

DEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING  
REMOTE MEETING

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**MINUTES**

**March 31, 2021**

*(Approved 4/28/2021)*

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PRESENT via REMOTE PARTICIPATION:

Lisa Laprade, Chair

Tracey White, Vice-Chair

Stephen Bilafer

Mayanne Briggs

Joshua Donati

Dr. Melissa Pearrow

Victor Hebert

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ABSENT:

None

MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION REMOTELY PRESENT:

Michael J. Welch, Superintendent

Dr. Ian Kelly, Assistant Superintendent

Sam Rippin, Assistant Superintendent for Business & Finance

Meeting Location:

Per Governor Baker's order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. C. 30A sec. 20, the meeting was held via Zoom as posted on the agenda: <https://dedham-k12-ma-us.zoom.us/j/98807925022>

Remote meeting commenced at 7:04 p.m.

Ms. Laprade read the following statement regarding the remote meeting:

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order concerning imposition on strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, meetings in the Town of Dedham are being conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. We have arranged for a call-in number for those who would like to listen to this meeting. While it is possible that some members of the public may be invited to comment, it is also possible that despite our best efforts, we are not able to provide for real-time involvement, we will post a recording of this meeting as soon as we are able.

Ms. Laprade called the School Committee meeting to order.

Ms. Laprade took a roll call attendance:

Stephen Bilafer - Present

Mayanne Briggs - Present

Joshua Donati - Present

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Present

Victor Hebert - Present

Tracey White, Vice-Chair - Present

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Present

## **Public Comment**

None

## **Old/New Business**

### Discussion and Vote on Next Steps for Grades PK-8 In-Person Learning

At the meeting on March 17, 2021, Supt. Welch updated the Committee on his plan to bring Kindergarten through Grade 8 students back to the classrooms. Tonight he has included Preschool in this plan. The presentation is located on the district website. The report included a review of the Dedham Public Schools return to in-person learning family survey, the logistical challenges to meet DESE guidelines, and a time line for a return to school:

- Full in-person for all K-5 students as of Monday, April 5
- Full in-person for all Grades 6-8 students as of Monday, April 26
- Recommend Grades 9-12 full in person on Monday, May 3

Supt. Welch thanked Director of Facilities Denise Moroney, Lead Custodian Robert Lazdowsky and all of the custodians for the work they did assembling and delivering over 200 desks to the elementary schools to prepare for the reopening. He also thanked Mr. Rippin for purchasing student desks ahead of the rush and over \$1,000 in lap desks for alternative means.

Supt. Welch noted the importance of the returning students to completing their COVID-19 pooled testing consent forms. (The form can be found on the district website.)

Supt. Welch also recommended preschool return to a full schedule of in-person learning on April 12. This would require an adjustment to tuition (which was reduced in the fall) to its original schedule.

The Committee discussed the spacing of preschool classrooms. Class sizes were reduced to 12 students per class in the fall, allowing plenty of room for students to remain six feet apart. They discussed the use of space in the Middle School. The cafeteria, library and gymnasium will all be utilized for lunch. Physical Education will take place outside or in other areas of the building during inclement weather. Lunch will be brought to students as they are

not allowed to wait in line. Superintendent Welch thanked Food Service Director Jeanne Johnson and the food service workers for all of their flexibility and hard work. The Committee discussed how ESSER-2 funds may be needed to refurbish gym floors as well as buy more hand sanitizer and wipes for the additional students entering the buildings.

Ms. Briggs motioned to accept the Superintendent's recommendation for a full return to in-person learning on April 5, 2021 for Kindergarten through Grade 5 and April 12, 2021 for Preschool, Mr. Hebert second; a roll call vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer- Yes

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes

Victor Hebert - Yes

Tracey White, Vice-Chair- Yes

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Yes

**Motion passed 7-0**

#### Discussion on Next Steps for High School In-Person Learning

Supt. Welch explained that DESE has not yet mandated a return date for high school students. He expects an announcement sometime in April. Supt. Welch would like to see Middle School students return to school on April 26, 2021 and High School students return on May 3, 2021. At this time only preliminary information has been released regarding commencements and no information has been released regarding proms. The last day for seniors is May 24 with graduation still planned for Saturday, June 5. Seniors will not take finals but instead will be given that time to makeup work.

Ms. Briggs motioned to accept the Superintendent's recommendation for a full return to in-person learning on April 26, 2021 for Dedham Middle School, Mr. Hebert second; a roll call vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer- Yes

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes

Victor Hebert - Yes

Tracey White, Vice-Chair- Yes

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Yes

**Motion passed 7-0**

A vote on high school return to in-person learning will be taken at a later date.

### Update and Vote on Massachusetts Travel Advisory

Supt. Welch welcomed new Public Health Director Kylee Sullivan to Dedham. He also thanked Gail Kelley for her immense work and efforts during this challenging year. The state has recently changed its travel restrictions to a Travel Advisory. At this time the DPS travel and quarantine guidance is stricter than the state's advisory. Ms. Kelley asked the Board to allow the School guidance match the State's Travel Advisory. The Board of Health voted unanimously at its last meeting to support this recommendation. No further discussion occurred.

Dr. Pearrow motioned to support the recommendation to align the Dedham Public School Travel Guidelines with that of the state's Travel Advisory, Mr. Hebert second; a roll call vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer- Yes

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes

Victor Hebert - Yes

Tracey White, Vice-Chair- Yes

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Yes

**Motion passed 7-0**

## **Subcommittee Updates**

### Policy Subcommittee

Dr. Pearrow noted the Policy Subcommittee has discussed and voted unanimously to add the following verbiage to Policy JICFB Bullying Prevention, which aligns with the Mass General Law Chapter 71, Section 370 part 3. This is the third reading of revised policy JICFB-Bullying and Prevention. The full policy can be found at the end of the minutes.

To add as vulnerable groups, "...pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics."

Ms. White motioned to approve the changes to policy JICFB-Bullying and Prevention as presented, Mr. Donati second; a roll call vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer- Yes

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes

Victor Hebert - Yes

Tracey White, Vice-Chair- Yes

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Yes

**Motion passed 7-0**

## Donations

Mr. Hebert motioned to accept with grateful appreciation a donation of school supplies with an estimated value of \$2,000 to the Avery Elementary School (\$1,000), Riverdale Elementary School (\$500) and the ECEC (\$500) from Staples, Inc. Ms. Briggs second; a roll call vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer- Yes

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes

Victor Hebert - Yes

Tracey White, Vice-Chair- Yes

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Yes

**Motion passed 7-0**

Ms. White motioned to accept with grateful appreciation a donation in the amount of \$3,600 to the Fine Arts Department from the Dedham Arts and Boosters to be used for the following:

- \$200 for middle school art equipment
- \$1000 for elementary musical digital editing
- \$1900 for winter percussion equipment
- \$500 for the PAC/Drama account at the high school

as well as a scholarship in the amount of \$1,500, Dr. Pearrow second; a roll call vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer- Yes

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes

Victor Hebert - Yes

Tracey White, Vice-Chair- Yes

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Yes

**Motion passed 7-0**

Dr. Pearrow thanked the Dedham Arts & Boosters for their donations during this difficult time.

## Minutes

Ms. White motioned to approve the minutes from March 17, 2021 as presented, Ms. Briggs second; a roll call vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer- Yes

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes

Victor Hebert - Yes

Tracey White, Vice-Chair- Yes

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Yes

**Motion passed 7-0**

## **Acknowledgements and Announcements**

Ms. White acknowledged the talent of the winter percussion group and the video they submitted to the New England School Band Association for winter finals this weekend.

Ms. Laprade acknowledged the fantastic job the students did in the senior musical performance of “The Addams Family” that occurred the previous weekend.

Ms. White motioned to adjourn the meeting of March 31, 2021, Dr. Pearrow second; a roll call vote was taken:

Stephen Bilafer- Yes

Mayanne Briggs - Yes

Joshua Donati - Yes

Dr. Melissa Pearrow – Yes

Victor Hebert - Yes

Tracey White, Vice-Chair- Yes

Lisa Laprade, Chair – Yes

**Motion passed 7-0**

Regular Meeting ended at 8:00 p.m.

File: JICFB

## **BULLYING PREVENTION**

The Dedham School Committee is committed to providing a safe, positive and productive educational environment where students can achieve the highest academic standards. No student shall be subjected to harassment, intimidation, bullying, or cyber-bullying.

"Bullying" is the repeated use by one or more students or school staff members, including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or of damage to his/her property;

- creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

"Cyber-bullying" means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a:

- wire
- radio
- electromagnetic
- photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.

Cyber-bullying shall also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person as author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Bullying and cyber-bullying may occur in and out of school, during and after school hours, at home and in locations outside of the home. When bullying and cyber-bullying are alleged, the full cooperation and assistance of parents and families are expected.

For the purpose of this policy, whenever the term bullying is used it is to denote either bullying, or cyber-bullying.

Bullying is prohibited:

- On school grounds;
  - o On property immediately adjacent to school grounds;
- At school-sponsored or school-related activities;
  - o At functions or programs whether on or off school grounds
- At school bus stops;
  - o On school buses or other vehicles owned, leased or used by the school district; or,
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school district;

Bullying and cyber-bullying are prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the school district if the act or acts in question:

- create a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringe on the rights of the target at school; and/or

- materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

We understand that members of certain student groups may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, or disability, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. We will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

#### Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Superintendent and/or his/her designee shall oversee the development of a prevention and intervention plan, in consultation with all district stakeholders, which may include teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians, consistent with the requirements of this policy, as well as state and federal laws. The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be reviewed and updated at least biennially.

The Principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the bullying prevention and implementation plan within his or her school.

#### Reporting

Students, who believe that they are a target of bullying, observe an act of bullying, or who have reasonable grounds to believe that these behaviors are taking place, are obligated to report incidents to a member of the school staff. The target shall, however, not be subject to discipline for failing to report bullying.

Each school shall have a means for anonymous reporting by students of incidents of bullying. No formal disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Any student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Parents or guardians, or members of the community, are encouraged to report an incident of bullying as soon as possible.

A member of a school staff shall immediately report any instance of bullying the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the school principal or their designee.

#### Investigation Procedures

Each school is required to investigate in a timely manner and determine whether or not bullying or retaliation occurred. Nothing in this section shall prevent school personnel from remediating any discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law consistent with the Dedham Public School's policies for investigating such matters.

The Principal or their designee, upon receipt of a report of bullying, shall promptly contact the parents or guardians of a student who has been the alleged target or alleged perpetrator of bullying. The actions being taken to prevent further acts of bullying shall be discussed.

The school Principal or designee shall promptly investigate the report of bullying, using a Bullying/Cyber-bullying Report Form which may include interviewing the alleged target, alleged perpetrator, staff members, students and/or witnesses.



Support staff shall assess an alleged target's needs for protection and create and implement a safety plan that shall restore a sense of safety for that student.

Confidentiality shall be used to protect a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or is witness to or has reliable information about an act of bullying.

If the school Principal or a designee determines that bullying has occurred he/she shall take appropriate disciplinary action and if it is believed that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator, the principal shall consult with the school's resource officer and the Superintendent to determine if criminal charges are warranted. If it is determined that criminal charges are warranted, the local law enforcement agency shall be notified.

The investigation shall be completed within fourteen school days from the date of the report. The parents or guardians shall be contacted upon completion of the investigation and informed of the results, including whether the allegations were found to be factual, whether a violation of this policy was found, and whether disciplinary action has or shall be taken. At a minimum the Principal or his/her designee shall contact the parents or guardians as to the status of the investigation on a weekly basis.

Disciplinary actions for students who have committed an act of bullying or retaliation shall be in accordance with district disciplinary policies.

Each school shall document any incident of bullying that is reported per this policy and a file shall be maintained by the Principal or designee. A monthly report shall be provided to the Superintendent.

Confidentiality shall be maintained to the extent consistent with the school's obligations under law.

#### Retaliation

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying, shall be prohibited.

#### Target Assistance

The school district shall provide counseling or referral to appropriate services, including guidance, academic intervention, and protection to students, both targets and perpetrators, affected by bullying, as necessary.

#### Training and Assessment

Annual training shall be provided for school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with students in preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying.

Age-appropriate, evidence-based instruction on bullying prevention shall be incorporated into the curriculum for all K to 12 students.

#### Publication and Notice

Annual written notice of the relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to students and their parents or guardians, in age-appropriate terms.

Annual written notice of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to all school staff. The faculty and staff at each school shall be trained annually on the bullying prevention and intervention plan applicable to the school.

Relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan relating to the duties of faculty and staff shall be included in the school employee handbook.

The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be posted on the school district website.

LEGAL REFS.: Title VII, Section 703, Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended Federal Regulation 74676 issued by EEO Commission Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 603 CMR [26.00](#)

M.G.L. [71:370](#); [265:43](#), [43A](#); [268:13B](#); [269:14A](#)

REFERENCES: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Model

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

CROSS REFS.: [AC](#), Nondiscrimination

[ACAB](#), Sexual Harassment

JBA, Student-to-Student Harassment

[JIC](#), Student Discipline

[JICFA](#), Prohibition of Hazing