

The Board of Education

Town of Brooklyn
119 Gorman Road
Brooklyn, CT 06234

Mae Lyons, Board Chair
Keith Atchinson, Secretary
Tana Jolley

Melissa Perkins-Banas, Vice-Chair
Justin Phaiah
Carolyn Hackbarth

Mission: The Brooklyn Schools will foster a drive for learning within each student to reach his/her greatest potential. To achieve this mission, the school will continually improve its educational programs and services to meet this community's expectations for a quality education for all.

The Brooklyn Board of Education held a special meeting on March 21, 2020 by teleconference. In attendance were Dr. Perkins-Banas, Mr. Atchinson, Mr. Phaiah, Mrs. Hackbarth, Mrs. Jolley joined at 3:17 p.m, and Mrs. Lyons joined at 3:23 p.m, Mrs. Buell, Superintendent, was also present.

1. Attendance, Establishment of a Quorum, Call to Order

Dr. Perkins-Banas called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

Each member present introduced themselves and their title since the meeting was being held by video on Zoom and being broadcast live on Facebook.

2. Discussion of Brooklyn Public School's response to COVID-19

- a. Waiver and Distance Learning

Mrs. Buell stated she applied for a 10 day waiver for distance learning approximately two weeks ago. Teachers prepared and distributed packets of work for all students. Students received the packets Thursday or Friday of last last week and have been working on them this week. The packets are to be completed by students and will be graded. The purpose of the waiver was to provide a supplemental school environment so we wouldn't have to make up the 10 days. The waiver was approved and the next day the Commissioner of Education closed all schools, which changed our status and the waiver was no longer needed. The 180 days of school have also been waived. Mrs. Buell has been getting guidance from the state and federal government. The latest guidance is that schools are currently closed through April 30, 2020 and will be reassessed as that date gets closer.

Mr. Atchinson asked about the 8th grade field trip to Washington, D.C. if that will be cancelled? Mrs. Buell stated that all field trips have been cancelled, including the 8th grade trip to Washington, D.C.

b. Transition to e-learning

Mrs. Buell explained that students have five more days of school work they currently have. This week, teachers will be working on transitioning to e-learning for the students. They will be using platforms they're currently using, Google Classroom, in addition to some electronic work that teachers will be sending students. Chromebooks were handed out earlier today at both schools to students that didn't have a device at home. Teachers have been doing shared learning with each other, as well as on their own.

Dr. Perkins-Banas asked if the district has been able to identify the students that may not have access to the internet or have they been given a card for temporary access? Mrs. Buell stated that teachers have reached out to families and there are about 50 families that the district is working with to try and get set up. Spectrum/Charter is offering free internet for 60 days. Parents have started getting access in their homes. Mrs. Buell has tried putting a hotspot on a school bus to go to locations with a hotspot, but it hasn't been successful. She has also looked into purchasing small hotspots from a different company that would be loaned out. They are on order right now. Best option for families is to connect with Spectrum.

Mrs. Jolley asked how e-learning will be implemented for the special education students that are outsourced? Mrs. Buell stated all of our students that are outplaced, all of those programs are closed as well. We are paying tuition to those districts to provide students with e-learning opportunities. There may be students that require different types of learning with special education instruction or intervention. Families have been getting multiple communications from teachers.

Mrs. Buell encourages parents to reach out to teachers and administration to let them know what's working, what's not working for their child. It's both challenging for teachers as well as for parents. Teachers may be doing mini video instructional lessons for students that they can engage in. The Engage NY program has video lessons. There is a techbook for science and social studies as well.

Everyone is learning as we go. All staff virtually met with students and we are making progress.

c. Food Services: National Lunch: Seamless Summer Meals Option

Mrs. Buell stated Heather Plourde, Director of Food and Hospitality Services for EASTCONN, implemented a plan to offer the meal program for our Brooklyn

students under the age of 18 feeding breakfast and lunch. Meals will be served 2 days a week on Monday (2 days of meals for Monday and Tuesday) and Wednesday (3 days of meals for Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday). The government has now extended that and the school can serve 7 meals per week. Meals are served on Monday (2 days of meals), Wednesday (2 days of meals), and Friday (3 days of meals) from 8-9 a.m. There are three serving locations: at the Brooklyn Middle School (behind the middle school at the loading dock), at the closed Sacred Heart Church on Wauregan Road, and at the Community Center on Tiffany Street. If families can't get to the three serving areas, Mrs Buell has been delivering meals to the families. The meals are free, part of a federal meal program.

Mrs. Buell will send out another school messenger in regards to letting families know that meals are for all students. She will post it again on Facebook and will also get it out to WINY radio as well.

Mrs. Buell wanted to recognize the Cafeteria employees that have been able to come in and work and prepare the meals for the students.

d. Wellness: students, families, staff

Mrs. Buell stated that she sent out a communication, it's also posted on the schools website and Facebook page, on Thursday in regards to Wellness. Staff were starting to look tired and stressed as well as families having added stress from everything going on. She asked that all staff turn off all devices at 6:00 p.m. to allow staff to have time for themselves and to stay healthy. It could be 24 hours or the next business day before staff gets back to parents if they email staff after 6:00 p.m.

Teachers have also gotten on Zoom to see students and students can see classmates since playdates aren't advisable right now.

e. Collaboration with local, state and national officials

Mrs Buell has been having communication with Mr. Ives, keeping each other informed and how it impacts Brooklyn Public Schools, and the Town of Brooklyn families and the community. There's a lot of collaboration at all levels. She's had conversations with other superintendents in the area. She's been invited to conference calls with state officials, the Commissioner of Education, and the Superintendents Network. Governor Lamont has led some of the conference calls as well. The federal government is looking at waivers for testing. If we happen to go back to school in May, the SBAC and SAT testing will be waived.

f. Staff Wages: Teachers, Paraprofessionals, Custodians, Secretaries, Nurses, Non-union Staff, Administrators

Mrs. Buell stated that when the 10 day waiver was approved it was contractual for each of the bargaining groups. She could continue to pay the teachers because they were continuing to work. She could pay the paraprofessionals so that they wouldn't have to make up the 10 days in June. Mrs. Buell has spoken to the Board's attorney. All staff salaries/hours are budgeted for already. The Board's attorney suggested entering into a MOU and pay the employees throughout the 180 days of their contract.

There was discussion about having paraprofessionals assisting teachers with curriculum. Mrs. Buell stated that she spoke with Mrs. Brown, Special Education Director, and she stated that there's a lot of paraprofessional training sessions that they can participate in. Paraprofessionals that are available have been volunteering with serving meals. Mrs. Buell will work on the MOU and get it out in the next week.

Nurses have been in the building a few times this past week. They will continue to be available to families as needed. They're still a resource to our families. Nurses also have a certain number of days in their contract, which takes them through June. Mrs. Buell feels it's appropriate to continue paying them under their contract. She has also been asking all staff to still enter their sick or personal time as needed.

Custodial staff have been working their regular scheduled hours. The "Stay Home Stay Safe" initiative, means non-essential workers are to stay home. What is essential for the school? We still need to pay bills, pay employees, and that the buildings are maintained. Since moving to e-learning, she asked teachers to gather their teaching materials. The fewer people in the building, the better. She will be putting secretaries on a rotating schedule so they're working on a different schedule and not all in on the same day. She believes it's better to have custodians stay home, but be on a rotating schedule and still be paid.

Mrs Lyons was wondering if there is anything outside that the custodians could tend to that they don't normally have time for? Mrs Buell stated that they've been disinfecting areas that haven't been able to get to. There are some outdoor projects that could be worked on.

The new Business Manager, Stephanie Levin, will be starting on Monday. Also, we no longer have an Interim Assistant Principal.

Mrs. Buell has asked Administrators at both BMS and BES to not come in. They have taken materials home and will be working from home. Mrs. Brown, Director of Special Education, will be staying home as well. Initially PPTs were going to happen during this time, but from guidance from the state and federal government that has been put on hold. Mrs. Watson, Special Education Secretary, is retiring at

the end of this year. She will be in the building when the other secretaries aren't in, since they work in the same area.

Mrs. Buell appreciates the decisions that the Board has made for the employees. She knows that all employees are waiting to hear from them on what the decisions are going to be. Mrs. Buell will move forward and to take care of the MOU's that will meet their contract and finish out the year with them.

g. Bills:

i. Tuitions

Mrs. Buell stated the direction from the state on out of district programs that we are already paying for are offering e-learning that we're also doing for Brooklyn students. We will need to continue paying for these services. High schools are educating our students as well, we need to continue paying the tuition.

ii. Buses

Mrs. Buell spoke with the Director from M&J and their concern is losing their employees if they're not getting paid. They have laid off their employees. He would bring them back if we pay the base of our bus contract and M&J will pay the drivers their minimum hours. All superintendents are having the same discussion. We have a contract for our school year. Mrs. Buell believes the right thing to do is to honor the contract. If we pay, drivers need to be taken off of unemployment. We will pay the daily rate for the 15 buses, no mid-day runs, no extra runs, no bus paras. The Board agrees that we need to continue paying the bus contract.

iii. Fuel

The fuel company wants us to continue to pay for the fuel that we agreed to buy. We may have a surcharge, Mrs. Buell doesn't want to pay for fuel that we won't be using. A storage fee or surcharge is all that Mrs. Buell feels we should be paying. She may need to get the attorney involved.

h. Return to school

As discussed earlier, Mrs. Buell stated we will be out of school through April 30, 2020 and will reassess and monitor with state officials.

i. Grading and report cards

The elementary school is sending home progress reports this week for the last trimester. The middle school just finished third quarter and will be beginning fourth quarter. As we enter into e-learning, discussions have been around what it'll look like for grading and how the packets would be getting graded that have already gone home. Mrs Buell stated she doesn't want parents dropping off packets and she doesn't want the teachers handling materials. Some samples will be collected from students by using the camera on the chromebook and submit it to the teacher through Google Classroom. Once we transition to e-learning and using Google Classroom more, grading will be easier. Electronic work is easier for the teachers. We may move to a pass/fail option for the last period of the school year.

Mrs. Jolley wondered how parents that are working are expected to be working with the students on their school work? Mrs. Buell stated that instruction will be pre-recorded where students observe or participate in a lesson anytime, teacher video lessons. She doesn't want to have students sitting for six hours doing work everyday. We want them getting physical activity.

Mrs. Jolley wondered about e-learning and pass/fail. If both parents are working due to being essential employees, how do they get a day's worth of learning that's structured? When it comes to pass/fail, if you have students in that situation, what are some of the accommodations that might be in place to help them access e-learning at a later hour at night? Mrs. Buell stated they've spoken about some of the students or families that might need different learning opportunities. Teachers won't be available to teach after hours, but will have some of the teacher instruction pre-recorded so that students will be able to review the lessons anytime. Students will be able to access the teacher videos through Google Classroom or other platforms.

j. Field trips, School Play, Promotion Ceremony

Mrs. Buell stated that all field trips have been cancelled. She stated we would love to have the school play. If we come back to school, the play may be rescheduled. There might be the possibility of doing some sort of e-performance.

Mrs. Buell stated that the last day of school was scheduled for June 19, 2020, due to us not being in school on April 28, 2020 because of the election. We can have e-school on April 28, 2020 now. Our last day of school will be June 18, 2020. Promotion ceremony will tentatively be scheduled for June 17, 2020 with caps and gowns, and certificates. If we aren't in school, we can send everything home and have families take pictures and have a virtual promotion. We will always try to do what is best for our students.

Mrs. Buell appreciates everyone's support and being available for a Saturday.

3. Calendar: Next scheduled meetings:

a. Budget workshop 3/25 6:00PM

We will plan to hold the meeting the same way as today on Wednesday, March 25, 2020. Mrs. Buell stated she's still working on a few questions that the community had asked after the last budget meeting.

b. Board Regular Meeting 3/25 7:00PM

We will plan to hold the meeting the same as today on Wednesday, March 25, 2020.

c. Presentation of Budget to the Board of Finance, canceled

Mrs. Buell stated that the budget approval process has been pushed out. Our budget presentation to the Board of Finance is no longer on April 1, 2020.

4. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 4:40 p.m.

(Jolley/Perkins-Banas)

No discussion, unanimous vote to approve

Thank you to the community of Brooklyn for supporting each other during this unusual time!

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna L. DiBenedetto

Donna L. DiBenedetto

Board Clerk