



PATCHOGUE MEDFORD CONGRESS OF TEACHERS



DEAR COLLEAGUES,

I HOPE YOU HAVE ENJOYED THE BEGINNING OF SUMMER VACATION. AS SCHOOL ENDED, THE DISTRICT SHIFTED GEARS TO BEGIN PROPOSING POSSIBLE WAYS TO RE-OPEN OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT. THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO ARE REQUIRING EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE STATE TO SUBMIT A PLAN ON WHAT THE RE-OPENING OF SCHOOL WOULD LOOK LIKE. THIS IS DUE TO THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT ON JULY 31, 2020. THIS MORNING, THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT RELEASED THEIR PLANS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR THE RE-OPENING OF SCHOOL. AT FIRST GLANCE, THE DOCUMENT HAS GUIDELINES THAT ARE STRONGER THAN SOME OF THE C.D.C. GUIDELINES. I AM SURE YOU'VE HEARD BY NOW THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS SUGGESTED RE-OPENING SCHOOLS COMPLETELY, AND HAS EVEN THREATENED TO REMOVE FEDERAL FUNDING IF THIS DOES NOT OCCUR. GOVERNOR CUOMO HAS STATED THE OPPOSITE... THAT SCHOOLS WILL RE-OPEN WHEN IT IS SAFE TO RE-OPEN THEM AND HE HAS EVEN RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THAT THIS MAY BE DONE BY REGIONS WITHIN THE STATE. HE HAS ALSO STATED THAT HE WILL HAVE A DECISION BY AUGUST 7, 2020.

THE DISTRICT HAS BEEN EXAMINING THE C.D.C.'S GUIDELINES FOR RETURNING TO SCHOOL. THEY WILL NOW NEED TO EXAMINE THE S.E.D. GUIDANCE. IT'S NOT GOING TO BE AN EASY TASK TO BRING APPROXIMATELY 7,500 STUDENTS BACK INTO THE DISTRICT, WHILE MAINTAINING A SOCIAL DISTANCE OF SIX FEET, ALONG WITH LIMITED AVAILABILITY ON SCHOOL BUSES. TO THAT END, THE DISTRICT HAS PULLED TOGETHER A TEAM TO DISCUSS RE-OPENING. CHRIS ANGELORA AND I REPRESENT ALL OF PMCT ON THIS COMMITTEE. THERE ARE ALSO SEVERAL SUB-COMMITTEES, WHICH MANY OF OUR MEMBERS ARE GIVING UP THEIR TIME TO SIT ON.

THE COMMITTEES AND MEMBERS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:

ALEXANDRA TUZZA, SANDRA KAISER, LORI STRATTON, GIOIA SCHARF & MARIA FILOSA

SECONDARY EDUCATION:

CATHERINE DAVIS, LAURA KLEIN, SHAUN DAUGHERTY, ELIZABETH MANNING & KATIE SORICELLI

SPECIAL EDUCATION / SEL:

DEBBIE RAMOS-RUDIGER, CAROLYN WALSH, ALICIA FUGGETTA, SUSANNE MCGOVERN,
PATRICK LEGGE, NANCY MEYER & NANCY GOLDFADER

OPERATIONS / HEALTH AND SAFETY:

TIM RITTER

ATHLETICS:

JEFF HANSEN & STEVE COLE

MUSIC AND ART:

AMY CUNNINGHAM, BRIAN REICH, RUDY JOHNSON, MIKE SCHOLZ & THOMAS CARROLL

I AM VERY APPRECIATIVE OF THESE MEMBERS GIVING UP A GREAT DEAL OF THEIR VACATION TIME TO SHARE THE VOICE OF OUR MEMBERSHIP AS WE DISCUSS IDEAS ON WHAT RE-OPENING COULD LOOK LIKE.

HERE IS WHAT I CAN TELL YOU SO FAR... PATCHOGUE-MEDFORD IS LOOKING AT THREE DIFFERENT SCENARIOS, THE FIRST BEING THE FULL RETURN TO SCHOOL, WHICH IS WHAT WE WOULD NORMALLY DO AND I BELIEVE WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE TEACHING AND WE'RE PREPARED FOR THAT TYPICAL RE-OPENING.

THE OTHER TWO SCENARIOS ARE WHAT DISTANCE LEARNING WOULD LOOK LIKE IF WE WERE TO REMAIN CLOSED. SIMILAR TO LAST YEAR, THE SPECIFICS OF A DISTANCE LEARNING PLAN WOULD NEED TO BE NEGOTIATED. WE WILL NEED TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS TO LAST YEAR'S PLAN. PARENT GROUPS ARE POPPING UP EXPRESSING THEIR FRUSTRATION WITH DISTANCE LEARNING, AND WE ALSO EXPERIENCED OUR OWN FRUSTRATIONS WITH DISTANCE LEARNING (AND THE DISTRICT'S GRADING POLICY).

FINALLY, THE SCENARIO THAT YOU'RE SEEING ARISE ACROSS THE COUNTRY IS A "HYBRID" MODEL, WHERE A PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WOULD RETURN TO SCHOOL EACH DAY. AS EXPLAINED AFTER THE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING ON LAST MONDAY EVENING, IT WAS DISCUSSED THAT PMSD'S HYBRID MODEL COULD LOOK LIKE THIS:

ELEMENTARY: STUDENTS ATTEND EITHER MONDAY/THURSDAY OR TUESDAY/FRIDAY. LEAVING WEDNESDAY AS A DISTANCE LEARNING DAY / DAY FOR A DEEPER CLEANING OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES. THE FINAL DETAILS OF THIS ARE STILL BEING EXPLORED. EACH DAY NEW CHALLENGES ARISE AND ARE WORKED OUT.

MIDDLE SCHOOL: STUDENTS WOULD ATTEND EITHER MONDAY/THURSDAY OR TUESDAY/FRIDAY. WEDNESDAY WOULD BE A DISTANCE LEARNING DAY SIMILAR TO ELEMENTARY. STUDENTS WOULD ONLY ATTEND FOR FIVE PERIODS A DAY. THE PERIODS MAY BE LONGER THAN THE TYPICAL DAY WE ARE USED TO. A TEAMING MODEL WOULD BE PUT IN PLACE, AND CLASSROOM TEACHERS WOULD TRAVEL RATHER THAN THE STUDENTS. AGAIN, THIS IS JUST AN IDEA AT THIS POINT, THEY'RE WORKING TO DETERMINE IF THIS CAN BE PUT INTO PLACE.

HIGH SCHOOL: THERE ARE TWO MODELS BEING CONSIDERED, A SIX-PERIOD DAY MODEL WHERE THE STUDENTS COME IN MONDAY/THURSDAY OR TUESDAY/FRIDAY. THE SECOND MODEL IS ONE WHERE THE STUDENTS ATTEND ON AN AM/PM SESSION, IN ADDITION TO THE MONDAY/THURSDAY OR TUESDAY/FRIDAY MODEL. AGAIN, THESE ARE IDEAS AND THE DISTRICT HAS NOT SOLIDIFIED WHICH ROUTE WOULD BE MORE FEASIBLE.

ALL COURSES THAT THE STUDENTS DO NOT RECEIVE IN PERSON, WOULD NEED TO BE CONDUCTED VIA DISTANCE LEARNING. AS YOU CAN SEE, THESE IDEAS DON'T HAVE CONCRETE PLANS; THEREFORE, WE ARE AT THE BEGINNING STAGES OF NEGOTIATING THE TERMS OF THE DISTANCE LEARNING PLAN / HYBRID PLAN. AS THE DISTRICT EXPLORES THESE PLANS AND DETERMINES IF THEY ARE VIABLE, CHRIS AND I WILL BE NEGOTIATING THE PARAMETERS OF OUR WORK DAY WITH THE DISTRICT. WE WILL BE LOOKING HOW OUR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT NEEDS TO BE MODIFIED TO MEET THE DISTANCE LEARNING NEEDS, WHILE UPHOLDING ALL ASPECTS OF OUR NEGOTIATED SALARY AND BENEFITS.

AT THIS TIME, I'M SHARING THIS INFORMATION WITH YOU, SO THAT YOU CAN BEGIN TO PREPARE FOR WHAT NEXT YEAR MAY LOOK LIKE. IN SOME INSTANCES, IT MAY MEAN RETURNING TO WORK, WHILE YOUR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN ARE NOT REQUIRED TO BE IN THEIR OWN SCHOOL. IT WILL REQUIRE OUR MEMBERSHIP AND THE STUDENTS TO WEAR A MASK / FACE SHIELD ALL DAY. IT WILL ALSO REQUIRE OUR FLEXIBILITY, BECAUSE WE MAY BE SHIFTING FROM ONE PLAN TO ANOTHER THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR. FOR EXAMPLE, WE COULD RETURN TO SCHOOL IN THE HYBRID MODEL, END UP IN A DISTANCE LEARNING SITUATION IF THERE IS A SPIKE IN POSITIVE CASES AND MAYBE, IF WE'RE LUCKY, THE WORLD WILL RETURN TO NORMAL AND WE'LL ALL BE IN THE BUILDING TOGETHER BY THE END OF THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR.

THE DISTRICT WILL BE CONDUCTING ITS OWN SURVEY OF THE FACULTY AND STAFF. THE GOAL OF THIS SURVEY IS TO FIND OUT HOW MANY OF OUR MEMBERS HAVE COMPROMISED IMMUNE SYSTEMS AND MAY NOT BE ABLE TO RETURN TO THE BUILDING. THEY'RE ALSO SEEKING THE INFORMATION OF HOW MANY OF OUR MEMBERS ARE UNABLE TO FIND CHILDCARE. I WOULD LIKE TO BRING TO YOUR ATTENTION THE FAMILIES FIRST CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE ACT (SEE THE LINK BELOW). THIS MAY AFFORD YOU SOME RELIEF IF NEEDED, BUT THERE IS A LARGE DISCREPANCY BETWEEN OUR DAILY RATE OF PAY AND THE MAXIMUM BENEFIT UNDER THAT FFCRA.

[HTTPS://WWW.DOL.GOV/AGENCIES/WHD/PANDEMIC/FFCRA-EMPLOYER-PAID-LEAVE](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employer-paid-leave)

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I VOW TO UPDATE YOU AS SOON AS I HAVE MORE ACCURATE INFORMATION TO SHARE. FOR NOW, IF YOU HAVE SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN, I ASK THAT YOU CONSIDER EXPLORING CHILDCARE OPTIONS. IF YOU HAVE HEALTH CONDITIONS THAT PUT YOU IN A HIGHER RISK THAN OTHERS, CONSIDER CONSULTING YOUR PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN TO SEEK ADVICE. MOST IMPORTANTLY, ANSWER THE DISTRICT'S SURVEY HONESTLY, SO THAT WE CAN MAKE THE BEST ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALL OF OUR MEMBERS.

PLEASE KNOW THAT THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF OUR MEMBERS, REMAINS OUR TOP PRIORITY. WE WILL DO EVERYTHING WITHIN OUR POWER TO ASSURE THAT OUR WORKING ENVIRONMENT IS CLEAN AND SAFE TO WORK IN.

IN SOLIDARITY,

KEVIN