

SCS Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 7, 2021
6:00PM
171 Watson Road, Dover NH: Meeting conducted over Zoom

Members Present:

Gretchen Carlson, Parent Member, Chair
Briana Moynihan-Sienkiewicz, Parent Member, Treasurer
Josh Roberge, Parent Member, Vice Chair
Mary Dellea, Teacher Member
Kasey Bilodeau, Teacher Member
Dan Bromberg, Parent Member
Chad Roberge, Parent Member
Jessica Foster, Parent Member, Secretary
Peter Sweet, Community Member
Jessica Pine, Head of School, Ex Officio
Theresa Lorvig, Facilities Director
Dennis McCann, Community Member
Meghan Samson, Community Member

6:02PM Call to Order

- Motion to approve minutes made by Chad R.
 - Seconded by Kasey.
 - Roll Call:
 - Gretchen Carlson: Yes
 - Briana Moynihan-Sienkiewicz: Yes
 - Josh Roberge: Yes
 - Mary Dellea: No
 - Kasey Bilodeau: Yes
 - Dan Bromberg: Yes
 - Chad Roberge: Yes
 - Jessica Foster: Yes
 - Dennis McCann: Abstained (not present at meeting)
 - Peter Sweet: Yes
 - Theresa Lorvig: Yes
 - Meghan Samson: Yes

- Gretchen opened floor for public comment.

- Krysten Godfrey – Kindergarten parent, expressed support for the K classes being in school 4 days a week.
- Brittany Barry, Kindergarten parent, also expressed support for K classes going back to a 4-day in school model.
- Tia Hackett, 6th grade parent, expressed worries for the safety of teachers and other vulnerable family members. Although we all want to be back in school, now might not be the right time given overarching concerns about safety.
- Gretchen read emails submitted to the board as public comment (see appendix for full email text)
- Kristi Brooks, Kindergarten parent, also expressing support for more in-school days for the K class.
- Public comment added to the record.
- Gretchen – starting process of data collection to inform the overall Strategic Plan going forward. Will report back on next steps over the next month or 2.

6:15 PM Head of School Report

- Remote learning is going well. Teachers are reporting that they are getting more student interaction with 100% remote model as compared to hybrid model.
- Considering going back to school, eating indoors continues to be a concern.
- Looking at more in school days for kindergarten and pre-k
 - Number of parents that want to get back in school is significant.
- Proposal for a half day model for the 1st/2nd grade classes
- Jess Pine is proposing:
 - Phase in younger students (Pre-K and K) starting January 18th.
 - Grades 1 and 2 would be offered a half-day model.
 - Phase older students back to in-person learning after the February break.
 - Trying to find more time for targeted learners to come back
 - Phys Ed teachers will try to offer more optional, socially distanced, in-person activities that students could take advantage of.
- Discussion of how half-day model will impact the number of families that can support that logistically.
- Josh R: disappointed that this is the plan at this point given all the planning and investments that were put into preparing for this situation. It is a disservice to older students who are also having problems with remote learning to have to wait another 8 weeks before getting back to some level of in-person meeting. When we had a positive case, the steps we took to contain it, worked.
 - Jess Pine: concerns leading to this were the
 - Concern about staffing in the winter months
 - Consistency in the programming (supporting multiple models plus needing to quarantine for positive cases)
 - Current level of cases in the community
 - Continued concern about accommodating eating indoors.

- Dennis: can we look back at the guidance that was provided for the recommended models based on the level of infection in the community.
- Theresa: There is more consensus about the risk levels of different measures. CDC published document with 5 different risk categories. We in Dover are at the highest level for new cases and second highest for the percentage of positives tests.
- Peter: Can we look at other schools in the area that are doing more in person days? Also, can we get a report in the next meeting about how students are doing socially/emotionally? Maybe have survey for kids/parents to create a more formal profile of how our kids are doing.
 - Jess P: those school (that she has talked to) are struggling with having to close for positive cases and going back and forth. Also, they are pulling from a single community in contrast to SCS. Those schools also tend to have higher staffing levels. Putting our teachers in danger is not good for anyone.
 - Peter knows of some other schools that might be more like SCS. He will get that info to Jess.
 - Dan: if there is a model that schools are using that is not taxing teachers to the same extent that the hybrid model was, then we should find out what those are.
- Jess will pull together a proposal for how the older grades could come back later in the year. Having the outdoor space for eating and classrooms will be critical to that plan.
- Gretchen: Proposing pulling in the next board meeting to Tuesday January 26th to discuss go-forward plans for older kids.
- MOTION: Josh motioned to open the forum for public comment for 15 min.
 - Brianna Seconded
 - Gretchen asked that everyone keep to 1 min comments.
 - Roll Call:
 - Gretchen Carlson: Yes
 - Briana Moynihan-Sienkiewicz: Yes
 - Josh Roberge: Yes
 - Mary Dellea: No
 - Kasey Bilodeau: Yes
 - Dan Bromberg: Yes
 - Chad Roberge: Yes
 - Jessica Foster: Yes
 - Dennis McCann: Yes
 - Peter Sweet: Yes
 - Theresa Lorvig: Yes
 - Meghan Samson: Yes

7:17 Public Comment (15 min)

- Jackie Burlage: supportive of younger kids going back.
- Patrick Wykoff: requested more advanced notice on future meeting agendas including links to join.

- Melissa Trip, Parent in Pre-k, 1st and 3rd. Supporting 3 different schedules will be extremely difficult. Especially since they live 40 min away. She would have to make tradeoffs between kids. Please send a survey to the 1st/2nd parents
- Jess Cardow, K Teacher – teachers are working everyday to make this work. She is immuno-compromised but she’s willing to come back. There is no stone unturned. Doing everything we can to support kids.
- Aaron Sharabaika – half day model would not work for families with 2 working parents.
- Kristin Hughes – 4th grade parent. Appreciates how much emphasis is being put on consistency. Remote learning stinks but going back and forth is awful. To say that our students our “losing education” is putting undue pressure on teachers who are working so hard.
- Brittany Berry, parent – Thanks for making the best of a terrible situation. It’s impossible to please everybody.
- Heather -- 2nd grade parent. Asks for survey for the 1st/2nd grade plan. It will be tough for them logistically.
- Emily – 1st grade parent – question about if teachers would change with half day model? How would that model work?
- Tahja – K and 8th grade parent – could we put the survey out to all grades to get a sense of demand in other grades (in case ½ cannot do it.)
- Aaron Sharabaika – have you considered hybrid instead of half day?

7:32 Public Comment Closed

- Jess: We thoroughly talked about every single model for the 1st/2nd plan and the half-day was the most viable.
- Chad: seeking clarification on the half day model. It will not include online/distance learning for the “off” half of the day.
 - Jess: they will have independent work, but the specials would still be remote. The requirement for days in school would still be met.
- Jess: concern with hybrid was about that model not being sustainable for teacher. But hybrid model is not being dismissed as a possible model going forward.
- Josh R: why is 5 days not an option for half day model?
 - We still need that day for planning meetings, remote planning, etc.
- **MOTION: Brianna motioned to phase in students in grades Pre-k and Kindergarten pursuant to the plan put forth by Jess Pine in the Head of School Report.**
 - Seconded by Chad Roberge
 - Roll Call:
 - Gretchen Carlson: Yes
 - Briana Moynihan-Sienkiewicz: Yes
 - Josh Roberge: Yes
 - Mary Dellea: No
 - Kasey Bilodeau: Yes

- Dan Bromberg: Yes
 - Chad Roberge: Yes
 - Jessica Foster: Yes
 - Dennis McCann: Yes
 - Peter Sweet: Yes
 - Theresa Lorvig: Yes
 - Meghan Samson: Yes
- **MOTION: Chad motioned to phase in grades 1 and 2 in a half-day model at the discretion of the Head of School based on level of interest measured in parent surveys. In addition, plans for grades 3-8 including specific, objective criteria for a return to in-school learning, will be discussed in the January 26th meeting.**
 - Seconded by Meghan Samson
 - Roll Call: All approved
 - **MOTION: Brianna voted to accept Emily Norton’s resignation**
 - Seconded by Theresa L.
 - Roll Call:
 - Gretchen Carlson: Yes
 - Briana Moynihan-Sienkiewicz: Yes
 - Josh Roberge: Yes
 - Mary Dellea: No
 - Kasey Bilodeau: Yes
 - Dan Bromberg: Yes
 - Chad Roberge: Yes
 - Jessica Foster: Yes
 - Dennis McCann: Yes
 - Peter Sweet: Yes
 - Theresa Lorvig: Yes
 - Meghan Samson: Yes
 - **Personnel Proposal: Proposal about maternity for assistants who have been at SCS for at least 3 years to be eligible for maternity leave for 60% for 6 weeks, effective January 7th, 2021.**
 - **MOTION: Peter made motion to accept the Personnel Committee’s proposal as stated above.**
 - Seconded by Dan.
 - Roll Call:

- Gretchen Carlson: Yes
- Briana Moynihan-Sienkiewicz: Yes
- Josh Roberge: Yes
- Mary Dellea: No
- Kasey Bilodeau: Yes
- Dan Bromberg: Yes
- Chad Roberge: Yes
- Jessica Foster: Yes
- Dennis McCann: Yes
- Peter Sweet: Yes
- Theresa Lorvig: Yes
- Meghan Samson: Yes

- Finance Report:
 - We are in good standing right now.
 - Hoping to offer aftercare if we re-open in the Spring.
 - See finance report.
 - No Questions from Board
- No questions on the Development Report

8:09PM Facilities Report (Theresa Lorvig)

- Continuing to evaluate cleaning protocols.
- Looking at possible new projects to take advantage of reimbursement from new funds that may be available to k-12 schools that is focused on school repairs and improvements.

Action items

- Next meeting January 26th
- We will keep the February 11th meeting.
- Develop survey to 1st/2nd grade parents regarding models for getting kids back in the building. Results will be shared in 1/26 meeting.

8:17PM Meeting Adjourned

Appendix – Emails sent to the Board for Public Comment

Hi all,

Are you planning on sending a survey out to collect data pertaining to the home experience?

I'm sure parents would welcome a structured format for providing feedback on their experiences. Would that be useful? If you'd like suggestions on questions, let me know.

Also, could the meeting minutes for any board meetings since October please be updated to the website?

Thanks,
Patrick Wykoff

Gretchen

Public Comment Received:

Please share this during public comment during Thursday's meeting.

I want to start by thanking and commending the teachers and staff of Seacoast Charter School for their dedication to navigating this year's challenges. This has been the hardest year of my own teaching career, and I imagine likewise for them.

In response to the issue of snow days, SCS sent out an email quoting a third grader. It got me thinking that in all these debates over snow days or no snow days, remote or hybrid, I hadn't really asked my third grader what she thought.

So I did ask her. I wanted to share what she said, "I want to go hybrid because it is the closest to normal I can be." "Doing school at home is just a tad awkward, it's not fun." "I'm learning but it's a bit harder because I feel stranded in space."

The staff should be celebrated for the safety measures and protocols they implemented in the fall. Though it is unfortunate that those procedures were tested with a positive case, I have renewed confidence in the hybrid model knowing that no other cases resulted in that exposure.

Remote learning has had an important role in this school year, but looking forward to January 19 and beyond... I am hopeful a return to hybrid learning will help my daughter feel less lost. I feel confident the hybrid model can be reinstated safely and that the students will greatly benefit from the in-person learning opportunities they would have.

Thank you,

Rachel Roberge

2ND EMAIL

Good evening to Ms. Pine and the SCS School Board. Thank you for taking my questions.

Prior to the holiday break, I filled out a survey about my preference re: K students returning to school four days per week (as opposed to hybrid) or continuing to go remote. (This had also been discussed prior to school starting, when area virus numbers were much, much lower -- and I heard that the kids could not go four days because "not enough kids opted for remote.")

There was no information in the survey that indicated whether or not students would all be asked to go 100% remote for an undetermined amount of time if not enough parents opted for the in-person option. I also had these follow up questions. I am hoping to better understand how the board and staff plan to make decisions regarding K scheduling.

1. How many K students are currently enrolled in SCS? Currently, what percentage of K students have been remote since September? What is the current teacher/ aide ratio to children? What would the ratio be if K went in-person for four days?

(For example, my child's hybrid classroom this fall included 6 students, an aide and a teacher, for a 1:3 student/ teacher ratio--which is a very high ratio-- but wasn't apparently low enough to trigger a four-day school model if the other cohort also had 6 students. Is a 2:12 (or 1:6) ratio too high to consider this winter as well?)

2. How many parents returned surveys?

3. Of those parents, what percentage opted for four days in-person vs. remote?

4. What is the threshold for determining the final K schedule? Percentage of parents opting for a particular schedule, teachers' preferences, or area virus statistics?

5. If enough parents opted for the fully remote option, does this mean remote learning will extend for K students throughout the school year?

6. Will teachers be re-assigned, depending on which direction SCS decides to go in terms of their final K schedule? For example, will there be a remote teacher and an in-person teacher?

7. For some, remote learning places an overwhelming burden on working parents who either have had to reduce their hours or quit their jobs to support their young students.

There are other homeschool/ private school/ child care choices for K students. If parents opt to find childcare for their 5-6-year-olds so they are able to work, do they lose their SCS spot for the following year?

8. When will K parents know of the board's final decision?

9. Has the state given SCS (or other schools) any indication of when vaccines might be administered to teachers and staff?

I would just like to add that although the Dover School District and Somersworth School District have both taken conservative approaches toward allowing groups of students back to school, neighboring towns such as Portsmouth are looking at how they can get more grades back into the building. I also understand that our numbers are higher than ever and that staffing is always an issue; however, I think SCS did a great job this fall keeping students and teachers safe. I would hope that the board would at least consider an in-person alternative for its youngest students.

Sincerely,

Krysten Godfrey Maddocks