



NORTHSHORE EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

Board of Directors Minutes August 5, 2020 8:00 a.m.

This Open Meeting of the NEC Board of Directors was conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020, due to current State of Emergency in the Commonwealth related to the outbreak of the COVID19 Virus. The Meeting was recorded.

PRESENT:	Beverly:	Dr. Charochak
	Danvers:	Dr. Dana
	Ipswich:	Dr. Blake
	Lynnfield:	Ms. Vogel
	Manchester-Essex:	Ms. Beaudoin
	Marblehead:	Dr. John Buckey
	North Reading:	Dr. Daly
	Peabody:	Dr. Vadala
	Pentucket:	Dr. Bartholomew
	Rockport:	Mr. Liebow
	Triton:	Mr. Forget
Tri-Town:	Dr. Morrison	
NEC:	F. Rosenberg	G. Bergevin
	Ms. Mahoney	K. Mahoney, NEC Treasurer
	E. Ford , AFT	
ABSENT:	Gloucester:	Mr. Lummis
	Hamilton Wenham:	Ms. Banios
	Lynn:	Dr. Tutwiler
	Masconomet:	Dr. Harvey
	Nahant:	Dr. Pierantozzi
	Reading:	Dr. Doherty
	Salem:	Dr. Zrike
	Swampscott:	Ms. Angelakis

- I. **Call to Order:** Dr. Morrison called the meeting to order at 8:05 and stated that the Open Meeting of the NEC Board of Directors was being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020, due to the current State of Emergency in the Commonwealth related to the outbreak of the COVID19 Virus. Dr. Morrison asked that Kathy Mahoney call the roll in order to record who was in attendance. Roll call was done with 11 members present
- II. **Official Welcome to Pentucket Regional-** Dr. Morrison welcomed Pentucket Regional, now an official member of the Northshore Education Consortium as of July 1, 2020

- III. Discussion of NEC Plan for School Reopening-** Ms. Rosenberg stated that she was working to finalize a plan to submit to DESE by August 10, 2020. This plan requires Board Approval. Ms. Rosenberg shared a PPT with key points summarizing the results of the NEC Feasibility Study and her proposed plan for a hybrid model. Since all of our students are “high needs” it is a priority to maximize in-person instruction even if many districts are starting with remote learning. We will need a remote learning option, with individual remote learning plans, for those who request it, and as a “backup” option. Many of our students, particularly at KOG, will be unable to adhere to masks and distancing, so we will need to provide extra protections for the staff working with those students. The PPT is attached.

Ms. Rosenberg shared a letter from the AFT Local stating their concerns and a “strong recommendation” to begin the year with fully remote learning.

Ms. Rosenberg stated that the school calendar would be adjusted according to the new DESE directive for 170 rather than 180 student days, in order to allow for 10 days of staff orientation. She is suggesting that NEC “bank” five originally planned PD days in case we need to switch back to fully remote learning and update learning plans mid-year. Annual tuitions would remain the same. Daily rate would change as annual tuition would be divided by 170 rather than 180 student days. She asked for Board support on this plan, and Board Members expressed no concern.

In summary, Ms. Rosenberg’s recommendation was for an In-Person with Modified Day/ Hybrid Model and provides a version of the Hybrid Model that would involve most students attending five days per week for an abbreviated school day, supplemented by remote learning. Probable exception for RHS due to unique transportation and physical space issues. Might need two cohorts of students in order to provide transportation plus more robust remote learning component. This model is currently working well for their summer session.

At this time, Ms. Rosenberg opened the meeting to discussion or questions/concerns regarding re-opening plan. None were raised. Dr. Morrison stated that plan seems pretty straight forward and in line with the updates that Ms. Rosenberg has provided throughout the past several months. Members of the Board agreed.

MOTION: A motion was made by Ms. Beaudoin and seconded by Dr. Bartholomew to approve the Draft Plan presented by the Executive Director, with the understanding that further changes that may arise in the coming weeks. Roll call was done with 12 members remotely present (Dr. Vadala- Peabody joined meeting at 8:16)

VOTE: The motion was moved unanimously

- IV. Reminder of New Board Member Orientation on August 19-** Ms. Rosenberg will send agenda and ZOOM invitation next week
- V. Other Business –** Executive Director Evaluation will be held for September Board Meeting. Dr. Dana will coordinate with Ms. Rosenberg.

VI. Adjournment

MOTION: A motion was made by Mr. Forget and seconded by Dr. Blake to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 am Roll call was done with 12 members remotely present

VOTE: The motion was moved unanimously



Kathy Mahoney, Administrative Assistant to Executive Director



Francine Rosenberg, NEC Executive Director

School Reopening Plan: Draft as of July 25

Dear NEC Families, Employees, and Districts;

Thank you for your prompt responses to last week's survey, and for expressing your confidence in us! We are working hard to have as many students return to school as soon as possible, but there are many challenges to making sure that we can do so safely!

Please remember that nothing is final yet, but we wanted to be able to answer some of the important questions that you have raised. As you will see in the Timeline below, we hope to have a final, DESE and Board Approved plan in place by mid-August.

This document is intended to give you an update on the following:

- 1) Timeline and Process for Decision Making
- 2) Recommended Plan given the data we have today
- 3) What will the New Normal Look Like? Protocols that Will Be in Place for All In-Person Programming (based on Guidance and Public Health Recommendations as of July 25th)

Timeline and Process

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has asked all Districts and Collaboratives to submit a preliminary re-opening plan by July 31 that describes the feasibility of whether we can return to full in-person instruction in a safe manner. If we don't think it is possible to return to full in-person instruction right away, we are also required to describe a "hybrid" model, and what the plan for "remote learning" would look like.

Between July 31 and August 10, we will be finalizing this plan based on DESE guidance, any changes in public health recommendations and what we learn from our Summer Program. We will then be discussing our proposed plan with our Union and seeking approval from the Board of Directors.

My hope is that all of these steps will be complete by August 14th, and I will be able to give you a clearer and more definitive calendar and plan.

My Current Recommendations

My current recommendations are based on the work that has been done by our Leadership Team and Staff Working Groups, our feasibility study, extensive reading of guidance documents, meeting with Superintendents and Special Education Directors, and surveys of staff and parents/guardians.

All of the experts agree that getting "high needs" students back to school as fully and as quickly as possible is the priority, as long as we can do so safely. 87% of our staff members and 80% of our families who responded to recent surveys state that they are prepared for full time return in September, assuming that all safety procedures are in place.

Although it will be extremely challenging, and school will look quite different than it usually does, I am confident that we can meet all of the requirements as described in the next section. We have sufficient space, staffing, and expertise to make this work. We will need to "let go" of some of our favorite activities and practices, and some of our goals and priorities will have to be different for this school year,

but I believe that we can succeed in getting our students back safely as long as the public health situation in Massachusetts remains stable.

Therefore, at this time, I am leaning toward the following recommendation:

- Extend staff orientation to allow us to set up classrooms and provide training on new procedures.
- All students return to in-person instruction on or around September 8th. It is likely that we will have a phased approach, and that for the month of September we would have shorter school days, four day weeks of school with Fridays for cleaning and professional development/team planning time, or a staggered entry to allow everyone to adapt to the “new normal.”
- Parents who are able to transport their students would be encouraged to do so.
- Parents who feel that it is not safe for their students to return due to family health concerns, will be able to request a continuation of Remote Learning.
- If there is a spike in cases and we need to close school temporarily, or if any individual students are exposed to Covid19 and need to self-isolate, we will revert to Remote Learning for as long as necessary.

Please remember that this is not a final plan, it is my “best guess” based on current data and recommendations.

What will the new normal look like?

Medical experts are clear that although some parts of the country are still at high risk, right now, the situation in Massachusetts is stable enough for reopening. The key to safe reopening is a combination of these four elements.

- Distancing
- Face Covering
- Hand Hygiene
- Staying Home if Sick

Experts are consistently stating that even if 100% of students are unable to wear face coverings, and even if 6 feet of distance cannot be maintained at every minute of the day.....having a combination of these four elements in place as much as possible eliminates most of the risk. Keeping students in smaller cohorts, reducing shared materials, opening windows, and cleaning high touch surfaces frequently reduce the risk even further.

I am providing some of the specifics here, in a very simplified form, to answer the most common questions that I have heard from parents and staff. Most of the procedures described below are already in place for ESY, and we will be “fine tuning” and updating them before September. MUCH more detail will be forthcoming and/or can be read on the DESE website at:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/return-to-school/>

Physical Distancing, “Cohorting” and Use of Space

- All of our classrooms are being cleaned out and reconfigured to allow for 6 feet of space between students.

- Daily schedules are being modified to keep students in fewer spaces and interacting with fewer people.
- Teachers and specialists are thinking about how to redesign curriculum and instruction to avoid close physical interaction.
- Therapy services might be delivered on different schedules and in different spaces to keep people in smaller “cohorts.” This might also require some reassignments of which staff work with which students.
- Lunch will be eaten in classrooms or outside. Staff will be encouraged to take their lunch breaks outside or to “spread out” in unused spaces and not congregate.
- Some items that are difficult to clean (i.e. bean bags) will be removed from use temporarily.
- Students will have individual school supplies, sensory items, etc. in order to reduce the number of shared items.
- All HVAC systems have been inspected and filters changed. Some sites have new or additional air purification systems.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

- We have hired three additional custodians to help implement more frequent cleaning and sanitizing in all buildings. Buildings and outdoor playground equipment will be cleaned daily. Bathrooms and high touch areas will be cleaned more frequently throughout the day.
- We are well stocked with soap, hand sanitizer, and safe cleaning products.
- Regular hand washing and sanitizing will be built into daily routines.

Masks, Face Coverings, and PPE

- All staff will be required to wear face coverings at all times except while eating and/or for limited “mask breaks” when 6 feet of distance can be assured.
- All students who are medically able, will be required to wear face coverings at all times except while eating or during designated “mask breaks” when 6 feet of distance can be assured. Mask breaks will be built into the schedule. Students who are having difficulty with masks will be offered options of different types of masks, bandanas, gaiters, or in rare case face shields.
- We have ordered special “clear” masks for staff who are working with students who have communication challenges and those who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- We have face shields, gowns, and gloves for all staff who need to be in close proximity to students for therapy services, behavioral support, feeding, toileting, etc.
- We have additional medical-grade masks and PPE for our nurses.

Screening, Symptom Checks and Exposures

- State guidance at this time does not require temperature checks in school and does not mandate testing for those without symptoms or known exposures.
- All staff and parents/guardians will need to sign an agreement to check for symptoms daily and to stay home if any symptoms are present. In addition, they will be asked to comply with the new MA travel advisories.
- We have received detailed guidance from DESE and will have clear protocols in place about how to respond if someone shows symptoms while at school and/or reports that they tested positive

or have been exposed to Covid19. This guidance includes a commitment from parents to pick up children who are ill, a “medical waiting room” in each building for the purpose of isolating anyone who appears ill, and clear protocols about contact tracing and when a classroom or building may need to be temporarily closed. While we cannot guarantee that all individuals will refrain from high risk behaviors outside of school, following the rules of face covering and distancing should provide protection.

Other

- Guests and visitors will not be allowed in the buildings.
- Repairmen or essential workers will need to follow all NEC protocols including face covering and hand sanitizing before they can enter the building.
- Most staff meetings, IEP meetings, professional development sessions, etc. will take place remotely. Any gathering of more than 20 people in a room will be prohibited.
- Student jobs and internships and community experiences will be evaluated on a case by case basis.
- Field trips will be prohibited.
- Home services will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

Although all of these new protocols will change the way we do things, I am confident that we will be able to keep everybody as safe as possible as we balance the risks of prolonged school closure with the risks of reentry.

My hope is to be able to provide you with a final plan and revised calendar by August 14th.

Thank you for your confidence and support,

Fran Rosenberg

Executive Director

NOTE:

For those who would like more detailed information, please see the attached documents, most of which are on the DESE website:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/return-to-school/>

[DESE Return to School Guidance](#)

[Protocols for Exposure Scenarios.docx](#)

[DESE Special Education Guidance.docx](#)

[DESE Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations Guidance.pdf](#)

[Video from Doctors on School Reopening in MA](#)