



Public Comment Responses Received During the WPS BOE Meeting on 8/3/2020

Below is the public record of public comment responses received during the 8/3/2020 BOE Meeting.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS - No public comment received. One test response was received.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

1. **Anticipated Appointment of a New Board of Education Member** - No public comment was taken on this item
2. **Approval of Technology Purchases - Coleytown Middle School** - Public comment is posted exactly as received.

george nanos	16 taylor lane	What is the plan for elementary schools in this regard?
Harris Falk	Overlook Rd	I asked this at the last meeting, but it wasn't answered. Is there extra audio and camera equipment being installed at BMS? Will that equipment be able to be moved over to CMS? Rather than purchasing more than we ultimately require.

3. **Grant to Chief Financial Officer of Emergency Purchasing Power and Waiver of Competitive Bidding Requirements for Personal Protective Equipment** - No public comment received. Two test responses were received.

DISCUSSION

1. **Update from the School Reopening Committee** -

Andrew Coleman	3 Rippling Brook Lane	Air Filtration
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<p>Andrew Coleman</p>	<p>3 Rippling Brook Lane</p>	<p>Reopening of Westport Schools</p> <p>Air Filtration</p> <p>The primary transmission of the corona virus is through indoor air, either as droplets or aerosols.</p> <p>The primary method of removing corona virus from the air is through air filtration (specifically via HEPA rated air filtration systems*).</p> <p>Portable HEPA filtration units with capacities of over 350 cubic feet per minute are available with (currently) no supply limitations for prices of hundreds of dollars each.</p> <p>One such unit should be sufficient to filter air for about 20 students. (Based on one student needing 15 cubic feet per minute of fresh air (ASHRAE Standard 62-2001, Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality)).</p> <p>Providing portable filtration units for the Westport school population of 6,000 (assuming 5,500 students, 500 teachers) would therefore cost less than \$6,000,000 plus installation, or 5% of the education budget. It could probably be implemented in a very short space of time, as these portable filtration units are easily installed by a single person of average strength and require no special electricity supply, plumbing, etc.</p> <p>Reopening the schools is probably the most worthwhile action that we can take right now, but it's also the riskiest in terms of potentially causing a new surge in Westport. \$6 million seems a small price for us to pay to mitigate that risk.</p> <p>The Westport Schools Reopening plan talks of "exploring air filtration options" but doesn't have any specifics. I recommend specifically we should put portable air filtration systems into every classroom that doesn't already have them.</p> <p>* Note that HEPA filters capture 99.97% of 0.3 micron particles, while MERV 14-16 filters capture only 75% of such particles.)</p> <p>Andrew Coleman 3 Rippling Brook Lane Westport, CT 06880 andrewcoleman2010@gmail.com 201-221-9763</p>
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[We request 6 minutes reading time if needed, 3 minutes for Jeff Benner and 3 minutes for Michelle Benner]

We urge the Board and Administration to adopt a proactive and aggressive approach to gathering and disseminating information regarding actual and suspected COVID-19 cases when school resumes in the Fall. We believe this is absolutely essential to avoid a major outbreak of infection and to allow families to make decisions based on accurate and timely information instead of running for the “opt out” exit in a panic based on rumor, fear and misinformation.

PROPOSAL

ONE Practice full transparency in gathering and providing COVID related information in real time to school employees, students and their families regarding reports of suspected or actual cases among staff, students, or their households.

This means:

- a. Require student families and staff to report to the school immediately any confirmed or suspected COVID infection or symptoms for themselves or anyone in their household.
- b. Immediately communicate this information – all of it – by email “alert” to staff and students/families of all those who share a classroom or pod with the person who has reported symptoms or who shares a classroom with any member of their household.
- c. Create a public “COVID Notifications” webpage where ALL notifications of

POINTS IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSAL

POINT ONE. We need to be much, much more realistic (i.e. pessimistic) about the risk of infection and the gravity of the life-and-death decisions that will need to be made almost every day in the Fall. There are going to be kids and/or staff infected with COVID on the first day of school. The only question is how many, and how quickly we will be able to find them and take swift action.

a. Connecticut tests about 10,000 people a day. Between 0.5% and 1.0% test positive. This is not a random sample of the population, but the vast majority of these people are not getting tested due to symptoms, because 99% don't have COVID, so it has some value as a predictor of general infection rates in our state.

b. Based on current positivity rates, when about 6,000 students and staff walk into school on the first day, some of them will have COVID. If it is just 0.5% of our school population, that is 30 cases (which could mean 30 classrooms) with a case. Could it be fewer? Sure. Could it be zero? Extremely unlikely. We need a plan that ASSUMES we have 30 – 50 cases in the schools on day one.

POINT TWO If we do not give families and teachers confidence they are getting full information and aggressive action is being taken when the school has information about SUSPECTED cases or POSSIBLE exposure, we will be back to “remote only” within weeks by default because families will pull their kids out and teachers will call out sick based on rumors, fear and misinformation.

POINT THREE The District cannot delegate responsibility for avoiding an outbreak to the Health Department. That will NOT keep kids and staff safe, which is YOUR responsibility.

a. If we have an outbreak and teachers, students or family members get sick or die, Board members and administrators will have to answer hard questions, both for themselves and in litigation. What did the district know about the risk in the class/pod/school? Who was told? When? Was all the information the school had about risks shared with teachers and families? “We were relying on the health department” is not going to be a sufficient answer if the District chooses to withhold information about risk from students and teachers.

b. If we only inform families and staff about confirmed positive cases, and rely on the Health Department contact tracing to inform classmates and staff about the positive case, this WILL GUARANTEE AN OUTBREAK GOES UNDETECTED FOR A WEEK OR MORE. This is unacceptable.

POINT FOUR If the District does not practice full transparency with information, the rumor-mill and Facebook groups will fill the void and this will mean panic and empty classrooms.

a. If there are rumors of an outbreak, and the response from the District is “you will be receiving a call from the CT Health Department if and when there has

		<p>been a confirmed case of COVID in your child's class/pod/school", the result will be panic and a rush to the "opt out" exit.</p> <p>b. Do not put yourselves through this. Set a policy of transparency now.</p> <p>POINT FIVE "But what about privacy?" is NOT a valid reason to reject the Proposal. Don't use names, and that solves the problem. This is what we have done for years with "a student in your child's class has strep" emails. You have an obligation to keep staff, students and their families safe, and that means you have the right to gather and disseminate information necessary to do so. This is what employers and government in Connecticut have been doing throughout this pandemic.</p> <p>Thank you for listening and for your hard work during this difficult time.</p>
Mark Friedman	14 Saint George PL	<p>Dear School Administrators & Members of the BOE,</p> <p>While new cases of COVID-19 remain relatively low in CT at the moment, it is no secret that the virus rages across most of the country, and, unfortunately, the month of July witnessed the most cases so far in the United States. Moreover, things have worsened in the northeast recently as New Jersey, Rhoda Island and Massachusetts have seen their numbers trend in the wrong direction.</p> <p>Out of an abundance of caution, I submit that it is far too early to commit to a fully in-person reopening plan at this time.</p> <p>I understand that some schools are phasing the return to campus by age, an approach consistent with the evidence that older students are more virulent carriers of COVID-19. So, a different plan for each level—elementary, middle-school, and high school—may well make sense, as might differentiated timing for the various levels.</p> <p>I am grateful to each of you and to the many teachers, staff and parents for your hard work and focus on this monumental task. As the parent of a Staples student and RTM representative for District 3, I appreciate that there is a collective understanding that this is not a time for wishful thinking or excessive risk taking.</p> <p>Sincerely, Mark Friedman RTM D3</p>
Athena McAlenney	26 Bauer Place	<p>I am thrilled to hear Mr. Scarice is taking another look at the hybrid elementary school model to give additional space in these classrooms. AAP guidance clearly states that three feet of distance between desks "may approach" the same protection as 6 feet of distance between desks if children are wearing masks and are asymptomatic. Since elementary children will be removing masks in class to eat lunch and snack, and since the district cannot control whether children are sent to school with or develop symptoms of COVID-19, what is the rationale for the safety of 3 feet "head to head" of space between students in the elementary schools in the full capacity model? Can the</p>

		Supervisor of Health Services provide the research documents to support that decision to the community? I am struggling to find any research to support that myself.
George Nanos	16 Taylor Lane	First I want to thank you all for tackling what seems like an impossible task. Testing and contact tracing is an important mitigant of covid spread. Can you speak to how the health department together with the reopening committee is thinking about testing students and staff immediately prior to the first day of school and also periodically throughout the year (e.g. weekly or monthly)?
Rob Rogers	CMS Teacher	How are teachers from CMS who will be at BMS and moving from room to room, going to be accommodated by this schedule?

2. Update from Policy Committee and First Reading of the Following Policies:

- "Temporary Policies and Regulations" (new)
- Policy 1250, "Policy Regarding Visitors and Observations in Schools" (revise existing Westport policy)
- "School Volunteers, Student Interns, and Other Non-Employees" (new)
- Policy 1330, "Use of School Facilities" (revise existing Westport policy)
- Policy 5114, "Student Discipline" (revise existing Westport policy)
- "Transportation" (new)
- "Student Attendance, Truancy, and Chronic Absenteeism" (revise existing Westport policy)

No public comment received.