

DOWNINGTOWN AREA BOARD OF EDUCATION
Meeting held virtually
Wednesday, February 3, 2021
6:30 p.m.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
NOTES

A. CALL TO ORDER

President Bertone called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m. in the James E. Watson Staff Development Room.

President Bertone
Director Blust
Vice President Britton
Director Ghrayeb
Director Gibson
Director Houghton
Director Kring
Director MacNeal
Director Wisdom

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 6, 2021

On a motion by Director MacNeal, seconded by Director Kring, the Board, on a voice vote, unanimously approved the minutes of the January 6, 2021 Committee of the Whole.

D. SUPERINTENDENT UPDATE – Dr. Lonardi

Dr. Lonardi presented a PowerPoint which reviewed the current Chester County metrics, PDE/DOH guidelines and district Covid cases. Dr. Reed reviewed staggered attendance. Ms. Shealy reviewed recent survey results. Dr. Chance and Ms. Dennis reviewed reentry planning for regular education and special education respectively. Dr. Lonardi also advised that permission from PDE was received to allow the Chester County Department of Health to oversee schools in the county once again. The district is awaiting new guidance from the county. Hoping to have this guidance next week for board review and consideration. Dr. Lonardi also discussed virtual days' vs snow days given the recent weather and virtual days.

E. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Personnel Committee Report – *Chairperson: Director Ghrayeb; Vice-Chair: Director Gibson; Administrative Liaison: Dawna Hankins*

Consent Agenda Items

1. Request approval of the Personnel Items

Moved forward to the Consent Agenda for full board approval.

Action Agenda Items

1. **Request renewal of an agreement with Vision Benefit of America for Vision Benefits**
Total Cost: Claims plus 9% of Claims for administration fee (no increase in fee)
Contract Dates: 7/1/21 – 6/30/23
Funding Source: General Fund
Budget Year: 2021 – 2022; 2022 – 2023

This will be an action item for full board approval on February 10, 2021.

2. **Request renewal of an agreement with Gallagher Benefit Services, Inc. for broker and consulting services**
Total Cost: Offset by broker commissions, \$90,000 per year (no increase in fee)
Contract Dates: 7/1/21 – 6/30/24
Funding Source: General Fund
Budget Year: 2021 – 2022; 2022 – 2023; 2023 – 2024

This will be an action item for full board approval on February 10, 2021.

3. **Request renewal of agreement with Sun Life Financial for Group and Optional Life insurance, AD&D, and Disability insurance for benefit eligible employees**
Total Cost: approximate annual cost \$100,000 for Life & AD&D, \$75,000 for LTD, \$10,000 STD (no increase in rates)
Contract Dates: 7/1/21 – 6/30/23
Funding Source: General Fund
Budget Year: 2021 – 2022; 2022 – 2023

This will be an action item for full board approval on February 10, 2021.

Curriculum Committee Report – *Chairperson: Director Blust; Vice-Chair: Director MacNeal; Administrative Liaison: Lou Chance*

Consent Agenda Items

1. **Request approval for the donation, disposal or sale of the following items:**

BC (1) Buffalo Chopper (kitchen item no longer in use)
BW (10) Pillo polo sticks (30+ years)
EW (5) Two old 5 foot tables with folding legs, one is broken. Shopping bag of old headphones and old cassette player (20+ years for headphones and cassette player)
LM (129) 129 copies of Bat 6 by Virginia E. Wolff (3 boxes) (All books from LMS listed here are being stored at central office for possible use for high school – not all are needed/if any at this time)
LM (81) 81 copies of My Brother Sam is Dead (2 boxes)
LM (68) 68 copies of World Myths and Folk Tales (3 boxes)
LM (390) 390 copies of Lyddie by Katherine Paterson

SM (9) protractors / compass ball bearings (The 4 items listed below for SM are items that have been left over the years from teacher purchases/retirements)
SM (1) QRG Cradle - electronic device that connects to computer
SM (1524) Letter boarders 15 /Desk tape 24
SM (6) Primio - Table raisers (purchased 2016-17 when creating optional seating for students – these created standing desks/tables)

Moved forward to the Consent Agenda for full board approval.

Public Comment on Curriculum Committee Report

(Public comment shall be limited to 5 minutes' duration per Board Policy #903-Public Participation in Board Meetings.)

Policy Committee Report – *Chairperson: Director Houghton; Vice-Chair: Director Gibson; Administrative Liaison: Robert Reed*

Policies Out for 30-Day Review:

1. 610 Purchases Subject to Bid Quotation
2. 611 Purchases Budgeted
3. AG Administrative Guideline: 626 Federal Fiscal Compliance
4. AG Administrative Guideline: 208 Withdrawal from School

Moved forward to the Consent Agenda for full board approval.

New Business:

1. 103 Discrimination/Title IX Sexual Harassment Affecting Students
2. 218.3 Discipline of Students Convicted/Adjudicated of Sexual Assault
3. AG Administrative Guideline: 200 Parental Registration Statement

The above policies will be out for 30 days.

Public Comment on Policy Committee Report

(Public comment shall be limited to 5 minutes' duration per Board Policy #903-Public Participation in Board Meetings.)

Technology Committee Report – *Chairperson: Director Kring; Vice-Chair: Director Wisdom; Administrative Liaison: Gary Mattei*

Consent Agenda Items

1. **Request approval to purchase a projector, sound system, wireless microphones and related accessories for Marsh Creek multipurpose room**
Total Cost: NTE \$19,500
Funding Source: Capital Funds
Budget Year: 2020 – 2021

Moved forward to the Consent Agenda for full board approval.

2. **Request the surplus sale or disposal of the following end of life devices:**

| Make | Model | Notes | Category |
|------|-------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Dell | PowerEdge Servers | End of life (2015) | Sell |

Moved forward to the Consent Agenda for full board approval.

Action Agenda Items

- 1. Request approval to purchase network switches including all software, maintenance and support for all 16 schools, and for the sale or disposal of all end of life switches being replaced**

Total Cost: NTE \$390,000 (40% eRate reimbursement)

Funding Source: Capital Budget

Budget Year: 2020 – 2021

This will be an action item for full board approval on February 10, 2021.

- 2. Request approval to purchase 91 computers for middle school art shared laptop carts**

Total Cost: NTE \$81,000

Funding Source: Capital Budget

Budget Year: 2020 – 2021

This will be an action item for full board approval on February 10, 2021.

- 3. Request approval to purchase new microphones, control systems and audio conferencing equipment for staff development rooms A and B at Central Office**

Total Cost: NTE \$63,000 (offset by forthcoming federal grant)

Funding Source: Capital Budget

Budget Year: 2020 – 2021

This will be an action item for full board approval on February 10, 2021.

Discussion Items

1. Device Committee Update

Device committee met on Monday. Devices for the upper elementary and middle school to be evaluated. Characteristics for the device include keyboard, touch screen, long battery life, two in one functionality, durability, support peripherals, and integration with DASD software.

Students, teachers and board members are evaluating devices currently. Presentation scheduled for next month with a recommendation for the board's consideration.

Public Comment on Technology Committee Report

(Public comment shall be limited to 5 minutes' duration per Board Policy #903-Public Participation in Board Meetings.)

Finance Committee Report – *Chairperson: Director MacNeal; Vice-Chair: Director Houghton; Administrative Liaison: David Matyas*

Consent Agenda Items

1. **Request approval of the following Student Activity Clubs:**

- a. **DHSW Class of 2024** – This club will raise funds for the class of 2024 and be a part of the student council executive board. They will potentially do a spirit wear sale. The funds will be used for future dances and spirit raising supplies.

Moved forward to the Consent Agenda for full board approval.

2. **Request approval of the following stipulation agreement. This was a 2019 District initiated appeal. The settlement was the result of negotiations between the school district and the property owner**

Parcel Number: 33-05-0003.1000

Owner Name: 180 Gordon Dr. Partners LLC

Property Address: 180 Gordon Dr., Exton, PA 19431 – Office Building

Total Current Assessment: \$2,470,500

Settlement based on the fair market value of \$7,000,000 with the annual STEB ratio applied:

2020/2021 – STEB 49.3%

Assessment per agreement: \$3,451,000

Increase in assessment: \$980,500

Increase in annual tax revenue: \$26,652

2021/2022 – STEB 47%

Assessment per agreement: \$3,290,000

Increase in assessment: \$819,500

Increase in annual tax revenue: \$22,276

Moved forward to the Consent Agenda for full board approval.

3. **Request approval of the following stipulation agreement. This was a 2018 District initiated appeal. The settlement was a result of negotiations between the school district and the property owner**

Parcel Number: 33-04-0030.06A0

Owner Name: Main Line Marsh Creek, LLC

Property Address: 91 Sheree Blvd, Exton, PA 19341 – Office Building

Total Current Assessment: \$3,580,360

Settlement based on the fair market value of \$10,975,000 for 2019, \$11,175,000 for 2020, and \$11,175,000 for 2021 with the annual STEB ratio applied:

2019/2020 – STEB 51.3%

Assessment per agreement: \$5,630,175

Increase in assessment: \$2,049,815

Increase in annual tax revenue: \$55,714

2020/2021 – STEB 49.3%

Assessment per agreement: \$5,509,175
Increase in assessment: \$1,928,815
DRAFT 2020-1-25 Newlin
Increase in annual tax revenue: \$52,425

2021/2022 – STEB 47%
Assessment per agreement: \$5,252,250
Increase in assessment: \$1,617,890
Increase in annual tax revenue: \$45,442

Moved forward to the Consent Agenda for full board approval.

4. **Request approval of the following stipulation agreement. This was a 2019 Owner initiated appeal. The settlement was a result of negotiations between the school district and the property owner**

Parcel Number: 33-04G-0367.0000
Owner Name: LTK Associates, LP
Property Address: 200 Eagleview Blvd, Exton, PA 19431
Dollar Tree (former Walgreens)
Total Current Assessment: \$4,179,442 *

Settlement based on the fair market value of \$5,700,000 for 2020 and \$5,450,000 for 2021 with the annual STEB ratio applied:

2020/2021 – STEB 49.3%
Assessment per agreement: \$2,810,100
Decrease in assessment: \$1,369,342
Decrease in annual tax revenue: \$37,218

2021/2022 – STEB 47%
Assessment per agreement: \$2,561,500
Decrease in assessment: \$1,617,942
Decrease in annual tax revenue: \$43,975

* The current assessment of \$4,179,442 was increased from prior assessment of \$1,839,760 based on a District initiated appeal filed for the 2013 tax year.

Moved forward to the Consent Agenda for full board approval.

Public Comment on Finance Committee Report

(Public comment shall be limited to 5 minutes' duration per Board Policy #903-Public Participation in Board Meetings.)

F. ADDITIONAL ACTION OR DISCUSSION ITEMS

Discussion of having public comments made in person moving forward. Dr. Mattei explained options. It was agreed that the public would be able to come in to present their comments. They will remain outside the building until their time to speak. Administration will work to develop a process.

G. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – The Downingtown Board of Directors encourages public comment from its citizens. Each community member may speak for a period of no longer than 5 minutes (per BP# 903). Please understand that this is not a time for dialogue with the board; rather the board will listen to all comments and consider them in further deliberations. Our individual e-mail addresses are on the website if you’d like to contact your individual board representative. We ask that you please direct complaints of a personnel nature regarding an individual employee directly to the superintendent.

| Full Name (First and Last) | Township | Comment |
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| Heather Barrett | West Bradford Township | <p>I urge the board to consider the following when determining a path forward this year and beyond:</p> <p>An in-person, 5 day a week education is not a ‘right’. The state constitution of Pennsylvania grants families the right to access a “thorough and efficient system of public education”. It does NOT grant everyone the right to an in-person education. By plotting to cram more students into classrooms and forcing our teachers to provide a “box of chocolates” to everyone, the district has failed to provide the majority of our students with what they truly deserve. 50% of IEP students are NOT attending. This does not mean we should fill their seats with additional students whose parents simply ‘want’ them to be in school. Instead, the district should find out why they are not attending and accommodate as necessary. All studies regarding safety in schools have been at 6ft. We cannot lower this threshold. We cannot permit students, other than those with a proven need, to attend more than 2 days a week.</p> <p>Parents need to take some responsibility. Parents portraying a positive approach to virtual learning and setting expectations for positive outcomes would go a long way. They may also have to invest some of their own time and implement strategies to help their students. Virtual learning should be treated no differently than in-person. Parents are responsible to make sure their students attend virtual class and do the work, just as they are responsible for making sure they get on the bus in the morning and monitoring their academic progress in ‘normal’ times. With technology available to monitor progress and access to teachers just an email or phone call away, why are parents allowing their children to get to the point of failure?</p> <p>We are in a world-wide pandemic. We all miss our friends, we all want to socialize, and some may even be suffering mental health issues. Although schools can provide support in these areas through counselors and extra-curriculars, socialization and safeguarding the mental health of our children is not the</p> |

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| | <p>responsibility of schools. Parents should monitor the mental health of their children, get them help if they need it, and nurture safe emotional connections outside of school.</p> <p>They say it takes a village. Our village must include parents.</p> <p>The DASD covid dashboard is a shell-game. Since the district has chosen to abandon the PA State metrics, parents must make decisions based on what little information they have. Many parents have lost confidence in the district's reporting practices, which are less than transparent, while the 'dashboard' is an ever-changing shell game, picking and choosing which cases will be reported and who will be notified. Unless they are cemented to the ground, we cannot ensure that desks remain 6 ft apart for the entire school day. Students have been spotted on elementary playgrounds closer than 6 ft without masks and sometimes it's just necessary for a teacher to be closer than 6 ft to a student. At minimum, the classroom teacher and every student sitting on any side of an identified case should be informed of a positive case. Now that the district has an accurate account of who is in the building, students who are fully virtual B&M should not be included in 'net enrollment' numbers. 'Sports' cases should be attributed to a school if the student was in the building OR if they participated in any school sponsored event, regardless of the location of the event. Where do these appear on the dashboard? Cases identified after a school is closed, but that occurred BEFORE the school was closed, should be counted toward in- school cases, even if the school is closed when the letter is sent. These cases occurred IN school and have the potential to keep the school closed longer. Finally, when an exposure letter is sent to parents, the DATE of the actual exposure should be provided in the letter. This should match the date where the case(s) will appear on the dashboard.</p> <p>The staggered model is broken. The staggered model was admittedly a short-term fix. As vaccinations move at a painfully slow rate, we need to accept the reality that some form of remote instruction will be an essential and inevitable part of education into the fall. Why is this district so intent on centuries old, lecture-based approaches to teaching? Yes, some students may struggle to adapt to remote learning, but this does not mean it's impossible. Even in the staggered model, the majority of students are still learning virtually at least 3 days a week.</p> |
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| | | <p>Much attention has been given to loud parents of students who 'need' or 'deserve' to attend in-person. At the same time, students who 'need' or 'deserve' to remain virtual must also have an equitable CHOICE that provides guided classroom structure and a dedicated teacher. Cyber does not provide the structure to be a practical option for many, especially at younger grades. The option for parents to keep their children fully virtual in the staggered model is also NOT A CHOICE. The staggered model asks teachers to split their attention between two cohorts of students at once and NONE OF OUR STUDENTS ARE BENEFITTING. Consistency has gone by the wayside, sending everyone (including our most at-risk learners) home with no advance notice when there is an outbreak, when some could be kept in school if the district were doing a better job.</p> <p>Rather than continue to band aid this ineffective model, the district must develop a solution that provides equitable treatment for all students, keeps our teachers safe, and eliminates the need for teachers to split their time between two groups. The district must also ensure that our teachers have the time and resources necessary to be successful in a virtual environment. HALF the SCHOOL YEAR remains, yet the district keeps making excuses for not wanting to change. When will it be the right time? This district must accept reality and consider solutions such as teachers dedicated to one cohort or the other or combining classes at the lower grade levels and using 'team teaching' to avoid shuffling kids at this point in the year.</p> <p>In summary, I request that the district take the following action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) the school district must issue a THIRD PARTY, comprehensive survey to staff and parents to gather unbiased feedback about the learning experience and comfort level with the current safety protocols and decision-making process of this administration.2) the district must follow the intent of the attestation and be more transparent with COVID case data.3) the school district must maintain the 6 ft rule, limit the number of students attending in person more than 2 days to those with the greatest identified needs, and increase who is notified of exposures. |
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| | | 4) the school district must re-examine the ‘staggered model’ and consider a more sustainable long-term education strategy to benefit ALL students and staff. |
| Amy Marsico | Upper Uwchlan Township | <p>I would like to make the following requests –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement a 3rd party, non-biased, comprehensive survey to our families, teachers and staff. The survey should allow for open and honest feedback as well as open ended responses. The goal would be to measure the current learning experience as well as obtain comfort level with current safety protocols. In addition, moderated focus groups could provide additional value and insight to the district. 2. Maintain the 6 ft rule. This cannot and should not be up for consideration or discussion. 3. Reexamine the staggered model and think long term as the 2021-22 school year is unlikely to revert back to a “pre-covid” experience 4. Put time, energy and resources into the virtual learning experience 5. Discuss and show you care about the students who have remained virtual since March 2020 |
| Leah Seace | Upper Uwchlan Township | <p>First of all, thank you for keeping the option open for virtual learning. I greatly appreciate that my son can take his courses at STEM while staying safely at home due to COVID.</p> <p>I have two questions - what is being done to get Infinite Campus to calculate days and absences correctly (I.e. my son missed one day of school but instead of being counted as one absence, it shows up at seven (one for each period of the day that he missed)?</p> <p>And two, what is the school district doing to ensure teachers and staff get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect them from COVID?</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p> |
| jennifer fenn | West Bradford Township | <p>Calls from parents to return to 5 day a week school and lessen social distancing requirements are irresponsible and go against recommendations from the CDC, which states school should be open only if they can accommodate proper distancing and mask usage. I urge the board to follow the science despite an aggressive vocal minority that objects.</p> |
| Jacqi Hutton | East Brandywine Township | <p>What is the plan to get the kids back into school full time? Chester County positivity rate has been on a steady decline, so there is no reason to not have the kids in school. Study after study shows schools are not causes of mass transition (and plenty of schools have been 5 days a week since September). This has been a lost year and these kids are suffering! Enough is enough!!!</p> |

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| Stephanie Griffith | East Brandywine Township | <p>Would be interested in knowing the survey results that were sent out to parents. These kids need to get back in school. For those that want the hybrid option, the kids should be able to attend more than 2 days. Class ratios are low. I'm a pediatric nurse and not one of us in my entire office have gotten covid from a patient since this whole pandemic started. Please open our schools for the mental well being of our kids!</p> |
| Joe Justice | West Bradford Township | <p>I would like to first thank the board for all their hard work in these difficult times. I would like to ask you to allow for public comments live and in person or at minimum via zoom. You are representing our families and the only way you can continue to hear from us in a meaningful manner where we can tell that you aren't just playing one your phones as we have all seen via the YouTube broadcast is to see you and speaks to you face to face. After the comments last meeting where Dr Lonardi was heard on the open mic saying "let not make them even madder than usual" I think live and in person meeting with limited public attendance socially distanced in masks etc should be an easily obtainable goal for our board in order to ensure full transparency of what is really being discussed at these meetings.</p> <p>Once again I will end with the following plea. Please open the schools to 5 days. Follow the science. Look at all the studies. Save our kids lives and futures and do the right thing.</p> |
| Brandyn Campbell | Uwchlan Township | <p>Dear DASD Board and Superintendent Lonardi:</p> <p>I am writing to express my concern that the district abandoned following any metrics in November. You promised to follow these guidelines, then forgot about that commitment when it became inconvenient. This level of transparency is critical in gaining the trust of staff, students, and families. It would also make these decisions less challenging if we all knew what to expect.</p> <p>It is abundantly clear that you are not following county guidelines. You are not following state guidelines, instead evaluating schools on a case-by-case basis. Why the resistance to consistency and transparency?</p> <p>We know that you are not public health officials, which is why it is imperative that you follow the guidelines followed by those that are.</p> <p>I don't think there is a single person in this district who does not want kids in school 5 days a week. However, the inconvenient reality is that we are in the midst of a pandemic</p> |

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| | | <p>where the virus involved is rapidly mutating. This decision should not be political or swayed by the loudest among us. It should be determined by scientific fact and consultation with local and state health departments.</p> <p>How will you commit to proving that you are following health and safety guidelines for DASD teachers, students, and the greater community?</p> <p>Sincerely, Mrs. Brandyn Campbell</p> |
| Stacy Halk | East Brandywine Township | <p>Thank you DASD. Our community needs you to focus on safety and a sustainable hybrid model. A 5 day model is no longer a viable option at this time. All of Our children do need to be in person (in some capacity) and able to be on school grounds to meet with teachers and peers, it can happen safely. Unfortunately, covid is not the only challenge our classrooms face.</p> <p>We've all seen the threats, lawsuits and misleading surveys and as difficult as your jobs feel now, imagine navigating this at 6 and trying to learn to read in a classroom. A classroom where half your friends are sick with the flu and the others are bullying you (you see how their parents talk) simply for making choices that make sense. All while feeling academic pressure, growing up with social media and minimal outlets or time for happiness. The only adult in the room is an overstressed, overworked teacher who doesn't have time to help. What would your school future look like by 15?</p> <p>It's time to fix the problems for the long term. There are students falling behind as there always were, not due to covid 19. All the more reason we must keep school open and available to those who display need or IEP. Our teachers need to reach those students.</p> <p>Any lack of motivation, crying tantrums or not wanting to zoom are personal issues parents need to address.</p> <p>You are able to make decisions that Rise above the entitlement and dangerous ignorance. Use your voice! Put our children's health and well being, and their teachers first. Our finances should be spent with a Focus on safety and quality classrooms with resources for all, our future depends on it.</p> |
| Regina Genua | Uwchlan Township | <p>The plan to go back to full in person needs to be developed now and a date set to roll out by the end of this month. For</p> |

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| | | <p>everyone ideally, but especially for elementary. Do what it takes; these kids need and deserve to be back in school. And the teachers deserve not to be teaching in person AND virtually. Kids that don't want to go in person should be in cyber. Parents that are willing to take the small risk that comes with in person DESERVE that option. My child most likely contracted Covid at school and I still want the option to send them. That is and should be my choice alone on whether I want to take that small risk, not yours. I won't go over evidence after evidence of why they should go back, you know the facts and the science. It's your job to make it happen.</p> <p>And no this isn't a parent getting "madder than usual", it's one demanding that you provide our kids the education they deserve and that we pay for with our tax dollars. Thank you.</p> |
| Tammy LaRosa | Uwchlan Township | <p>Open the schools!! Please at least consider opening schools 4 days for hybrid students. My daughter has committed all year to hybrid! Give her 2 more days in person. These kids have a right to learn in person. She knows it's not ideal but it's better than staying home all day. I know it's safe because I have another child who goes to Catholic school 5 days a week since September!!!!!!</p> |
| Danielle Caruso | West Pikeland Township | <p>I'm interested in knowing the reason we aren't as a district moving forward with allowing parents to attend the school board meetings via Zoom? Personally, I believe we should be allowing the tax paying parents of this school district to have a chance to voice their concerns, in person, socially distanced and safe, of course. Perhaps, we could meet in one of the bigger buildings in the district. If the desire of attendance is more than is safe for all to be together in one place, perhaps splitting the school board members, splitting the parents into safe numbers and providing Zoom capability for those who choose to stay home could be a way to provide this 'in person' meeting that many are asking to happen.</p> <p>Let's get creative. At this point in time, with the pandemic and the 'new' way of doing things, we need to think outside the box to get conversations going, to get our kids back in school FULL TIME. I can see that's the only way forward. At the least, I suggest the allowance of LIVE Zoom meetings. It is your job as school board members to LISTEN to your constituents. I believe it's much more impactful for the board to hear parents and/or students read their own letters, to actually see and hear the emotion behind what is written and read aloud. Having someone, who has zero connection to what's being read, written by someone else, read another's</p> |

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| | | <p>words, it doesn't translate as well.</p> <p>It's time to stop hiding. It's time to stop stalling. It's time to dig deep and do the right thing. It's time to unite and put our thinking caps on. It's time to get creative. The time has come to move forward and OPEN OUR SCHOOLS, full time. Our kids deserve more. Our kids deserve a chance. Our kids deserve to feel 'normal'. Our kids deserve to be back in the classroom FULL TIME today. Not tomorrow. Not next week. Not next month or next year. They NEED to be back in the classroom today, surrounded by their friends, with a teacher in front of them, actually teaching to them. Let's collaborate to give them the opportunity to move through this uncertain time. TOGETHER, we can do more.</p> <p>Thank you in advance for your consideration. Dani Caruso</p> |
| Shaili Chandramohan | Upper Uwchlan Township | I have heard that there has been request to move the school timing for the older kids to later. I have personally seen the elementary kids bullying each other in school stop. I do not think having older kids with the younger kids would be a good idea. Just want to get clarity on this before any decisions are made about the school timing. |
| Jennifer Miele | Uwchlan Township | I just can't understand how this district cannot figure out a way to get the children back to school 5 days a week. Snow days should be snow days. Start reading about the mental issues the kids are having. Virtual learning is not effective for many kids. The virtual learning is ridiculous, if you are going to go virtual then the classes should be run like they are in class. Along with the mental issues the kids are having, working parents are trying to keep their jobs while trying to be a teacher at the same time. If frontline workers can go to work with precautions then the schools should be able to. Figure it out. |
| Sarah Smith | West Bradford Township | <p>Dear DASD Board,</p> <p>I am writing in light of the most recent information gleaned by researchers at the CDC and published by JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association). Studies show scant transmission of covid 19 in school settings where masks and distancing are used. The highest risk settings are in restaurants, bars, and people's personal homes. The safest place for our children at this time is in school. I won't rehash the statistics regarding the effects of virtual learning on our children's mental health. However, I will note that my colleagues at nearby children's hospitals tell me of the</p> |

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| | | <p>dramatic increase in anxiety, depression, eating disorders, and suicide ideation in children and teens presenting to the Emergency Room.</p> <p>You have the ability to bring those elementary (and middle and high school) students that want to return fully back to school 5 days per week. By not acting on this data, you are actually contributing to the harm of our children.</p> <p>Please do not delay or waste any more time. Bring our children back to school 5 days per week now.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p> |
| Sarah Christie | West Bradford Township | <p>With mental health issues on the rise as well as teen suicides across the country in direct relation to the isolation and anxieties caused by virtual learning, what is DASD doing to ensure mental health in children? I regularly witness my own teen in front of a screen for 10+ hours a day including zooms and homework, which is clearly not healthy mentally or physically and cannot persist indefinitely. With no goal to end virtual or hybrid learning given by DASD and a lack of effort to provide school events or social activities outside of regular class zooms for kids to connect with one another, it's time to wake up and place focus not just solely on the virus but recognize the real toll this is causing to mental health.</p> |
| Izabella Feathers | West Bradford Township | <p>I am a student and I know you likely won't pay attention to this since I'm not a teacher or parent, but I am very unhappy with the school as it is now. While I understand we are in a pandemic, the way you have handled everything has been unprofessional and messy. Before virtual school I loved school and was a very good student (straight A's, honor society, etc.). Now I am working on homework until 7pm regularly. That means about 10 hours of screen time and minimal breaks only to achieve a B on things. On another note, I am completely shocked that I was attended mandatory mental health assemblies pre-covid, just for the school to abandon the thought of making sure students are ok with everything going on post covid. We have no say and cannot offer any thoughts in the changes and day to day decisions that directly effect us. I am stressed and the district doesn't care one bit, thanks for that. You may think that being in person 4-5 days is impossible but it actually isn't and the CDC and multiple scientific studies have proven it to be safe. For example, my sisters go to a k-8 school 5 days a week and they have only had 1-2 cases since September and their class sizes are actually way bigger than mine at this point. When we open you have expect some cases but it is not necessary for an entire school to be effected and shut down for an isolated case, it should be a case by case basis and cleaning can take place immediately to prevent less time out of school.</p> |

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| | | I don't see grocery stores and gas stations shutting down every time someone has walked in having covid and yet people still go there every week and survive with hand washing and masks. I would also like to point out that luckily I have an amazing family that supports me the best they can but not everyone is that fortunate. Consider children with an abusive family, school is their escape. For the first time in my life, I feel school is becoming a waste of time. I'm not getting anything out of staring at a computer for hours each day. I'm not learning, I'm memorizing for a test and to pass. The decline in the education quality is terrible and the district should be ashamed to be associated with it. Even if you don't share this I hope you keep in mind that you had your teen years and all the experiences in high school that we all look forward to, but I won't. My high school experience is sitting alone on a laptop in my room everyday. |
| Rachel Miller | Uwchlan Township | The damage to the dasd childrens futures has and continues to be catastrophic!!! Social isolation, depression/anxiety/newly diagnosed mental health issues and extreme learning loss are only a few of the negative consequences with which the dasd students, including my own children, are consistently struggling with on a day to day basis!...When it comes to preparing the dasd students, including my own children, to be well-adjusted learned adults there is absolutely no substitute for in-person instruction!!! The dasd is failing these children! Dasd needs to eliminate all the "choices" and only provide two options one hundred percent fully 5 days in person brick and mortar instruction -or- one hundred percent fully virtual instruction via the Downingtown Cyber Academy!!! If the dasd cannot offer full time in person instruction now/ASAP my family and I will be moving to another district or school option that has and can continue to do so!!!! |
| Nathan Laing | Downingtown Borough | Proper configuration of the school zone on the 300 block of E. Lancaster Ave. Proper crosswalk and signs at Chestnut Street on the 300 block of E. Lancaster Ave. Crossing guard and police enforcement of the 25 mile an hour as well as the 15 mile an hour school zone at East Ward Elementary school. |
| Tara M Haarlander | Upper Uwchlan Township | I would like to know why the district is not trying to get more feedback from parents on how they feel about the safety and learning models. The "surveys" put out have not been real surveys at all, but disguised attempts to make it seem like more people would like their kids to be in the building more. It almost seems as if administration is trying to push their own agenda. Please ask some real questions so that you can see once and for all how many parents will NOT take advantage of extra in person days, and find out why. And then use that |

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| | | <p>information to determine where your efforts should be focused...will it really be effective to try to pack more kids in? Or should you instead focus on creating a sustainable way for kids to have a great virtual experience until it's safe to loosen social distance restrictions?</p> <p>Also, please look into exposure notification for whole classes. Other districts manage to do so without violating HIPPA. Parents deserve to know if their kid has been sitting all day next to someone with COVID. You are doing the bare minimum now and we pay enough in taxes to deserve better than that.</p> |
| Will Tompkins | Downingtown Borough | <p>Our children at East Ward are not safe. The school zone in front of East Ward elementary on Lancaster Ave needs to be rezoned as it does not encompass all of the school property. School zone heading eastbound starts inside of playground area. Vehicles do not slow down till already 1/3 of the way into school property. Cars drive too fast and need to be slowed down prior to reaching school area. Local law enforcement needs to be stricter especially during school hours. A cross walk with crossing guard should be placed at Lancaster and Chestnut for those students who walk. If PennDOT needs to be involved please start that conversation as each township has a contact who will support these issues. Thank you for assisting in keeping our children safe.</p> |
| Annie Laing | Downingtown Borough | <p>We have lived here for the last 10 years and the speeding through the 300 block of Lancaster Avenue is out of control. Our children are not safe to cross the street adults are not even safe to cross the street. People do not stop the cross walk and they go speeds up to 60 miles an hour between red lights a red light on the block. The school zone is not properly zoned and no one adheres to the 15 mile an hour speed limit. It is dangerous from her picking up our children from school it is dangerous for us to even walk her children to school. And there's no way that any child under the age of 16 should walk through this borough unsupervised because of the Danger presented from people driving through this strip of Route 30. We need a proper school zone, a proper crosswalk proper painting on the streets maybe stop signs or a traffic control lights and some sort of marker in the middle of the road to make people slow down. My husband and I have been talking to the borough the police and the school district about this for five years and nothing ever gets done. We have been documenting all of her complaints and talking to our neighbors about this problem please we need action before someone gets hurt or killed.</p> <p>The strip of 30 is a stork block and the seat of our borough with a sign saying welcome to Downingtown there is no</p> |

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| | | <p>reason why people need to speed this fast through the strip and the downingtown police are aware of this and do nothing about it. We need cohesion between the people that live here, the school district the borough the Downingtown police and our public officials we are reaching out to see what can be done about this and we are adamant about seeing it something change to better our community thank you very much for your consideration.</p> |
| Angie weldon | Wallace Township | <p>Please open school up again. Countless reports are showing how detrimental online school is for all involved. We simply can't understand how you don't see it. 3 ft distance and masks solves all issues! You requiring 6 ft when it is NOT A LAW is insane! My kids and I can go to dinner at a restaurant with the ENTIRE RESTAURANT unmasked (except for waiters) and that is safe, but somehow school is unsafe?? Do you see how crazy this is??</p> |
| Jessica Huhn-Kenzik | East Brandywine Township | <p>I am writing to again to ask the board to implore the administration to truly survey the community as to why they do not feel safe coming into school. The focus seems to be on getting kids in that truly NEED in person instruction to succeed which I believe is the right direction. However, currently many of the children that need to be there, and have been offered more in person instruction, have declined. I assume it is due to safety concerns but to my knowledge no one has asked. If the belief of admin and this board is that in person is the only solution for some of these kids why why are you not asking what protocols may make them feel and be safer so they can be there? Further, I am concerned about the move to "fill seats" as a result of the survey will have the unintended result of pushing more of those kids out that really need to be there as result of safety concerns. Please don't ask families that whose kids really need to be there choose between their child's education and their safety. Last, I still feel strongly that there is a disconnect between what the admin believes the educators are struggling with and what their actual daily struggles are. As a parent of young children in the district the teachers and school staff are our most valuable resource and I believe that an anonymous survey asking for feedback is well overdue. My company surveys us anonymously every two months right now to gauge engagement and get the pulse of what needs to be improved. This shows an employer that cares about their employees during this unprecedented time. Please implement something similar. Thank you for all your efforts in balancing the needs of all of our community, but please don't let the loudest voices drown out the silent voices of our neediest</p> |

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| | | students just because the loudest feel entitled to something that cannot be given to everyone in this crisis. |
| Kimberly Venzie | West Bradford Township | I would like to know why a certain number of parents are not allowed to attend the Board meetings live and in person in order to ask questions and field concerns. Once the room is at capacity, the remaining parents can be directed to return home and log onto zoom. This is absolutely feasible and can be done. I would appreciate a direct answer to why the Board is not making this accommodation. Additional, I am going to suggest that turning off the camera in the meeting room during the public comment period is actually resulting in the meeting not being a public meeting and violates the Sunshine Act and related laws. The Board does not have the right to decide when the camera is on or off - either its a public meeting visible and audible to all or it is not. I think you are putting your entire meeting at risk and subject to challenge by deciding what to put on camera and what not to put on camera. It is also incredible rude and unprofessional. |
| Joshua Bugay | Uwchlan Township | This comment pertains to the superintendent update item on the agenda and I ask that you read this comment and similar comments before any board action is taken, as required by Pennsylvania law Have you explored use of portable trailer, heated tents, or short term corporate building leases to maximize educational instructional space and allow for physical distance between students, teachers and staff? If no, why not? |
| Sofia Pargamotnikas | West Pikeland Township | Hello! We would like to hear from the board what are their plans on reopening the schools. Many districts in the area have been open or opening as we speak, while nothing was heard from DASD. I believe the board is aware by now that there is no science that proved schools are the spreader of the virus. Some of the board members referred us in the past to recommendations from CHOP to remain on hybrid or virtual model. Based on their publications, CHOP is now endorsing schools to reopen in our area. CDC issued recommendations several times that schools can and should be reopened. When DASD is going open our schools? |
| Natasha Roselli | East Brandywine Township | I am MADDER THAN USUAL! Schools MUST open for in person learning 5 days a week! Enough is enough and FIGURE IT OUT!!! Stop playing games with our kids! |
| Stacy Halk | East Brandywine Township | Please issue a more comprehensive survey to teachers, students and parents to find what is working and what is not. |

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| | | Please make them anonymous choice so families feel safe in sharing their voices. |
| C Scott | Upper Uwchlan Township | Why have results from the mandatory surveys not been communicated to teachers? Wasn't the purpose to help lesson planning or is to make room for parents who are demanding 4 days? |
| Alicia Dever | West Bradford Township | As a parent, this approach can no longer be OK. DWHS is suffering because of this case count. The number set is way too low. Our kids are suffering mentally and are NOT receiving a proper education. "Whole classes are being quarantined for 14 days as a result of a single person testing positive. Whole schools are being required to close if as few as two people test positive for COVID-19." |
| Karen Kerr | West Pikeland Township | Research has now proven that schools do not spread the virus and kids in schools are safer than kids in the community. No more excuses! Open full time! |
| Haley Hoban | West Bradford Township | This board should be ashamed at the manipulative propaganda that was dispersed via mass email just minutes before the "noon" deadline for meeting comments today (2/3/21). Regardless, it is disgusting to use the vaccine rollout schedule as your scapegoat for why our children aren't back in school yet. I imagine many families would agree that YOU ALL are the reason our children aren't receiving the education they deserve at this time. We all are paying 100% of our school taxes and yet these kids are robbed by your CHOICE to operate only a fraction of the time. As "educators" you should be looking around and gathering information for yourselves to make these grand decisions. Look at the daycares and the private schools just in this immediate area and you will find very quickly that your overabundance of caution is misguided. Kids all around us are back in schools full time with full classrooms with the same (or less) positive cases as this district. If there is anyone left in this district who still actually cares about kids then you will do the right thing. |

H. INFORMATION

The School Board Meeting is scheduled for:

Wednesday, February 10, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

The next Committee of the Whole Meeting is scheduled for:

Wednesday, March 3, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

I. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Director MacNeal, seconded by Director Kring, the Board, agreed to adjourn at 9:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia B. Warihay
School Board Secretary