

Wednesday May 13, 2020 (via zoom video conference)  
6:36 pm meeting called to order by David Hiller, President

*In attendance:*

See attached. Board Members present: David Hiller, President; Christian McNamara, Vice President; Misha Serfillippi, Fundraising; Christy Czekaj, Membership; Katie Metcalfe, Treasurer; Katie Connors, Secretary. Central Office representation: Chris Melillo, Assistant Superintendent; Linda Mordibelli, Mathematics Department Director; Julia McNamee, Language Arts Department Director.

*Suggested alteration to agenda:*

Motion to amend agenda to include discussion on remote learning: Dave Hiller; Second: Mary Nelson; Carried unanimously.

*Discussion of Remote Learning*

**Chris Melillo**, attending to answer questions related to district distance learning;

Districts in our District Reference Group (DRG) have not engaged in live video instruction, although local communities are engaging

District model must regard equity: sharing technology, views into private homes, understanding that working/schedules may negatively attendance, equity in access to instruction/support.

In process/In delivery adjustments made thus far:

- Technology: identify needs, distribute devices and hotspots to provide equity across district
- Taking feedback from the beginning days of remote learning to recent parent survey. District responded to both, continues to respond.
- Established Wednesdays as no new learning/communication day
- Revised minutes assigned to work
- Reduced due dates for assignments
- The district initially engaged in distance learning without knowledge of school year closure, asked for flexibility as best practices were developed
- District has awareness and is responding to social/emotional needs of our school population.

*Opportunity for District representatives to respond to member questions:*

1. **Can we get a list of what teachers are allowed to do?** Chris Melillo: Yes, part of distance learning plan, will email.
2. **Is the district looking into live teaching?** Chris Melillo: District is investigating synchronous learning, could look to provide more social exchanges such as: morning meeting, office hours, providing flexibility. Will use parent surveys to inform district work.
3. **What are the teacher challenges in remote learning?** Linda Mordibelli: In communication with other districts within state. Our district was purposeful in a conservative start, looking for successes in initial phases, build on successes. Live, social interaction is missed by all. In discussion with other districts, there are common challenges to synchronous learning including: set times, availability blocks, curriculum improvements, families are struggling. We will continue to take feedback; it is a work in progress. Linda praised teachers, specialists, and SRBI coordinators for communication, collaboration, strengthened teaching teams, delivery of curriculum.
  - a. **Howard Hornreich, SGS Principal:** reiterated pride in how district and specifically Spring Glen School have met above-mentioned challenges. Teachers have worked tirelessly, extensively, collaboratively, collegially, and creatively. Offered his thanks for their commitment.
  - b. **Julia McNamee:** Have had significant adjustments all along. We paired down but continued to offer high quality options. Providing strong context while adapting used 6<sup>th</sup>

grade writing as an example. Flipgrids have now created opportunity for social interaction. Continue to look at how to improve and make adjustments.

4. **What actions has SG PTA taken to address equity among students:** (to be answered by PTA)
5. **Question regarding equity in expectations of students:** **Chris Melillo:** reiterated that we are investigating the equity piece and that Wednesdays (no new learning day) can be differentiated. District is providing enrichment activities for those that are eager for more learning, students are still encouraged to read, work on long term assignments, can communicate and request enrichment activities. **Linda Mordibelli:** Gave examples of learning opportunities: academic support, student connection, building relationships through direct communication, optional math extension Google classroom. **Julia McNamee:** Wednesdays are an opportunity to reach out, opportunity to complete optional work, viewing instructional videos, mentor texts videos, student read books, participate on Lexia, opportunities to catch up and maintain skills.
6. **Equity issues, level of parent support required with distance learning.** **Chris Melillo:** Described the complexity of providing quality distance learning and that the importance of
7. **Should students be better able to navigate the online experience independently?** **Chris Melillo:** We are trying to support students as best we can with richness of materials. **Julia McNamee:** It does depend on age and technological adeptness. We have tried to provide younger students with consistent formatting to ease that transition to independent computer work. We recognize that we need to provide options for these reasons. Parents are encouraged to work with students when they can. **Linda Mordibelli:** Our planning of many of the district policies was conservative for this reason. There is a learning curve; Hamden's phased introduction supported the transition. Hamden believes we have been responsive to these needs.
8. **What is PTA doing now during distance learning and why are parents choosing to use social media to voice concerns?** (To be answered by PTA)
9. **When can we expect special ed. services to return (such as speech and language instruction) to begin?** **Chris Melillo:** Many speech & language, OT and PT services have begun to best of PPS team's ability. As such, speech & language sessions often require the type of physical proximity/contact beyond the scope of virtual sessions cannot afford. Audio meetings can be limiting in therapeutic support and not always recognized by the speech & language pathologists governing board. Special education department recently sent survey to gain better understanding of student need. Chris recommends opening lines of communication with phone call or email.
10. **Has state/district cancelled standardized testing?** **Chris Melillo:** State has suspended standardized testing (including SBAC, NWEA). Federal money will not be withheld because standardized testing has been suspended. **Julia** and **Linda** reported that data collected up to March 12 will be used for student placements/transitions to HMS. Processes for placement have not changed. 6<sup>th</sup> grade students will be placed into content areas based on performance up to March 12.
11. **Will online programs (Lexia, Moby, etc.) be extended through the summer?** **Chris Melillo:** district is currently looking into extending software through the summer. **Linda:** We will have Moby through the summer. Plan to be communicated soon.
12. **Question asked about ideal school environments (see video for descriptions)**
13. **How will current 5<sup>th</sup> graders be placed in 7<sup>th</sup> grade math?** **Linda Mordibelli:** In current discussions, no definite answer.
14. **How will we assess if students are prepared for next grade?** **Chris Melillo:** We understand there will likely be a slide or gap. Students will need support to catch up. Our Plan is to assess and implement SRBI to provide supports. Intervention blocks across K-6, wrap around services before and after school programming, extending school day, extending summer school. Strategic planning to gain instruction currently being discussed.
15. **Is there a plan in place that all students have internet access? What is the district % has access? What is participation %?** Hamden believes it has reached all families needing devices and hotspots. Hamden currently has 90% participation rate.
16. **What is the process of learning from different school communities across the state/country?** **Chris Melillo:** We all participate in working groups within our disciplines. Consulting, webinars, reading research provide collaboration at state level and nationally.

17. **How are students placed in Moby Max? Why were students “replaced into grade level?**

**Linda:** Math department placed importance on students’ exposure to grade level standards. Math department will allow for flexibility in determining placement within the program.

18. **How can parents advocate for level changes in programs like Moby and Lexia? Linda:**

Communicate with classroom teacher.

*Financial report (see attached) – Treasurer, Katie Metcalfe*

- This years budget: approximately \$34,000 in account (reconciled 4/30/20)
- Many cancellations this year because of school closure
- 25,000 income, spent 32,000
- Still outstanding expenditures (play)

*Principal’s Report, Howard Hornreich*

- Thanks to staff and parents for attending tonight’s meeting
- Pleased, excited about how distance learning has been rolled out
- Report cards: marking period 3 will include feedback rather than standards based grading
- Connection Wednesday has received positive feedback. For those looking to explore differentiated activities, for others it has allowed kids to catch up
- June 5 we will hold district virtual field day (no new work assigned)
- District working on day for students to retrieve their belongings
- Teachers will be in school May 20, cleaning and organizing their classrooms, organizing student belongings
- Howard delivered lawn signs for teacher appreciation week
- Teachers feel disconnected from students, miss students, closure was abrupt and did not allow for closure
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade in-person promotion cancelled. Parents working on organizing video, yearbook, t-shirt
- Howard and Dave discussed teacher appreciation week: PTA has felt same challenges being out of school, video was planned as a valuable way to connect students with teachers. A teacher appreciation committee was recommended for next school year.

*Discussion of event cancellations/postponements, Dave Hiller*

- a. 5K reschedule-
  - Postponed, new date 9/20/20
  - Runners refunded, sponsors remain for new date
- b. Play update
  - Play committee considering to continue virtual rehearsals, play is currently postponed indefinitely

*Update on Yearbook, Misha Serfillippi*

- There were not enough forwarded photos at this time, hard copy yearbook has been cancelled
- Can be substituted with a slide show, we can continue to collect photos
- Yearbook continues to be valuable, connecting students to the year & school community
- Would need to capture the list of students that have opted for photo privacy

*Proposed budget for 2020-2021*

- Budget has previously been proposed (see attached)
- Budget is open to amendments
- Events planned further our mission, reduction of fundraisers
- Goal is revenue neutral, furthers the mission
- Open to amendments; Amendments: none
- Move to adopt proposed budget: Dave Hiller; Second: Tim Trama; Approved by unanimous consent.

*Election of officers for 2020-2021*

- Open Board positions: Vice President, Membership, Treasurer, Secretary, and Vice President for Fundraising. Allowances for co-offices.
- Considering sharing work of the organization to committee members
- Accepting nominations to Board positions
- Dave Hiller nominated for President
- Misha Serfillippi volunteered to continue in any capacity PTA needs her
- Christy Czekaj volunteered to continue as Membership Chair

*Other Items from Executive Board*

- Misha Serfillippi: Kindergarten play dates for incoming class – postponed because of playground closures, dates TBD
- Dave Hiller: Response to earlier questions regarding PTA’s role in supporting equity across the community. PTA has made significant efforts to increase opportunities and equity through financially supplementing afterschool programming for students who may not otherwise be able to attend afterschool activities. It was very successful this year and supported by the Spring Glen community as a whole. Suggested forming mentorship program: incoming families paired with current Spring Glen families. Would support communication, building relationships. Pairings could be intentional in building bridges and networking across school community regarding proximity.
- Dave Hiller: share of PTA mission statement (see attached recording)
- Dave Hiller: share of personal statement (see attached recording)

*Member Questions and Comments*

Member comments: Howard Hornreich & Dave Hiller, Shelby Irwin (comment read by Dave Hiller), Mary Nelson, Liz DiFonzo, Christy Czekaj, Howard Hornreich, Christian McNamara, Kristen Senise (see attached recording)

Motion to Adjourn: 9:16 p.m. Dave Hiller.

*Minutes respectfully submitted, 5/16/20*

*Katie Connors, Secretary*

Chat transcript from meeting. When no name is stated, the person asking did not consent to their name being shared. Other comments are included in this transcript only if the person writing them gave explicit consent.

18:47:32 From : can we get a list of what the teachers are allowed to do?

18:48:04 From : Question coming now: if they didn't talk about live teaching in the open — I'm curious if they are considering it? Why or why not? How are they learning from other districts about what's working and what isn't?

18:48:08 From : okay that's a lot of questions!

18:50:25 From : what is making it difficult for the teachers to teach? what are their challenges?

18:50:28 From Shelby Irwin : What actions has the PTA taken to help solve disparity within the Spring Glen community to create equity for all Spring Glen students?

18:51:11 From : I feel there is not enough work. is that equality?

18:52:22 From : what do they imagine the kids are doing on Wednesday when no assignments are given? I assure you there is still inequality

18:54:21 From : I'm hopeful that there is going to be full teaching through the end of the school year.

18:54:31 From Christian McNamara : I appreciate the focus on equity issues. It would seem that one of the biggest potential sources of inequity is students whose parents are in a position to assist them with online learning and those whose parents are not (because of job commitments, etc.). Would a system that allows for more teacher interaction be beneficial for equity because it would reduce the role of parents?

18:56:36 From Becky Murphy : I think it's pretty safe to say that we're not the only ones that need to provide guidance for our younger children through navigating the different site, avoiding commercials (please limit YouTube links) and ensuring tasks are completed. do you feel the children should be able to do this on their own and,as more parents will be returning to work, how does this change the expectation?

18:58:40 From Eliza O'Rourke : I don't think that anyone is debating how hard the teachers are working, but that this system isn't allowing them to ad lib enough to teach to their students in the best way possible. I want to make sure that if we need to do this next year, that there is more leeway for them.

19:02:24 From Shelby Irwin : My question is about what the PTA is doing NOW during distance learning.

19:04:46 From Shelby Irwin : Also, why are parents choosing social media as a forum to address concerns?

19:05:40 From Misha Serfillippi to David Hiller(Privately) : If not already asked (if a similar question is ask then you don't have to ask) ... When can we expect Special Ed services to return, for instance Speech?

19:06:30 From Robyn Reynolds : Please mention and consider that many teachers have young children and no child care available.

19:07:50 From Robyn Reynolds : I have 2 young children that are dependent on me all day long. This is reality. It is a struggle daily. I love teaching. We are doing the best we can.

19:08:20 From : This is not a high priority question at all, so feel free to skip -- but I'm wondering about what the state (or district?) is doing about standardized test requirements? Are tests still going to be administered, and does state funding for schools depend on cumulative test scores this year?

19:08:58 From susan Alsamara : will the applications like Lexia,mobymax,epic continue to be available through the summer for continued learning

19:16:16 From William Asch to David Hiller(Privately) : We have heard nothing about speech at all - Isaac should be receiving services once a week.

19:18:45 From Misha Serfillippi : Will Lexia and MobyMax be available through the summer as some of the continue learning through the summer that was mentioned?

19:23:49 From Makaela Kingsley : I know it's hard to think aspirationally during a time of crisis, but just for kicks... if you could reimagine public education for a distance learning climate, what might that look like? if resources were unlimited for schools and families, what ideas come to mind? if schools can't open in the fall, can the district think creatively about how to nurture and inspire students in new ways?

19:24:37 From : how will they decide on 7th grade math placement for the 5th graders?

19:26:57 From Eliza O'Rourke : What are the plans for next year to asses if kids have learned what they need to learn in order to advance grades? While computers have been procured, is there a plan being put in place to make sure that all kids will have adequate internet access so that part of the equity portion of the distance learning is no longer an issue?

19:27:02 From : What is the process of learning from other districts both in CT and other parts of the country about what's working well—especially as we think ahead to the fall

19:33:33 From Makaela Kingsley : thank you for asking my question David. I appreciated those answers!

19:33:57 From David Hiller : You're welcome! You were not alone wanting that answer.

19:37:55 From Shelby Irwin to David Hiller : I plan to leave this meeting soon, but I hope you will read and have a healthy discussion about this comment. You may read my name as I have no need or desire to hide behind anonymity. Spring Glen parents - Please know that the choice to use social media to discuss discontent with teachers, the school and the school district is really counter-productive. It is really damaging to the parent/teacher relationship as it leaves hard feelings. I say this knowing that this is by far not the first time a parent has chosen to use social media to bash Spring Glen teachers, the school, or the district. I love teaching, and I love my students. I want the very best for them. And I know my colleagues feel the same. Of course parents want the very best for their children. To that end, we should be a team, and a team doesn't disparage its members in a public venue such as a social media site. I truly hope parents who feel discontent choose to lean into collaboration over divisiveness.

19:51:59 From Christian McNamara : Doesn't a blanket policy of reverting students to their grade level eliminate teacher assessment, not take advantage of it?

19:55:48 From Becky Murphy : thank you Dave, Ronan hates Moby right now and were having a hard time getting him to complete it

19:58:48 From Makaela Kingsley : FYI lexia also seems to be too slow / not challenging enough

20:00:08 From : It's not just Moby Max. My child finds Lexia incredibly tedious. My concerns about the appropriateness of the level were not addressed and we have been skipping it entirely.

20:00:17 From Makaela Kingsley : it seems that these digital platforms should be built to respond to kids' abilities and pace with no teacher intervention!

20:00:48 From Leslie Redmond : I would really appreciate being able to see comments/questions. I feel we need more transparency.

20:03:15 From Julia McNamee : Thank you for inviting us; please reach out if you have other questions or suggestions.

20:03:25 From Kaari Pitkin : Thanks for coming!

20:03:40 From Mary Nelson to David Hiller(Privately) : Thank you for coming and supporting us

20:05:47 From Linda Morbidelli : Thank you, Spring Glen. Teachers and Specialists - Thank You all for your hard work. Keep it up. Stay positive. Have a great rest of your week!

20:15:55 From Leslie Redmond : Thank you so much for the signs, Howard.

20:19:27 From DiFonzoFamily : I want to say that an email on monday would have went a long day

20:19:49 From DiFonzoFamily : I agree that there does not need to be a lot of money spent. It is the thought and the consideration that is the most important.

20:20:00 From DiFonzoFamily : \*way

20:23:33 From Kristen Senise : In general or only regarding teacher appreciation?

20:23:48 From Katie Metcalfe : it would definitely be helpful to know how the teachers would like to be appreciated- it's Katie Metcalfe

20:24:08 From Katie Metcalfe : plants? a sign?

20:24:09 From Kristyna Templeton (Ms. B) : communicate with other ptas in our district

20:24:25 From Katie Metcalfe : what do they do?

20:24:31 From DiFonzoFamily : My son's school did a beautiful job in a very simple way letting the teachers and staff know that they appreciated them. I would be more than willing to share these with the committee for next year. It was simple and meaningful.

20:25:58 From allison rosenberg : I have served on the board under three different presidents on the pat over the last 5 years and know that getting volunteers and committees formed is very difficult. It needs to be the board that is brainstorming and making sure that things come to fruition

20:26:00 From DiFonzoFamily : I will message you on Dojo. It was really sweet

20:26:12 From allison rosenberg : waiting on volunteers and committees is something that will not always end positively- like this years teacher appreciation week

20:26:50 From Eliza O'Rourke : Can that be run like some others have been where you do it individually if the date doesn't work?

20:29:01 From Eliza O'Rourke : Was there something sent out that requested photos from kids? Will there be a refund from prepaid yearbooks

20:29:27 From allison rosenberg : the students had their pictures taken in the fall as well as class pictures- why weren't those used to create a yearbook?

20:31:01 From Eliza O'Rourke : Maybe that would have been seen better if the teachers sent the requests via the classroom for stuff like that too

20:41:10 From Misha Serfillippi : I nominate Dave Hiller for president

20:42:01 From Becky Murphy : I second dave for president

20:48:36 From Leslie Redmond : Dave, While we appreciate the video you made, the staff would like to address how insulted were by your recent FB post about teaching

20:51:43 From DiFonzoFamily : I would like to second that Leslie. I was very hurt and disheartened after seeing the comment.

20:52:50 From DiFonzoFamily : Especially seeing that we are working extremely hard. I often times put my students before my own son. I have tried my very best in a situation I received no training for.

20:53:32 From DiFonzoFamily : If we want to build relationships and strengthen communication between the parents and the teachers

20:53:32 From Robyn Reynolds : We are working so hard. Countless hours. Miss our students and doing the best we can. I was hurt reading the comments as well.

20:54:07 From Donna Nolan : On behalf of our staff I would also very much appreciate that being addressed.

20:54:10 From DiFonzoFamily : Social Media is not a platform that is appreciated

20:55:30 From Mai Bradley : It's unfortunate that the SPG teachers had to read to such derogatory comments during this already troubling time.

20:55:48 From Mary Nelson : I would like to comment

20:56:06 From DiFonzoFamily : I would like to comment tot

20:56:08 From DiFonzoFamily : too

20:56:27 From DiFonzoFamily : Teachers are going crazy making tutorials, slideshows, giving feedback

20:56:35 From DiFonzoFamily : It is far from ideal.

20:56:41 From allison rosenberg : I agree with all that has been said by my colleagues above- we are working so hard and missing our students and trying to meet their needs in the best way that we can. To hear that a post on FB is questioning that is disheartening,

20:56:44 From Alexis Meurs : There is a difference between advocating for your children and saying that teachers aren't teaching. We are pouring countless hours into the children of Spring Glen who we deeply care about and miss.

20:56:49 From DiFonzoFamily : I agree

20:57:11 From DiFonzoFamily : It was said that no new learning is taking place

20:57:14 From DiFonzoFamily : and that is not true

20:57:15 From allison rosenberg : "There is no teaching going on in our schools...."

20:57:16 From Jessica Mangini : It is untrue that students are learning.

20:57:19 From DiFonzoFamily : we spend hours planning and creating

20:57:22 From allison rosenberg : that was the beginning of the comment

20:57:49 From Mary Nelson : Please let us speak!

20:57:57 From DiFonzoFamily : It is fine to have concerns. We have concerns too. We would give anything to be with our kids in the classroom. We are open to it.

21:01:41 From Dorian Bauknecht : OUCH

21:05:04 From Eliza O'Rourke : I have to say that Dave's comment came across that you, as teachers, aren't being given the

21:05:48 From Eliza O'Rourke : Opportunity to teach, that your hands are tied <3 not that any of you aren't busting your butts to do the best you can with what you've been given

21:09:19 From Dorian Bauknecht : Thanks Christy

21:09:19 From Donna Nolan : Thank you for your kindness Christy! <3

21:09:46 From Leslie Redmond : Thank you, Christy. Much appreciated!

21:09:51 From DiFonzoFamily : Thank you Christy!

21:09:58 From allison rosenberg : Thank you Christy!

21:10:07 From Amanda Riley : Thank you Christy!

21:10:14 From Robyn Reynolds : Thank you Christy! Say hi to the kids. Miss them.

21:10:15 From Nancy MacGregor : Thanks Christy for all you do for us!

21:10:27 From Jessica Mangini : Thanks Christy!

21:10:33 From Alexis Meurs : Thank you Christy!

21:10:44 From Dorian Bauknecht : Thanks Howard!!

21:12:41 From Janet Lavorgna : I hope you will no longer post any school concerns on Facebook and that you can realize how hurtful and unprofessional it was, especially as PTA president. Thank you.

21:13:49 From Kristen Senise : I have a comment