

Virtual Special Education & Student Supports Sub-Committee  
Friday, July 17th, 2020  
Broadcast from the Media Arts Studio  
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA

Called for the purpose of discussing what we learned from the Spring, and planning for the Fall, including remote, in-person and hybrid, with a focus on emerging models. The meeting started at 4 p.m.

Members Present: Member Wilson, Chair; Member Rachel; Member Weinstein

Also Present: Mayor Siddiqui; Member Killian, Dr. Turk, Deputy Superintendent; Dr. Morgan, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services; Jean Spera, Special Educator Director; Robin Harris, Director of Family Engagement

Member Wilson is in the chair. Member Wilson provided context and guidelines for the meeting. Member Wilson opened the meeting for a presentation.

Dr. Morgan started the presentation with "Part 1: Spring 2020-Lessons Learned"

- Successes: Technology, Family/Parent Engagement, Live/Synchronous Learning, Asynchronous Learning, and Materials
- Challenges: Technology Connectivity/Access, Instruction/Services/Materials, Parent/Caregivers in particular with communication (overloaded with emails), and Staff Supports

Dr. Morgan continued the presentation with "Part 2: Fall Planning"

- DESE Guidance: CPSD is required to develop 3 plans for each model of In Person/Hybrid/All Remote regardless of model we are in there will be a focus on instruction and services, not resources and support. Prioritize students with disabilities. Need to develop a comprehensive plan for resources and support. Tasked with providing family support safety and health guidelines.

Dr. Morgan discussed the different working groups such as Students with Disability Group and how they are connected.

Dr. Morgan ended with challenges to address:

- Remote learning: inconsistency, tension in families' needs, and educator challenges
- In-person (hybrid/full): Transitions and scheduling

Member Wilson opened the meeting for public comment.

Nathan B stated there was difficulty with transitions and changes of scheduling in the Spring. Dr. Morgan responded that they are trying to make the schedule consistent and looking at ways to continue to build supports for students.

Rosalie Rippey expressed her concerns about the quality of online and remote learning experience especially with children who have families with health concerns and that if someone does get sick that schools will need to close. She was looking for clarification on specialized teachers, training, scheduling, and office hours. Dr. Morgan discussed how they want to have conversations with families about their experience of remote learning and scheduling. She provided that in working groups they are discussing with parents about communication with educators. She encouraged feedback to her office.

Rosalie Rippey asked for further clarification on specialized teachers. Dr. Morgan responded that the district is still disseminating information and getting information from teacher's needs and who is going to be able to come back.

Mercedes Soto asked if teachers are able to share best practices for distance learning. Specifically asked how OSS is working with schools who are outplaced.

Katherine Gamble shared her experience with her son having an IEP and that the liaison was overwhelmed. She asked how the district is going to handle co-taught classes and the implications for Special Education classes. She also asked if the district has an autism consultant for students who are having difficulties with remote learning.

Ena Valenzuela discussed three points 1) Her concern about the verbiage about wearing a mask on the bus and the need to contact OSS rather than working with the bus driver and what is the distancing and time frame on the bus? 2) Concerned about the fact about silos of working groups. There seems to be no communication between all the different groups. 3) How will discipline be changed due to the stresses of going to school in Pandemic and highlighted the importance of having a safe space.

Amara Donovan also discussed her concern about the behavioral discipline inconsistencies and increased surveillance of students. She further discussed how the surveys being utilized right now are not accomplishing gathering information from families. She advocated for the district to be more creative in their outreach efforts such as getting people on the ground and having district leaders be on the ground to build trust.

Member Weinstein discussed how on July 30<sup>th</sup> there is going to be a Sub-Committee to focus on a potential "caregiver university."

Misha Rosenberg emphasized the focus of the IEP should be about what the individual needs of the child are. Member Wilson echoed Misha Rosenberg's sentiments that the focus should be on the child.

Lily Rayman-Read provided her perspective as an educator and that too much was asked of our special educators in the spring. She advocated for a reduction of responsibilities in non-special-ed services for special education teachers. She discussed how there was not consistency in the spring and going forward there needs to be accountability and the need for more educator support.

Member Wilson extended the meeting for 20 minutes.

Mercedes Soto echoed Misha Rosenberg's sentiments on centering the experience of the scholar.

Bobby Travers discussed his experience about being a para-professional during this time and their ability to take on more responsibilities and that they should be included.

Love Holland shared her experience as a 7th grade parent and that her students were not given enough work.

Robyn Towner discussed how there needs to be more attention given to students who have "moderate" needs and advocated to look at the students who did not participate in gen-end and how to reach them. She also hopes that there will be a special educator on the working group.

Karen Dobak shared her experience of the lack of support for students with emotional difficulties, she is concerned there is nothing put in place for those students.

Amatul Mahmud shared her experience as an educator during this time and asked will students that experienced with COVID transitions and issues viewing remote learning be considered a first priority when they return to school.

Kini Udovicki spoke to her experience as a school counselor over the last four months. She asked how counselors will be integrated into the various models of reopening and how are the mental health needs of students going to be met.

Jennifer Bump discussed how many of our students struggled with virtual classrooms and they are needing much support when not in school. She advocated small groups as a better way to teach and asked how can special educators learn multi-sensory education remotely?

Ena Valenzuela read an appeal on the listserv by a parent named Margo. Margo is concerned about school plans and inclusion and asked how will all children be able to participate in daily inclusion this fall?

Member Wilson extended the meeting to six pm.

Dr. Morgan answered many of the questions:

- On capturing best practices for remote learning (Mercedes Soto's questions): professional development is being developed in partnership with principals and teachers.
- On Katherine Gamble's concerns: there is a need for more coordination between gen-ed and special-ed. Going forward there will be more district direction on how many hours educators will be working and the scope of the work.
- On Ena Vanzuela's concern of children not being able to wear masks: She discussed how Jim Maloney is reviewing the transportation plan and support for bus staff in supporting the child.
- On the concern of increased surveillance: the teachers will be looking at students to make sure they are being safe but does not want it be a hostile environment
- On Social Emotional support: having a more responsive and trauma informed approach and additional training for staff. Also looking at support for staff.
- On putting people on ground if cannot reach students: not recommended because they have to maintain the safety and wellbeing of the people on the ground. There is a need to think out of the box on how to reach those students and advocated for the collaboration of many departments to achieve this.
- On Misha's concern for the lack of services/Lily's comment about the social workers being overwhelmed: Discussed how they were interconnected and how the upcoming district's plan to reduce the amount of paperwork.
- On professional development opportunities: Dr. Morgan discussed how that pre-COVID they were able to combine gen-ed and special-ed training.
- On centering experience of scholars and of parents not at the meetings: She discussed how there needs to be better community engagement
- On the under-utilization of para-professionals: There needs to be better communication techniques and they are working with the union to provide clarity on a plan.

Member Wilson extended the meeting.

Dr. Morgan continued:

- There is a need for greater partnership to understand what happened for the child to receive what is necessary for the student and parent needs to be supported
- Students not able to access virtual learning due to SEL and disengaging-we're developing a tiered model to address bringing children back to the virtual classroom with counseling or social group sessions. Expanding partnerships
- Integration of counselors-We will be working with our supports social workers to discover a model for the role of counselors regardless of settings.
- Students having difficulty in asynchronous learning-small groups essential, so we are in conversations with including more of those groups
- Multisensory education-will be asking educators about this. Trainings will be remotely to minimize risk, but we will work to provide it remotely and are training. Making sure that PPE is in place to keep everyone safe.
- Inclusion and reverse inclusion-Still trying to figure out but do have CDC guidelines, those students need access to their peers. Connecting with other schools and will be able to share more about this

Member Wilson thanked Dr. Morgan for her presentation and responses to questions. She called the next meeting for August 5 from 2-3:30. Member Wilson ended the meeting at 6:16 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Allison Daley  
Confidential Secretary to the School Committee Office