

## **Open Work Session**

### **Discussion with Wicomico County Board of Education on the Virtual Learning Plan August 18, 2020**

Dr. Donna Hanlin, Superintendent of Schools, and Mr. Gene Malone, Vice Chairman of the Wicomico County Board of Education, came before Council. Dr. Hanlin said she believes they have other members of the Board of Education on Zoom - Don Fitzgerald, Chairman of the Board; Anne Suthowski, Mr. Palmer, Mrs. Laird-Lewis, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Murray. She said they also have with them virtually Dr. Rick Briggs, Chief Academic Officer; Mrs. Kim Miles, Assistant Superintendent for Student and Family Services; and Dr. Micah Stauffer, Chief Finance and Operations Officer.

Dr. Hanlin said she is very pleased to have this opportunity to come before Council and the community who are viewing through PAC14 to share their recovery plan for the opening of schools for the fall of 2020. She said this plan has been finalized, but they do consider it a working document as they tweak things as they move along. She said it has been translated, and it was posted on their website on Friday afternoon. She said the plan is the result of many, many, many hundreds of hours of research, dialogue, and collaboration with medical and educational experts, and they believe it is a great plan. She said it is 40+ pages long, so there is a lot of detail involved, and today, for the benefit of Council and the community, she just wants to walk through some of the major areas of the plan and highlight some of the important details so that everyone knows what to expect in the fall, and then very briefly she will take them to where the plan itself is posted, and how it is organized.

Dr. Hanlin said, generally, the plan does a number of things. She said most importantly it provides a resource for their families in the community, and is designed to be very user-friendly with parents in mind as the audience for viewing and becoming familiar with the plan. She said it was developed in collaboration with three different stakeholder groups on which there were individuals who represented parents, teachers, administrators, the community, the Health Department, and the medical profession. She said these groups utilized many different resources, but most especially the Maryland Together Recovery Plan for Education, which is the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) recovery plan and guidance that contains thirteen non-negotiables that local school systems needed to include in their plans, so that was very much a part of what those stakeholder groups were considering as they worked over a number of weeks. She said the plan reflects the unanimous decision of the Board to begin in a virtual modality and the rationale behind that decision, and then moves into the details of recovery and instruction, student and family services, business and operations, communication, and the future of their pathway of recovery. She said, finally, the plan embodies their guiding philosophy in the school system for all students by describing how they will ensure that all students have the necessary opportunities and resources in order to be successful.

Dr. Hanlin said the next slide was taken from the July 28 special meeting of the Board during which the Board voted unanimously to go virtual. She said first was the decision to begin on September 8, but then shortly thereafter part of that decision is that, on or before October 1, they will begin to transition small groups of students based upon need into their buildings with the hopes of transitioning more and more students into buildings safely as they can do so. She said they came to that conclusion understanding that no decision is going to make everyone happy, but with their two priorities of student learning, and

student and staff safety at the heart of that decision making. She said, with so many unknowns about the virus and increases in cases locally, they sided with caution knowing, if they could focus all of their attention on a totally remote virtual program, they could have the most success considering consistency for their students. She said Council may be familiar, if they have watched the news, that a lot of school systems who went back were open for a day or two, and then have shut down again based upon cases, so they believe, and she said this before that even happened, that it is really, really important to have consistency for their students. She said she will make one more point again before she moves off this slide that it is important to remember that, while they announced it is for the first semester, that is what they hope to be the worst-case scenario. She clarified, they all want their children back in school, there is no question, but they will do so when it is safe to do that. She said they are watching and hoping, and the Superintendent's Group has actually asked the State Health Department to come up with metrics for school systems. She clarified, they are educators, they are not physicians or medical experts, so they are awaiting that guidance, and, in the meanwhile, they will follow their plan as it is written.

Dr. Hanlin said this next slide is taken from the plan, and she will tell Council what it says generally, and hopefully they can go to the plan to see this particular slide because this slide and the next comments she will make emphasize that what parents and students will experience in the fall is not what was experienced in the spring. She said, in the spring they were required to pivot very quickly, and they had very little synchronous live teacher instruction in the spring, and a lot will be different, and she will tell Council about that as she goes through this. She said the instructional part of the plan begins with this summary set of expectations, and, in the first block they can see what they are committed to as a school system, which is working with their State and local leaders to provide a very strong educational program for all students, whether it be in-person or virtual, in a safe environment. She said they have been and will continue to support their staff through needed professional development. She said, in the teacher area, teachers will connect with students every day through live and recorded teacher-lead instruction. She said there will be regular ongoing daily feedback on student's work, and students and parents will be able to connect and talk with teachers through email, phone calls, and virtual meetings with teachers throughout the school day, and then there will be other staff available through hotlines throughout the school day. She said students are expected to log on to Google Classroom and Zoom daily for instruction and to access assignments. She said attendance will be monitored and recorded, and assignments will be graded. She said parents are asked to support their student by working closely with teachers to monitor student learning through the family portal, and to review communications from teachers, the principal, and school system, and to be sure to ask questions as they arise.

Dr. Hanlin said, as part of their commitment to a robust instructional program in the fall, all of their curriculum guides have been revised to highlight the essential standards for a grade level or a course, as well as the prerequisite knowledge and skills that learners need in order to be successful in each content and in new content. She explained, every content area has developed a plan to target learning loss, and to introduce new grade level content while maximizing instruction and support for diverse learners. She said they will assess students in the fall to determine gaps in instruction. She said teachers will be doing their own planning on a daily basis unlike what occurred in the spring. She said Council will recall in the spring their curriculum supervisors developed units of instruction and posted them online, and teachers followed those units of instruction, or they passed out hard copy materials, but in the fall, teachers will be doing their own planning. She said they have had opportunities for professional development and to

consider their course work for the school year, and there will be synchronous and asynchronous instruction, which are terms Council will begin to hear more and more. She explained, synchronous means everything is together, it is a live teacher in a classroom virtually with students, and that will be occurring during the day. She said then there will be asynchronous, which is the opposite where there are opportunities for students to be meeting in small groups with teachers, teachers to be meeting with parents and answering questions, students to be completing assignments, and so forth. She said she will show Council some sample schedules to give them an example of what she is referring to.

Mr. McCain said, earlier in the meeting, a parent brought up a situation regarding the synchronous instruction beginning at 10:00 a.m. and they were talking about seniors who have dual enrollment with Wor-Wic, and that instruction time is conflicting with when they would be doing their dual enrollment classes. Dr. Hanlin said, just as they do when they are live in person in a traditional setting, guidance counselors are working with students and families to make sure their schedules are set up to allow for that travel time and that opportunity to go to Wor-Wic, and they will continue to do the same thing. Mr. McCain asked if Dr. Hanlin is saying they are aware of this issue, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, they want the dual enrollment program to continue with Wor-Wic, and, yes, that is being taken into consideration. She said, if a student or a parent has a particular question about a student schedule, especially after they receive the schedule, or really even before that, they can call the school and speak with the guidance counselor and let them know what time they are scheduled for that dual enrollment course, and the guidance counselor will adjust their schedule to make that work.

Mrs. Acle asked if the best method for any parent who has a question is to contact the school, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she believes the first course of action is to call the school. She explained, they have adjusted to a live voice at the end of every phone call now, whether they are calling the school or the central office, so no matter where they are calling, she hopes 100 percent of the time they are going to get a live voice, though there may be cases, as it was during the traditional setting, but they have made those adjustments now so that parents can easily get their questions answered.

Dr. Hanlin said the next slide has to do with the 1:1 laptop device to student ratio. She said, again, with emphasis on equity, through CARES funding they have been able to move to a 1:1 device to student ratio, and will also be able to assist families who are not in a service provider footprint with a hotspot. She said, again, to Mrs. Acle's point, they have been encouraging parents to call the school and let them know what their needs are, whether it be a device or internet connectivity, and they will work with them to figure that out. She said they will be using Google Classroom and Zoom as their primary platforms for instruction, but there are numerous other web-based instructional programs listed as an appendix item in the plan. She said they will be taking student daily attendance, and, unlike the spring, they will be returning to their traditional grading policy when they begin in the fall.

Dr. Hanlin said the next slide shows elementary schedule guidance suggestions for schools, specifically prekindergarten. She said four days a week prekindergarten will be in live classroom instruction with their teacher for 80 minutes a day, and then asynchronous they will be working without that whole group live instruction 30 minutes a day either to receive additional assistance, or to complete work that has been assigned by the teacher. She said, over the course of the week there will be 50 minutes per week for synchronous live instruction in art, music, and physical education. Mr. Dodd asked how they

are going to do physical education, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, their instructional staff have been working on that, but she does not have the details. Mr. Dodd said it will be interesting, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, yes, it will be very interesting, especially when they think about those special areas.

Dr. Hanlin said kindergarten through grade 5 schedule guidance is a little more complex. She said the older students still see English-language arts, and associated with that is guided reading. She said the amount of time is 60 minutes a day for synchronous instruction, again, live with the teacher, and then 45 minutes a day where they are doing other assignments, viewing prerecorded lessons, and working in smaller groups with their teachers. She said mathematics is 40 minutes of synchronous and 35 minutes of asynchronous on a daily basis. She said science and social studies will be every other marking term, so they will have one or the other in a given marking period, but, again, 20 minutes of synchronous and 10 minutes of asynchronous. She said, over the course of a week, elementary students will have a total of 120 minutes for special areas, and there are a number of other special areas listed there besides those three she talked about with the prekindergarten students. She said on Wednesdays it is small group instruction, intervention, and teachers and students having an opportunity to complete some independent work but still having access to their teachers.

Dr. Hanlin said the pyramid on her slide is about how parents can get help, and applies to all grade levels, but just happens to be on this slide. She said the first thing they want parents to do is communicate directly with teachers. She said teachers will have office hours where there will be times they will be available every day to parents who have questions, and there will also be, as mentioned, a hotline where anytime between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. parents or students can call and indicate whether it is an instructional question or a technology question, and will be able to get an immediate answer from a live voice on the end of that phone call. She said there are email opportunities as well. She said, beginning on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September for all grades 1-12, there will be information posted, such as grades, assignments, and attendance in the parent portal 24/7, and that is true of any grade level.

Dr. Hanlin said the next slide is middle school, and there is a little more complexity to the schedule guidance provided. She said most of the synchronous instruction will again be on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday with Wednesdays being mostly asynchronous. She said students will begin their school day at 7:45 a.m. and there will be multiple things going on during that time, whether it is small group instruction, teachers providing intervention for students, teachers being available to answer parent's questions, parent and student meetings, and so forth, and then the completion of assignments. She said at the middle school level beginning at 10:15 a.m. through 1:30 p.m. there are five synchronous 30-minute classes where students are interacting directly in their virtual class with their teacher, and then some students will have a sixth virtual class, and then again at the end of the day reteaching, small group instruction and opportunities for parents to talk with teachers. Mr. Dodd asked if the teachers will be taking roll during this, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, yes, and that will be important. She said, if Council recalls, in the spring they were working diligently to engage all of their students and try to locate them, and by the time the spring semester ended they were down to less than ten students who they were not able to locate. She said, by having synchronous classes, they will know right away who is in class and who is not, so they will then be able to deploy those resources to locate students to see whether they have left the area, or whether they need assistance at home in engaging.

Dr. Hanlin said the next slide is high school, and at the high school level they made the decision to go to a modified semester-based schedule on a temporary basis for this school year. She said, for the first semester, students will have four courses as opposed to seven all year. She said, upon successful completion of those courses at the end of the semester they will be awarded credit, and then four more for the second semester, so students will actually have an opportunity to earn eight credits this year. She said counselors are working with the students, so if any anyone watching has only picked seven and has the question of how they are going to get eight, counselors are working with their students to identify what that eighth class is for the second semester. She said, based upon that change in structure, students begin their school day at 7:45 a.m. with asynchronous instruction, reteaching, and small group instruction, followed by four virtual 45-minute classes, and then a fifth virtual class if applicable, and then the office hours at the end of the day again.

Dr. Hanlin said, as she already mentioned, on or before October 1 they will start to bring identified students back into their school buildings for periods of time. She said the students will be identified based upon the need for in-person instruction, and they could be students in CTE, special education, English language learners, and other students requiring intervention, or other vulnerable populations. She said one of the groups she is particularly concerned about and may be next in their thinking would be their youngest students, the prekindergarten and kindergarten students, recognizing the importance of that foundation. She said the schools will be working in collaboration with supervisors to identify those students who need the face-to-face instruction, and those families would then be contacted by the school and transportation would be provided for those students who are identified as being eligible for transportation under normal circumstances.

Dr. Hanlin said the plan also describes a bit about roles and responsibilities for staff, and how, during this virtual learning environment, roles and responsibilities are subject to review and revision to best serve the needs of their students. She said it is also important to note, and she knows Council will be particularly interested in this, that they are carefully reviewing vacancies and, in some cases, not filling those vacancies during this time through a soft hiring freeze, and they are already implementing that. She said specifics related to schedules and responsibilities will be determined by administrators and other instructional staff, and all staff will be working with their direct supervisors to confirm their work location based upon a number of things - the needs of students, appropriate staffing levels in buildings, accountability, contact tracing, and the ability to clean their buildings efficiently. She said, no matter what the location, there will be clear expectations for effective online instruction, their traditional observation and evaluation model for teachers will be in place, and teachers can expect administrators to regularly participate in their Zoom and Google Classroom sessions while instruction is occurring.

Dr. Hanlin said the last note on this slide is the importance of professional development. She explained, professional development has been a focus since the inception of the closure last spring with hundreds of teachers participating in professional development over the summer, she believes the last number she knew was 800-some, and they will continue to provide opportunities throughout this time period. She said the main part of the document only provides a listing, but there is an appendix area where there is a full listing of the professional development that has been and will continue to be offered.

Dr. Hanlin said the last area they touch on in the part of the plan that deals with instruction is athletics. She said she knows everybody is very concerned about athletics with many strong opinions, but the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association has officially postponed fall and winter sports, and they are going to continue to work with that organization. She said Mr. Ashby, the County's Athletic Supervisor, is a very respected member of that organization, and is working very closely with them to plan for spring and what they might be able to do in condensed sports seasons hopefully during that time, and then they are going to continue to work on how they might be able to work with athletes on a very limited basis in the fall and winter with some type of conditioning like they did this summer.

Dr. Hanlin said, in terms of cocurricular activities, she thinks everybody is probably aware of the fact that the Tournament of Bands competition and halftime shows have been postponed. She said their band directors as well as their other fine arts instructors are working to offer other creative virtual options, and the same is true for extracurricular activities and afterschool programs. She said they recognize the importance of those opportunities for students to complement what is happening in the classroom, so they are working very hard to come up with some creative afterschool programming and extracurricular activities; for example, ways the student government can meet, so they are working in that area as well.

Dr. Hanlin said the next area of the plan is Student and Family Services and their planning for how they will continue to support families, and that is very critically important. She said their Student and Family Services Team has developed some very specific details on how to support, first of all, families in transition, that is their homeless population, as well as to support the social and emotional needs of their students. She said they have home-school liaisons, pupil personnel workers, social workers, and guidance counselors in that division of the organization, and they will continue to work in partnership with their community agencies to make sure students are supported through a host of services and activities, and those are listed in detail in the plan, but that is a very important part of their recovery for the 2020-2021 school year. She said the plan also includes information on enrollment, attendance, and safe transportation. She said, finally, of great importance to everyone is that the recovery plan also includes healthcare protocols. She said their nurses' suites have all been configured to now have two separate identified areas for students with and without COVID-related concerns, and their nurses will be working on site in school buildings each day to respond to questions and address health concerns of students and staff who are in the buildings. She clarified, on all healthcare related matters, they are working collaboratively with the Health Department and, as she said earlier, looking forward to some further guidance and metrics from the Maryland Department of Health.

Dr. Hanlin said the next slide is an important flowchart in the plan, and the decision aid that was created by the Maryland Department of Health in collaboration with MSDE. She said this outlines screening and response protocols for laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases, and persons with COVID-19 like illnesses in schools. She said she knows Student and Family Services and their nurses are all very familiar with this flowchart, and they will be following this, which was created by those experts.

Dr. Hanlin said Business and Operations has also been very hard at work to ensure a safe environment including the use of personal protective equipment, physical distancing, and the requirement that anyone in their school buildings will be required to wear masks. She said they are going to continue with meal distribution, and plans will be further developed as guidelines are received from USDA and MSDE

on what, if any, those waivers include as they begin the fall. She said they are cleaning their buildings on a regular basis, and when students and staff are in their buildings, they will be cleaning high-touch areas each night, if not in between times when students are in particular areas of the building.

Dr. Hanlin said the next section of the plan is communications and community outreach, and they are doing that in a number of ways as they have done, and will continue to communicate their plan in this way through the media and phone messages, PAC14, school messages, Facebook. She said they are also continuing to work in collaboration with multiple community organizations in supporting the plan, including their faith-based partners, business leaders, local and State Government Officials and agencies, higher education, health experts, advocacy organizations such as the WNAACP, the Greater Salisbury Committee, the United Way, the Community Foundation, and the Chamber of Commerce. She said they are in regular calls and meeting with all of those organizations, especially those advocacy organizations, and the Education Foundation. She said they consider that to be a very important part of their work.

Dr. Hanlin said the last section of the plan briefly describes their future plans towards full reopening of schools. She said, as Council knows, they will begin on September 8 for all students in a fully virtual mode, and, again, they hope that is the worst-case scenario for the full semester, but they will be bringing students back in, and they still hold out hope that they will be back in school sooner rather than later. She said, on the new school year registration, which they had deployed when they thought they were probably going in a hybrid model, the vast majority of families who indicated they would like to see a hybrid model chose the schedule having their students in school two days every week rather than every other week, so they have been and will continue to be fully developing that model in anticipation of returning to their buildings. She said any reopening plan will continue to offer a virtual option for parents, and that includes a future regional virtual school that is being examined by the Eastern Shore of Maryland Educational Consortium (ESMEC) that they are working through this semester as the nine superintendents on the Eastern Shore to develop for piloting in the second semester.

Dr. Hanlin said the full plan is posted under the recovery plan on the home page of their website. She said, when clicked on, it goes to a flipbook, which is very well-organized beginning with a table of contents for parents to find what they are looking for. She said immediately after the table of contents are definitions and acronyms that will be helpful as parents and others go through the plan. She said, in gray boxes throughout the plan itself, they have addressed each one of those 13 MSDE requirements, so they have identified where those requirements were met throughout the plan. She said pretty much everything Council has seen today they will find in the plan. She said, at the end is a very valuable appendix area where they list the full professional development opportunities, those web-based instructional programs, some resources for mental health, and teleconferencing guidelines for staff and parents. She said, if Council has not already, she hopes they will go to the plan itself because, as she indicated, that is hundreds and hundreds of hours of work, and collaborating with stakeholders to develop what they believe is the safest, most consistent plan for their students.

Mr. Holloway said he has heard concerns from teachers about going back into the classroom. He then asked what would happen if a teacher is called back and they say they are not going to go, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, teachers are being required to commit to where they are teaching, so they may teach from an alternative location. She clarified, if they have an underlying health condition, for example, they

can teach from home, but that does not mean they will not be in their classrooms. She said they need to know where the teachers are for contact tracing and a lot of other reasons, so those particular teachers will be able to teach from home. Mr. Holloway asked, what if they do not have underlying reasons, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, some teachers want to come into the building. Mr. Holloway said he knows some teachers want to and some do not, but what happens to those who say no, they are not coming back, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, then they will teach from home. Mr. Holloway asked if they are allowing them to teach from home, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, yes, in collaboration with their administrator so they know where they are, and they are committing to where they are. Mr. Holloway said Dr. Hanlin's earlier attempted communication with Dr. Briggs via Zoom is what he thinks they are going to see all year long. He said he does not think this is going to work real well. He clarified, they have had a task to try to get through this, and he does not envy them for what they have had to do. Dr. Hanlin said there are such strong opinions, and, as a parent rightfully pointed out to her, it is dealing with their children, so she understands that. Mr. Holloway said Dr. Hanlin talked about parents helping their children, but he remembers when they were talking about how they had to have pizza to get the parents to the schools to even talk about their kid's education, so he does not know how they are going to get them to help them with this. He clarified, that is not meant towards everybody, just some parents, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, they are very hopeful that they will be able to support their students, and they have staff who will also be working with them to make sure they are engaged.

Mr. Malone said this was not an easy decision for the Board, obviously. He said they began talking about this in June in Work Sessions and talking to each other on the phone, and asking everybody they saw what they would do. He said, at the end of the day, it became clear not only that the safest way was to do it virtually, but the smartest way. He clarified, by smartest he means, if they got started even with the hybrid and there was a positive case and it started spreading, which is what they have seen in other States, then Dr. Hanlin and her team would have to revamp and go to virtual, so they would have lost time. He said it is a cliché, but this is as good as it gets right now until they know where they are going to be. He said they will at least start virtually, and it is safe, and then they can press forward into the fall and see what happens with the virus. He said his other point is that he heard a lot of comments from parents, and rightfully so, that the spring was not what they had hoped for, but they got notice the schools were being closed on a Thursday at 5:00 p.m. and Friday was the last day, and then Dr. Hanlin and her team had to put something together, which was phenomenal given the time, and it was not anybody's fault. He said the virus just jumped on them. He said, if there is a parent watching on PAC14, forget about the spring. He said that was what they had to do in order to get through the year. He said what they have now is a very, very detailed, robust virtual learning, and there is going to be a lot of accountability for these teachers. He said the supervisor will be able to go right into the Zoom classroom, observe the teacher, observe what is going on, and it is going to have a lot of checkpoints where they will know what folks are doing. He said it is going to be okay, but he gets it that it is not going to be easy for the parents. He said parents are working, and he gets all that, but this is the best solution they have, he thinks. Dr. Hanlin said she has said that they always want their administrators to be instructional leaders, they want them to be in classrooms providing feedback and so forth to teachers, but often they are distracted by other things like discipline. She said they are not going to be dealing with that right now they hope, so what an opportunity to really be instructional leaders.



Mr. Holloway said, speaking of parents working, is there going to be an option where the parents can do Saturdays, Sundays, or nights, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she will be honest, they have talked about recording classes to give parents that opportunity. She said they have not come to a decision yet because they really want that interaction in a classroom setting with all students and the teacher, but she has not made a definitive decision on that. She said she knows that would be something that would be helpful to many parents. She said they also have the legal aspects of recording a class, so they would need to work with legal counsel, and she thinks there are some school systems who are doing that and actually developing waivers for allowing classes to be recorded, so they are still deliberating that.

Mr. Cannon said he agrees with Mr. Holloway that this is a monumental task, and what they have accomplished is very fantastic. He then asked what they do when they have a family who has to work while the child went to school, so what happens now that the child has to stay home. He asked if there has been a solution found for that type of an issue because there has to be a lot of people involved in that, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she knows there are families out there struggling with that now, and she definitely understands the challenge of trying to figure that out. She said she has heard of families coming together in learning pods where they are sharing the responsibility on a daily basis of monitoring what is happening with their children, or they are engaging with childcare. She said they are also working with some other community leaders to look at some possibilities, and she does not want to get anybody's hopes up because it would also be very involved, but they are looking at some childcare possibilities. She clarified, not in the schools, but in the community where other organizations are assisting in that way because that is a very real challenge.

Mr. Cannon said, with Wednesdays being asynchronous and then every day from 7:45 a.m. to 10:10 a.m. being asynchronous, he always thought virtual was going to be 100 percent virtual, and they would be interacting constantly with breaks. He then asked why it was decided that Wednesday for one day out of five days was going to be totally asynchronous without any real back and forth education, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, there will be that back and forth. She explained, asynchronous does not mean that a student is just working independently on their own without any support, so it provides an opportunity for other small group instruction, intervention with students, and, again, like she said, for the teacher to be interacting with the parents if the parents have questions. Mr. Cannon asked, what does the child do from 7:45 a.m. to 10:10 a.m., to which Dr. Hanlin responded, there is a bulleted list. Mr. Cannon said he saw the bulleted list, but, honestly, if he is a kid and gets up at 7:45 a.m. and goes online, where does it all start, and what does it begin with, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, it will begin with whatever the teacher has organized with his or her class. Mr. Cannon asked if their first contact is going to be with a specific teacher at 7:45 a.m., to which Dr. Hanlin responded, not as a whole class, but on a daily basis maybe, with the exception of the very first day of school, but after things get rolling, students will have assignments to complete, they will know if they need to watch certain prerecorded lessons, or they will know if they will be working in a small group with an instructional assistant, so they will know what they are going to be doing during those time periods. Mr. Cannon asked if there is kind of a homeroom so that when they first sign on they will get the instructions for Wednesday, to which Dr. Hanlin responded they will know what they are doing on Wednesday because of what has been done on Tuesday.

Mrs. Acle said, as a parent with children in the school system, she just tells her kids they will have to wait and see how it all goes. Dr. Hanlin said, as she said in the beginning, this is a living document, and it

is finalized and is online, but they want to hear what is working and what is not working, and then they will continue to tweak the plan based upon what is in the best interest of the students. She said they know it has to be better than the spring. She clarified, she believes it is better than the spring, but she is sure that it will continue to evolve.

Mr. Cannon said they had a large group at the meeting earlier, and it was really heart wrenching to hear the students and parents talk about this. He said everybody has thought about the education process, but he does not think the social skills and interaction have been thought about, and they just have to work with what they have, and he understands that, but it was not until he heard them had he realized how compromising this has been. Mr. Malone said that was a big piece of what they agonized over as a Board. He said, if a student was a junior last spring and they played a spring sport, plus social activities with friends, they missed that, and now they are going to miss the fall. He said they want everybody back in school, that is for sure, and he gets the pain because he has kids who went through the system, and he cannot imagine what it would have been like if they missed their senior years. He said it is about safety, and then they will just have to move forward and see how it goes. Mr. Cannon said he thinks the key is what was stressed in the initial Zoom meeting. He clarified, most people think they are closing schools because they are so worried about health, but he thinks Mr. Malone stressed it is that they could get them in school, one teacher could get an infection from anywhere, and all of a sudden they would have to turn everything upside down and send them all home. Mr. Malone said it could be a student at a high school also on the bus with a middle school student, so it could be just like UNC shutting down after one week, and Georgia has 900 people on quarantine after one week of public school in one area. He said it is time wasted, and then they really would not get the education that Dr. Hanlin's team has put together. He said it was agony.

Mr. Cannon asked how they see private schools coming into play, and is it true that some of the funding coming down to the local level is being administered by the Wicomico County Board of Education, even for the private schools, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, yes. She explained, they can work with the Board on their Title I funding, but most recently they received a portion of their CARES funding, a percentage of that, so, yes, they worked through the Board to order whatever it was they were choosing to spend that money on. Mr. Cannon said he read that another County was implementing oversight on the private schools, and he thought that was a huge overstep, but they were having them fill out their plan for what they were going to do for the year almost demanding from the County perspective of what they were going to do, similar to what Dr. Hanlin presented. Dr. Hanlin said they did not ask for the private schools' plans, obviously, but they needed to know how they wanted to spend their funds so they could order items. Mr. Cannon asked how the private schools are being accountable for their teaching processes, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, by their own boards of directors. Mr. Cannon asked if they have to send that information to the State Board of Education, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, no.

Mrs. Acle said it is very difficult for parents and children to go through this, and it is a really unfortunate circumstance with public health, so she applauds them for the work they have put in to come up with this plan. She said one of the things Council heard today during public comments from teachers, students, and parents was that there were a lot of questions. She said she sees the staff they have for the recovery work groups on page 31. She then asked if that was who she selected to come up with the plan, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, they did not actually write the plan, but they were part of

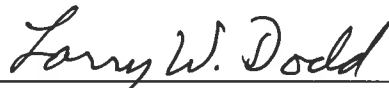
deliberating the hybrid model and so forth. Mrs. Acle said she sees that Dr. Hornstein was their medical expert, and Mr. Smoke was transportation. She then asked if they were able to engage any other parents or stakeholders, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, there are parents on there, and in some cases they may have had dual roles. She said, in fact, Dr. Hornstein is a parent, so there may be some overlap. She explained, in order to keep the groups a manageable size, they did that on purpose having dual roles if they could. Mrs. Acle asked, if those students, parents, or teachers have questions, can they contact their representative from this group, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she would say they would probably be better off asking the Board about the plan because they did not actually write the plan, they had input early on. Mrs. Acle said one of the things that came up with transportation today was school buses, and how that was going to be funded since it is a line item in their budget. She then asked if those funds were going to be transferred somewhere else as another support, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, they will still be utilizing some transportation to transport students, and they are determining now what those routes might look like and, with social distancing, how they can assign those routes with contractors. She said, quite honestly, they are balancing that with what a contract looks like. She clarified, they have a contract, but how the actual agreement will play out with bus contractors. She said they do not want any bus contractor to lose their livelihood, or to not be able to pay for their bus, for example. She said they are going to make sure that does not happen, but there has to be a balance of using taxpayer dollars responsibly, and also utilizing their bus drivers as much as they can in other ways. She said it might not be just transporting students, but they have talked about the possibility of transporting meals into certain areas of the community. She said they have looked but found that it is not as efficient to use hot spots on buses, so that does not really help them much because it is really only a couple of families that it would help, but that is certainly something they could revisit if they thought so. She said they are looking not just at bus drivers, but they are looking at every individual staff position and repurposing the job or looking for ways to keep people solvent while using taxpayer dollars efficiently and prudently. Mrs. Acle said, if there is anything she can do to help get information out to the community, she would be more than happy to, and she is sure everyone at this table feels the same.

Mr. Hastings said there is usually a big kickoff for all the teachers and educators. He then asked if there is going to be any virtual kind of that, or any kind of rallying moment, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she wishes they could do that, but her plan at this point is to rally at every school's faculty meeting. She clarified, she is going to make a personal appearance virtually at every school's faculty meeting. Mr. Malone said there will be a virtual kickoff for new teachers, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, yes, for new teachers. She said this is quite different because, when they think about where they were a year ago with Ron Clark, it was so incredible, and who would have ever thought they would be here a year later.

Mr. Davis said Dr. Hanlin mentioned the school bus contractors and that they are going to use the tax dollars wisely. He then asked what that means, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, she does not know yet. She clarified, they are examining that again to make sure, and she will repeat herself, that bus drivers continue to be solvent. Mr. Malone said he does not think the comment that they will use taxpayer's dollars wisely applies just to transportation. He said they are going to take a look at everything, and the Board is looking at that now because there are going to be savings from utilities, etc., but they still have to run the air conditioning in the schools to avoid mold, etc. He said they are stewards of taxpayer's money on the School Board, they are not irresponsible, and they are not turning a deaf ear to that. He

said, to Mr. Davis' point, they are not just looking at transportation, they are going to be looking at everything to make the budget balance, and to make sure they spend the money responsibly.

Mr. Hastings said there was a question earlier during Public Comments dealing with broadband. He said he thinks the general explanation was they are trying to get some hot spots to different families. He then asked if there is anything Dr. Hanlin would like to say about that publicly. He clarified, he knows there is not really much they can do about last mile broadband expansion, but there are a lot of folks in this County who do not have access. Dr. Hanlin said they are going to work with every individual family who is not connected to provide a hot spot. She said she does not remember how many hundreds they have been able to purchase, and she is looking at her staff online, but she does not know if they can hear her. Mr. Stauffer, via Zoom, said they have provided over 1,000 hot spots at this point. Mr. Holloway asked how many laptops they have provided, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, about 8,000. Mr. Holloway asked if that was all done with CARES money, to which Dr. Hanlin responded, yes. She clarified, CARES money, GEARS money, which is the Governor's Relief Fund, and there are a number of funding sources where they have been able to piece that together. She said this will be very, very helpful. She said also Council is probably aware that there is an initiative through the Office of Rural Broadband for local jurisdictions, meaning Counties, to apply for grants to enhance rural broadband in the area, so they would be glad to assist Council in that area because certainly that would benefit the school system as well. There was no further discussion.



Larry W. Dodd, President, District 3

John T. Cannon, Vice President, At-Large



Ernest F. Davis, District 1

Nicole Agle, District 2



Josh Hastings, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5



William R. McCain, At-Large



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator