Good evening, everyone. I would like to welcome you all to the September 24, 2020 work session of the Croton-Harmon Board of Education. I would like to call this meeting to order and let any community who have joined us watching to know that we will be starting this meeting with an executive session. So in a moment, I will recommend that we move into executive session.

And we expect that we will be in executive session for about 30 minutes. And then we will return to the meeting. So recommended action that the Board of Education-- sorry, Tracy? You moved on into executive session. Thank you.

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

So moved.

Second.

All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Opposed? Abstain? Motion carried. All right. Thank you, everyone. We will return in approximately 31 minutes. Thank you.

Great.

Thank you, everyone, for bearing with us. We are returning. So recommended action that the Board of Education leaves executive session and returns to the work session meeting.

So moved.

Second.

All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Opposed? Abstain? Motion carries. All right. So recommended action that the Board of Education approves the agenda as presented.

So moved.

So moved.

Second.

On the question? All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Opposed? Abstain? Motion carries. All right. We will now move into new business. Recommended action that the Board of Education approves the consent judgment as presented.

So move.

Second.

On the question? All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Opposed? Abstain? Motion carries. We'll move on to the second recommended action that the Board of Education approves the Memorandum of Agreement between the Croton-Harmon Union Free School District, and the Croton Teacher's Association, CTA, as presented.

So moved.

Second.

On the question? All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Opposed? Abstain? Motion carries.

I'm abstaining.

Abstaining, thank you. All right. And now I will move into agenda item number three, which is instructional personnel. Recommended action that the Board of Education approves the instructional personnel appointment as presented.

You don't have to read it?

So moved.

I do not, no. It is there in the--

OK. I will second.

On the question? All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Opposed? Abstain? Motion carries. We'll now move into the consent agenda. Recommended action that the Board of Education approves all items on the consent agenda as presented.

So moved.

Second.

On the question? All in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Opposed? Abstain? Motion carries. All right. So now we will move into the work session part of our evening, and we will start with a superintendent report from Dr. O'Connell.

Thank you very much, and good evening to the Board of Education and our viewing public. Two things-- I actually have one thing written down on the agenda. And I'd like to make an announcement that we are forming a bus electrification task force. And we are looking for members of the community and within Croton-Harmon to serve on this task force.

Next week, we'll be sending out notification to the community. But in general, we'd like to have some outreach to our partners. So for example, I know the village has a sustainability group, and perhaps they'd like to join in this work. Again, we have other partners in terms of our environmental sustainability group.

So perhaps to have members from there. Our community partners had lots of conversation with Croton 100 and Mothers Out Front, as well as having some of our internal administrators, teachers, students, board. So we don't want it to be huge that it's unmanageable, but we'd like to put our feelers out for those who might be interested in joining us in this part of our journey.

So next week at some point, we'll be sending out a note to the community about the formation of our bus electrification task force. And hopefully, we'll have some interested takers. We've benefited so from having task force, such as our Reentry Task force. And we're looking to get the collective efforts of many to work in this area.

So that was just a brief announcement there. And then the other piece before we start hearing from our principals, the governor has-- and I mentioned it at the last meeting, as well, but I know some of the audio was a little challenged last time. So I want to make sure I say it again.

The governor has been speaking about a COVID report card. And the COVID report card will allow people from the public to type in the name of the school and see the COVID results. It's a way of-- it's a dashboard which will keep the community apprised of COVID positive cases in schools.

So it is up and running. But what I'd like to share is, as the community knows, we did have a positive case associated with Pierre Van Cortlandt Middle School. We have-- and Mr Griffiths does this data upload each day-- has presented our one case. And it is not accepting it into the portal.

So right now, PVC still says zero, even though we know we have one. The data started to be collected on September 8. So even though we have one, it's still showing up zero. Mr. Griffiths has emailed the help line more than one time to ask for help. We've called-- we've called the Westchester Department of Health to say, can you help us?

So right now, we're trying to remedy that. But I wanted the community to know we are working on that, because it's not reflecting the correct data. I have heard of this from other districts, as well. So I don't think we're alone in some of the glitches. But we continue to try to remedy and make that correction with the state.

OK. With that said, I'm going to turn this over to Mr. Griffiths, and maybe Tracy, you'll need to share your screen with him. And we have our administrative team here to talk about specifically our school openings. And I'd like to thank our administrative team for being here with us this evening. So Mr. Griffiths?

Thank you, Dr. O'Connell. It's great to be here with the board. It's great to be able to be here with our community, those who are watching us live, or on the recorded version of this work session. So the topic of this work session this evening is our school reopening?

I have to say after spending so much time planning for our reopening it is great to have this school year underway and finally have a vantage point where we can offer you a little bit of a retrospective on how things have been going with our reopening. Just for the board's information, we would love the principals, and Mrs. Gatto, and Mrs. August, and myself to have this be a conversational event, more than a presentation. We really have formulated this work session to just have some key focus areas, and be able to give you some information, and also just allow for a lot of dialogue.

So the first place where we would love to start in terms of this conversation is really taking a look at what has happened in the past month. When we're looking at the past month, we are really looking at what we had planned for September. And through all of our reopening discussions, we really heard that we thought a prudent way to enter our reopening plan was with what we are calling a phased in approach.

And just to remind the board and our community, really, there were four phases to this reopening plan. And when we look at the color coding, we see that pretty much it went incrementally through the weeks in September, that when we decided to reopen on the 31st of August and go through those first dates of September, we really said that the first thing that was of most importance was to start with our teachers, with our teacher aides, and with our administrators to have some time around

professional learning goals.

At our last board meeting, I was able to really just discuss the professional learning that took place and how important it was to spend some time as colleagues to really ground ourselves in prioritizing curriculum, in really grounding ourselves in terms of instructional planning to go over the technology learning. There is a good-sized learning curve with new hardware. An emphasis on some new software tools that we're using, as well as really re dedicating ourselves to a lot of the social, emotional goals that we know are so important going into the school year.

When we look at the second week of September, we said, let us make sure that we have everything well in order in terms of our remote learning skills and technology tools. So that whole week in yellow was a week when we were entirely remote. When we hit orange, we said, all right, now it's time to get a flavor of our hybrid schedule.

Let's get our K1, 2 in the building. And when it comes to our hybrid, let's do this incrementally. Let's start off with our fifth grade, with our ninth and 12th grade, with those transitional grades, so that we could-- so that we can start doing some action research. Get the kids in at a grade level at a time to get some skills, see what's working, what needs tweaking.

And that really brings us to this week in red. This is the week that we are really in full implementation of our hybrid program. And we are four days into it, which means that today was actually the very first day that our Harmon scheduled students were in the building for the first time.

So I present this to you because as much as I said, it's great to have some of the school year in place and be able to look back at how things are going. I also want to just bring the board's attention into the community's attention that we are still in the fledgling stages of the full implementation of our hybrid program. When it comes down to what we stated was of most importance, once we were in this full implementation, was to make sure that our students were really very, very familiar with the process as we need to put in place around all of our COVID-19 precautions.

That has been something that we've been dedicated to make sure with all of our many procedures that we have been familiarizing our students to. I'd also like to emphasize in our reopening plan that we stated that the beginning of the year would have an increased focus on social, emotional priorities before we would ease into academics. And that the building administrators and the teachers would really provide clarity in towards-- in terms of how we were going to monitor and support students for their social, emotional health.

So I know one of the questions the board would have would be, how are we doing in terms of assessing student readiness? Have we been able to assess if there are any learning gaps? And I would like to just inform the board where whereas that is a priority, as you can look at the schedule, we are still really in the phases of making sure that our procedures and processes are being communicated and rehearsed by our students.

That we're going through those social, emotional goals that we feel and stated were of importance, and that in the very, very near future, we will begin to do all of those important phases in terms of making sure that we're assessing student readiness. That when we are looking at that, we will look to our tried and true methods, our star assessments for reading and math in grades K through 9, begin our formal RTI processes and at-risk meetings, have our teachers really start to undergo the pre-assessments that assess the baseline knowledge of content and skills so that we will be really positioned to understand what kind of academic writing in this-- there are on the part of our student body.

So before we move onto the next slide, I'd love to just pause, take a break and see if there are any questions or conversation around these topics of the September phase in period of the reopening plan. The next part of what I think was really important to move into before a big part of this will be going in and hearing from our buildings. But we know one of our largest concerns throughout the district, and all three of our buildings, is the students that we possess that we know need extra supports have special learning needs.

So before we move into the building reports, I would love to just have our director of pupil personal services, Karen Gatto, just have a moment to really do an overview of during this time of hybrid and remote learning what we're going through to make sure that we are really have a solid instructional approach and appropriate learning resources for all of the children K through 12 with special needs or require support services. So Karen, I'll pass it over to you.

OK. Thank you, John. And good evening to the board and the community. Thank you for having me here tonight. So while the new year is rather new, and we're all acclimating and easing into the new year, I have had an opportunity to interact with special educators and observe in different settings and have different kinds of discussions.

And I think it's safe to say that the Special Ed teachers and their related service providers are doing what they do best. They continue to look for ways to accommodate and support our students. And particularly, under the different formats that we have instructional formats that we have designed for

the year.

And they're-- I think that I'm impressed by the conversation that's going on, by the energy and the motivation to support our kids and help them succeed. I see that in different ways on many different levels. I've had the opportunity to already attend several team meetings for students who we already have a little bit of a concern, or we want to add something to their accommodations or their modifications.

And so we get together. And it's a real brainstorming opportunity that often includes the family. There are questions that arise about the instruction that occurs during remote time, either for kids who are fully remote, or for kids who are part-time remote. And so we're able to look at each individual case and put our heads together and really look at it from all angles.

So a team meeting can include the psychologists, the behaviorists, the speech person, the occupational therapist. And everybody looking at it from their own modality can really come up with some good ideas collectively. The gen-ed teachers have been involved, too, which has been very, very helpful.

And I think that we come up with ideas for different resources that might be helpful. Someone came up with some thinking the other day about an idea for, well, if I had a whiteboard next to me while I'm doing my remote instruction, that would be helpful. I happen to have a bunch of whiteboards there, made it to the classroom quickly.

So we have things like that. Ideas come out of these brainstorming, like breaking down tasks a little further, easing into the academic demands, building in movement breaks, helping parents to kind of set up some boundaries in the home to minimize visual and auditory distractions. Use of things like headphones, the whiteboards. We have specialized programs that we've ordered this year and added to accommodate kids while they're instructed remotely and in class.

So for example, we have a student in the high school who is requiring some closed captioning. And so we've been able to provide that during the Zoom time with his instructors. And so it's really student by student and very individualized.

I think what's impressive to me is the energy and the determination that I'm seeing. I'm seeing a lot of positivity. People are really enthused about brainstorming and coming up with the accommodations that will be helpful to our kids.

The programs that we've added, I mentioned closed captioning. We have text to speech program. We

have some specialized reading programs. We have some other new technology that we're using in our special classes in the elementary building.

So we're really adding tools and resources to help through the new format of instruction. Also what I'm seeing, too, is that last spring while teachers talked about the technology that we're using, they're really delving into it more deeply. They have a higher level of professional performance with the use of the technology. And it's really obvious that the professional development that went on over the summer is very helpful.

And so what-- it's still a little early to really understand what all our needs are going to be moving forward. We have been focused on, in some grade levels, in some situations, how to make consultant teacher more available to students during remote, and co-teachers. And again, the technology really interfaces with that and helps us with our thinking about that.

And so I think that's really about all I have to say right now. It's still pretty early. And as I said, we're still trying to understand how things are going to look moving forward. Are there any questions?

Karen, it's Beth McFadden. I just have a question, and you might not have an answer yet for this, but these are probably by definition some of our most vulnerable learners in the sense that they're the ones that have-- benefit the most from in being in person. And so I'm wondering if you're seeing any themes or areas that need to be addressed, or even how you are kind of getting that feedback during the process so that we can make sure that we are being responsive in real time to these learners and to their families.

So as we described during a forum in some of our planning conversations, we were able to invite our neediest students in the middle school and the high school to come to school for four days a week, so that's been offered to families. Many have taken us up on that, and that's a really great opportunity for our kids to benefit from the direct instruction.

Also, within the first week of school, we-- I sent a letter from my office describing that there's a case manager for every student with an IEP and a 504 plan and described the function of the case manager and described how we saw services rolling out this year. It-- and that specifically the case manager is the point person, and so that they can always contact my office, but they can also go directly to the teachers. Then I worked with the teachers to remind them of their role of the case manager and the need for them to proactively reach out and describe how the instruction was looking-- was going to look because it really varies from grade to grade, building to building, and they

know far better how to describe that day than I do personally. So that's been happening.

I've already gotten some feedback that people have heard from their case manager and do understand, and I also described to the special ed teachers and their related service providers to be very forthcoming with how the day is looking and how we might even continue to improve how that day is going to look. So specifically for kids learning remotely, how we can support them as effectively as we need to. There are some kids who are working remotely, and we wish we had them in our-- within our vision, within our reach, within our social distancing reach, and we don't for an array of reasons. But we really want to make sure that we still have close contact with those families and those kids.

Karen, all that information about the case managers is very interesting, very reassuring. I'm just wondering who are the case managers? Are they the student's teacher or another person? I am just wondering who they are.

Great question. So for every student with an IEP, either a related service provider or a special ed teacher is the case manager. So for example, if a student receives only related service, doesn't have a need for a special educator, then their related service provider is the case manager, and we divided up so it's pretty equitable. And it's always been that way, but we really-- I highlighted with everyone, under these conditions during this time with these instructional models, it's even more important that we have this contact, this communication, this connection, and so they've been following up nicely. The 504 plans, the case managers are psychologists.

Thank you.

And Karen-- Beth, again, sorry to bother you. I guess from the board perspective, is there anything-- can you be mindful of like are you getting what you need? So what is-- in future conversations around budget and things like that, how can we help to make sure we're meeting all the needs of all our students?

Yeah, I think we are getting what we need, and we do have access to what we need. You know, I looked at some of our grants today to see if I could carve out anything additional if I needed in terms of aides, for example. Aides during remote instruction can sometimes be very helpful as an extra set of hands in a breakout room, so we've been talking about that. I mean, basically I collaborate with the principals because they really have a finger on what their building needs are and how things could-- it could be improved. And so I've had a lot of contact with them over the last couple of weeks as well, particularly CET.

Karen, just one other quick question. I'm just wondering in terms of our English language learners, do they have case managers or how does that work with them?

Absolutely. And I had an opportunity just in the last few days to look at how that's being implemented. There are supports, and they're all receiving the mandated support levels that they require, and those students were also invited to participate four days a week.

Thank you.

So Karen, I thank you for presenting that district overview as we go into our buildings. I know your work is very, very deep and influential in each of these buildings, so I invite you, as we talk about the buildings, if you have anything to contribute specifically about those buildings to jump on in. But if we're ready to move on, I would love to invite our principals to really give an overview of their building's individual re-openings.

I'm going to start with our youngest kids. I'll tell you from personal experience that the first year as a principal is a challenge one-- a challenging one in any professional environment. You add to it being a first year principal during a pandemic, and I would say that that furthers the challenge. And then you come to a district where we probably gave the elementary school the most challenging schedule to say, no, it's not just going to be hybrid like the middle school and high school, where everybody does the same thing. We're going to have some people be hybrid, and then some of your faculty and students are going to be every day, but we're going to take your classroom, and we're going to split them in half and put them in two different locations.

So that is what our fine Dr. Mojica has walked into, and he has done it with a smile on his face every single day, and I am so happy to introduce Dr. Mojica. If the community doesn't know him, you will soon know him, and he is a welcome addition to our educational community. And Dr. Mojica, tell us a little bit about how CET has been starting their year.

Thank you very much, and thank you everyone for-- who's listening live and those that are watching the recordings as well, but I want to just say what an amazing opening it has been. Just being a part of the excitement and seeing students, their faces light up on the screens when we started a remote session to the first moment when they stepped off the bus with their ticket in hand, ready to get in the building, or they come-- being out there on the first day, helping parents open car doors, it was just a wonderful, warm welcome. It was nothing-- there's nothing like it.

You know, we, through our transition, I thank the parents of our kindergarten team and our remote-- 100% remote option students as well for just being patient as we were able to organize our meet and greet on the front lawn of CET, and it was at a great attendance. It was at 100% attendance. It was-- it was such a wonderful opportunity that we are looking to organize more for our 100% remote learners. I think one of the joys of being at CET and one thing I feel blessed about is also the faculty. The faculty is just so refreshing, and their knowledge and professionalism through the opening weeks have been unbelievable. I look to our leaders and our teachers that have been there for some time, and they are unbelievable professionals and leaders as well.

Now, through the process of the opening, there was a lot of videos that we also put together in terms of so students can learn the buildings and the grounds. As they move through the hallways, there's a lot of markings, arrows, and it's just been unbelievable. We also look at the social-emotional needs of our students, and that started really with the conversation me coming in and reading more about the parent surveys from the DIAL-4 that was used to start with the placements.

And going more in depth, I will-- I have to give a shout-out to our wonderful school counselor, Robin Woolley, and our school psychologist, Lauren Fitzgerald, who's already started working with children to really identify and touch base with families and children, and as we move into the next couple of weeks, we're really going to start to look at starting up our RTI meetings. Those are being scheduled, and we're identifying students' needs, and we're really getting-- we're hitting the ground running. But it's so exciting to be back in the building and to have children in the building, and this week has been extra special because now we're K through 4, and I'm really, really excited about this start this year. Thank you.

Yeah, thank you, Dr. Mojica. I was wondering-- and I'm so lucky to have my windows overlook the kindergarten playground, and I share that feeling of joy at just what you're communicating about having schools and kids in schools and feeling that energy. Could you comment on are there any challenges that are surfacing that you're facing?

You know, you alluded to some of the challenges, and one I will point out is the fact that in our effort to have welcomed back our K-2 at 100% in person, we devised a plan of splitting the rooms. And one thing in terms of splitting the rooms, there is a distance that some of our teachers may have to travel, and that's been a challenge thus far, and I think it's a challenge that the fact that our teachers-- some of our kindergarten teachers are traveling from the kindergarten wing to the third and fourth grade wing. And this led to a challenge because we also have TAs in the room. That's something that we are continuously working to address this challenge.

I speak to teachers about it. We collaborate. We're working on different ideas, looking to implement how we can do so. But one thing that really has now been effective, and it's really a tribute to our teachers is that when they arrive on their journey, they are all smiles, and they are there for the kids, and the kids are doing great. The kids-- the kids are very excited. They're excited to be with their teacher, and that's a tribute to our teachers. After their journey, they really are there for the children, and they are doing a great job in making their experience one for the ages.

Yeah, and Dr. Mojica for the benefit of the board, I know is before you are very, very committed, as we're going into this plan, to make sure that teachers retain their own classrooms and homeroom, so one of the things that we really were committed to, we're trying to keep those classrooms intact for our teachers and looking at those ancillary spaces for our secondary classrooms. And you're right. We did realize that in utilizing those ancillary spaces, there was that distance, and it's caused a little bit of frustration with transitions, but I'm happy to hear that when kids are in the room, you're saying those teachers-- I know. They're all business--

I'll add you're absolutely correct. There was a lot of thought in the fact of having teachers to be able to keep their spaces. So it was great-- it's great that our remote teachers are able to use their space and have access to their materials, and they have set up their rooms in a way that makes it feel-- makes their virtual classroom so real. And it-- and that's what provide-- that's what posed the challenge that we face is now that we-- we were able to identify spaces that weren't necessarily used in the building to its full capacity, and we separated certain groups, but as a result of that, it resulted in more travel, and it resulted in other areas.

And along the same side-- along the same lines, I will add that another challenge that really came out of this as well is we did experience some technology challenges early on because we were trying to-- we wanted to support our teachers, our teacher aide, and the children. So we started out by setting up to livestream from one room to the other, but that posed some challenges. Doing so in a closed network running-- as you mentioned, we run so many different models, having a fully remote, having a hybrid, and being able to stream within our building from one room to the next, it did pose a challenge.

But we stepped-- our staff stepped up to the challenges. Our support from Miss August and our Edgitech tech staff, and our willingness of our TAs to be trained and continually improve. It's one thing that we are facing those challenges, but I feel like the effort and-- the effort and continual growth of our staff and faculty has really helped ease the burden of those challenges. And I will also add, we did

face-- we faced a challenge as well in terms of our third and fourth grade hybrid students in being able to connect.

What came about-- and what came about through the process of our hybrid is that they-- some students struggled to connect. And it's also that we continue to find solutions to it, in that finding-- maybe, supplying families with hotspots. Is it-- working with students to upgrade their technology that they currently have. We had students that were swapping out laptops, so they were able to connect.

So connection and the technology challenge is something that we did face early on. I'm sure we're not the only people that faced it or the only elementary school that faced it. I mean, overall, I do have to say that we're doing a pretty good job for a building that is a one-to-one building in the past three weeks.

And we'll have plenty of opportunity to give props to Ms. August, and it's also a good time, Dr. Mojica, just remind everybody, just going back to that calendar I showed in September, this is our first week in the red, right, with everybody back for full implementation of hybrid.

And we're still new, and I thank you for being honest and really sort of sharing that there are some frustrations and all those things that I'm sure schools around the United States are coping with in this new reality. And I admire you and your faculty's commitment to work together to overcome those, to always have a smile on and never let your kids see any frustrations you're experiencing because I know that from being in your building as much as I am, and that's-- and that's truly a great quality of CET.

So before we move away from CET, just wanted to give you a chance to just tell us any benefits you're seeing, anything that you're seeing that you really think is-- are some good moments to share with the community and with the board.

I would say one of the benefits that we have-- we have many benefits, but I would say one of the first benefits that I've seen is the students connecting with each other. And I said early on that we're physically distant, but the social connection of the students have been tremendous with each other and with our teachers as well. I think that's-- the smiles, you could see them smiling underneath their masks while they walk down the hallway. They're just so excited. They wave. The first time when they saw their teachers from last year, they were just so excited to do it. I think that social interaction and that connection is a huge benefit.

In addition to that, along the lines of some of the challenges, I'll tell you one of the benefits is really

seeing our staff rise to the occasion to meet the needs of those challenges. Now, is it easy? I would not say it is, and I've seen it. It's not easy, but they're putting forth great effort. They really are. They're putting their students in a wonderful position to be successful despite having to travel distances, despite the challenges of technology. And our teachers, they are-- they're really giving forth an unbelievable effort, and I want to acknowledge that it's not hard. It's not easy, excuse me.

It's not easy, but when they arrive at their destination, they are-- they're putting on the greatest show on earth for the kids. And that-- the kids, they're the reason why we're there, and these challenges have just revealed the type of professionals that we have despite-- there's a lot of emotion. At times, there's a lot of frustration. Technology is very hard when it doesn't work. There's a lot of emotions and a lot of frustration, but our teachers are really professionals, and they're shining when they're in the moment when the children are in front of them.

Great. I'll just sort of open it up if the board has any questions for Dr. Mojica.

Hi, Kern. Oh, sorry. Neil, did you want to go first?

No, you go first. I'll go after.

So we spoke earlier, or Mr. Griffiths spoke earlier, about how the plans at CET are certainly a bit more elaborate than the middle school and high school. And we do have these dedicated remote classrooms at CET, so I just wanted to hear a little bit about how those classrooms are going and maybe some differences that the hybrid with the different teachers, with Miss Rimoli and Ms. Lynch, how those are working as well.

Those I would-- let's start with our remote classes. Our remote classes, I think it started off-- started off very well. Better-- less-- let me rephrase. Our remote classes started off well in terms of the connection that our teachers made with the children. They were able to connect. They also worked through some technology issues and challenges in terms of connection, but over the past couple weeks, our remote classes, you could see the assembly line of pickup and drop off of materials.

You could see teachers, how they're formulating their schedule, and they have continuous conversations with our families about their daily schedule and their communications. I'm usually copied on those communications. The relationships that's being built between our remote instructors and our students in the home setting, they are-- you could see them getting stronger day by day and week by week because of the continuous conversation and the continuous communication between our parents and our teachers with the intention of the best interests of the students. So that I think is

going very well.

Our hybrid students-- our hybrid students is getting adjusted. Today was our first day that we had our Harmon group in. That Harmon group, they were very excited to be in on their first day today. The difference-- I would say the difference between our hybrid and our fully remote 100% option is the fact that our students in the hybrid, they have three teachers. They have their classroom teacher, but then they have a supplementary of Miss Rimoli and Ms. Lynch, who is supplementing their work when they're in a remote setting. The collaboration between Ms. Lynch, Miss Rimoli and the teachers have been great.

They have collaborated to look at the curriculum they're going to teach and how it's going to be a fluid transition from being in school to being at home. Miss Rimoli and Ms. Lynch, they run a very tight ship because of the groups that they have. They're very organized in how they align their classes. They have their whole group session. They have a breakdown of their individual small group sessions as well, and they're starting to identify areas that can be bolstered while the students are in school and areas that could be bolstered when the students are at home. As this grows over time, and I know today was the first day of having that Croton-Harmon group, this is something that is going to continually improve with communication, with collaboration, and having opportunities for professional development as well.

I've got-- I've got to share a quick anecdote that I was in the third grade weighing and looking into one of the remote classrooms, and there is this-- there's Mr. Pascarelli, he's by himself, and he's dancing, and he's stirring this big thing a soup, and he's moving. And I was thinking to myself, no man alone in a classroom should be having so much fun as I saw this man having.

And then I realized, he's not alone, that he's got a screen of 20 kids in front of him. And they're all in their houses, and they're all up, and moving, and stirring the soup, and singing the song. And I'm thinking to myself, that's a good sign. That's a really good sign that there is that level of engagement and that level of fun happening for those remote kids. So just a little thing I caught that I wanted to share.

Thank you.

Neil, did you have something?

I do. It's a-- I guess a question to help me understand logistics from, Kern, something you had talked about earlier, which is the movement of a teacher from one half of the class to the other half of the

class and the distance. I'm just wondering about the logistics of that. How does that work? The classroom teacher is going to the other room, and then the aide, of course, is supposed to flip and go back. How-- or who covers the room when the teacher is in transit?

The other thing I'd like you to speak to is, you had talked about technology issues regarding the two halves of the class being able to be linked by technology, how is the technology used by the classroom teacher to link the two classes? What are you using that [INAUDIBLE]?

Great questions. So our first is in our K-2 model-- excuse me-- in our K-2 model for physically distancing and socially distancing rules, we separated each class into half. So if we think about a kindergarten class like Ms. Vlad's, typically you would have 20 students, 20 to 22 students, so we separate them into two rooms. So we identified a separate room, and that room happens to be a second-- so we separate it into a second room. So we split the students into two rooms, and the teacher is in one room, and we have a TA in another, a teacher's aide.

And so throughout the day, the teachers are going to have their schedule, which will incorporate the ELA and math, and what we wanted to do is we want-- the reason of having students in school is so they have that experience of having a live teacher in front of them in person, to gain that, and that's one of the benefits, especially for our youngest. We want them to have that live teacher in front of them in person.

So what we implemented was an opportunity-- two opportunities where, during ELA and math, our teachers are actually switching from one room to the next, as you started to describe, and some of the logistics of this we needed to hash out.

And so we-- we have a substitute or an aide that's available to help with this transit because it seems like your question's more about the logistics, so we have-- we have an adult that will be in that room and meet the teacher when it's their time to switch. That will allow the teacher to teach their lesson, get the class situated, an adult comes into the room, the teacher will then switch to the other side.

Now, I'm going to also address the technology as well, a part of that. While the teacher is teaching the lesson, in the other classroom, the plan is to set-- have a-- well, our plan was set up, and we have a projection of what's being taught in one room, it's also being projected onto the board in the other room. So in the other room is the TA with the second half of the class.

So that second half of the class, they are listening to the lesson. The TA is supporting them, so when the teacher arrives in that second room, they don't necessarily have to start over from scratch. They

don't have to. They can start at a level above start walking into a room and starting over from scratch.

Now, what this model allows us to do, it allows us to essentially save some time in the fact that the teacher is traveling and the teacher-- the idea is that they don't have to start over from scratch with that lesson when they get to that second room. When they arrive at that second room, the aide then goes back to the first room, if you could follow what I'm saying, to relieve the substitute or the adult that's there to help with the transition. So that's how we've been transitioning for our K-2 students, our K-2 classes that are split in half.

So the teachers-- so the room in which the TA is, the students in that room are observing the lesson. There's not any interactivity between room number two, where the TA is, and room number one, where the teacher is, but the teacher will then be able to move to room number two and pick up, not at the very beginning but somewhere close, while in room one the TA and other staff are helping the students with individualized projects or supplementation of what the lesson is. I've got that right?

Yes. And it's with the intention as well that, with the TA that's with the students, they are-- they're supporting the students through that process as well. Now, this is also something that is refining over time because we've been [INAUDIBLE] for a week. And as I mentioned, with some of the challenges that we had with technology, we've been-- we did face some challenges with the technology that were unforeseen, but we're able to-- we're able to adapt-- improvise, adapt, and overcome, where we troubleshooted.

We got SMART Boards up and running. If we needed a new bulb, then we put the bulb in. If we needed to upgrade our software, we were able to do that. It did not come without challenges, and it was not perfect. But as I say, we do-- we're improving every day a little bit at a time, without a doubt.

And that certainly is the spirit that I know. It's a great culture you've inherited at CET, and I know that part of the personality of our district, and it is especially true at CET, is that we're forward thinking. We are always looking on how we could be better tomorrow for the sake of kids, and this is a time in history where we're really called upon to work through challenges.

And I love the team spirit that I know exists there, and I know they'll prosper under your leadership and onward. I look forward to seeing what tomorrow brings. And I think we're ready to give Dr. Mojica a chance to take a sip of his water and to--

John, wait.

I'm sorry.

John, I have three quick questions.

Yeah, go ahead. I'm so sorry.

Actually, I'm--

I'm so sorry. I don't want to cut off conversation. Go ahead.

No, I have three quick questions, and actually I'm going-- they're for all of the principals, so they can actually even incorporate it when they're talking, but I'll start with Dr. Mojica. My three questions are really how with the Linq app, how's that been working? Have we been finding any problems with the app and what we expected it to do? The second is-- I know one of the questions we had talked about a lot before starting up was being able to go outside when possible. These have been a couple of really good days. Have we been able to-- have we been able to take advantage of that, and if so, how has it gone?

And then the last one is since these first few weeks have been really about the-- getting students into the routine, are we-- are we seeing really good adapting to wearing the face mask, taking the breaks, handwashing, and all those things that help keep the building and everyone safe? So I think-- did you get the three? How's Linq doing? Well, the other two administrators that are waiting as well, get them ready as well. How's Linq working, ability to go outside, and then our procedures with the hygiene.

Linq has improved every single day. It's a process with five- and six-year-olds getting off a bus to get into the building, but I have to say our parents have been great. They've been honest. They've completed their surveys. They've completed their health screenings online, and they fill out the piece of paper for their child that have come in. Linq has been great in the fact that it gives us the ability to search and connect if a parent did not fill out that-- the app or hasn't done the health screening.

I think we've refined the process with the help of Mrs. Bianchi. We've definitely refined the process of streamlining and getting students into the building at a much quicker pace in terms of-- I noticed that in the first couple days, the announcements were at around 8:20, maybe a little later, but now our announcements can go off at about 8:17, which is great because in the past years prior to COVID-- pre-COVID, term that we're going to use often, announcements were done at 8:15 sharp. So yesterday, announcements were at 8:17, so we've streamlined that process.

And Linq has been great because it allows us to connect and identify students who have not filled it

out. And there's been a couple-- there's been a couple of challenges in terms of parents registering, but that's something that we've worked through, and we've been able to get parents registered, and we are able to screen students if a parent does not fill out an app.

So if a child comes to our front door without their green slip filled out, we're able to go through a screening process and connect with the parents at home so they can also fill out the app. But we make sure and screen them at the door before we let them into the building.

In terms of going outside, we've been blessed with some wonderful-- with the past week and a half, it's been unbelievable. We've had our meet and greets outside, our classes, our teachers are going outside for brain breaks, for mask breaks. Our lunch and recess-- our recess has been outside every day. We try to get out as much as we can. Our PE classes now, they're all outside. They've gone through a lot of their procedures to start off.

I know initially, in the first day, some of our PE classes didn't just go outside because we were welcoming five, six, seven-year-olds into an environment that they'd never been a part of, and there's a lot of procedures that we want to talk about and walk them through that process.

But since then, our classes have been outside every day. Today, I believe, one of our music classes went outside. We're looking at-- taking advantage of the wonderful fall weather as much as we can for as long as we can, and we're going to continue to do this because it really, really helps our environment, and it gives our kids an opportunity to just move around.

In regards to face masks, kids have been wearing their face masks. We've had-- considering our age group, and that was one of the biggest concerns, I know, coming into this year of wearing face masks. We've had very little issues with students wearing face masks. Sometimes we may have to remind them to cover their nose, but they're also five, six, and seven-year-olds. That's understandable.

But the first time Dr. O'Connell walked through the building, she even mentioned, I didn't notice any kids not being able to wear their face masks. And it wasn't necessarily bothering them, either. The kids have been great in terms of face masks.

And we wear our face masks outside. We've implemented that when we go outside, we do have face masks. And during a face mask break, they are physically distanced at greater than 6 feet, and they're separated from their peers. Our classes have been going outside, as well, where it's like a bocce court in the back of our building. I don't know if you've seen it.

But today, we had physically distant spots painted because a number of teachers have been using that space where they go outside to do their reading, to read to their classes. So we're really identifying a lot of different space, and we're putting a lot of markers out there for the children because they need help remembering that as well. And we a lot of markers through our building, so they know what six feet looks like because not many people do know what six feet looks like.

Great. I have a quick question, Dr. Mojica. And this is, again, a question that is for all the administrators, and it's actually kind of a future question because we are just getting going this week. But we do know that the spring was a very interesting time. Some students adapted to it better than others. But down the road, I know as a board member, I'm interested in being kept apprised of maybe some academic gaps we might be seeing because people were connected at different levels. And I think we're not in as strong as a place we would be under normal situations, but we're in a much stronger place.

So if we could be kept apprised of what you're seeing or what the-- sort of the evaluation process that's going on, to kind of make sure that kids are where they should be and what kind of remediation is going to be put in place. Again, that's a future question, but that's something that's very much on my mind as we're starting the year.

That is something that's definitely on my mind as well. As I talked to a number of parents about the profile of a Croton-Harmon graduate during our back to school night. So I actually had a conversation with a couple of teachers today that I know started their next step assessment of their students, and I asked them, like, what are you guys seeing? Are you seeing any discrepancies? Are you seeing any deficiencies?

And they said, well, they haven't really tested many students yet. They've tested-- in the short time, they've tested three students, but two of the three students has shown growth, and the third has not. There was learning that went on in the spring into this school year, but I think that we'll-- as time goes on, we will have more data, and that data will be shared with parents as well. I know that we are going to run-- start testing as well, and this data, I believe, will be shared through our information system of Infinite Campus.

And Dr. Mojica, I just want to add one other thing to what Andrea said, which is, I think we can be mindful of the fact that we have two different kind of modalities going on here in terms of 100% remote and hybrid, and that there might be differences in outcomes that relate to that, to the differences in instruction there, and also from a social-emotional perspective, connections for our

students who, in both modes, actually-- 100% remote because those kids are at home. But and even our children who are coming into the building, because the bulk of their week is remote.

So I don't know how we think of that, because I know we have the star assessment, but if we can have those checkpoints, the social and emotional learning checkpoints, whatever, however that methodology is, but to know that there is a methodology, that it's formalized and being utilized, I guess. If you can apprise us of that.

I think you're absolutely correct. Along the lines of social-emotional, Robin Woolley has already started to meet with each individual half group, and she spoke of how more intimate it is as opposed to the past because she's now meeting with half the amount of students, and her ability to reach out and connect with that group. I know that Ms. Fitzgerald is also starting to meet with small groups.

And I-- and we're looking-- we're starting our implementation of our RTI process, where we start to identify students' concerns. And I think this is just the baseline for our start to our social-emotional, but we're also going to look at starting and implementing aspects of our Yale ruler into our building. I know that this is something that has begun, and it's the basis in the PVC. But our basis started off with the fact that we are starting with more of that closer connection in terms of Ms. Woolley being in the classrooms, connection to teachers.

I've been in and out of teacher meetings and hanging out with teachers during lunch to really get their gauge of the well-being of some of the kids in the room. And I think it's important that, along the lines of academic, one thing that I know that has been said before, and I truly take it to heart, and I think our teachers are keeping it in their heads as they're starting their curriculum as well, is that we're really going to meet the kids where they are. We understand that these kids, the students, they live through something that not-- I don't think anybody else could say that they lived through, where school stopped so abruptly at such a young age, to be thrown into a distant learning environment. As the kids come back, we are definitely going to meet the children where they are, and our teachers are going to be there to support them, and we're going to look to put into place the supports that kids need, without a doubt.

Does anyone else have any other questions for Dr. Mojica? All right. Thank you very much for giving us a glimpse into how CET is shaping up this year. John, I'll let you-- turn it back over to you. You're on mute.

Thank you very much. Mr. Plotkin needs no introduction. Mr. Plotkin, why don't you tell us a little bit about-- and I see, I'm sorry, Ms. Scollins. Both of you are here this evening. Thanks for being here to

tell us a little bit about PVC's reopening.

Thank you, John. We had a wonderful reopening and, again, not without challenges and a lot of hard work, and we want to recognize all the people, our staff and faculty, that put into the successful reopening of school. And I also just want to thank the members of the Board of Education who sent over some well wishes this week. Thank you for that. And the members of our community who have been sending emails of support from our work that they know stemmed back into the spring of last year.

At this time, we would like to start [INAUDIBLE] with a little mood meter check in. We're all aware that the mood meter is a tool used to gauge our emotions and to help us set emotionally--

How we're feeling right now, but if you could take a second and just think about where you are in the mood meter, your pleasantness and your energy. And Mr. Plotkin, I'll ask you just to share where are you on the mood meter?

I'm feeling--

And I'm supported by a community that wants to see the outcomes that I want to see. So thank you for asking, and how about you Ms. Scollins?

I would agree. I'm feeling definitely in the yellow, excited to share about all of the fun things that have been happening at PVC in the last few days and as we started this week in a remote setting and then pivoted nicely back to having students in the building. It's been a very exciting week.

Thank you. So we would like to begin tonight by just saying that at our back to school night, we spoke about the things that have changed in our lives and the lives of our students. And we also spoke about the things that haven't changed. One of the most important things that hasn't changed is how we treat every new school year as kids arrive at our doorstep. We begin to get to know them, understand them as people and as learners, and let them know that we're going to be there for them on the journey no matter what obstacles we face. At PVC, our first assessment of readiness was social-emotional. This occurred through advisory, councilor check-ins, and the administrators-- Ms. Scollins and I-- our meetings with students, and even a good handful of home visits to start the year, which set things straight and right.

The most important assessment for readiness-- readiness that you can make in a middle school in the first weeks of school, especially-- is our social-emotional readiness of our students. And our

advisory curriculum and core routines that Mr. Plotkin will speak about have been designed to create an environment that helps our students be ready for the academic rigors, adjust their anxieties, and create a school environment that is supportive and addresses all of our students' needs.

One of the best ways to address unpleasant feelings or anxiety is to be able to recognize them. And in our Wednesday advisories, when all of our students our remote, we're learning our core routines, such as utilizing the mood meter check-in, to help understand their emotions, what they're feeling, and how to communicate them as well as how to maybe pivot or change that emotion and get away from something more negative if they feel like they're ready to move on to a positive emotion.

So at this point, we've already had four advisory meetings, and through those, we were able to glean feedback from teachers, and that led to teachers following up with students, counselors following up with students, Ms. Scollins and I engaging students in some of these check-ins and follow-up meetings to ascertain whether or not they needed additional support. We're ongoing assess-- continually assessing our students in this regard as we use our social-emotional approach to gauge their emotional well-being and to create an outline of what the next steps are based on these assessments.

The second of the core routines that we're very interested in continuing is our connection circle or what we would also call restorative circle. One of the most effective ways to mitigate feelings of anxiety, trauma is through building of relationships that allow our students to feel safe, and that's a really important point that we want to bring out tonight that the reopening of school was about making students and teachers feel safe. Teachers have been engaging these students-- their students in these community circles. These conversations have focused on communicating what their needs are and how we can support one another. We should not be ashamed to share our emotions, and we must be steadfast in the creation of an environment that says it's all right to feel and to feel anything and that you will find support in that environment.

And like I said, we had four advisory meetings thus far, in addition to the work that the teachers are doing in their classrooms to expand upon these core routines. And Ms. Scollins mentioned the advisory curriculum for the first time, it's made up of two parts. One is the lessons, and the other are the core routines that we want to see practiced, and in the weeks to come, I will share, in my weekly with you, my board report, and I want you to take a look at how this advisory curriculum has been tailored to meet the anticipated needs of students based on what they experienced in the spring. So we also wanted to talk about other aspects of our building opening and, of course, just like Dr. Mojica did and Mr. Griffiths asked him about, is our procedures, and the first one we'd like to start with is, one

of our favorites, the morning entry procedure.

So if you've ever visited PVC in the past, you'll note Mr. Plotkin and I are always standing outside. It's our most favorite time of the day, greeting students and getting a few minutes to ourselves to set the-- set the day. Nothing has changed this year, although we've been joined by a welcoming committee. We have a group of teacher aides and many teachers who have joined us and have the clipboards that you see in the picture here. And as students arrive, we are-- we are looking at their green slips. We are working with our nurse, Laurie Payne, to ensure students have filled out the Linq app, communicating between, using our radios to all the staff out there to make sure that we know which students have completed the green form, which students have completed the Linq app, and making sure that they've done both.

As Dr. Mojica said, each day that goes by, we are noticing more and more students making sure they have their green slip ready to go, the Linq app has been filled out. Our teacher aides and welcoming committee, as we're calling them, we have our clipboards with that our student information. Everyone was trained in how to use the radio to communicate with each other as well as a little check off system to make sure that those green slips are there and all of our students are accounted for. The students have been-- the weather has been cooperating too, so that's been nice as we socially distance on the sidewalk until the bell rings, and students enter into the building.

So while it looks a little different, and students are hanging out outside before they're in the building, the normal morning routine of Mr. Plotkin and I down there with traffic has been unchanged and, dare I say, are-- in the times, the parents have been so great about dropping students off within the time frame of the information we shared in our welcome back letter. And I must say there hasn't been nearly as much traffic, so I'm waiting for that first rainy day where I'm out there with my umbrella directing traffic. But for this week, when we had students in the building and both Croton and Harmon cohorts, it's been a really positive, welcoming experience.

Yeah, with all those things, you'll have to hold. We're going to have to reconsider the umbrellas. I have a really nice see-through ponchos. So anyway, that being said, we're going to move on to talking a little bit about lunch and recess and the changes there and aspirations. Obviously, we collaborated very closely with Eric Nickelson and the Child Nutrition Program to ensure that our students are fed and that they have some choices and that-- Denise has done a great job in helping us with that.

And then it's trying to get the kids outside, so trying to carve out time so we can have them go outside, and looking to expand that, looking to fine tune things so that they're more expedient in the

service of lunch, and kids understand the timetable that they have, and we think that's really important. And of course Mr. McDonald and the lunch aides have been really helpful in getting the kids outside. Some of the things that they've been doing are taking the kids for a walk around the track.

So we haven't ventured into the traditional Frisbee yet or badminton, and obviously we're going to keep the monkey bars closed for a while, which Nurse Payne is also happy about, but the kids are really happy to get outside. And they've been really great about understanding how these procedures are important because we explained it the first day. We said to them, listen. We have to find that balance between enjoyment and engagement and safety, and our kids have been very receptive to that message. And you wanted to talk about fire drills and handwashing.

So I'm going to add to the outside piece too. If you come to PVC before the rain next week, you'll notice our sidewalks are full of chalk talk. Our students have been outside writing about the books that they've read this summer. The science classes were out today picking up specimens to investigate. So our students who are at home or in school are able to engage in exciting opportunities like this outside.

I will touch on fire drills. We've been outside for fire drills. We have conducted fire drills, and we'll continue to work on our safety drills in a socially distant way. Very successfully making sure our fifth graders last week are our first ones in the building to understand the protocols on how to do a fire drill at PVC as well as in this different time. We've worked hard to have our handwashing stations and our bathroom procedures, and now we have our mobile hand sanitizing stations outside, so the way into the building, on the way after a fire drill, students are sanitizing their hands before entering the building again. We have a great new screen at the front Welcome Center as you walk right into the building that's projecting all of our reminders, our CDC posters, and has a nice little hand sanitizing dispenser, which is a donation to PVC. It's great. It's a nice way to enter the building.

So I don't want us to lose sight of the fact that when we talk about a safe, healthy environment, we're talking about the physical structures, the procedures, but we're also talking about the social-emotional because how kids feel is really what's most important to their experience at school. And then there's the learning that's going on, so let's talk a little bit about that and talk about some of the things that we have worked diligently to address. The many challenges of these times and the best way to do it is to be honest about what those challenges are, to speak honestly with our students and our teachers, and to embrace those challenges and collaborate with our students, teachers, and families to mitigate those challenges. And one of the first challenges, obviously, was technology.

So with the phased-in opening, we really were able to work out many of the kinks with our live streaming. So as you know, our teachers are live streaming their lessons, so we have students in the classroom and students at home, and our teachers have been experimenting with a variety of ways to communicate back and forth, where to position the webcam. Our students-- we have been rolling out over the past few years, a one-to-one program at PVC. So while we were working on that this summer and distributing and deploying laptops, similar to CET, some of our laptops may have not had the charger not been working-- or the Chromebook, rather-- or the charger piece was broken. So working through some of those technology pieces, making sure that we're responsive to the help desk as well as responsive to the teachers.

Our teachers worked really hard those first-- that week of professional development to get into all their classrooms. So at PVC, our students remain in their classrooms in their cohorts, depending on the grade how often they change, but our teachers are rotating. So they're in many classrooms, and so we set up docking stations so that they can just go into a classroom and plug right in. Today I was walking down the hall, and I said, hi, Ms. Finan. And she was carrying her laptop, and she said, oh, say hi to my class. We're on our way to our next classroom. So I got to wave to all the kids in the laptop.

So our teachers are working out ways to make sure that the Zoom is up and running and that students aren't left in a waiting room. And we've noticed that we're getting less phone calls from students who aren't able to access Zoom. Restarting the computer seems to be helping, so we're working through some of those little technology glitches. But that first week was really beneficial for getting our teachers into each classroom so they could physically see what does this space look like and how do I plug in when I get here?

And I also want to just make note and compliment and thank Deborah August, who's been helping us along the way. The first weekend before school opened that we went remote, we ran simulations with students at home on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday for people who e-mailed us and told us that they couldn't get Zoom working. And I said, let's jump on a Zoom meeting right now, and I'll show you how it works, and Deborah gave me information about different issues that people were having, and it was really successful. It really saved a lot of people a lot of heartache come-- you know, when Monday morning came around.

The other thing is one of the questions that we tried to address in some of our community forums was how are we going to make the in-person and remote learning and the whole hybrid piece work? Well, basically, like Ms. Scollins said, that first week with teachers, we were able to work out some of those

understandings. We were able to show about how to utilize different modalities of instruction and make those decisions based upon the instructional objectives that people wanted to achieve with their students. Running simulations and team meetings, providing feedback and encouraging reflection, collaborating with teachers, with one another. And again, all around, how do we promote student engagement in this landscape?

At our last faculty meeting, which was yesterday, we focused a lot of time on talking about, on letting people brainstorm and share ideas about how did you used to collaborate? How did you plan for those collaborative experiences? And how are you going to do that now? And that's what's really important. And we know that those types of experiences are going to not only help our teachers, ease them into things and make them feel confident, but it's also going to help us get back to our focus on the strategic coherence plan, right? I mean, we haven't changed our goals. Everything else has changed, but our goals have remained the same.

So we would like to now transition to talking a little bit about what type of joys and benefits are surfacing. Despite the challenges, our students and teachers are finding successes and acclimating to this new environment. Our teachers are continuing to rely on data to craft their instruction and meet the needs of students and finding ways to gauge student readiness and growth. Students are reporting wanting to be in school.

One of the greatest challenges we face is the kid who comes up to you and says, why can't I be here for four days? And that is something-- obviously a very difficult thing to hear for a principal. But students are also reaching out to their teachers, to Ms. Scollins, to myself asking for suggestions, and we're receiving very positive emails from parents, as well, [INAUDIBLE] ones asking for assistance. And we're going to meet those needs.

Additionally, our teachers are focusing and each department is really focusing on how are we formally assessing our students and using that information to craft assignments and units based on where our students are? Our Math at Your Own Depth program is based on data-driven instruction, so thanks to a learning style like that or a unit like that, a math program, each unit is uniquely designed to meet the needs of all students. So wherever they are, we learn where they are at the beginning of that unit and tailor that unit to the needs of the students in the class. So we do have the ability to analyze those assessments and differentiate as needed.

And it's very important we identify those gaps, and we feel that we're in a good place at this point in this regard. Our teachers, again, are accustomed to relying on pre-assessment outcomes to plan and

guide their future instructional endeavors and to respond to the student needs.

Also conducted are at-risk meetings where we meet weekly with our team of school counselors and psychologists and special ed teachers to really hone in on those students who need additional support or intervention or families that we're aware of that may need support. That's something that's happened pre-COVID and will continue to happen.

And we have been very proactive in helping students make sure they're in class remotely as well. When students were absent from class, we immediately called. And, like I said, we've been doing home visits, communicating with the parents, and assisting them. Sometimes it's not easy to understand scheduling and how schedules change from day to day. So that-- the question is always-- and Ms. Scollins, you wanted to say something about our FEBA.

We did. We were able to administer our Fast Efficient Baseline Assessment on critical thinking in the spring, and we'll be analyzing those this fall with our curriculum coordinators and continuing that work. As Mr. Plotkin spoke to, we can't lose sight of the fact that we do have a strategic coherence plan, and we have goals, and we are hoping there will be life after the COVID times.

Exactly, and one of the things that Ms. Scollins and I keep talking about is what is our guiding question? And I think for this year it is how are we building quality relationships that support our teachers and our students? And in order to create the most supportive and productive environment, we've been focusing our attention and our energies and our intellect on various things.

Working with our families and students to fix at-home technology issues as well as troubleshooting with Infinite Campus and the rollout of that program.

We've been addressing teacher concerns about technology and showing them and helping them by modeling and also connecting them to other people that can help them.

Our teachers are going beyond the usual and responding to challenges in so many ways and coming up with creative and unique solutions to taking attendance and these little pieces and are really working together to support one another in that as well.

And I think it's also important to add that, basically, we're focusing our teachers and our students on savoring those small successes because those small successes will lead to bigger successes.

Additionally, our teachers are really utilizing the time allocated in the hybrid schedule, the non-instructional time, to really plan and collaborate and come up with really good professional learning

experiences for one another. And we're creating opportunities for our staff to be engaged in professional learning. That focus is on supporting the teachers, supporting the teachers supporting one another, and really having the opportunity to work together as teams in a time where they may not have had that planning time in the past.

Just to wrap this up I wanted to say that I feel like instructional leadership has taken on a life of its own during this time period. Lauren and I have been consistently working with teachers to not only use technology, but to ensure that quality instruction focused on the mastery and attainment of standards. This is where our goal was in the spring, and it continues to be. The teachers have also demonstrated their penchant for leadership throughout the reopening, and we just want to speak a little bit about that.

Our teachers are constantly getting emails and reply-alls with great videos that they're sharing tech tips. We created Google Classrooms for them to be able to share that, and they're sharing their best practices across grade levels and curriculum and content. Teachers are figuring out and working together to find out how students thrive in these remote settings and capitalizing on the small groups and the breakout rooms. Maybe someone who wasn't so inclined to ask a question in a large class is able to privately chat a teacher. You know, they're worried about asking that dumb question. They can privately chat the teacher and not have to worry about what other students in the class may think.

We're learning to work within Zoom and figuring out how our instructional objectives can work with the technology we have and our SMART Boards and our Newline boards in the building. We're having a lot of dialogue about how to best use technology as well as when technology isn't best, and we can have our students, even our remote ones, do something in their house that's stepping away from the screen. Our team meetings are really focused on supporting the students and the teachers as well as coming up with ways to support the curriculum.

And obviously we're going to face challenges ahead. We don't deny or obscure those challenges that we continually will face, but I think it's really important that, at this point, we want to also constantly remind our teachers and our students about it's important to celebrate the hard-won victories that we have currently made. And we can enthusiastically speak about the successes of the school reopening, and that evidence is found in kind of a feeling renewal of PVC and a continued focus on social-emotional and academic growth.

As the kids have been coming in, there is an energy that has been renewed to the building. And the

teachers feel it, and they've come and told us that this is the day that they were waiting for. Teachers are adjusting to the current state. And as we watch this transition from August 31st to now, it's been a pretty uplifting experience for us. In fact, the other day in the office, we said it feels like a little bit of normal around here. Positivity hopefully will continue to grow as we get more comfortable with the current situation and we become more proficient and adapt to the pressures and the unpredictable nature of things.

Again, one of the key aspects of our approach to the current state is to address concerns quickly through open communication. We created a reporting apparatus if anyone has non-emergency health or safety concerns. We don't want those lingering. We don't want those festering. We want to get those questions. We want to answer those questions, and if there is an issue, to mitigate it as soon as possible.

The other important thing that I think is really important for teachers is that whatever we've done with the students social-emotionally, we've also offered those same opportunities to teachers. In every meeting and get together, there is a social-emotional component for us there, and we want the teachers to know that how they feel really matters. And if you look at the advisory title this year, it's Emotions Matters with an asterisks, and when you go down the page, it says now more than ever. So our partnership with teachers to troubleshoot, find solutions, and brainstorm will continue.

And what I really feel, and I want to leave this conversation with, is we must create an environment that allows our teachers and staff to embrace risk. Once our teachers fully realize that they will not be penalized for taking risks or for a technological glitch, they will be more inclined to venture out of their comfort zones and embark upon new risk taking.

Parents have been very understanding if there is a glitch or has been one, and we have told teachers that we will support them in their quest to promote quality instruction, taking risks, and that we will recognize when they are doing their best, and we will celebrate those moments with them. So I thank you for listening to all of that as he ran through those questions, but we really cut it short. If we wanted to go into other aspects of our opening, which is just the pure joy of having stacks of green paper handed to you all at once.

So suffice to say, Mr. Plotkin, that you and Ms. Scollins and your team have been a bit busy. I'm wondering is there any aspect of student life or professional life that you have not yet considered? Because that was very thorough.

We try, John. We try to take through all the scenarios.

All right. I now-- then I will open it up to the Board of Education for any questions they have for you.

I just have a procedural question. Maybe because I'm jealous, but I notice that on Wednesdays the PVCers, it seems like they have a half day.

Yeah, so I want to set the record straight. That's a hyphenated word. That's not allowed at PVC. So basically, we have a built-in PD time for teachers there. We also give the kids a lunch break. Well, the day was designed, and we reviewed this with students, so that they can have some asynchronous work-- if they have asynchronous work that they can get it done. I think also to offer them a break from the computer screen.

Also, if we share the scheduling, I could do that and one of my board weeklies, the importance of that is also so we can have some one-to-one or small group time for teachers. And again, it's early in the year, but I know there's been a lot of teachers who've told kids this is the time I want to meet you, and we're hoping to get some kids to call their teachers as well, to tell their teachers hey, I want to meet you at that time.

Mr. Plotkin, I'm going to add onto that too that we've also offered some related services during that time, some counseling services, or some of our social-emotional work and as well our performance groups. So we're not meeting as a band, a chorus, and a strings, an orchestra. We're not meeting with those full groups. So our music teachers have been used that time to schedule their meetings, so the sixth grade band, the beginner band, strings, orchestra, chorus is meeting at that time so that we are making the most of the time in the classroom but also understanding the health and safety protocols and continuing that-- our exciting music program, but virtually.

All right.

Any other questions for anyone? All right. Thank you very much, Mr. Plotkin and Ms. Scollins. That was very thorough and a very good review of how things are going at PVC.

So even though Ms. Duback does shine after 10:00 PM, I'll make a deal with you, Ms. Duback. Next time we do a work session, we'll go in reverse order from the oldest to the youngest so that you can actually present before 10:00 PM. But anyway, because I know you shine every hour of the day, we'll pass it on over to you.

All right. I will take you up on that offer for next time, but we are ready. So to start with, I wanted to start with just a picture of what it looks like when you enter the high school. So in the morning, when

you enter, you come into one of two entrances at 7:55, and you're greeted by three to five staff members and administrators at either entrance.

You, as a student, you hand in your green sheet, and we wave to your bus driver or your parents as they pull away. Another staff member asks you to sanitize your hands, and you have ample time to get to your first period class, where you're greeted by your teacher, who again asks you to sanitize and place a paper mat on your desk. While you're getting settled in your area, the teachers are setting up their remote students to stream in, and then the bell rings at 8:10, where we start with our morning announcements. So there are more steps along the path to entry this year at the high school, but our students are welcomed and happily greeted every single morning by many familiar faces.

So among many of the other things, procedural things we're doing during this time, we're also using it as the time to connect with our students, seeing who might be stressed, who might need some outreach, and having that sort of first set of social-emotional checks for the day. So just this morning, I had a moment where a student I could clearly see was upset about something as they got out of their car, and the student walked in, and we were able to right away get a trusted staff member who took a walk with them before heading to class, and we were able to later follow up with communication and check in with the counselor. So these morning greetings, as much as they're about health and safety and procedures and getting our green slips in, they're also a connection point with our high school students.

I have to say that our kids have been excellent with the procedures, with compliance, wearing masks, everything that-- they're amazing. And it's rare to even have to remind them, honestly, to do the procedures, even after such a short amount of time. Linq is working well for us. We've been able to troubleshoot any minor issues that families have had. We have very few students on any given day that don't either-- that either don't have the screening completed, or don't have a green slip. Can count the number each day on one hand, and sometimes it's even zero.

So we also have sort of a two-factor authentication system, where we cross-check the Linq app with the green sheets so we can make sure that both of those are filled out every single day. And I have to thank our families very much for being so responsive, both to doing these procedures in the morning, but also to picking up our phone calls in the morning. In those rare events that they're not done, we've had no problems really getting in touch with our families, getting the screening done, and we're very thankful for that support on the other end.

You-- so in the building, there's a palpable feeling of excitement as the students have been here physically. You see it across the board, both from the students and our staff members. In terms of classes, so what it's like day to day for the students in their actual classes. Each class is being planned and approached differently. So for example, a student might be in a social studies class where they're on the computer for most of the period, and then they might move to a math class next period where they're at their desks using their own personal whiteboards and not the computer as much. So they have a little bit of a different experience from class to class.

Then they might move to their art class where they're creating their work while, at the same time, they have their Chromebooks on their desk, and they're conversing with their classmates at home for discussion. So each class is obviously approach based on the teacher's instructional plans, but we're also really mindful as a school about the flow throughout the day for our in-person cohort students so that they're having a variety of experiences and really getting that benefit of being in the building.

Have to say that for me, one of the happiest times of the day is lunch, not because that's when we get to eat, but because our students can talk to one another while they're eating, and even though it's in smaller numbers and it looks a bit different with some plastic in between, it's so good for them. We have many students eating outside, walking the track, sitting on the bleachers eating, and it's just-- it's, again, one of those times where it almost feels normal for them, and it's really, really nice to see. And we want our students to have these moments where it feels a little bit more relaxed without actually relaxing the procedures. So we are continually reinforcing that students have to put their masks back on when they're done eating, even when they get up to throw out a piece of garbage, or if you're just in the common spaces doing work.

Students are complying with not going off campus and are able to enjoy eating outside since the weather's been so nice. I'd say more than half of our students are eating outside, sometimes even more than that. We also have classes going outside for full classes or portions of the class. One of the pictures on this slide is actually a class that is outside on the lawn, and I don't know if you can see it in here, but we have one of our students sitting in his new seat in a tree-- a low tree-- on our front lawn, so we have-- very low-- so we have been able to do that.

And we've also worked with Eric, our food service director, to make some updates to our cafeteria service, such as made-to-order salads and sandwiches, and these options have been a really wonderful addition and have also made our students happy, especially with our closed campus for now. And we are very thankful at the high school for the phased-in opening. It was so helpful for us in making sure that all of our procedures were in place, that our staff felt comfortable with the

procedures, and that they felt comfortable implementing them with our procedures.

So I mentioned a little bit already about the social-emotional, that start to the day and really being able to see each and every one of our kids. Other ways that we're approaching social-emotional support, so we've built in every week, we have a standing open appointment time-- or open appointment time for counselors, where each of our counselors has a standing Zoom link where any kid on their caseload can drop in without an appointment and just ask questions, to talk about anything they need. So in addition to regular appointment times, they know that they have this guaranteed time when they can just drop in to see their counselor.

We also have our RTI and at-risk meetings. And one thing that we're very mindful about as we're communicating with our students is positive messaging about protocols, the spirit of being in it together, our seniors and juniors as leaders in the building. We want our kids to be at school, and this is important social-emotionally, we want them to be here and not constantly comparing it to when things were normal or what they're missing out on. So we're really focused on doing everything properly, doing it well, but the spirit of togetherness and making this work together. And as many of my colleagues have mentioned, the social-emotional needs of our teachers and staff are equally as important as our students, and this is all really hard.

We have been keeping a very positive tone in our building, being present, listening, trying to help whenever we can, even if we don't know where to start. We are all learning, and it's our job to help each other. I know-- and I'm so appreciative of our students and also our families and mindful of the stress of our families.

Going to Google Meet this morning with a student and his parent early in the morning, and we were troubleshooting getting into the online meeting for his class together. And this kind of thing is happening all day long with our parents and students as we try to help each other out, and I just want to say again how appreciative I am of our parents who're at home supporting us with patience and understanding and helping our students to be successful when they're not in the building.

We've also been really mindful of our ninth grade transitions, so our big buddies have been meeting with their ninth grade buddies since the spring, and they met again with them just as school was beginning this year. And our senior big buddies actually taped a building tour from the student perspective, incorporating the new procedures as well, which is a really nice thing for their older students to kind of show this-- show the ninth graders around the building from their eyes, since they didn't get to do that in person.

We also had a fully remote student meet and greet, and we had a separate one for our ninth graders, where they had-- where they had sort of like a few-minute session with each one of their teachers so they could talk one on one, meet their teacher, and get to know them, as well as their counselors. And then we also held grade level meetings during the first week of school on those half days so that we could meet separately with each grade level, go through the procedures, some more training, and tone setting.

Another layer of support that's new this year that I'm very happy about is we have almost repurposed our Learning Center model to allow those staff members to be remote learning point people. So we're very mindful of the feelings of isolation that all of our students have had since the spring, but now it's intensified by the fact that some students are coming back into the building while others are not. They're teenagers, and there are feelings that come along with that.

So we've been able to assign each of our fully remote students a remote learning point person. So we have-- so each of those point people meets with their student at a regularly scheduled time, and then we have a live document that outlines each fully remote student, who their point person is, when their point person meets with them, and then alongside that is their case manager if they have one, their counselor, so that we can all be in communication with the right people when support is needed. So it's a nice additional layer that we've been able to add.

We also have CHAP. This year, we have it actually every week, so one week it's virtually with your whole CHAP class, and then the other week you meet in person with whatever CHAP-- whichever CHAP students you have in that-- on that particular day. So we have sort of a small group, in-person meeting and a larger group, virtual meeting to support our kids. And again, going back to the importance of supporting our faculty and staff, yesterday at our faculty meeting, we started the meeting with all of our faculty members in breakout rooms, and their discussion topic was to share the bright spots from the week. And it was wonderful because it was hard to cut them off to come back to the whole group meeting. There were enough bright spots and enough happy moments happening that really livened our whole meeting.

So all that being said, of course our challenges surfacing, and people have talked to a lot tonight about the challenges of adapting to technology. And also for us at the high school, we have-- a challenge we've faced is adapting the technology to meet individual teaching styles. So we have the things that we need, and then we've been manipulating them to make them work for each individual teacher and their styles. So that could mean manipulating what computer is connected to the SMART Board, what computer is mobile, where each of the webcam versus the document cam is stationed in

the room. And that's different for every teacher.

Challenges. Zoom security has been a challenge. You probably see it in the media. We're very, very happy that as of this morning, actually, we have found a way to secure our Zoom meetings so that all of our students are required to log in with their trusty email address. So there are no issues with outsiders or anything like that trying to join Zoom meetings, which is really exciting and a measure of security that we didn't even think was possible and found a way to do it in Zoom.

So we might be getting some calls, if anyone's listening to this meeting, about how to do this from other schools in the future. But it's really exciting, and I've been running around the building all afternoon testing it with personal email addresses, and it works. So we're pretty excited about that. So that's sort of-- it's a challenge that has been a concern of ours in the first few weeks that we've been able to hopefully solve.

Other challenges that are surfacing are creating the learning environment that we want. So really thinking about how much computer time do we want our students in person to have? How do we balance that while still being able to have those kids who are in the class engage with the kids who are at home?

We know in some ways, we're actually fortunate to be in a place where we're able to start thinking about that and having those conversations because, as we've heard tonight, there are a lot of challenges in getting used to all this newness and technology, but those kinds of conversations are markers for me that we're moving forward and thinking beyond just making it work, which is really exciting to see that burgeoning conversation.

So many benefits are surfacing. Technologies here, we're trying to innovate. We're very pleased with our bring your own device program at the high school, where we've been able to give students the flexibility to use their own devices if they choose to. We have an incredible amount of collaboration and support among our faculty and staff. The real spirit of we're going to figure this out together.

I keep joking about how we're going around the building, plugging different things into different holes and figuring out how to make it happen in the way we want it to happen. We learned a lot in the spring, all kinds of different skills, above and beyond just making screencasts, but I'm just going to use that as an example. It's something that we wouldn't necessarily have thought to do so regularly, and now I find staff members making screencasts just share a quick idea with colleagues now, something cool, a cool feature that they found out.

So in terms of our staff, teaching like this is hard. None of us have ever done this before, and I don't want to minimize how hard this is, but I think for us the bottom line is we're committed. We've been messaging for each other and for our kids patience, presence, care, and support. We're messaging it to our kids and each other. We're focusing on what's working and entry points for everyone.

So for example, we started with three base models for utilizing the technology setup that we have. There are all kinds of other really cool things that we could envision and will do in the future, but to start with, we had our three models, and we made sure that everyone was committed to one that they felt comfortable with to start with so that we knew that when that first class rolled around, everyone had their model that they were comfortable with.

And I think our staff, as hard as it is, our staff feels supported. They are supported by each other. I think they feel supported by their building leaders and know that we're available for them whenever they need it in a second's time, whether it's instructional planning support, rigging computers or SMART Boards in different set-up, troubleshooting something on Zoom, whatever they need. And they've also taken a lot of initiatives. So two of our staff members created a phenomenal Google Classroom technology page, where the only rule is it can't be any sort of canned technology support or videos from other sources.

They make all these snippets of videos themselves. They have it categorized by topic, so you can search for literally anything as small as how to make your Zoom link a cool font to larger things, like how to integrate your document camera and your document camera view onto your SMART Board, for example. So that's been a really awesome resource. It's a live resource, and people post questions, and then other staff members will answer the question and create a video to help them answer the question. It's really very cool to see, and I personally use it all the time.

And so just to close, I really have to say we've had a successful reopening. When it comes to-- at the high school. When it comes to procedures, I was joking with someone earlier this week, it feels like we've been doing this for years. And I think it's-- in terms of those entry procedures and getting our kids in the building, it feels good, and it feels like very natural for us. And it's not easy and-- it's not easy, and we're in a really good place. So thank you.

Thank you.

Laura, I know-- you brought up something as a board member that I'm wondering if it could be possibly considered or maybe thought through with CET and PVC because-- or maybe it's already happening and I don't know-- but I think you highlighted a really important challenge for our remote

learners, and it might be even more acute the younger they are around that sense of disconnection as they know that other children are in the building.

And what you said about having the remote learning point person, actually meeting with the student, and I'm wondering if it's not exactly that model-- how that challenge is being addressed at CET and PVC for our remote learners and also our hybrid learners who are feeling disconnected. Because I think what you said is a really, really useful thing, and it does highlight one of the larger communal challenges for some of our kids who might not be feeling as connected to their school right now because they're not actually in the building.

So Beth, can I speak to that? Remember--

I love it. Yeah.

Remember on the task force, we described the concept of a caring connection? And so-- and the administrators, particularly Laura Duback, really welcomed that concept, and we've all agreed that we're going to implement it in each building so that every student will have a caring adult that will be the point person for that student-- or a point person. Our kids have a lot of go-to people, but definitely everybody would have allocated that person, and Laura even found a real structured system of going through that activity in each building. And so we do plan to implement that after things get a little settled.

Yeah, we've just been-- we've been fortunate at the high school that we had this existing structure of Learning Center, and we've said we have this structure, but it's not exactly the right fit to just continue with it as we would have in a normal year. So we put our heads together, and were like, oh, this is a need. We have the people. Let's get together and create something new, and who knows. It might be something that goes beyond this year if it works out.

And we identified also at CET, Dr. Mojica and I were speaking, and I know he's worked with a group-- he's working with a group of people in the building to plan for activities or ways to have those remote kids come in for a meet and greet and things like that because I got some feedback the other day from a parent that-- she had brought her remote son into one of these meetings, and he really enjoyed it. He really enjoyed being there, and we were saying wouldn't it be great if we could do things like that on an ongoing basis. And I know that the CET folks are already all over that idea.

We have-- I'll also add that from-- what came about from our meet and greet is the connection that the children made, and it's not-- it's probably going to be a little bit harder, and I'd like to hear more

about the model of a contact person for an elementary school student, but one thing is giving them a platform where they can meet in a safe environment.

So our remote teachers are planning to have periodic meet-and-greets for their 100% remote classes. I know that our kindergarten meet-and-greet teachers have already started to develop their fun Friday and what that would look like and having smaller group sessions because that's one thing, before we even got through half of each session of our meet and greet, parents were already asking how can we-- how can we do this again a lot sooner?

The other thing I would like to add, Beth, because I think your question is really good, and we spoke more generically about this. Obviously we've situated Wednesday for advisory that those groups are totally mixed between remote kids hybrid kids, so that's great. And then the other thing is we've been focusing a lot of attention on collaboration. How are we going to get kids in all different places and different days to collaborate?

And basically, even some of our teachers that were worried about this are now able to say that they're working with the breakout groups and that they're meeting at other times on Wednesday with kids who need additional support or who they want to just to get to know better because they don't have them in their classroom.

The other thing I would point out is that mostly all of our clubs will run virtually to kind of welcome in and court our remote students. And then also, what we're going to be continuing to promote is designated times that teachers and students can work together. And what we've seen in classrooms, especially where there are two people, is we've seen people divvying up things so that they're able to check in with the remote learners to give them feedback, provide them with further direction.

And it all comes down, I think, the most important piece is the instructional model. Are you building in check-ins for students who are at home just like you would do for those in school? And are you able to provide them feedback and get feedback yourself as an educator? So I really appreciate that question, and I know that our work will be continuing to monitor that and growing and cultivating that. So thank you.

Before we move on to our last presenter, any questions for our principals? All right. Hello there, Ms. August. We've been hearing-- we've been hearing a lot about technology, and I will preface by saying even if there was no pandemic, this would have been a tough year for technology because we had a major implementation with Infinite Campus. We had all of the Part 121 regulations for having our vendors sign off on student privacy come down on us. So how have you been managing all of those

normal operations and all of the implications of technology that the teachers and the principals have been mentioning? How are you doing?

Well, thanks for asking, John. First of all, I want to thank the board for inviting me tonight and the community out there who have been so super supportive of our technology program. I cannot thank the parents enough. They have been awesome. So just start off with some numbers, we have a student help desk for families, and we have a teacher help desk for district staff.

We've had 185 help desk tickets on the student help desk submitted. As of today, I believe we have three that we still have to attend to, so we've actually attended to everyone. Many of them, I've reached out to the parents myself and tried to help them with whatever the issue was. Some time-- there's been a myriad of issues. We're in a whole new world here.

We had Chromebooks in the district, which worked absolutely flawlessly, and now we put them in people's homes, and they don't work absolutely flawlessly. And there's a lot of reasons for it, and that's why I thank the parents. They've been so patient in helping us to try to figure out, on a one-by-one basis, every case individual, how can we make it work for that student? Our teacher help desk between-- in the last two weeks since school opened, we've closed over 600 tickets, almost equal among the buildings-- 218 for CET, 184 for PVC, and 215 for the high school.

And really that's because we took a model of a desktop computer connected to a SMART Board and took it away from teachers and gave them a myriad of devices with a docking station, a whole new way to work, having to choose cameras from a webcam to a dock cam, to a Zoom meeting, to a Google Meet, to putting it up on a SMART Board, to looking at your kids. It's an entire shift in technology for every single person in the district-- students, teachers, administrators, and they've been awesome.

But there have been a lot of struggles to get familiar with it, like with anything. If you used to use a PC and now you use a Mac, it takes a while to learn how to use it. And it has taken the last two weeks for many to start to understand the nuances of how all the pieces fit together. We've had-- our Edgitech staff has been awesome in the buildings, trying to support teachers, go in at CET. They've actually run sessions for teachers where groups of teachers came and asked questions and tried things.

Laura mentioned that the high school model is a little bit different. So we had one model for the district, and as we started implementing, we realized we needed to make changes at the high school level for individual teachers' classrooms. The K-2 model's different because we're streaming half of a

class to another half of a class and three and four are hybrid and remote. So there's been a lot of challenges, but I do have to say today there were only 48 help desk tickets when I left work. That is magnificent to go from 600 to 48 in two weeks is magnificent, and I feel that the student issues are diminishing daily.

Some of it had to do with we just tried swapping Chromebooks, changing microphone settings, changing audio settings, recommending that kids sit closer to the router, recommending that parents might want to upgrade their internet at home because we have five devices on instead of three devices on or whatever. We've given out 30 MiFi hotspots to help people who don't have any access and give them some kind of internet access so they can participate. And I do expect we probably will give out some more hotspots. Right now, we've met the demand that we had, so we seem to be doing OK with that.

We all know we live in a community with Croton where connectivity is not always our friend, so.

Yes, because we're remote-- because we live in a beautiful place, our internet's up and down all the time. It's really a shame, but everybody's been working together to address issues and try to find solutions for every single student, and it's amazing in two weeks how far we've come. I'm sure as we grow, we're going to change the model again for the same reasons that high school teachers are starting to see different ways to do things. And they're saying this might work better this way than that way. As you get more familiar with the devices and with the technology, you do find different ways to do things.

Also, we've had some issues which are way beyond our control. Google Drive was down three days in a row. Google Meet has been running at incredibly high rate of capacity, draining everything out of every computer. Zoom has had a few glitches along the way, where it's working great-- because we have to remember the whole world is streaming. It's not just Croton. It's not just New York. It's everybody.

So we have had glitches that are beyond our control. The teachers have been awesome. They just go to plan B. They make it work. They've just been totally awesome about trying to just keep things moving forward, focus on instruction, and not let that trample the classroom.

There are some wonderful benefits that have come out of this. The Google Classrooms that are being run by the teachers at PVC and the high school and I know there's one starting up at CET, they're putting in the most incredible one-minute videos. These teachers are making these little screencasts and putting them up, and they are awesome, and they're all these little tips and tricks that are unique

to us in Croton. And that's why at the high school, they don't want to put up a canned video from another school or from Google or somebody else because what they're putting videos up on, hey, did you know you can do this? And it's really wonderful. It's building capacity across the district.

The videos at the high school are shared with the middle school. They're shared with the elementary school. So now we have capacity being built from kindergarten through 12th grade by teachers for teachers, which is really kind of super awesome. I just think that's an incredible benefit that's come out of this.

Also, we're portable. PVC was closed on Monday. Every teacher took home their laptop for the weekend. They could run their classes. They couldn't do that before. We're totally portable now. We can teach from anywhere. It's best in the classroom because we have all the other little peripherals, but the fact that we can just move it where we need it to be and still conduct school is a wonderful benefit.

And then another benefit that's kind of come through the back door, and John will tell you, ed law 2D is not my favorite topic. I do not like being the legal person for the district and having to get a vendor to sign a contract for every piece of software we use, but it has succeeded in streamlining what software teachers are using so we're giving a more consistent experience to the kids. Teachers are using similar software now across the district because they're limited in what they can use.

They can't go to just any free app, so they're focusing on specific solutions, and that's giving the kids more consistency, which is better for kids. They don't need to be on a learning curve every day for a new software. They need the consistency. They need to feel comfortable with the software that the teachers are using. So I find that as a really strong benefit of what's come out of this from the ed law 2D side.

Linq also has worked out much better than I ever anticipated. Yes, there have been glitches, but every one of them we've been able to fix. Any parent who had a problem connecting, we could go in through a back door and do it. The nurses are finding it extremely helpful. It's been running very smoothly. So I feel like we made a good decision with Linq, in moving in that direction.

And Infinite Campus is coming along. Infinite Campus is probably the biggest test of how much stamina we have to put in a whole new SIS system virtually. It's probably the largest task any of us have ever been faced with. The teachers are faced with it. We're faced with it as administrators. I'm certainly faced with it. But it is moving forward, and it is working, much to my surprise. And I have to give tremendous credit to the principals and the assistant principals, who have been there every step

of the way to help move it forward and have joined in with anything they could do to help in the technology aspects of solving problems. So the camaraderie, the communication, the building capacity, the collaboration has been remarkable this year.

Managing our technology has been a Herculean task.

It has.

Nothing short of it, and I've got to say, Deb, I think everybody on the administrative team and the teachers will say it's been a heavy lift, and a lot of the lift has been on your shoulders, and it's been really an amazing accomplishment you should feel proud of. And I'd love to pass it on over to the Board of Education with any questions they may have for you.

I've got a few. So, Deb, I think I heard you saying that-- said that the student help desk received about 185 calls or 180 and teacher help desk about 600. Am I correct in understanding-- I'm pretty sure I heard this that you said that the slope is going down. Is the number of tickets per day increasing or decreasing right now?

Decreasing. The student help desk gets now three to five tickets a day. The teacher help desk right now is at about, I would say, 25 to 30 a day across the three buildings. Many of the tickets that are in right now are about printing. When we went to the laptops, we didn't push out centralized printing, and we're actually pushing it out tomorrow, printing stations around the building so teachers can push from their laptops for printing. But it's about 25 to 30. There are issues in classrooms. Everything works on Monday. You come in on Tuesday, all of a sudden, you plug in, and your SMART Board doesn't come on or your touchscreen screen doesn't work.

We've always had issues in our help desk. Just so you get a kind of parameters on this, a normal help desk, pre-pandemic, ran 25 tickets a day. That's about how many were in the help desk. Today we had 48 when I left. To me, that's remarkable to get down to that level at this point. I would love to see it go back to 25 tickets a day because 25 tickets a day means can you add this app? Can I have-- my printer needs ink. You know, normal stuff. Right now we're still-- we still get a mix of technology issues, and thank goodness my team is out there working hard.

Do we have a sense of what the mean time to resolution is on our tech support requests?

Yes, under two days. So we prioritize too. If it's a SMART Board, it goes to the top of the list because we know that the teachers are doing the hybrid, and they're using the SMART Boards. So that goes to

the top of the list, so we do prioritize. The normal turnaround is about two days. Now, it depends. Sometimes the help desk ticket is about a software, and then I have to go get a privacy agreement from the vendor. That could be two weeks, three weeks, depending on if the vendor signs. So I don't close a ticket. It sits while we work on it. [INAUDIBLE] sit there.

Do we have a sense of how many are closed and then-- how many are closed successfully versus closed and then have to be reopened? We measuring that?

I don't have figure-- I bet you I could get figures on that.

It'd be nice to see that. [INAUDIBLE]

Yeah. Because our help desk does give me statistics, so I'm sure I could take a look and see if we can figure out reopen.

That'd be a good thing. The other statistic that I'd love to see broken it out, and I'm not saying that you need to get this to me today, but it'd be really nice to know if we're seeing any difference between-- because we have a lot more BYO devices now, right-- and I'm curious as to whether that is taking up a significantly larger amount of tech support effort versus our district-owned equipment.

No, it's not, because in the student help desk, over the first two weeks of school, from September 8 to 23, which was yesterday, CET had 107 tickets. PVC had 53. High school had 22.

OK. Interesting. OK.

The BYOD's not taking up more. Now, some of that has to do with age, also. You know the older kids know more how to use their equipment than the little kids. So that's-- a part of that has to do with that.

Right, there's a little skew there. I understand.

Yeah.

And sort of my final question, and I apologize for peppering you this way--

No, it's OK.

Well, I think it's my final question. We already talked-- you already talked briefly about students that were struggling with limited internet access, and I'm glad to see that-- I worry that MiFi is not always the solution, given how cell phone coverage is in the area, of course.

Me too.

I kind of worry-- I mean, I just want to voice I have a little worry about students who are in households that cannot afford the higher bandwidth tiers because the prices escalate pretty quickly as you start-- as you move up 5 megabits to 10, 20.

No, I agree. You're right, Josh, because MiFis don't work everywhere. They don't pick up every signal. I totally understand that. And I actually have just reached out to T-Mobile. They have a program to bring-- I'm not sure all the solutions yet-- but I'm looking into programs to bring internet to the families that don't have internet that also MiFi isn't working for because we know that's happened.

But I can tell you in the spring, we did not have one student who did not do their work on their computer in April, May, June. We checked. So all figured out how to get onto something, and I didn't have the MiFis in the spring.

Now, I got the MiFis because we had time over the summer to talk to people and reach out and send surveys and find out who needed them. But I'm just saying so we know that that group is small because we know that in the spring, they did get the internet. I'm not sure if they went to the Black Cow or the [INAUDIBLE]. They could have. It's possible. But I am looking into other solutions to see what can we do for these families who need it, especially if they have two children, three children. They really need some type of access, so I'm looking into that now.

That makes me think of one more thing. So I have an acquaintance who works in a district out in western New York, I think Williamsville, and they have just eliminated snow days.

But what that actually got me thinking about that because they eliminated snow days-- they said, well, kids can learn at home. If we're in a remote model, kids can learn at home on the days when there's snow. That was their idea. I'm not suggesting that we should do that. I'm just saying that that's what they did. But what it got me to thinking about actually is internet outage days. So--

Oh, we had one--

Yesterday, there was a big outage.

Yeah, we've had two since school started.

And my worry is that yes, we might have days where we can stay open and be remote, but we're now vulnerable-- we have a different vulnerability surface, which is massive internet outages or you

mentioned a Google Drive outage. You mentioned that sort of thing. Those are reasonably rare.

But on the other hand, Optimum and Verizon both have had fairly significant outages, and sometimes they're multiday outages, especially as we saw after the storm. So I kind of wonder what the impact is it. Just putting it out there. District administration might want to think about what kind of contingency plan we have for if there's a major loss of internet access throughout the district.

Good question.

Josh, just to-- it's not just Williamsville. This is something New York State Education Department is looking into as a pilot. Just to give you their exact words, the State Education Department is establishing a one-year pilot to enable school districts, at district option and consistent with each district's reopening educational plan, to pivot to remote instruction to provide continuity of instruction on what would otherwise be a day of school closure due to a snow emergency.

This pilot is in effect for the 2020-'21 year, after which the Department will review the outcome of the pilot in determining whether to continue this flexibility in subsequent school years.

This is something that I will need to speak with the teacher union as we have language in the contract relative to snow days, but it is something that is throughout New York state. And one of the concerns that is raised is to your very point, what if it's a day where there were outages, and some folks are saying, well, if there were asynchronous items in, let's say, Google Classroom that might be something the students could be doing. So it is something that all school districts are examining and having conversations with their teacher unions about.

I mean, I actually envisioned a scenario where if a sufficient-- so for instance, if our school buildings had no internet access because of an outage-- I think we're on Optimum-- I think we're on Lightpath, right? If there was a significant outage, and their school buildings had no access to the internet, that would essentially block instruction for all of our at-home learners that day.

Maybe not. We're on BestWeb. Maybe not. We can pick up our laptops, and go home, and teach our kids.

Right, but if they're also out.

That's different, yes. That's different.

And then we need to be able to assess how many are out, and there's a complication there, and it's

just something I hope we're thinking about.

I don't want to get into the weeds, but I didn't want you to think it was just something that Williamsville--

No, I didn't think that it was, and thank you for pointing out that it is a statewide initiative. And I think that is-- I think that's all I got.

Thanks, Josh. Does anyone else have any questions?

Oh, you know, I'm sorry. I do have one more, and I apologize. How's the toil? I mean, by toil I mean-- there's a lot of tickets. You talked about 600 teacher help desk tickets and 185 student help desk tickets. Is it-- are the things that you're fielding interesting things, or are the things that you're handling by and large tedious things?

Mostly tedious.

Got it. OK.

Most of the student tickets are my screen froze when I did Zoom or a Chromebook swap or something like that. But most of the teacher help desk tickets are tedious things. They're things like I can't figure out how to change my camera, or I couldn't turn on my SMART Board or just basic technical stuff. What you-- plug it in, get work.

OK. Got it. Thank you.

So as we come into the final stretch, I hope that as a board and for the community that you appreciate that we are keeping it real tonight, that we are here to tell you that we have a lot to celebrate because we have accomplished a lot getting our schools reopened during the pandemic. But because we are facing probably the most difficult time in public schools' history, you are also hearing that there have been struggles and that there have been obstacles to overcome, and there are remaining obstacles that we will continue to overcome.

So when we're talking about next steps, you know, I said it earlier in the evening, and I've said it many times before, I think one of our finest attributes as an educational community is our ability to get together as a team of colleagues, to be reflective of where we are, and to use our good thinking collectively to think about how we could be better tomorrow for the sake of our students. And that's what we plan on doing, and that work is going to be ongoing because our kids deserve it, and the

times demand it.

So some of the things that we are looking forward to in the very near future, we have established an October 6th reconvening of our Reentry Task Force. This will be the first time that our Reentry Task Force is able to, as we are doing tonight, look back at things with a retrospective of here we are. We had all of these plans. We are forecasting and prognosticating, and now we could go back to our individual areas and really think about what are the challenges that remain? What are the things that we want to celebrate? And really consider what our next steps are.

I also want to share with the board our continuous commitment to seek the voices of parents, of students, of our community, as well as our teachers and staff. You know that we have a very, very powerful new tool and a thought exchange, and once of a little bit more time has gone by with us being under full implementation of our hybrid model, we plan on sending out a very, very open-ended thought exchange that asks what are the biggest challenges you are seeing or experiencing with remote or hybrid learning? And what is working well? So that we really could hear from all of the voices within our community as to what the needs are.

And the last thing I will celebrate is our ongoing commitment to professional learning. We have a half day of professional learning coming up in October. And at yesterday's administrative meeting we've identified an essential question, and it's a very simple question. What does instructional excellence look like now? Because we are in a time where instruction looks different, and therefore excellent instruction is something we need to strive for, and in order to strive for it, we have to collectively define it as a district, and then all year long continually work towards making sure that we are reaching that excellence for the sake of our students.

So I will end it there and go to our last slide, which really gives us a closing opportunity to ask what further questions or conversation we can entertain before we say good night.

I just want to thank you, John, and thank everybody. I don't really have a question because there is so much to absorb, so much to think about that I think we all need to digest it. I do hope, at some point, we will be able to do, as board members, some learning walks. I don't know if we can do learning walks virtually, but I would love to see how things are doing and how we can kind of get a sense of what you've talked about more up close and personal.

Does anyone else have any questions for anyone? All right. Well, I just wanted to take a moment to thank Ms. August and Ms. Gatto and all of our building administrators. You guys definitely gave us a lot of information. As Neil said, it's a lot for us to sit with and reflect on, but I'm glad to hear that the

start of school is going so well, despite the challenges that we faced, and that we're facing them and innovating and moving forward. So I think there's overall exciting stuff going on.

And thank you to the Board of Education for giving us this opportunity to use a work session to continue our discussions about school reentry. And again, I thank the administrative team for their thoughtfulness on what they wanted to share tonight. I'm very, very proud of you.

Well, with that, recommended action that the Board of Education adjourn this work session at 10:58 PM.

So moved.

Second.

Second.

All in favor?

Aye.

Oppose. Abstain. Motion carried. Thank you, everyone, and thank you to the community who tuned in tonight.