

Notes from Principal's Coffee Hour December 11, 2020

Greg Rota, the Athletic Director, is keeping an eye on guidelines for youth sports. PVCICS is trying to have basketball but the season is delayed this year until possibly early January. Kids have to have their own balls so PVCICS bought more balls. There cannot be any spectators. Mr. Rota sent a note to middle and high school parents. Alpine skiing for middle and high school kids might be another feasible sport. PVCICS has had an alpine ski team for the last two years. They are also looking for possible places to play tennis in the Spring.

The Fall athletic schedule is complete with cross country and soccer.

There is a general FA meeting open to the community on Sunday, December 13.

Kathy is trying to send out major relevant MA DPH (informed by CDC) and DESE guidelines that she receives.

The school is watching state budgets because they still do not know their tuition numbers for this year. There may be more federal money with the upcoming changes in Washington.

There was a Board meeting on December 3. The school is still planning for the Fall semester to be completely remote until at least the end of January. DPH weekly postings come out on Thursdays with Covid numbers. We have students from 34 towns and 12 red communities this week. Parents would have an opt out when/if the school goes to a hybrid model. They need extra professional development hours for any kind of transition. They want a plan that is stable and to give advance notice. They want to bring students in all the grades back rather than just specific grades. They believe that every grade matters. They are looking at the A-B alternating week hybrid model. They just finished a teacher survey and will be looking at those responses. A family survey will be forthcoming. The school is buying another 100 chromebooks.

Kathy discussed some of the safety protocols related to the hybrid model. Students would have to wear masks and follow social distancing. Hand washing will be very important. HVAC system has been upgraded over the summer. Desks are 6 feet apart for all the classrooms. Teachers have been trying to rewrite the collaborative curriculum. Activities will take place at their individual seats. Students would still have recess, but specials might be offered remotely depending on the length of the school day. It will likely be one student in a bathroom at a time. They are doing training with the teachers. They will be very strict about not sending children in with any types of symptoms. Children will have to be escorted to the nurse's office and would likely be sent home if they exhibit any symptoms at school. There will be individual isolation areas that are 6 feet apart and they hope they will not get overwhelmed. Families will need to have plans in place to quickly pick up their children if they exhibit symptoms at school. Nurses will be in full PPE. There are only 3 classrooms with windows that cannot open. They put an ionizer in the new HVAC system. They are getting 25 small air purifiers for the rooms with windows that do not open. Busing is a big operational piece for the school. They are planning to

run buses, but they can only have 25 students on the big buses (normally rated for 77 students). It is a lot of money to add buses. The school really wants families to follow COVID guidelines leading up to any re-opening date in order to help keep the PVCICS community safe.

Other re-opening issues that were discussed: School hours might be changed to be a little shorter to release in early or mid-afternoon for the core curriculum. For middle and high school there is only one teacher per subject. For re-opening they will have to straddle the remote and in-person cohorts. They are looking at technology and cameras that can follow the teachers around. It is a challenge to have students who are in the class and students who are remote. They don't want remote students to feel that they are out of sight and out of mind. The elementary school situation is a little different because there are two teachers in every classroom. It might be a possibility to split the teachers for in-person and remote.

A parent brought up the amount of homework for her middle school student. The school is required to cover the standard curriculum this year even with remote learning. There are state requirements for structured learning time that are supposed to be synchronous with a teacher. Families should touch base with teachers about specific homework issues, but the school can also check in with teachers. Some teachers are allowing class time for homework to be done. They want students to be engaged and happy.

If students are struggling at home, contact the school if the teachers are not responsive. The teachers are trying their best. They are watching attendance. The attendance for the school has been good.

A parent brought up the idea of a LEGO and/or robotics club. Students could potentially get their own kits for at home and then meet virtually to build. High school clubs typically meet during their lunch period or after school. The middle school clubs meet after school. There are currently no elementary school clubs. There have been some socially distanced meet-ups arranged by class parents for elementary students.

MCAS is the annual state testing starting in third grade. Students in 3rd to 10th grade are required to take MCAS in English and Math every year. At this time, DESE says that MCAS will occur. They are looking into how it might work for remote learners. MCAS usually starts in March. The school gets to pick the days they do the testing within a window of time. Passing the 10th grade MCAS is required to get a MA diploma. The state needs a federal waiver to cancel the MCAS (it happened nationally in the Spring). The state also needs to pass a waiver to cancel the MCAS. The school offered a Fall in-person SAT. The school wants to offer a SAT in March, but they are not sure about space. They may not offer PSAT this year.