

## **PS24 Town Hall Minutes**

November 16, 2020 at 4:00PM

### **Meeting Moderator:**

Missy Adriaola, Corresponding Secretary

### **Speakers:**

Steven Schwartz, Principal

Anita Maher, Teacher & UFT Chapter Leader

Aiyana Brooks, PA Co-President

Jen Chau Fontan, PA Co-President

Missy started the meeting by introducing herself, speakers and housekeeping items:

- Questions have been gathered ahead of time via google forms. Questions not covered may be addressed on Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup> during the Coffee with the Principal at 6:30pm or during the PA meeting at 7:00pm. Also feel free to send questions via the Q&A Slack channel, direct email to the PA, or google forms previously sent out.
- Minutes will be sent via PA Blast and Slack Channel in English and Spanish.

Principal Schwartz welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance during the late afternoon meeting. Last eight months have been interesting and he is very proud of what we have been able to do together as a community but there is much more work to do.

### **Purpose of the Meeting:**

Give as much information as possible to the community regarding a plan detailing where we are today, where we hope to be tomorrow and how we will have to adjust if needed.

### **Agenda:**

What are the knowns currently?

What don't we know?

What we hope to know

Short-term plan

Long-term plan

What can parents do now to prepare?

### **Currently Know:**

Two statements made by two important decision makers:

- Mayor DeBlasio – if city reaches 7-day citywide positivity rate of 3%, schools close following day.
- Governor Cuomo- if schools are not spreading virus or have much lower positivity rate than surrounding area, keeping children in school is not part of the problem but part of the solution.

Parents should not panic as this may change.

As of 11/13, 7-day citywide positivity rate spiked to 2.83% but rate has lowered since then to around a 2.5%.

Chancellor sent an email to principals on 11/12 asking to prepare for a potential shutdown of all schools.

If schools do close, they will not reopen for a possible minimum of 7 calendar days, and then until the 7-day average of positive cases is below 3%, according to Mayor DeBlasio.

Plan in place for school will be based upon the notification of a short-term (less than 4 weeks) or long-term closure.

**Do Not Know:**

- If schools close, for how long? Important to know a time frame in order to implement either the short-term or long-term plan.
- Rolling closure below 3% mark? How long will it take to get to under the 3% mark?
- Will city give a clear minimum date on when schools can reopen?
- Will schools be given specific guidance on what can/cannot do regarding programming, instruction, etc.? Any new guidance issued to schools may/may not impact current plans in place depending upon how/if they are aligned.

**Priorities:**

- Create consistency by limiting the amount of student and teacher assignment changes. Relationships already built should be continued.
- Ensuring the best and most appropriate education for all students through appropriate placements of students with disabilities, multilingual language learners, gifted and talented students. Teachers should be assigned according to their knowledge, expertise and current planning.
- Assignments should be aligned to the DOE and UFT guidelines.

**Short-Term Plan (Less than 4-week closure):**

- Minimal changes to student assignments as possible.
- All in-person teachers to support both in-person cohorts.
- Reassign hybrid remote teachers to support traditional IEP classes.
- Clusters continue with synchronous and asynchronous instruction.

All teacher assignments remain the same except for the following:

Kindergarten: Ms. Brophy joins Ms. Valentzas (ICT)

Ms. Gilheany will support only her remote students

1<sup>st</sup> Grade: Ms. Lunney joins Mr. Kelly (ICT)

Ms. Fortunato will support only her remote students

2<sup>nd</sup> Grade: Ms. Yannaco joins Ms. Au Coleman (ICT)

Ms. Roth will support only her remote students

3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: Ms. Quenneville joins Ms. Robertson (ICT)

Ms. Lorenzo joins Ms. DiNapoli (ICT)

4<sup>th</sup> Grade: Ms. Lennon joins Ms. Kanze (ICT)

5<sup>th</sup> Grade: Ms. Young joins Ms. Feeney (ICT)

Ms. Levy will support only her remote students

**Pros:**

Allows for the least amount of changes and a smooth transition when school reopens.

Prioritizes the social/emotional well-being of the student and can implement immediately.

**Cons:**

No guarantee any closure will be less than 4 weeks (short-term).

Some inequality of classroom sizes due to the need for consistency.

Less priority placed on instructional needs of each student due to a less than ideal situation, albeit only a short-term fix.

### **Long-Term Plan (announced as at least 4-week closure):**

- Focused on instructional and compliance priorities.
- All G&T students reassigned back to G&T teacher, creating a G&T cohort.
  - G&T student can remain with current cohort or switch to G&T class but will revert to original cohort once school reopens.
- ICT students will be reassigned to ICT classrooms with a second teacher in order to provide a suitable educational environment as per their IEP.
  - ICT student can remain in same cohort or switch to traditional ICT classroom but will revert to original cohort once school reopens.
- Reassignment of students to provide smaller class sizes. Reassignment of staff to provide services based on need, additional reduction of class sizes and intervention services.

In order to provide consistency, no interchanging of classes per parent request will be accommodated.

#### Pros:

Provides long term consistency and considers the well-being of each student.

Opportunities for smaller class sizes and intervention supports to address the possible learning gaps over the past year with availability for more individual and smaller group instruction.

#### Cons:

If school building reopens in the same year, there will be another transition.

Not as focused on social and emotional needs due to all the changes.

Will need some time to transition into new assignments.

### **What Can Parents Do Now?**

Ensure you have at least one working device and WiFi for remote learning. Contact administration if you need to request either.

Ensure access to all communication tools such as:

- MYSTUDENTNYC - <https://mystudent.nyc/>
- MYSCHOOLS - [www.myschools.nyc](http://www.myschools.nyc)
- ROBOCALLS -parents can call school office to verify their information is registered to receive this
- PA SLACK - <http://bit.ly/ps24pa-slack>
- PA EBLAST - <http://bit.ly/ps24pa-eblast>
- Updated Blue Emergency Cards - [Digital Blue Card Form](#)

Request any supplies/resources from your current teacher or school.

#### Assumptions/Conditions:

- Plans discussed will be aligned with DOE guidance
  - Mandate may differ
- We will know the time frame of any school closure
  - Time frame may not be clear

#### Guarantees/ Promises:

- Goal is for in-person instruction 5 days a week in a happy and safe environment.
- Staff is committed to provide the best support for your children regardless of platform.
- Will continue to provide information as soon as it is provided.
- Will work with community as partners in the best interest of our children in a positive light. We will get through these hard times by focusing on what is working with our unbelievable parent community and staff. We will continue to be successful and persevere.

## Questions

Moderated by Missy Adriaola, Corresponding Secretary

1. What is the status for all reading and math assessments?

Schwartz: Math assessments are ongoing. Normally diagnostics are done in September but this year everything was delayed due to the focus being on social and emotional well being in place as a priority. Teachers were concerned about assessing remotely with possible inaccurate results. Training is being done next week on how to do a remote running record. Apologize for the delay but do not want to waste anyone's time with invalid grading information.

2. Currently there have been concerns with inconsistency with services being met, or even held at all, with the hybrid model, so if we go 100% remote, how will kids with services on their IEP be handled? PT/OT/Speech, etc...

Schwartz: Please inform us of any concerns or complaints so that we may find a solution. Try to be specific so we determine if it is an isolated incident or not. If we go remote we would continue to provide services according to the guidance of the DOE remains the same, albeit not guaranteed. Take services, IEP etc., very seriously and if students are not getting the services we want to know about it.

3. Parents don't understand what a teacher's schedule looks like. Can you briefly explain their schedule for both 100% remote and hybrid?

Maier: (On behalf of remote teachers)

Normal day –

(Depends on grade and according to guidelines set by DOE on 8/26 referring to how many minutes a student should have live instruction.)

8:00am – 8:30am is collaborative planning time which is not enough and asked SLT for more time.

8:30am is morning meeting, consisting of a mandated social/emotional activity check-in.

Next is a 30-minute lesson for the whole class.

After lesson, children have independent work while I meet with small groups independently for 20 minutes at a time.

A small amount of time for independent reading, and teacher meet is open for any questions before lunch.

Teacher is consistently on the computer.

Instructional lunch for kids.

12:30 - whole class lesson followed by small group meetings again.

Teacher can structure it and switch the schedule around. Parents may not be aware, but the feedback is also being given on the work during small group meetings. In normal school setting teacher would walk around and give feedback on work to student directly during class as a verbal instruction or exercise.

2pm - 2:20pm starts office hours and parent meetings. Teachers cannot respond to email until office hours and have 24 hours to respond.

2:20pm – 2:50pm is prep time for teachers. DOE uses this time to clean the building and teachers can leave to start their prep.

Asynchronous instruction must also be posted on the classroom. All must be planned by the teacher, with very little planning time allocated. Many teachers are doing planning on their own time and burning out.

DOE Live Instruction Guidelines:

Kindergarten currently 80 – 90 minutes, 120 minutes in January/February

1<sup>st</sup> Grade currently 90 – 100 minutes, 120 minutes in January/February

2<sup>nd</sup> grade currently 95 – 110 minutes, 130 minutes in January/February

3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade currently 100 – 150 minutes, 150 – 200 for remainder of year

Teachers also have instructional lunch for 30 minutes. Consistently planning and collaborating to get materials and convert them to virtual settings. Teacher are teaching 3<sup>rd</sup> graders how to change font settings etc. It is incredible what is being asked of students and of teachers.

Schwartz: If child is on for two hours, it does not mean teacher is on for that amount of time as well. Teachers need to assign the asynchronous work, so they pull the small groups and assess the students. Most teachers are on almost all day. Most of the staff are almost parents and we all understand what you are going through.

Hybrid teachers schedule:

8 – 8:30am, working with remote teachers on collaborative planning. 20 minutes is not sufficient time to do any effective planning.

8:30am – instructional lunch, in the classroom teaching.

After lunch teachers are back in the classroom giving instruction until dismissal, according to the staggered dismissal.

2:00 – 2:20 office hours

2:20 – 2:50 transitional prep, where teachers are asked to be in their car so the building can be sanitized for the next day.

4. What is the policy for small group instruction? Is there a requirement to do so for a specific amount of time on a specific day? Can teachers themselves without permission from administration have these breakout groups or do they need to go through other channels to do so?

Schwartz: It is not administrative; it is good instruction. There is no mandate but there is an expectation. Small group instruction is a corner stone for good teaching.

Maher: Becomes difficult when there are small groups and not enough staff for supervision during instruction. It depends on who is in your classroom when it can be done.

5. How will Social & Emotional learning continue to be handled, and by whom? Some hybrid classes have shared they are not receiving it.

Schwartz: Sometimes the children do not understand the activity they are doing, i.e., a writing sample where children don't realize it is a social/emotional exercise. The vast majority is done during the beginning of the day to set the tone for the day. If a parent is concerned that it is not being done bring it up to the classroom teacher so he/she can explain how they are conducting the lesson. If it is still not addressed, please bring it to my attention so we can look into and make the teacher has the sufficient support if needed.

6. Parents are tired, frustrated and going through many emotions. What resources are out there for parents related to their own wellness?

Jen: On a good year I would say we need to collaborate and build community, which feels even more important this year. We are hoping, with the new board of the PA, to be able to pull together share resources and identifying skills we might share. Created Slack channel for that kind of exchange and collaborate, #resources on the Slack workspace. Dial-a-teacher by the UFT is a resource that offers homework help for parents from Monday through Thursday, 4 – 7pm, for K – 12 students. NY Project Hope is a helpful site that offers a space to talk about the stress we are all going through at this time of COVID. We will be gathering resources and sharing them with the community.

7. Specials are not working well, and many parents share their kids don't attend. With 100 kids on, it is very difficult for one teacher to manage. Kids continually interrupt the teacher, are not on mute and become a distraction where the other kids are not learning. How can we improve this?

Schwartz: When we discussed during the SLT two months ago, I stated I don't have the answer based up on the guidance provided. I welcome ideas from parents or committees where ideas can be contributed. We are all struggling with this issue. Would love to hear from parents on how we could make it better.

8. If we stay hybrid, what is the plan to get kids outside for recess on a consistent schedule? If a concern is that there is not enough staff to supervise, can parents volunteer to supervise as additional support?

Schwartz: We have a consistent schedule now submitted two weeks ago to ensure we maintain social distancing. Open to ideas on how to make it better but can't have multiple cohorts of children playing together.

Currently using both school yards but there are only so many periods in the day. Welcome the conversation at the SLT meeting.

9. If a child has to quarantine due to a recommendation by their physician, why cannot they not just join the remote schedule for 2 weeks? It seems unfair that kids will be marked absent when they are actually participating in all daily assignments. We are penalizing them for actually trying to keep this community safe. Can we change that policy?

Schwartz: We do not want to refer to the child as being penalized as attendance does not factor into grading or performance but I do understand as a parent it is unfair if your child is engaging online and still marked absent. Unfortunately, I do not have the authority to change that policy at this time.

10. What did the results show with the recent survey parents had to answer about choosing remote vs hybrid for the rest of the year? When will we have answers you can share?

Schwartz: There are only 21 parents that I know of going hybrid because the live document from the DOE is currently down. Hoping by end of the week to at least inform the 21 families I know of regarding their new assignment on 11/30 for in-person instruction. If there are any additional families, please inform the administration so we can account for your transition until I gain access to the DOE document.

11. Some parents have multiple children at the school and using different forms of technology. Is there a way to be more consistent so parents don't have to manage so many different types? Is it up to the teacher or is there a collaboration discussion?

Maher: It is the discretion of the teacher and teachers are already learning many different technology programs; it will be hard to learn yet another. The need for collaboration is understandable and, in that case, emails are a good tool.

Schwartz: If teachers had the correct amount of planning time it would be easier to collaborate on those best practices and resources.

12. Today was another round of random testing and it happened to be in Cohort A again. Any reason it was Cohort A? Do they just come when they come and do you have any say? Parents want to know why kids were tested again that were tested last time.

Schwartz: We get an email saying "We are coming on (blank) day" and we plan accordingly. I can't promise it will be another cohort but the next round is likely during the week of December 16<sup>th</sup>. Don't know the day they are coming until a few days prior. Only know what students they are pulling 24 – 48 hours prior to when they come.

13. With many parents out of work and many who are struggling to make ends meet, is there anything this community can do to assist? Meal trains, donation days, etc. What resources can we share? How can we help our community of parents?

Ms. Roth (Teacher): There is a refrigerator on Broadway and 240<sup>th</sup> street, by the end of the 1 subway line, that is stocked by people in the community for those in need.

Missy: There is a Facebook Group called Riverdale Buy Nothing where people are giving away clothing and supplies. Will send out more information.

14. Ink is expensive and not all parents have printers. Schwartz: Please reach out to your child's teacher and ask what materials can be sent home with child if we go remote. Will vary depending on grade. We are only allowed to gain access to the building and give out supplies according to the guidelines are given at the time.