

March 16, 2021 3:00 p.m.

[Zoom Meeting Video](#) \*: 31 Committee Members/84 Attendees

\*Due to technical difficulties the above Zoom recording starts about 7 minutes into the meeting. See Summaries below for Superintendent Wolfstrom's presentation during the first 7 minutes.

## Summary

The Administrators have been able to explore new options for increasing in-person learning following the recent increase to indoor capacity limits, ventilation upgrades at all three schools and prioritization of staff vaccines. Options under consideration include adding alternating Wednesday morning instruction for existing cohorts, offering split sessions for Pond Cove and CEMS, and bringing current hybrid students back full-time with 3 ft. distancing in classrooms and 6 ft. distancing while eating. Returning full-time with 3 ft. spacing would still present logistical challenges with furniture, transportation, arrival and dismissal, and cleaning/sanitization. The team discussed a recent Harvard study which did not find an increase in transmission between 3 ft. and 6 ft. distancing in schools, and the importance of staying on top of current data and letting the science guide decision making.

[Link to Meeting Materials](#)

## Full Meeting Notes

The purpose of the Committee will be to work collaboratively to develop a plan to present to the School Board as a recommendation for working toward increasing the time our students spend in in-school learning, while maintaining our 100% remote learning program for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year and supporting the following three goals:

1. Safety of students and staff
2. Student learning: assessment and equity
3. Social and emotional well-being of students and staff

## Committee Meeting Schedule:

March 16, 2021	3-4PM
March 30, 2021	3-4 PM
April 6, 2021	3-4 PM
April 13, 2021	3-4 PM

Introduction from Donna -not included in Zoom recording, summary and notes are below.

We are all on the same team, we all want what's best for students, we are all committed to their safety and health, and we all want them back in our schools as much as possible.

Three major factors have influenced the school department's recent work:

1. Increased Indoor Capacity

- On March 5 the Governor announced that the indoor gathering capacity will increase from 50 people to 50% capacity as of March 26th, and in May 24th, will increase to 75% capacity
- Schools are still under the 6 ft. distancing requirement for eating, and 3 ft. distancing requirement for children in classrooms
- The requirement is 6 ft. distancing for adults and between students and adults
- The capacity change allows us to serve more students in gyms in cafeterias:
  - +24 in PC Cafeteria
  - +100 in CEMS Gym
- This means we won't need to meet 6 ft. requirements in classrooms because students won't be eating in classrooms

2. Ventilation

- Prior to COVID, our Facilities Needs Assessment Report determined "safe" capacity was less than a full classroom of students
- We used over \$600K of COVID funding for ventilation updates
- Updates are complete at PC/CEMS and CEHS will be complete around Spring Break

3. Staff Vaccinations - Update from Karen Jenkins, CEHS Nurse - Zoom Recording starts here.

- Teachers and other school staff have been prioritized for appointments
- The Pfizer vaccine requires 3 weeks between doses + 2 weeks for full effectiveness
- The Moderna vaccine requires 4 weeks between doses + 2 week for full effectiveness
- With this timeline, people receiving vaccines now will not be fully vaccinated until the end of April
- Vaccines help with quarantine requirements and travel restrictions. Close contacts won't need to quarantine if they have been vaccinated
- Even with vaccinations, masks and distancing requirements are still in place
- Vaccines increase staff comfort level and safety
- School staff members, including bus drivers, custodians, and substitute teachers are eligible to be vaccinated
- Only one vaccine is currently approved for people as young as 16, and that group is not likely to be vaccinated until late spring
- The transmission risk for vaccinated individuals is still under research

Three possible scenarios for increasing in-class learning time:

**1. Bring students back on Wednesday mornings in alternate cohorts**

**Benefit:** This would result in four additional half-days per cohort.

**Challenges:**

- Reduction in student support for Wednesdays
- Reduction in time for Special Ed Evaluations
- Requires a change to remote meal distribution schedule

**2. Split sessions for CEMS and Pond Cove, and possibly CEHS**

**Example:** CEMS would occupy both buildings for morning session and PC would occupy both buildings for afternoon session.

**Benefit:** Students could return to school full-time

**Challenges:**

- Serving food (might need serve bag lunches to go)
- Would need to divide CEHS students if splitting HS day
- Sport schedules (CEHS/CEMS)
- Cleaning time between sessions
- Furniture sizing (PC has small furniture for younger kids)

**3. Bringing all students back full-time with 3 ft. in classrooms**

**Benefit:** All hybrid students could return full-time.

**Challenges:**

- Not enough space to accommodate fully remote learning students
- Busses could only accommodate K-8 and Special Education students who are currently accessing our transportation services; there would not be enough room on busses or enough drivers to transport CEHS students; we are required to provide transportation for K-8 and Special Education students
- Gyms would be used for eating; physical education classes could not use gyms; they could go outside on nice days; if inclement weather, we would need an alternate solution
- New schedules would need to be made for Pond Cove and CEMS for lunch, snack, allied arts
- Increased Risk: Pond Cove classes would be their own pods, but more CEHS & CEMS students would be changing classes and exposed to more students

## **Principal Updates**

[Pond Cove - Jason - 15:55-mark of the video](#)

We have two parallel planning processes happening - planning for reopening in Fall 2021 and for the possibility of some sort of opening for Spring 2021.

The plan to bring 100% of hybrid students back:

- 3 ft. distance while learning in classroom
- 6 ft. distance while eating
  - PC has measured classrooms with the help of a parent who is a structural engineer and is looking at capacity
  - Looking at square footage only, we are comfortable fitting all current hybrid students, but there is no extra space; there would be no room for new students or to bring in fully remote students; 2nd and 4th grades are at top limit
  - Furniture is a challenge; fewer classrooms use individual student desks and more classrooms use tables; tables take up more room than desks and full classrooms would require individual student desks
    - Major barrier: Funding (Could use COVID relief funds), ordering and 6-week delivery (likely more due to demand)

#### CEMS - Troy - 21:59- mark of the video

This has been an ongoing process. As state mandates change, we look at what we can change. Prior to the governor's change, we were exploring ways to maximize space.

- Need to remember, we are still in a pandemic; teachers have to wash desks when classes change - moving from 12 to 24 desks will require twice the cleaning
- Teachers are concerned about our ability to keep a full school of kids 3 ft. apart; this will increase risk; it will be challenging for teachers/staff to manage
- Struggle is around spacing; many spaces weren't intended to be classrooms and they work for 10-12 students now, but may not work for 24
- Furniture: We want to maximize - we may be able to use a mix of tables and desks; where are also the logistics of moving it back in and cleaning it; we'll need a staging area to plan furniture move-in and placement
- Arrival/Dismissal: May need to be staggered due to multiple drop-off/pick-up areas
- Questions remain around in-person Band
- Lunchrooms: We need room for around 220 students at each lunch - cafeteria, gym and hallway outside gym to feed all kid
- Teachers feel like they are in a good place with kids; a schedule change will be disruptive to routine

Donna: We have talked about doing some type of roll-in, similar to what we did last fall, staggering the number of students we bring in to buildings.

#### CEHS - Jeff - 29:02- mark of the video

Maine CDC guideline recommendation and US CDC guideline for distancing is 6 ft. Jeff has some concern about medical research regarding older students vs. younger students.

- CEHS ventilation is currently scheduled for April 8, but may go later; it should be done by April break
- Full measurements for 3 ft. distancing will be done tomorrow (3/17); estimate is 15-20 desks per classroom; larger classrooms, 20-24
- 15-20 desks would work for most classes at 3 ft. distancing, if remote students stay remote
- Is there a 75% return-to-school solution here? All kids are already doing 4 days of instruction at CEHS, with synchronous learning on 2 remote days; can we bring kids in 3/5 or 4/5 days? The last three weeks of the year, the seniors are out for STP
- Lunch is also an issue at CEHS. 6 ft. is possible using the cafeteria and gym; we have picnic tables outside, but we need to consider rainy days; some classroom furniture is in the cafeteria now; normal cafeteria tables do not allow 6 ft. distancing
- Gym is currently used for students attending classes offered by remote teachers
- Furniture is an issue at CEHS - currently classroom furniture is in use in Cafeteria
- Band: Distancing requirement is 10-15 feet; there could be rehearsals of small groups outside, but the band room would be limited to 10-12 students

#### Questions and Comments from Committee Members

##### Bri Gallagher, School Counselor at Pond Cove: 37:49

When we talk about having all kids back, does this mean some kids are changing teacher placement?

Jason: In terms of the number of students in class with current enrollment, the answer is no. If a significant number of fully-remote students come back, or additional students enroll, we may need to make an additional class. There could be potential for those students to have to change teachers. We would first explore options to find a larger classroom before switching teachers.

##### Win Phillips, CEHS teacher: 41:12

Many people are getting vaccinations through WalMart. WalMart is scheduling 3-4 weeks apart, which may impact time period.

##### Zakia Nelson, Epidemiologist and parent: 41:43

Federal guidance requires a minimum of 6 ft. distance for students and staff. If we are using a 3 ft. minimum as a requirement, is there allowance made to allow for student movement (i.e. sharpen pencil, use restroom)?

Troy: There are walkways, they would be within 3 ft. during passage - walking around room, entering, leaving.

Zakia's thoughts on 6 ft vs 3 ft. It's a moving target - we have new data on a daily basis. Recent Harvard study compared policies in different schools. Federal government guidance is a minimum of 6 ft, but we are talking about a virus that can be aerosolized. 3 ft should be considered an absolute minimum, but we should strive for closer to 6 ft., and always have additional mitigation strategies.

Knowing 3 ft would be breached when students move around makes her uncomfortable to support this policy.

Dr. Jessica Rosenthal, Pediatrician and parent: 45:40

Harvard study did include HS students and found that there was not increased transmission in schools that followed 3 ft vs. 6 ft. Massachusetts will be reopening based on this guidance. The World Health Organization has recommended 3 ft. spacing and other countries have reopened with 3 ft. Parents have been wanting more open communication and there will be anxiety about making changes. As we get more data and know more about how to control the disease, let the studies guide us. If teachers are anxious about having more students in the classroom, let's explore how we can bring them more communication and science/data.

Are we assuming kids would be eating in their classrooms in two groups?

Donna: We run into a staffing problem if we split classes for eating. With increased spacing in the cafeteria this is not an issue.

Kathy Bock, CEHS teacher: 49:57

Many teachers are concerned with 3 ft. distance with older kids, Harvard study couldn't separate HS from other pieces. If we do this for HS, we need to provide data on 17/18 year old students vs. adults. If balance between in person and remote students change, this will be a consideration.

Ingrid Whitaker, PC teacher: 51:58

Isn't exposure a cumulative 15 minutes over 24 hours? Passing in hallways, going to sink, etc. are brief encounters. Would this be an issue because it is so brief? Could students eat snacks in two groups in the classroom at Pond Cove if they alternated every other desk? With the change in capacity guidelines, does this make the split session option no longer relevant?

Donna: We are considering everything - nothing is off the table yet.

Laura Ellis, CEMS Teacher: 54:05

There is a lot of anxiety with teachers. Kids in the hallway do not keep their distance. Will all teachers be vaccinated before kids return?

Donna: Teachers can share/offer the information about their vaccinations, but they aren't required to share. If they have been vaccinated, they don't need to quarantine for 10 days. We can't require vaccination. Vaccination is a personal choice.

Dr. Jessica Rosenthal, Pediatrician and parent: 55:49

Spacing guidelines are for sitting in the classroom, not transient. One vaccine dose does give some protection after 10-14 days.

### Next Steps - Donna

The school team is beginning the process to move and order furniture to prepare for next year. You may notice some furniture moving around, but that is not an indication that any decisions have been made.

If attendees have questions, please email and Donna will respond and bring it to the committee. The team is open to other ideas for how students can return to school.