation and how we tell kids that they can't join the remote class. But there's nothing to prevent 10 families from having really entirely valid reasons to need their children to be remote. And so now these, however many children, are now effectively just watching a class happen, I think, because they're not allowed to be in the remote class.

And I think that maybe we're doing a disservice in that area, as well. But I think that there should be-- we should not dismiss the search for the money for the staff just because we're worried about depleting our reserves. I mean, that's-- if we add one staff, it would take an absurdly long time to deplete our reserves.

If we were to-- if we were able to find someone to add who could allow us to split that class, I would support taking some money from reserves to do it if we could find someone. I just think we're cruising a little close to the limits. But we'd have to think carefully about which reserves that would be-- and I know that Denise was not unable to be here tonight. But we don't have that kind of-- there's no general emergency reserve, right?

Right. But there's something. I mean--

We have-- every one of our reserve funds has a very specific purpose. And the one thing that has happened this year is that we have been given permission to dip into those reserves. But we would have to pay them back, I believe, is that correct?

Yes, you have to pay them back with interest, which would mean that if you were able to find a teacher, which is a very big if, and you were to then by resolution borrow the cost of that teacher, let us say \$100,000, which I would presume and obviously we have to get guidance from our auditors on this and Denise, and legal. I assume the only place you can borrow from is your unrestricted fund balance, because everything else has been set aside for a restricted reason.

But that would mean that we would be reducing our fund balance by \$100,000, which then would have to be paid back over five years with interest. If we face that situation, can we do that? OK. I mean, certainly, I will-- I'm not inclined to be supportive, but I could be supportive.

But then I'll ask the question, what happens next? What happens when we need to add in fifth grade and sixth grade and third grade and second grade because of things that happen. We have to have the flexibility then, in essence, not blow through our entire reserve because we're dealing with a

short-term situation. Where here, we have a question of whether a one section that happens to be the remote section, will have three or four students more than each of the hybrid sections.

OK, [INAUDIBLE].

Yeah.

In a way, this is all a hypothetical discussion, because you don't even know.

Yeah. Because the truth of the matter is, as you were saying that Governor Cuomo is talking about possibly doing this. So I think this-- I would love to turn this back to administration and to Denise to find out if this is even a possibility. I think the Board would love to see the fourth grade section supported, if it's at all possible. And also weighing all the conflicting interests of staffing and grades all across the board.

So let's-- I think we-- personally, I think we need to turn this conversation back to administration. And again, we're all struggling so much, because this is the end of August. And I appreciate how hard everybody's working on this.

Well, thank you.

Thank you, Andrea.

I definitely concur on that.

Yeah. Let us go back. I think I've heard your views. I hope everybody has had a chance to share if they had something different that wasn't already here. And I will bring it back to our team for discussion. And the very pieces you brought up about the budget pieces, I'll bring certainly back to Denise.

And, Dr. O'Connell, just one other thing, because this never-- ran into an endless to-do list. But there has been some public interest in-- not tonight, but when we can, to hear a little bit more about water testing in the buildings. I think that's something that Paul does regularly. And it would be helpful if we can have an FAQ, or maybe some way of getting information out. Because that's come up in the news.

OK.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. And thank you, Andrea, I was having problems getting my mute button off, but that was very much what I wanted just to say. Thank you. Yes, we do need to hear from Denise and I would like for her to be able to look at this and get back to us with more information.

Yeah. There's a lot of avenues to look at. OK.

Does anyone else have any-- have any questions for Dr. O'Connell and Mr. Griffiths?

Again, we're having this meeting tonight.

No? Thank you very much for providing an update to us, and also to the community. And we look forward to continuing these conversations, and we're getting very close to the beginning of school. And it's certainly going to be a different start of the year for everyone. But I know that you and all of our building administration are working incredibly hard, not to mention our teachers who are ramping up and working hard and going through a lot of professional development in these next few days and getting ready to start the year.

Well, thank you. That concludes my report.

Thank you. All right. If there are no other questions, that does bring us to the close of the meeting, in which case I will recommend an action that the Board of Education adjourns the meeting.

So moved.

Second.

All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Oppose? Abstain? Motion carries. Thank you very much, everyone, and thank you to the community

who is tuned in to listen to our meeting this evening. Have a nice night.