

CABOT PTO MEETING WITH NPS SUPERINTENDENT & SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

THURSDAY JANUARY 21, 2021 @ 7PM ON ZOOM

Please note: The notes below provide a brief overview of this meeting. An audio recording is available and posted with the notes. Interested parties are strongly encouraged to consult the audio recording for specific language and detailed remarks.

In Attendance: NPS Superintendent David Fleishman; School Committee Representatives Bridget Ray-Canada, Margaret Albright, Kathleen Shields; Cabot School Principal Eric Sprung; Cabot School PTO Co-Chairs Agnes Pietrzyk, Jayven Rappa; numerous Cabot stakeholders and families.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Agnes Pietrzyk, Cabot PTO Co-President:

- Welcome
- Thanks to Cabot families for contributions to CFC and teacher gifts
- Open positions on PTO Executive Committee
- Upcoming events

UPDATES FROM NPS LEADERSHIP

David Fleishman, NPS Superintendent (approximately 4:03 in the audio recording):

- Visited Cabot School today and shared observations - increased use of technology, writing lessons in Grades 4 & 5, thoughtful teaching and learning, same content seen in hybrid and DLA
- Another transition week (extended school day for K-2)
- Ready to begin planning for 4th quarter of this year and next year; on Monday 1/25 will announce planning teams (including NPS educators, administrators, principals, NTA, PTO, reps from L-PAC, SEPAC, Boston families)
- Vaccine on the horizon is the real game-changer in terms of getting more students back in school; this is our goal for the fall
- Continue to consult with medical professionals; no relationship between medical advisory panel and ability to get students in school (e.g., Brookline)
- Attended a meeting of school psychologists last night to discuss social emotional development and this will be available on our website
- Happy to hear that Kathy Lopes will be coming to Cabot (2/25/21); NPS to host community conversation around race as part of Overdue series on 2/24/21 (additional details to come).

Bridget Ray-Canada, NPS School Committee Ward 1 (approximately 10:48 in the recording):

- Overview of School Committee and its main roles within NPS: hire and evaluate superintendent, policy setting, collective bargaining with the three NPS unions, budget oversight, and constituent communication. Content and curriculum do not fall within the domain of SC.

- Part of a working group on health and wellness, with school nurses and PE teachers; feedback is more optimistic due to increased testing and vaccine.

Kathleen Shields, NPS School Committee Ward 7 (approximately 12:48 in the recording):

- Update on NPS ventilation systems. Some were in better shape (e.g., Cabot) than others.
- NPS spent approximately \$2.3 million on outside contractors – to conduct testing, maintenance, and air balancing work. Due to this work, 100% of occupied rooms meet the safety requirements for full occupancy.
- Most work is complete, with a few schools (Day, NNHS, NSHS) completing work in coming weeks.
- Dashboards for each school are published on NPS website.

Margaret Albright, NPS School Committee Ward 2 (approximately 15:25 in the recording):

- Since August attending meetings of a group called Safer Schools Testing Collaborative. NPS began surveillance testing of our teachers in December with special education teachers. Free testing available every other week. Run testing center 2x week at the Newton Ed Center.
- NPS has signed on state surveillance testing, large number of details are unclear. Investigating how to offer weekly surveillance testing for teachers and adolescents.
- Working with The Broad Institute and MA School Superintendents to build comprehensive data set and put together a dashboard (touching on distances, surveillance testing, masks, vaccines).

Eric Sprung, Cabot School Principal (approximately 17:38 in the recording):

- Amy Martins, Grade 2 teacher, welcomed a baby boy on 1/16/21;
- Work on anti-racism continues with support from our anti-racism committee (e.g., staff training);
- Celebrating the life of Molly Williams through a “kindness week” (which would include fundraising for a scholarship in her name, a dance program, library books in her name);
- MCAS dates ELA: Monday, April 5-Friday, May 7, Mathematics: Monday, April 26-Friday, May 28, STE (grades 5 and 8): Tuesday, April 27-Friday, May 28.

QUESTION & ANSWER (approximately 22:10 in the recording)

QUESTIONS POSED FROM THE CABOT SCHOOL COMMUNITY (approximately 24:00 in the recording)

PLANS FOR SPRING AND MORE IN PERSON TIME

1. Many districts (e.g., Westwood) are prioritizing in-person learning for students in K-3. What was the rationale for focusing on K-2 and excluding students in Grade 3, who lost half of Grade 2?
2. What are the current barriers to Gr 3-5 coming back more in person and how is NPS addressing these barriers to be ready for the fall? When will they make the decision about return to in-person school for the next academic year and inform parents?
3. What is NPS currently working on in regard to the goal of having elementary students back for daily in-person learning and the goal time-frame for this to happen?

4. How likely do think it is that K-5 schools could return to 5 full days per week of in-person school after April vacation?

5. How are you planning for spring and fall and when will the decision points be? Waiting until August again to finalize details for September puts parents in a ridiculous bind.

6. What is the rationale in hybrid for no project-based activities or reading groups (that could take place online) and any plans to implement these?

7. What resources does NPS need to make full time in person a reality and how can the community help (e.g., more space, teachers, funding, etc)?

SPACING & CLASSROOMS

8. If NPS followed the 3 feet rule instead of 6 feet in elementary, would there be enough space to have one cohort?

9. Has NPS looked into using alternate spaces to increase in-person learning time?

SCHOOL PLANNING FOR FALL 2021

10. My biggest concern is next fall. I would hope we can get those who want in-person school back to school 5 days/week. What steps has the district taken to plan for fall 2021? What specific plans are being made to reopen schools full-time in fall 2021?

11. How does the district plan to "catch up" students when all students return for in-person learning? What assessments will it conduct? What compensatory instruction does NPS plan to offer gen ed students?

12. It would be great to understand plans for September re: in person learning - is base case back to normal? Anticipate staffing and vaccine will enable full in-person?

13. How will middle school and high school orientation be handled this year?

MEDICAL ADVISORY QUESTIONS

14. Why has the administration and school committee been resistant to appoint a medical advisory team to help guide reopening? Why did the district refuse offers of help from Newton experts, including Dr. Rochelle Walensky (Director of the CDC under President Joe Biden)?

15. What medical experts does the district currently consult with? What are their credentials? Do they have children? Do they receive a stipend for their participation on NPS committees?

16. Wouldn't better decision-making be possible with more expertise?

COVID TESTING AND SHARING OF INFORMATION

17. Are you looking into routine Covid testing of students?

18. Regarding NPS reporting policies: If a student in my child's in-person class tests positive for Covid-19, will our family be notified? (My understanding is that the answer to this question is "no", so my follow-

up question is: If we were regularly notified about lice and strep in our child's classroom, then why not Covid-19?)

19. Regarding statistics shared with Newton HHS: My understanding is that the positive cases in NPS reported on the Newton HHS website have elementary, middle and high school lumped together. Where can we find the breakdown of the reported positive cases into elementary, middle, and high school buckets, so that we parents can better compare?

TEACHER SUPPORT AND TRAINING

20. Why did NPS choose to lay off over 100 unit C professionals in June 2020, knowing that physical distancing and reduced cohort sizes were a reality and therefore would require more staff?

21. I'd like to know what standards and trainings are required of the support staff recently hired to assist DLA classroom teachers and were they run through BRC or CORI/SORI'd?

22. How are teachers being supported to create and sustain inclusive classrooms in person and online?

EQUITY & RACIAL DIVERSITY

23. What conversations is the district having around the impact of a prolonged hybrid model on equity of access to in-person learning for public school students?

24. I would like to hear about how the district is moving forward to implement a district-wide racial awareness K-12 curriculum, including professional development. I would like to hear about how the district is working on diversity in hiring and retention.

TRUST & REPAIRING OF RELATIONSHIPS

25. What is the NPS administration doing to restore the trust of parents? What systems will be set up to ensure that we feel heard in the future, and that information is more transparently shared with us?

26. Are there critical repairs that also need to happen between NPS and the teachers' union? The relationship between the local governing body and the student-facing faculty and staff/their union representation is one, if not the most--important factor in measuring the success or failure of the school planning.

MAIN TOPICS ANSWERED FROM THE CHAT

- Vaccination rollout for teachers/willingness of teachers to be vaccinated
- Alternate Spaces to allow for more students to be in person
- Meaning of "Live, Synchronous learning"
- Clarification that we would need all Hybrid families to agree to go back full time to make that happen this year. DLA would not change.
- MCAS