

NORTHERN LEHIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
Special Board Meeting
Board Minutes

Slatington, PA
March 1, 2021

PURPOSE The special meeting of the Northern Lehigh Board of School Directors was called to order virtually, via Google Meet, by the President, Mr. Gary S. Fedorcha, at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, March 1, 2021.

ROLL CALL Members present: Mr. Robin T. Distler, Mr. Mathias J. Green, Jr., Mrs. Michelle M. Heckman, Mrs. Gale N. Husack, Mr. Robert J. Keegan, Jr., Mr. Robert L. Kern, Jr., Mrs. Donna M. Kulp, Mrs. Michele L. Martineau, and Mr. Gary S. Fedorcha (9)

Members absent: None

Non-members present: Mr. Matthew Link, Dr. Tania Stoker, Mrs. Susan Bahnick, Mrs. Jill Chamberlain, Mr. Greg Derr, Mrs. Michele Dotta, Mrs. Rhonda Frantz, Mr. Bryan Geist, Mr. David Hauser, Mr. Eric Hill, Mr. Eugene Marks, Mrs. Sherri Molitoris, Mr. Scott Pyne, and Mr. James Schnyderite.

VISITORS Approximately seven hundred and ninety visitors viewed the meeting and approximately twenty-two community members connected via Google Meet.

PUBLIC COMMENT As per NLSLD Policy #903, each public participant was allotted five (5) minutes to speak. Public comment subject was in regards to the pandemic and students returning to in-person learning. Each participant stated their name and address.

Mr. Justin Jackowicz - Not in a million years would he have thought he would be speaking at a school board meeting in regards to advocating for his kids for in-person instruction. This is how far we've fallen in nearly a year's time. COVID-19 has exposed the lack of leadership in our school system. He wished he could begin on a more positive note, but the reality is that we failed our children for nearly a year. This meeting should've happened sooner. This is the first school board meeting since COVID-19 that we're able to speak and voice our opinions as we have been censored and silenced as our children are kept on the hybrid schedule. How was almost every other school board able to have verbal comments from the public? Allentown School District has public comments, why can't we? As he mentioned in the article in the Times News, we pay taxes for face-to-face, in-person instruction, and not cyber education or the hybrid model that we're currently engaged in. He's reached out to leadership of the Northern Lehigh School District, as many parents have, and received responses that due to the CDC and Department of Health guidelines, they're sticking with the hybrid model. These are merely recommendations and when stated, when feasible, when possible. These are not state laws. Although in the fall, our leadership chose to defy the same guidelines and allow sports to resume when Governor Wolf recommended against that. We chose to say okay, we're going to participate in sports, Governor Wolf said not until January 1st, but we said that's okay, we're not doing the same with our in-person instruction. Are sports more important than education? He comes from a sports background and he agrees with what we did. He wants the district to do the same for in-person instruction for every day of the week. The CDC and PA Department of Health and Education always have recommendations but rarely followed religiously like COVID-19. It seems like we can't stray away from them at all. Again, when the terms are when feasible and when possible, we need to use common sense and do whatever it takes to get our kids in school for five days a week. We've also arbitrarily chosen students with IEP's were able to attend four days a week, while other students are not. What justifies this? Are these students less susceptible to COVID-19? Seems to be working for them if they are in four days a week also. The decisions being made, not just at this level, but the whole COVID-19 are through one single lens, the COVID-19 lens. Other important areas that we know, such as mental health, physical health and socialization are completely neglected by these decisions. We need to take into consideration the impact of not having in-person instruction and what it has done to our children. The fact of the matter is COVID-19 virus is 99% survivable and we know much more about transmission than we did in March or April with all signs leading to reopening schools. This is from the CDC. This is from the World Health Organization. And, now even from the Biden administration,

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as well. How are other local school districts like Catasauqua, Tamaqua, Saucon Valley, Panther Valley, and especially local Catholic schools be able to open this whole time or even four days week? What is holding us back? Other states have been maskless and open for in-person instruction since September and are not worse or better off than we are. He asks the leadership to return to full, in-person instruction. How can't we do that but Catholic schools can do that with limited resources and they're able to make it happen. We need to do the same. Other local schools such as Whitehall-Coplay, Northampton and many others are also listening to their parents and beginning to open their doors. Northern Lehigh needs to do the same. He could go on and on, but the plan is simple. Open the schools for those families who wish for their children to attend face-to-face instruction. Even have them sign a waiver, if necessary, so the school is not held liable if someone claims they contracted COVID at school. If families do not wish to attend in person, they can attend Bulldog Academy or still get the livestream of classes like they've been doing. He asks the leadership to look in the mirror this evening and ask if they are doing what is best for students and are they doing all they can to get our students back in school where everyone knows they belong for in-person instruction. Just today, in addition to weeks and months, the PA Department of Education says reopening schools is a local decision. That means it's up to you guys to make the decision, it's not up to the state to do that. You are our elected leaders for the children. Please make sure you're making decisions to get our kids back in school for in-person instruction. Thank you.

Mr. Hill announced Melanie Nonnemacher to speak next. Ms. Nonnemacher was not on Google Meet.

Ms. Pauline Grady - Good evening Mr. Link and the Northern Lehigh School Board. Thank you for finally having a meeting where we, as parents, can talk about what has been concerning for almost a year now. She sincerely hopes this meeting isn't just to listen to us talk and then just tell us there's nothing you can do. We collectively as a group of parents are looking for action and looking for a plan for our kids to get back to school as soon as possible. This is achievable and, honestly, if you say it isn't or you can't, we want solid evidence as to why it is not. As she's stated before, there are numerous schools returning to in-person in our area. There are numerous schools that have been going five days a week since the fall. There are other states in our country that haven't missed a beat. Statistics show our kids are regressing. The failure rate is at an all time high and to make matters worse the school and teachers are calling teachers out that they are failing, sometimes in emails and letters. The school board and administration has handled this as poorly as any school district possibly can. You had a plan for all kids to come back to school in the fall. Guidance changed and you went to, what she would consider, the sloppiest Plan B there can be. Plan B clearly wasn't working so you made an addendum to Plan B, adding livestreaming months into the school year. Returning to school was to be revisited around November. There was no revisiting, only deciding. Deciding without parent input, without student input, just input from all of you, the board and administration. She would briefly like to go back to the word guidance. The information from the Pennsylvania Department of Health is just that, guidance, not mandates, guidance. You all realize that you have the ability to have these kids return to school. You choose to be driven by whatever decisions from whomever, whether it's the Department of Health, the union, she doesn't know. She doesn't know where your decisions are coming from. You keep talking about safety and wellbeing. Well, the safety and wellbeing of your students have gone by the wayside. The mental, emotional, and educational health of the students have taken a nosedive. Children that have never had mental health issues are depressed and anxious. Children who have been at the top of their class academically are now struggling to keep their heads above water. She doesn't want to hear about COVID precautions. It's a moot point when she drives past the local bingo hall and sees our most vulnerable population sitting shoulder-to-shoulder, playing bingo, when our kids can't have a normal, unmasked recess when outside. Don't tell her about COVID precautions when we are able to go into a restaurant and enjoy a meal with our families but our kids can't even turn to talk to their friends during lunch or they get yelled at. Planes are packed with passengers but our kids can't sit with their friends on the school bus. Our kids have become the sacrificial lambs during this entire COVID situation. You as a district are holding parents and students hostage when you don't put all choices on the table. You are the only ones in control, and that is unacceptable. You've forced parents to take action and we will not stop until the families that want their kids back in school, are back in school. A generation of kids will struggle with subpar education, mental health issues, and emotional trauma. They're going to be known as the COVID generation, the COVID kids. The silver

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lining out of all of this is that they will see their parents fighting for what's right and not taking no for an answer. Moving forward, parents want a seat at the table from here on out. Whether it's forming a coalition or somehow having parents on the school board like you have students on the board for meetings, whatever way, we want a seat at the table. It's time for a change. Public education has been on it's last leg for years. It took a pandemic to really put it in the spotlight. You guys can do better and get our kids back in school. Thank you.

Mr. Mark Bentz - He comes this evening as a parent of a Kindergarten and second grade parent of students at Peters. He commended the job of the building principal, Mr. Schnyderite, and the teachers that his daughter had in first grade and now second grade and Kindergarten on the job they've done under very difficult circumstances. We thank them eternally for making this in any way bearable for our kids. He also stated that he comes to this as someone who has been relatively supportive of the district. You were obviously dealt a difficult hand at this time last year and handled it about as well as possible in the last spring. The summer was a disappointment when they weren't able to come back five days a week but we worked with you and we've worked with you for over a year to get to where we are today. Last summer we had a difficult decision to make involving our Kindergarten son who thrived at his private school for Pre-K and preschool. The difficult decision that we had was weighing the five day alternative against what we were hoping would be a five day at some point this year at Peters. Because of my daughter, and not wanting to pull her out of school as a child who absolutely and positively and loves school and now absolutely hates snow because of what it's done to this year. They could not make that decision for their son and thus they enrolled him at Peters with his daughter so that they were both getting the same type of education and they wouldn't become resentful of each other. It's difficult to look back at that and see that it was the right decision for his son. His teacher has been phenomenal and he can speak about all the good things she has done this year, but he has definitely taken a step back this year and has not progressed to where he was a year ago when the world shut down. When he looks through the media and looks at the list of schools he simply questions why we've been unable to get back to either a four to five day in-person sessions. Whereas much of the Colonial League's much smaller and larger schools have been able to do. We've been lacking on a plan. We come to you tonight seeking help and seeking help in getting a plan in place to get our kids back in school. They have taken a step back. They have taken a step back socially. They have certainly taken a step back academically. His children love school. It's a disappointment to them every day. As kids being at the beginning of the alphabet, it's great in the beginning of the week when they can go off to school two days and then they have to face three days of disappointment as they are learning virtually the rest of the week. He understands that this winter has been beyond horrendous. The days missed and the weeks the kids have missed in the building, they're not even getting the two days that they were promised. I realize there's nothing anyone can do about the weather however, it has made the situation worse unintentionally. Our students are suffering. Our students are having a hard time understanding why they can't be there every day. His daughter, depending on what happens the rest of the year, will basically miss almost half of her time at Peters. His Kindergarten student has obviously not been in the building for five days a week since we started. We come to you tonight asking for a voice. A voice that's been lacking this entire time from the parents and the community. To be able to find a way to come together and make things as safe as possible. Safety is the utmost importance. But, we're only looking at one end of safety and one end of health. We are not looking at the emotional side of things. He thanked the board for the time and putting this meeting together and thanked his students' principal and teachers for what they have been able to do during this time. But, he asks you tonight for more.

Mr. Eric King - Thank you for having the meeting tonight and opening up a two-way discussion for the parents to voice their concerns for their children in the district. Over the last eleven months we've been faced with and asked to overcome new and unique challenges in our personal lives and our professional lives. Twelve months ago, we closed our schools and told our children to stay home for the safety of everyone in the community. At the time, this was a new virus and no idea of what we were dealing with. At the end of August last year, our board members were faced with the difficult decision of how to proceed with opening our district. If he remembers correctly, this decision was made only two weeks prior to the scheduled start of the first semester. Numerous times through the fall parents had requested that you send out a survey to the parents asking if given the option would you send your kids back full time. Each time this was brought up, we were told that this was too difficult to establish. We continued our so-called hybrid model through the holiday

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season and prematurely closed the district for over a month. During our January meeting, it was brought up that new guidelines were out from the state and the CDC recommended that children be back in the buildings. Mr. Link at the time said he was waiting to see what other districts were doing and would not have any other decisions until after a Superintendent's meeting. It was at this time that other districts like Salisbury opened its doors for the first time all year. Shortly after this, you finally agreed to send a survey to the parents to see how many parents would be interested in sending their children back to the buildings full time. During the last meeting you told us that those results would not be gone over until March. If those numbers are not going to be discussed until March, then we are looking at a few weeks for plans to be formed and the buildings to be open. So at the earliest, the end of April. Our children could not finally start to return to normalcy till sometime in April. For almost six months into this school year no one wants to make the decisions on their own and take responsibility for this decision. Every time we ask the board or Mr. Link questions, we've been told that we are waiting to see what others are doing. If a student gave that answer to a teacher they would be given a failing grade for any assignment. Our students are asked every day to show their work for their assignments. Why are you not willing to show us what evidence you are using to make your decisions? The actual science, in the schools all over the country, is some districts have been open since September with little or no evidence it is causing any community spread in the districts. We ask that you please open our district for our children and allow them to get back to normal education. Many children are suffering at home and cannot continue to do this on a regular basis. He'd like to finish this a little bit stronger, but as a parent he's going to behave. He does want our children back in school. We need you, the board members and Superintendent, to finally make the decision to allow our children to be back in the district. If you guys can't make that decision, we need to find new board members that can make that decision and start taking the responsibility for what we elected you to do. Thank you for your time and letting him speak tonight.

Mr. Tim Weaber - He thanked the board for allowing him to speak as the Northern Lehigh Education Association president. He thanked the board, district administration, parents, district support staff, aides and teachers for working together to make sure our students get the best possible education under these extreme circumstances. This pandemic is real. Over a half million individuals in the United States who have tested positive for COVID-19 have lost their lives. We cannot ignore the dangers of contracting COVID-19. Since before the 2020-2021 school year, the Northern Lehigh Education Association has been focused on the safe return to school for our students and staff. We've remained steadfast in our adherence to the guidance of the Center for Disease Control and Department of Health by proper masking, social distancing, and cleaning protocols to ensure the safety of all who enter or interact within our schools, our district transportation and our facilities. While the school year has brought many challenges and changes, our dedication has not wavered. It has also been the commitment of the Northern Lehigh School District Administration and Board of Education to make decisions based upon the science and the advice of medical experts. Safety guidelines have been established and reinforced. Learning models that allow for social distancing have been adopted. Additional methods for keeping our buildings clean have included equipment purchases for deep cleaning, new air filtration systems and deep-cleaning Wednesdays. On behalf of the Northern Lehigh Education Association, he would like to thank the school board members for realizing that this pandemic is real and acting in a way to keep our children and staff safe while they are in district facilities. Only because of wise decisions, by the school board, is the Northern Lehigh School District able to continue to provide uninterrupted education for all our children. The Northern Lehigh Education Association is not against a full return to school. He repeated, we are not against a full return to school as long as it can be done safely and while maintaining all safety guidelines. In particular, the COVID-19 safety guidelines of maintaining a social distance of six feet is one that we believe must continue to be followed. According to the latest guidance issued from the CDC on Friday, February 12, 2021, it's clear that six feet of distance still remains as a guideline. The guidelines to not differentiate social distancing adults versus children, nor do they promote less than six feet of distancing. On a National Education Association call with the CDC on Monday, February 15, it was explicitly stressed that six feet in the absence of widespread vaccination is the standard. Without question, there was no flexibility with this recommendation. We are currently able to accommodate six feet of social distancing in our classrooms because of the lower numbers. If we return at a distance of less than six feet, unmasked or masked, before teachers have the opportunity to vaccinate, everyone's health in the rooms would potentially be compromised. Some community members who have been the most vocal in challenging the school board members to return to five day in-school instruction have been quoted in saying they were willing to take the risk. My question

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is, whose lives are you willing to risk? Are they the students' lives? The teachers' lives? Teachers' families lives? Please help me understand how we are considering it safe to bring students back in for the five days a week while we are still following safety protocols by having committee meetings, faculty meetings, board meetings and in-service in a virtual setting. There are alternatives in getting these students back into school. The alternatives (inaudible) such as increasing staff, renting mobile units (inaudible) and providing vaccines for school staff. We know, and strongly believe, that students, educators, families and the community will benefit by students returning to in-person learning but we want to make sure this is done as safely as possible. This is not the time to make the change.

Mr. Hill announced Kim Bentz to speak next. Mr. Bentz stated that he spoke for both of them.

Ms. Ariel Sly - As a teacher herself, she thanked the teachers for everything they are doing right now. She knows that it's not the hand that anybody wants to be dealt with, especially she works with special education and she knows how hard this could be right now. She also wants to lean into why have we not tried to go towards full time. She knows that there are other schools around us that are going full time like Catty, Bangor, Northwestern, Saucon Valley, Southern Lehigh, Whitehall, Lehigh. There are other school districts who are talking about going full time or talking about four or five days like Bethlehem, Easton, Nazareth, Northampton. Why has this not been discussed with our school district? We haven't even discussed a date yet. How are they doing it safely? Mr. Weaber had just talked about how we're not, we're following the CDC guidelines and it's not feasible to go back right now but a lot of districts around us are. They are going to four, five days a week and we haven't even discussed the dates to possibly move forward with that. The equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment requires equal education opportunities. The key word is equal. How are we considering this an equal opportunity education if other districts around us are attempting four or five days and we haven't even discussed the possibility of that yet? She chose virtual, personally, for my child, not because I wanted to, but because it was the only thing that made sense for my daughter as she has some struggles as far as Attention Deficit Disorder and flipping her schedule with the hybrid model just seemed like it would really mess up her rhythm. So, she chose virtual, not because she wanted to but because she thought that was the best choice for her daughter to keep her in a stable educational environment. These poor hybrid learners, she's seen them not being able to go to school for multiple days because of snow which I know it's nothing we can control. But, they're being pushed back to virtual. She knows for a long time that they were having no live Zoom. So, for her, she feels like the virtual education was better because at least her daughter was getting live Zooms every single day which unfortunately those children are not. Again, where is the equal there? How are we comparing that? Our virtual kids are getting livestream everyday and hybrid kids got pushed to the side. Again, she's glad she chose the virtual schedule but it has not been easy, especially with her returning to school. Her mother has been coming down and helping with education who knows absolutely nothing about computers and cannot help when her daughter struggles at home to get on her online every single day. Like Mr. Jackowitz said, if you're uncomfortable why don't you stay home. Have everybody sign a waiver that takes the liability off the school that we don't have to worry about if anybody from the school contracts COVID. It's not the school's liability. We want to talk about the safety, but we're not going to talk about any other issue besides COVID. This has created so much economic status stress, regression and the nutritional issues for our kids, and especially their mental health. She knows technology definitely heightened the children's mental health especially with her child with ADHD. She knows that her anger issues have definitely heightened over everything that's going on right now. And she's sure we've seen the regression with not only our children in special education but for our regular education children as well. What is stopping us from pulling our children out right now of our public education system and putting them into a public charter school? Or, if we're homeschooling now, what is stopping us from sending them to a non-NLSD homeschooling program which would cost the district way more money out of pocket than what we're doing right now if they're already in homeschool. If we want a better education for our children, then what is stopping us as parents from making our own decisions. She doesn't want to do that. She doesn't want to hurt the district but at this point, she wants her daughter back in school. That's all she has to say, thank you very much.

Mr. Hill announced Elizabeth Taves. Ms. Taves was not on the Google Meet.

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Ms. Tara Williams - First she wants to say that she appreciates having the meeting tonight and while she commends the teachers and staff for doing their best during a very difficult time, we can't keep the lives of our children on hold forever. I understand that COVID has a lot of people concerned and it is a real threat. But the research shows the risks associated with missing in-person schooling is actually higher than our children acquiring COVID. They have a high risk of suicide, attempting suicide, than they do of acquiring COVID in school. The mental health of our kids is at risk. They're at a complete disadvantage by not being allowed back in the classroom full time. Private schools have stayed open without issues. How can they do that? As many of the parents have been saying, it's like a broken record at this point, you don't need her to repeat it. Other schools are reopening. She looked at some of the meeting minutes and somewhere she saw a reason for not opening is the signed attestation statement that it's binding. She doesn't know if she's misinformed or can't you resubmit that? Another thing, have you really thought about or asked any of these kids how are they doing. How are they really doing? The mental health aspect as many of the parents have mentioned is really scary, like the suicide risk. The risk for that. Mr. Weaber mentioned about the safety of the staff. I know the staff is probably more at risk than the kids are. But, one of the parents mentioned that, and she was going to mention that many people have said about the local bingo hall. There's the most vulnerable population. There they are packed, packed house, no masks whatsoever and our kids can't go to school. She's a taxpayer and she pays a pretty nice size chunk of taxes for an education that her son is not getting, he's a third grader. Some schools are reopening. Why aren't we? There was an article done back in January about the COVID funds being spent on the mitigation efforts and she found it interesting that Director Kern, she quoted him as saying the technology is used for learning and it's not designed that way, it's a tool used to enhance learning. While it's designed as a tool to enhance learning, let's stop using it as just the primary way of learning. She really doesn't have much else to say other than we really need to get these kids back in school. What is the reason why they're not there? They need to get back before the end of the year. Is it that attestation statement or is it really the safety? CDC guidelines of six feet, while there's been talk and research, from the World Health Organization that three feet is sufficient. In Indiana schools, they went to three feet. So, CDC is even reconsidering. CDC is all for resuming full-time classes. So who's to say. She knows there's risks. She's a nurse. She's lost loved ones. She understands the risks totally. Please do the right thing and go to bat for our kids to come back. Thank you, again.

Ms. Katja Bender - She currently has three students in the Northern Lehigh School District, a 4th grader, second grader, and Kindergartener. She would like to begin by saying that she feels that as a taxpaying parent, it is her responsibility to make the decisions regarding her child's health and safety and it is the school's responsibility to educate her child. If she as a parent is not comfortable with them being in the school then it is her responsibility to find other forms of education for them. If she is comfortable with them being in the school, then her children and her parenting decisions should have the right to an education. At the beginning of the school year, her husband and she discussed pulling their children from public school and placing them in a private school where they would receive full five day instruction. Because of her personal love for public education and the idea of public education, they chose not to do this. And, they chose to put all their hope and support into the public school district. They chose to work side-by-side with their children's teachers, who are doing a fantastic job under the circumstances. She speaks to her children's teachers on the phone multiple times a week, they reach out to me for advice and help. She reaches out to them for advice and help. She has put her entire heart and soul into doing everything that she can to ensure that her children can go back to school five days a week. She does not send her children to school at all, even if they are exhibiting the slightest sniffles, to ensure that we are not spreading germs along with 90% of all parents that she has spoken to. She does not send her children to school without several masks so they have multiple mask changes a day and there is never a reason for them not to be masked. She does not send her children to school without their own hand sanitizer so that they are able to follow all of the safety protocols that the school has put in place, regardless of her personal opinion of those safety protocols. Her goal is to have her children in school. We are not asking for our children to be allowed to run around to cough and spit on their teachers. We are not asking for the schools to go maskless when the rest of the community is wearing masks in public and these are the mandates and recommendations of the state. We are asking for our children to get the consistent and in-person education that especially an elementary age child requires in order to be able to learn. Study after study is showing that elementary age children specifically do not learn effectively from a screen. They learn effectively from in-person education. All we keep hearing

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is that the studies show that the case numbers are high, the numbers are showing this, well, the numbers are also showing that children are failing at an increased rate in all school districts that are not going in-person, including Northern Lehigh. The numbers are showing attendance issues that have never been shown before in our school district. The numbers are showing children falling through the cracks. And, she is tired of sitting by and watching this happen and repeatedly voicing her concerns and doing the best that she can to advocate for not only her children, but for the other children who don't have a voice. Who do not have a parent who has the social status privilege to be able to stay at home and help educate them. Who do not have a parent who understands the things they are learning about because they didn't get the same level of school education themselves. We have students in our district that are getting absolutely no education. She would just like to finish with her psychological concerns for students. She understand that yes, there is a virus and yes, it is dangerous. Many other things are deadly and dangerous but we have never ever laid our childrens' mental health out on the chopping block to make up for it. Adults have basically been allowed to live their lives as they are best able to. Our children have been given no choices in the matter and are asked to not socialize, to not speak to people and not get an education. Thank you.

Mr. Christopher Barnes - He is a 14 year teacher at the district. He teaches English, Journalism, advisor of The Slate newspaper, and he is speaking only for himself. We have only three plus months left of the school year and it seems that COVID cases are going down, thankfully. From my perspective, as a 14 year teacher, and takes his students' health as seriously as his own two boys. It's not a reason to jump into a risky attempt at normalcy. Despite other districts jumping into that. It's a risk that we could take dangerous steps backwards. Few teachers, that he knows of, have become vaccinated but many are waiting anxiously on the list. While we all want to be back in the classroom full time, he cannot stress that enough, to the community and to the parents, he promises you that we do more than anything. His classroom with your children is his home. We should not rush back to full time while the pandemic is still a threat with three plus months remaining. Our current situation is nowhere in the ballpark as ideal. But, as educators, he promises you that they are all doing more than their best at keeping it real under the circumstances. We miss your children terribly. We hate seeing some of them only on a screen. But to him, that is better safe than the alternative which could be more destructive. So, again, only his perspective, please consider leaving the schedule status quo and continuing all the current health and safety measures that we all have been doing very well, mask-wise and everything. There's an editorial in the latest issue of The Slate. So that way in the fall, which is his hope, we can be as much back to normal as we all desire and we can all celebrate safely together.

The next two people on the list Lorrie Frame and Lori Wolfe were not on the Google Meet.

Ms. Allison Chruscial - Thanked the board for allowing the union and the parents to speak and give input regarding what has been going on for the past year. She'd like to reiterate that we are definitely, as an association, committed to bringing our kids back full time. As a counselor in the district, she sees the residual effects that are happening with some of them, but safety has to remain a top priority. And, there are at this point in time, a lot of unanswered questions as to how it is going to look. The CDC is recommending the six feet distance and she knows some parents are saying about the three feet distance but what if that cannot occur, what then? So, she asks that the board as you move forward and you take everything that was said tonight into consideration, that you are thinking of the long-term effects. You are being proactive for our students and all of our faculty in this district, because we have been successful at keeping our numbers very low this year. And, we want to be able to maintain that for the next three months of school. We would not want to see the back-and-forth ping pong ball of having to shut down because we have two cases and it's causing us to shut down for a week, we open back up, it occurs again. She does not think that would be in the best interest of any of our parents, students, faculty in our district. So, she asks that the school board and the administration can be very proactive as they move forward, that we do not have to be reactive down the road. Thank you.

The next person on the list was Amanda Bashore. Ms. Bashore was not on the Google Meet.

Ms. Susan Bachman - She wanted to thank the parents who have given teachers positive comments because we really are trying to do the best that we can for all of your children. She also wanted to say that she thinks every teacher would agree that if you had a choice between in-person or virtual

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teaching, that in-person definitely has more benefits than anything. But, right now, looking at her classroom, she definitely could not have 30+ kids in her classroom, in her homeroom, and keep a six feet distance let alone a three feet distance. The classrooms are over 30 kids per classroom. She thinks sometimes some of these details are left and she wanted to let all know that's a lot of the reason they are trying to keep things safe and we're doing the best we can. She doesn't see how it would be possible with bringing everybody back. Thank you for your time.

The next person on the list was Ashley Reinik. Ms. Reinik was not on the Google Meet.

Mr. Richard Roberts - Thank you for your time. First, he would not want to be in any of your positions as a school board and this is nothing personal about anyone that has any opposite feelings or thoughts. You'll have people not happy with whatever decision you make. That decision does need to be made based on what is set for 100% of the student body, faculty and community in general, not what's best for a group of parents that are being louder than others, which he understands per their best interest. His son has been virtual 100% this whole year. He's handled it extremely well. Mrs. Dibilio has been amazing. He's always been good academically but has run into issues attention-wise and other small issues here or there. This year, haven't had that. He's actually had to speak to him less academically than he has in previous years. So this situation and what you're hearing from many is not the voices for all. And, that's why he wanted to speak up. He's not going to say shame on them, the other families for saying what they said. Everyone has their own reason, totally understand. He needs the school board to understand the perception you're placing on the school district. Here we are one week before a regular school board meeting with an emergency meeting called. So, he questions why. In Northern Lehigh, he knows for a fact, that we have a zero tolerance for bullying. So, why does it appear that the school board is being bullied into making a rash decision. Why can't this be done at the normal school board meeting? Or a month ago? Or even three months ago? Why did we pick hybrid from the get-go if we're going to allow the voices of upset parents make the decision for us. So, if each and every one of you on the board truly believes in your heart that we should be back four to five days a week, then you should also have to explain to us why now and not previously. What is going back into the classroom in four to five weeks telling the parents that felt safe sending their kids two days a week with six foot guidelines. And, what about spacing on the buses? How's not going back going to make the buses a petri dish for spreading diseases? Is pushing all the students in four to five days a week going to force families to remove kids from hybrid and go virtual? If that's the case, how is that fair? For six months now, a few hundred students have been virtual and have built a rapport and a schedule with their teachers. So, to the naked eye, many may think why does he care as to what this decision is? Well, up until tonight, nobody's been able to give a 100% that his son's virtual learning won't change. If it doesn't change, then fine. But, as a former NL alum, this perception that is being created he's still not happy with. If the numbers he got were correct, only a little higher than 50% of families responded to the last survey. We should know that the ones responding were probably the ones that were angry and upset and want to go back to full time. He thinks we can also assume that families that didn't respond are okay with the current scenario. Maybe we're here tonight because of himself and many other content and happy families that haven't spoken up. Shame on us for that. We sat back, many of us know what was being said and done by other families. We should've been more vocal. Northern Lehigh has been doing an adequate job compared to other districts in the valley and Colonial League. Many people talk about Catty. What many people don't know is that nearly 40% of the students stayed home. Many people reference Whitehall but they don't seem concerned about the fact that the school board does not have a positive working relationship with the school administration and teachers. The superintendent left the first school board meeting this year in tears. Many of these same people who are pushing for four to five days back in school are the same families that he sees not social distancing, meeting with families during the holidays, and not wearing masks all the time. Many of these parents could be the same ones that sit back and then have words, negative words if their son would get sick or their daughter does get sick or something even worse happens to a family member. He thinks that's where a lot of people aren't looking. What about you as a parent or your parents? He understands that this isn't fun for anyone. School isn't built to be fun, school is built to learn and work hard to get better. Just know that by making this decision tonight to go back to four or five days a week, you may be silencing one crowd, but you're also stirring the pot of another. Could this decision cost the district more money in the long run? Absolutely it could. Just like someone said if you make the

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opposite decision it could. He hopes everyone makes their own decision tonight based off of what you, as a school board member feels.

Ms. Heather Royer - She thanked all for giving them the opportunity to speak on behalf of their children. She has a 5th grade daughter. She thanked the teachers. Her teachers have done a fantastic job helping them navigate all the technology this year and they have to teach and maintain attention of students who are in many different settings. She has been in contact with Mr. Link over the past couple of months with her frustrations over the situation. This whole hybrid learning has taken a toll on herself and her child. If your child is doing fabulous, great, she's happy for you. But, education is not a one-size-fits-all. She has a background in education and she had to resign from her position in Northampton Area School District to stay home with her child because the daycare she was attending was not going to accommodate virtual learning. She would essentially be paying for her to play and then doing four or five hours of school work on the days that she'd have to pick her up. So, their choice as a family was for her to stay home and do the virtual learning with her. She understands the need to keep everyone physically safe but she believes the transmission of the virus is not from the children. We need to start focusing more on the mental health of our students. Her 5th grader went from Honor Roll and Principal's List to crying at home, having meltdowns and failing tests and quizzes. This is not acceptable and it has nothing to do with the teachers, at all. It's the fact that her child cannot focus at home. There are distractions here. She can't imagine how these students are focusing at daycare with all these other children running around in the background and having these daycare teachers in charge of their education. It's not acceptable. Some children may excel in virtual learning but as she's said, her child does not. She has seen the decline in her mental and emotional health. Her grades started falling which has affected her confidence. Hybrid learning has been a disservice to many children. Children have distractions at home, daycare, or whatever their setting they are completing their work in. She has listened to her daughter's meets. If you as a parent have listened, you can understand the chaos. She doesn't know how teachers are doing this. As an adult, she doesn't know if she'd be able to focus and attend with all the distractions going on. She's sure if you look at academic performance of these students you'd see a decline across the board. Education is defined as a discipline that is concerned with methods of teaching and learning in schools. Our children have suffered enough and so many things were taken from them this past year. Please, think about the overall health of our children and as a taxpayer, she is urging you to get our students back into the physical buildings like so many districts are already doing. She understands that every district is different and their numbers are different. She refuses to sit back and not fight for what's in the best interest and education of her child. Unless you have a child in this situation, it is hard for you to think about what is the best interest of children. She's sure if you ask the teachers, they want to get back. She understands the safety concerns because she was at Northampton and she sees what they're trying to do and they are working really hard to get these kids back into school. These teachers see the issues concerning our children. She understands, again, we need to keep everyone safe, but other districts are getting back. Let's make education as important as we made the sports that we did this spring and fall. Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer Arnold - Thank you so much for letting all the parents speak this evening. She does understand that safety of our students and our teachers are of utmost importance. But, if you want your child to be in school five days a week, why can't we make that an option. If you don't feel safe sending your child to school, then continue with hybrid, continue with Bulldog Academy, whatever you may choose. Unfortunately, she does see that there are forty people on this meeting when we have way more parents and families in this district not wanting to fight for our children. Our children deserve an education. Our children deserve an in-person education. And, yes the pandemic is real. It is a not pretty virus. She knows. She's a nurse. She's been doing it since March of last year. She's watched people die from it. She's watched people survive it. Our children are not the ones that are most susceptible to getting this and most of our teachers are not either. So, she asks the Northern Lehigh School District and board to please consider another option for those of us who are willing to send our children to school five days a week. Because they need it. Not because they want it, they need it. They need to be stimulated. These kids being at home, it's okay to a certain extent, but they're not benefiting. They're not growing. Okay, they're getting instruction but are they growing? Isn't that the goal? They need to grow. They need to learn. And, unfortunately, the past year has not helped them. So, most of the parents on here that have voiced their opinion, they want something better for their child, as we all do. All of us want better for our children than what we had.

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All she's asking as far as the school board and the district is some kind of option. Can you give us an option to provide five days of instruction for our children? She gets it, people are afraid to get it, afraid to be around it. She was afraid. Can you please provide something for those of us who would like to provide five day instruction for our children? If you don't want that, then continue on with what the district has provided to us. Thank you so much for your time.

Ms. Tracy Ettinger - Good evening to Mr. Link, the school board, administration and members of the Northern Lehigh community. She'd like to thank Mr. Link, the board, and administration for all of your hard work and difficult decisions you've made in the past and the difficult decisions that you will have to make in the future. First, she wanted to say that she thinks we can all agree that administration, school board, staff and parents that we all want to have the kids back in person for their social and academic needs. She personally can say as a teacher that she has never worked harder in her life or felt more stress than she has this year in the ever changing dynamics that they are facing as teachers. This is compounded for her personally by also being a parent of school aged children and she fully sees the situation from both sides, as many of the teachers in the district are parents as well. She'd like to thank the parents for their assistance, cooperation, and their patience. She knows, as many of them do, that this is not easy, firsthand. That said, we want to make sure that if we reopen, we do it in a safe way. At this time, in our current numbers, there are classrooms that if students are all brought back, will not have the six feet distance but most likely will have less than three feet. What is considered feasible and acceptable? At this point, at Peters, students are eating snacks in their room, unmasked, and taking short drink breaks unmasked in our classrooms. There is one class from each grade that is currently eating lunch in the classroom unmasked. In this current model, we do not have enough seats in the cafeteria. The children are unable to use their lockers for safety reasons. And, they have their desks pushed up against the lockers to give them as much space as possible. With added numbers, there will be no place to store jackets, bookbags, or books, etc. If they are stored on the floor, this will block the already small aisle ways in which we travel, causing a safety hazard. If the numbers remain, some classrooms will have twenty five students in them, not including the classroom teacher or any paraprofessionals that may be working with the children. If a child does develop COVID, with the lessening of social distance regulations, many more children will need to quarantine as well as staff. This may cause an even more difficult challenge finding coverage for classes. She knows that we all agree that we'd like to return to having all our students back in person for their academic and mental wellbeing but additional consideration needs to be given as how to further account for the students safety and the staff's physical health as well. Thank you for your time and thank you for your consideration.

Mr. Fedorcha thanked everyone who presented tonight. Mr. Green asked if it was possible to have Mr. Hill asks if there was anyone else who wanted to comment before moving on if they had joined later. Mr. Hill asked and there were no more comments.

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Superintendent's Report - Mr. Link shared his screen for the slide presentation of COVID-19 data and the survey responses. The purpose of the presentation is to share COVID related data, parent survey results, employee survey results, pros and cons of re-opening 4-5 days a week, the unknowns of re-opening and choices for consideration by the board. A snapshot of the positive cases in the district was shared. The overall percentage of students testing positive is 1.91% throughout the school year. The overall percentage of employees testing positive is 10.24%. There were no active 14-day rolling windows at the time of the presentation. Overall in the district, the peak was 11 student cases in November with only 4 cases for February. The quarantine high for one week was Peters Elementary with 30 students the week of November 30. Quarantines are trending down. A slide was shared with PDE's Recommendation for Teaching, Learning and Assessment for 20-21 which stated that "it is vitally important that educators are supported in making deliberate instructional and assessment choices within a comprehensive system that allows all students to effectively engage with grade-level work".

Mr. Schnyderite, Peters Elementary Principal, presented the slides for Peters Elementary. We will be taking a look at data for both ELA and Math using the DIBELS Next assessments for ELA and the ECB assessments for Math. These are typically given three times per year. The first slide represents ELA from the 2019-2020 school year. There are three categories and students in the green are considered CORE support. These are Tier I students who do not need extra support.

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Students in the yellow are considered Tier II, strategic support, who may need some additional supports. Students in the red are considered Tier III, intensive support, who need a greater level of support. The next slide represents the 2020-2021 school year. From the beginning of the year to the middle of the year, there have been some slight regression in 1st grade and some gains in 2nd grade. The kindergarten students, based on the data, have demonstrated some of the biggest struggles this year. In the middle of the year, 46% of kindergarten students were considered intensive support. The next slide represented the impact attendance has played on this data. The slide shows ELA students with 10 or more absences and students with perfect attendance since the beginning of the year. 77% of students who are intensive support had 10 or more absences. 70% of the students who are in the green or CORE support have perfect attendance. Students who are engaging in the current models are being relatively successful. The next three slides showed the math data. The middle of the year data is comparable and slightly better than last year. Kindergarten students are up 26%, 1st grade is up 4% and 2nd grade down 2%. 41% of students who are intensive support had 10 or more absences. 76% of the students who are in the green or CORE support have perfect attendance.

Mr. Pyne, Slatington Elementary Principal, presented the slides for Slatington Elementary. You'll see some similarities to what Mr. Schnyderite shared with reading, math and attendance. The first slide was grades 3-6 and students who are at or above benchmark according to the STAR data. Third grade in all the slides begins in September. The greatest decline was between March and September. Third grade had a 9% increase in the 2019-2020 school year. The 2020-2021 is relatively level with a 1% decrease. Fourth grade had a 15% drop from March to September. In the 2019-2020 school year they had a 15% increase and 2020-2021 a 1% decrease. Fifth grade had a 15% drop from March to September. In the 2019-2020 school year they had a 9% increase and 2020-2021 a 13% decrease for 2020-2021. Sixth grade had a 16% drop from March to September. In the 2019-2020 school year they had a 7% increase and 2020-2021 a 9% decrease. Mr. Pyne had a connection issue, Dr. Stoker presented. The next slide showed the attendance impact on ELA. Students who have higher absences are not as successful as students who have less absences. The skills become more difficult each month. STAR benchmarks in Math for all grades had increases and slight decreases. Attendance impact for Math did show a wider divide.

Ms. Chamberlain, Middle School Principal, presented the slides for the Northern Lehigh Middle School. The first slide was the 7th Grade Cohort utilizing the STAR data comparing their 7th grade year to their 6th grade year. Intervention students were marked in yellow and urgent intervention were marked in red. There were increases from last year's data. This could be due to the curriculum or the COVID impact with hybrid. However, ELA curriculum for 7th grade is more difficult than 6th grade. In math there was an increase in the positive and a decline in the urgent intervention. The 8th Grade Cohort showed 30% of students in ELA were in the urgent intervention. Math students increased in the positive area and only a 1% increase in urgent intervention compared to last year. The next slide showed that students in ELA are moving towards mastery. The next slide showed students with 10 or more absences and the impact on the increases and then students with perfect attendance. Students with perfect attendance showed less of an urgent intervention.

Mr. Hauser, High School Assistant Principal, presented the slides for the Northern Lehigh High School. The data presented for the high school was based on teachers' grades. The 2020-2021 school year, first semester, there were 1,308 grades issued. 38% - A, 22% - B, 16% - C, 14% - D, and 10% F. From this year to last year, there was a gain in B's and F's. A's and C's are comparable to last year. Failing grades (132) by grade level were freshman, 32%, sophomores, 29%, juniors, 23%, and seniors, 16%. The next slide represented the Keystone trigger courses and the prerequisite(s) for each. The next slide represented the attendance impact on the failing grades.

Mrs. Dotta, Director of Special Education, presented the slides that had data comparison with Read 180 and System 44 for the first semesters of 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. The programs are implemented from grades 3-12 within the special education ELA learning support classrooms. System 44 is a phonetically based program that separates readers into pre or beginning decoder, developing decoder, or advanced decoder (move to Read 180). Read 180 is an evidenced based reading intervention program that focuses on comprehension skills. Both programs give Lexile numbers. Grades 3-5 average annual lexile growth is 140 points, grades 6-8 is 70 points and

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grades 9-11 is 50 points growth. Slatington Elementary had a slight decrease but went from 10 students to 22 students. The NLMS and NLHS made considerable gains with System 44. Read 180 students made gains in each building.

Mr. Link presented employee data for COVID-19 cases and quarantines. District wide, the highest was 15 employees testing positive in December. No one has tested positive in the last 3 weeks. In December the highest quarantine was 33 district wide. The next slide was the parent survey results. There were 706 respondents for 1,515 students. 65% of respondents wanted 4-5 days in-person, 18% to continue the hybrid, 15% for the 5-day remote and less than 1% for Bulldog Academy. The next slides showed the results for each building. The next slide was the employee survey results. There were 198 respondents for 246 employees. All workgroups were surveyed. The next slide showed how employees would feel about their safety if the district returned to 4-5 days per week. 5% felt very safe, 13% safe, 12% kind of safe, 18% kind of unsafe, 20% unsafe, and 32% very unsafe. 82% of the employees that responded said they preferred to stay status quo, 18% for in-person 4-5 days. Mr. Link shared the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommended models in the next two slides. Mr. Link shared considerations for the school board as they are making motions tonight. Perceived pros to 4-5 days per week in-person instruction - improve mental well being of students, increase physical health for students, increase consistency in instructional model/routine if parents/guardians must commit for remainder of the year, reduce attendance enforcement challenges, improve instruction and timely intervention for at-risk students, increase the opportunity for social interaction and social skills, improve ability to monitor and respond to student mental health and safety needs more directly, increase time available to plan for instructional differentiation for students, increase meal participating for the students that suffer from meal insecurity, and decrease logistical barriers associated with standardized test administration. Perceived cons to 4-5 days per week in-person instruction - decrease our ability to maintain 6-ft social distancing, increase bus seating capacity to 1-2 students per seat, increase number of students impacted by quarantine requirements resulting from inability to maintain 6-ft. distancing, require significant rescheduling of students to reach the greatest social distancing, require additional changes in procedures and programming for students who remain virtual, increase reliance on non-instructional areas for instructional purposes, increase the responsibilities of already "stretched thin" custodial staff, increase the staffing challenges presented by both substitute shortages and quarantine requirements, and require funding diverted away from instructional needs to address additional safety requirements. There has been talk of a third wave of federal funding being released. Unknowns - what impact will switching to 4-5 day in-person option have on current instructional practices, will 4-5 day in-person option lead to more students going virtual, will the 4-5 day in-person option lead to more staffing shortages, will the 4-5 day in-person option lead to more availability or less availability of substitutes, will we need to switch to fully remote instruction surrounding holiday periods or through requirements of the Attestation agreement, will there be increased disciplinary incidents related to mask wearing (how will we handle these), will families satisfied with hybrid instruction seek a non-NLSD option in response to this, when will vaccines be given to education workers and/or older students, will moving to the 4-5 in-person option cause more instability because students and/or employees will have to quarantine more often when someone gets sick, and how will this impact the successes that we have had if it resolute in increased quarantines or building shutdowns? Choices - maintain status quo for remainder of year, all currently available instructional models would remain, transition to 4-5 day in-person option once Phase 1B is open for education workers to be vaccinated, implement a phased return to 4-5 day in-person option by grade spans, such as K-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-12 or by building while allowing the vulnerable student groups to continue with 4-5 day in-person instruction, or return all students to 4-5 day in-person option simultaneously.

Mr. Fedorcha thanked Mr. Link and the administration for putting together the slide presentation.

Mrs. Kulp asked Mr. Link how many students are in a classroom now compared to how many students we think will want to be in school for the 4 or 5 days by grade level. Mr. Link asked the building principals to answer the question. Mr. Schnyderite reported that the average class size for 2nd grade is 25-26, for 1st grade 20-21, and for Kindergarten 18 students. With the hybrid model, there are 13-15 students in 2nd grade, 9-11 in 1st grade and 9 or so in Kindergarten. Assuming the return of students, anticipated numbers of approximately 23 in 2nd grade, 16 in 1st grade, and 15 or 16 in Kindergarten. Mrs. Kulp asked how many students are in a class in the hybrid model? Mr.

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Schnyderite reported that it is 8-10 students at the max. Mrs. Kulp asked if there is additional room to maintain 6 feet in any of the classrooms? Mr. Schnyderite reported that it is his assumption that based on the numbers we have, Peters Elementary would not be able to keep 6 feet of distance in any grade level. Mrs. Kulp asked if there were any empty classrooms at Peters? Mr. Schnyderite reported that if there was extra staff available, we would be able to find some empty spaces that could work. Mrs. Heckman asked Mr. Schnyderite to explain the spaces. Mr. Schnyderite explained that there is a 1st grade/Kindergarten lab that was previously a large group instructional space and has been committed to an IU classroom but is not currently used. There are some small areas that could be used. There is also a Kindergarten and a 2nd grade computer lab that could be used.

Mrs. Chamberlain reported that with the hybrid model there can be 13-15 students in a classroom at the middle school. If students come back, classrooms would be 26-30 students depending on the class size. There would not be 6 feet of distance in any of the classrooms or cafeteria. Other areas that could be used are the library and the auditorium.

Mr. Hauser reported that elective classrooms might be under 20 students at the high school. Core subject classrooms will exceed 20 students. There would not be 6 feet of distance in any classroom or the cafeteria. Alternate areas could possibly be the library and auditorium.

Mr. Pyne reported that the average class size at Slatington Elementary in hybrid is 13-14 in third and fourth grade, 16 in fifth grade, and 15 in sixth grade. At 16 students it is 6 feet of distance. More than 16 students in a classroom will not be 6 feet of distance. If students come back to the classrooms, third grade would be 22, fourth grade would be 25, fifth grade would also be 25 but could be as high as 33 and sixth grade would be 26. There is an auxiliary room to the gym and two computer labs.

Mr. Fedorcha commented that he's hearing that we could accommodate if we had extra spaces. At this point, those extra spaces would require us to have to hire more instructors. Is that correct? Mr. Link commented that even if we use other spaces, until we know the actual number of children in school, we may still not be at 6 feet. We may be able to lower the density of students in rooms but not be able to hit 6 feet. We would have to have people to monitor the students and more staff if using more rooms.

Mrs. Heckman asked how this would affect custodial staff. Mr. Link commented that more people in the building would have more areas to sanitize and more cleaning on a daily basis. We don't have substitutes to come in to help. Right now we are using other people in other non-custodial positions to help clean. Mrs. Heckman asked if we are under any obligation with the Attestation to clean at a certain frequency. There is not a law that says we have to clean at a certain frequency. The Attestation addresses face covering requirements and positive cases in a building based on the size of the building. Best practices and what we want to do for our students, employees, and visitors is to have the most sanitized, clean environment for them to come into.

Mrs. Husack thanked the administration, the community, the teachers and staff for attending the meeting. This is the first step to a true collaboration. She looked at Northern Lehigh's mission statement that was board approved at the beginning of the school year. One of them in particular is to create a challenging and supportive environment dedicated to the diverse educational needs of all learners. Part of the items included achievement and growth of students and staff, culture, climate, instructional technology and district operations. So based on some of the metrics, she feels we are not meeting some of the goals. And she's asking for help to identify how to do that. Parents in the community are having to make a choice on what to do with their children. If they're going to put food on the table, send their children to school or to help educate. Teachers have talked about the safety and the protocols we are putting in place. She believes we as a district have to stop following what others are doing and start to take a lead in some of these actions. She believes that we are letting our students, our community and staff down. Other schools have put in place choices to move forward to bring their students and staff back in a safe environment. Have we asked our staff if we bring our students back, what do we need to do? Have we looked at plexiglass for student desks? Our attendance for students has declined and truancy is at its top level. We're in a community where we need to help each other. How do we do that and how do we collaborate differently? This should have happened months ago. How many students have left our district or gone to a private,

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charter or cyber school? How do we get those students back? How do we get our students the education that they need and social and emotional health? What do we have to do to get the kids back to school?

Mr. Link commented, yes, we talk all the time about what it's going to look like when we come back. It's going to look different in each building and each classroom. What drives that is how many children are going to be in those spaces and then how are we going to manipulate those spaces to ensure safety while continuing education. Our biggest barrier right now is social distancing. We need to make a collective decision as to what we are comfortable with when it comes to social distancing. Once we have that direction, we can put a plan in place. We need to work through social distancing and if we need to add more staff. Mr. Fedorcha asked if we add staff, where would that money come from. Mr. Link commented that we would have to access the federal funds that are available. These would have to be temporary positions or re-evaluated at the end of the school year. Mrs. Martineau asked if we've thought about temporary certified positions in rented mobile units. Or, the kids that are in the graphs that are struggling, have we thought about bringing them back 4-5 days a week as a precursor to the transition? Mr. Link commented that most of the at-risk students, special needs and english language learners, are in the building 4 days a week. Those that don't fit into those categories but are struggling could be brought back earlier. We could look at a phased return. Mr. Keegan called the question. He commented that the community needs options.

Motion
Withdrawn

Mr. Keegan made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Kern, to return all students to in-person 4 days a week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday is a virtual cleaning day, Thursday, Friday and we continue all the other options.

Mr. Green commented that he and his wife had talked earlier in the week about being tired of "Zooming". They zoom maybe 3 or 4 times a week, maybe 6-8 hours a week. Think about the teachers who Zoom daily or a 1st or 2nd grader at Peters 5 or 6 hours a day. We need to get the students back to school at least 4 days a week as soon as possible. He would like to see the district stay as it is until next Monday's meeting to allow the administration to come up with a plan. Safety is still important. Mrs. Heckman asked if we vote to return to 4-day in-person would the students who want to remain virtual be able to stay virtual. What she heard during the presentation is that their format would change. Mr. Link asked the building principals to describe what virtual would look like at each building level. Mr. Link commented that if we are going back to 4-day, thank you for allowing Wednesday to be a day to clean and to have time to discuss multiple models of education. Mr. Link asked all board members to consider for two weeks to implement the plan.

Mr. Schnyderite explained that Peters virtual now is that there is one teacher at every grade level who is dedicated to just teaching 5 days virtually. All other teachers are teaching in the hybrid model. Not sure what the board will decide but he's going to make some assumptions. Likely, Peters would try to keep the livestreaming going because what happens when a student needs to go on quarantine. What are the options for that student? It is depending on how many students decide to remain 5-day virtual and how many decide to come back into school. Right now, 2nd grade class size is between 25-26 students with the 5-day virtual teacher teaching 26 students. If only 9 of those students decided to remain virtual, what that would then look like is one teacher teaching 9 students virtually while the rest of the 2nd grade would have 30+ students. Another option, once we know the numbers coming back, is to reschedule the entire school to ensure that every class size is optimal size. Half the school may have a new teacher. The best for the students might be to keep them with their teacher but, again, it's dependent on class sizes. Mr. Keegan commented that the data shows most of the parents want their students back in school. He is confident our administration and our teachers can pull this off.

Call the
Question
Denied

Mr. Keegan called the question, which was seconded by Mr. Kern, to close debate.

Roll Call.

YEA: Mr. Distler, Mr. Keegan, and Mr. Kern (3)

NAY: Mr. Green, Mrs. Heckman, Mrs. Husack, Mrs. Kulp, Mrs. Martineau, and Mr. Fedorcha (6)

Motion denied.

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(cont.)**

Board members discussed giving the administration two weeks to have a plan in place. Mr. Green asked about having another special meeting. Mr. Kern commented that he feels we keep kicking this issue further down the road. We need to do something. Mr. Kern sits with his grandchild for six hours with the virtual learning and he commented that it is all encompassing. He only has one child, he can't imagine what it's like with parents of three or four children. His granddaughter has an advantage because she has an educator sitting next to her. He's heard all sorts of things during Google Meets that are non-educational. It's not the right environment for education. Our kids need to be in school. Technology is a resource. It is there to enhance learning. It is not designed to be the learning tool. Mr. Distler commented that he is the grandfather of three granddaughters in a neighboring school district and they've adapted very well. He's sure the Northern Lehigh teachers are doing the best that they can. He'd like to also see the students come back to 4 days a week. We need to give the administration time to put a plan together. Mr. Kern commented that he was in no way inferring that our teachers are not doing a great job. They are doing a miraculous job. He thinks the teachers are working twice as hard and the administrators than they would in a traditional setting. He sees the frustration in our parents voices that spoke tonight. It's a highly emotional decision, but we need to give our parents options. Mr. Distler commented that it will take time and effort to get the students back in school. Mrs. Martineau asked if we can meet everybody halfway and start some positive motion in getting the students back. We don't have that much time left in the school year. What is this going to look like and how soon can we get started even with the first step. Mr. Link commented that he would request that we have two weeks before we start bringing groups of students back. He would recommend that we start with the primary grades, not just at-risk student groups, on the first day of the second week and then roll it out in one week increments from there. Slatinton being next, possibly 3 to 4 and then 5 to 6. Then middle school and high school and he would not be opposed to doing the middle school and high school at the same time. Mrs. Martineau asked if it is an option to resubmit the Attestation Statement? Mr. Link commented that we would still be operating under the current Attestation statement no matter what model we are in. We still have to follow the face covering guidelines and if two cases in any building, because we are considered small schools, occurs within the same 14 days, we would have to close that building for 3 to 14 days. Mrs. Heckman commented that she is not in favor of sending everyone back to 4-days at the same time. She is 100% in favor of a phase in starting with Peters Elementary, the way that Mr. Link described it. Mrs. Heckman asked how many additional staff per building would be required. Mr. Fedorcha commented that would we not have to first survey the parents to see how many want to come back full time. Mr. Link commented that there is a survey already drafted. The administrators have a 9:30 meeting tomorrow morning to debrief the outcome of tonight's meeting knowing that there are several different choices the board may be able to approve. Parents will be told that it is a rest of the year commitment barring any shutdowns from PDE or the Department of Health. Once we have the survey results, that will better drive the staffing needs. If we release the survey tomorrow, he would recommend we give the parents until the end of the day Friday to respond. It's going to be a tight turnaround. Mrs. Husack commented that if we already have a survey and we are working ahead, that means we already have a plan. If we do a rollout approach, it will be the end of April. Is there a plan already started and drafted? Mr. Fedorcha commented that there would be a need for a survey to get the numbers. We don't have the numbers of students coming back. Mrs. Husack commented that we are always going to have a "what if". We've had the flu in our buildings for years. We had a plan then, we have a plan now. Mrs. Martineau commented that we just took a survey. Mr. Link commented that less than half of the parents/guardians responded to the survey. We would have to send out a survey and give the parents time to respond and then use that information to drive the logistics of what it's actually going to look like. A staged approach would look like this: A survey goes out tomorrow, we have a traditional board meeting on Monday, March 15th would be the earliest students start to come back, March 22nd would be Slatinton, if the board would decide to do the middle school and high school the following week on March 29th, and the 4th quarter begins on April 6th. Mrs. Kulp asked how the survey was going out? Is there a quicker way to get it out so we can plan sooner? The survey would go out online and possibly a backpack, paper, survey with the younger students. Mrs. Kulp asked about the two weeks. Mr. Link commented that he's strongly urging the board to give administration two weeks to get the survey results back and then put the logistics into place to start the students on March 15th if it were to be Peters. Mr. Green commented about amending the motion and

**SPECIAL
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(cont.)**

say we're going to return all students for 4 days a week, the administration will come back with a plan that we can discuss at our next regularly scheduled board meeting next Monday. And, if there's any reason why we can't do it, we just call a special meeting the following Monday. If not, we proceed with the plan. That will give two weeks to put the plan in place. Mrs. Martineau asked about a point of clarification. By plan, do you mean everybody back at once or the staged approach? Mr. Green commented that we can look at that next week. He'd like to see them back sooner. He doesn't want to wait four weeks to bring them back. Mr. Link commented that in order for administration to develop the plan, they would need direction this evening. Probably a succinct motion whether we're all back at once or to phase it because that will be a driver for the plan. Mr. Keegan asked for language from Mr. Green to amend his motion. Mr. Keegan suggested a two week phase-in instead of four weeks. Mr. Link suggested two options: Vote on a motion that students in Peters Elementary School have a choice to return to four days a week on March 15th, Slatington return on March 22nd, and middle school and high school return on March 29th four days a week or students in Peters and Slatington return on March 15th and students at the middle school and high school return on March 22nd four days a week. That will then help the administration release the surveys out tomorrow. Mr. Link suggested sending the survey out to elementary parents in the beginning of the week and secondary parents at the end of the week. Mr. Keegan liked the second option. Mr. Keegan and Mr. Kern withdrew the first motion.

Return to
4 Day
Instruction

Mr. Keegan made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Kern, to bring the students back for a four days a week program, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday is virtual, Thursday and Friday in house. It will be a phased-in option of Peter and Slatington returning on March 15th and the middle school and high school returning on March 22nd.

Mrs. Heckman commented that as part of the plan, are we going to have an update on the plan next Monday? Mr. Link commented that he can give an update on the progress of the plan at that time and a discussion on what the spacing will look like in the schools and how it may impact the other instructional model. Mrs. Heckman commented about an update on the virtual people, how it could affect custodial staff and cleaning if we need to put more resources into that, how many teachers need to be acquired in each building, what type of resources we need to allocate to that. Mr. Keegan commented that he respectfully disagrees. Administration's job will handle that. When we start asking those intimate questions about every action that he's going to do, then we're micromanaging and he doesn't want to micromanage our administration. He has faith that Matthew, and team, can come to the board with a plan that will work for all students and families. Mrs. Husack wanted to clarify that students will still have the option, if there is a student or family member that does not feel comfortable coming back in the building, and they want to continue being virtual, this plan will still include the virtual approach for children who want to do that. Mr. Link commented that there will be an option for them. It may not be as robust as what they currently have in front of them but we will have an option for them virtually. Mr. Fedorcha asked if that means the current Peters Elementary virtual teachers may not have a virtual class anymore. All those virtual students would then be distributed among the other teachers? So that would be a tremendous change to the virtual learning of those students? Mr. Link commented that it is a strong possibility that we would have to use a virtual dedicated teacher as an in-person classroom teacher to lower the number of students in the classrooms. Which then means the high-quality produced recordings that students have at night would be taken off the table because those teachers would be teaching and they may just have to watch a recording of the instruction in the classroom either real-time or later. Mrs. Husack commented that her question would be if we are talking about a quality in the education of students, why would the virtual be getting something different than the hybrid model. If she's looking at that now, she's not sure we're providing equal opportunity for those students. If the virtual model currently today is doing something different than those students in hybrid, why can't they all just follow what the hybrid is doing and the choice is you're either in the classroom or hybrid and the video gets recorded from the teachers teaching anyway. Why are they getting something polished? Mr. Link commented that at the K, 1, 2 level they found that children and their families often times found that when they are at home they support them during the evening. Our virtual teachers record kind of here's what you need to know in 15-20 minutes instead of them having to watch through an entire instructional period in the livestream

**SPECIAL
BOARD
REPORTS
(cont.)**

recording. He's not sure how we'd continue to do that if those virtual teachers or the classroom teachers that may have been recording those at night videos are now doing live instruction throughout the day.

Roll Call.

YEA: Mr. Green, Mrs. Heckman, Mrs. Husack, Mr. Keegan, Mr. Kern, Mrs. Kulp, Mrs. Martineau, Mr. Distler, and Mr. Fedorcha (9)

NAY: None.

Motion carried.

Mr. Fedorcha asked if there were any other items the board would like to discuss. There were none.

**RECOG-
NITION OF
GUESTS**

Mr. Fedorcha asked Mr. Hill if there were any guests who wanted to address the board.

Mr. Hill read the list of participants to see if they wanted to speak.

Mr. Justin Jackowicz thanked the board members for a very productive meeting. It was long overdue. A lot of the members said the same thing. He's very appreciative for the opportunity to be able to speak and he thinks they are doing the right thing by trying to get the kids back in school. Thanks, again.

Mr. Timothy Weaber said again he is speaking as the Northern Lehigh Education Association President. He will tell you that the association's very disappointed with your decision. You've forgotten the one group that really makes this work in the end, the teachers. You've demonstrated that you're willing to take the risk with our teachers and families health and wellbeing. This decision is not acceptable to the teachers. There was a comment that a spouse's wife was an essential worker and has been working through this. I'm sure that spouse has already gotten the vaccination. We've not had the opportunity to all get vaccinated. In fact, some teachers are working very hard and are in the process of doing that, he's one of them. Additionally, teachers have taken on a huge task of taking on mobile teaching models, this is a huge task, and now you're asking them to change that again. This is not the right time. He wants to ask again to please reconsider, thank you.

Ms. Pauline Grady wanted to thank the board for listening to the parents. We do appreciate your time. It's been rough for all of us, the kids, board, administration, teachers. But, the biggest concern here are the kids and that's the bottom line. We do appreciate your time, thank you.

Ms. Ariel Sly wanted to thank everyone that was here tonight. She knows it was a very long meeting and she appreciates everyone's time and listening to the parents and voiced their opinions to stick up for their children's education and trying to get them back to school. Thank you, she appreciates it.

Ms. Katja Bender thanked all for their time and thank you for providing this option to parents from all ends of the opinions spectrum. This was a much more effective way of having their voices heard than 200 characters and she greatly appreciates that.

Mr. Richard Roberts said he's not surprised, but a little disappointed because of the fear of what he thought was going to happen. Congratulations to everyone that is getting what they want. But, now at the same time, his son and his classmates are potentially, now in the middle of March, being forced to forget about their rapport with their virtual teacher and their schedules and the way everything's been going and then now all of a sudden, be put into a new classroom with new students and he doesn't think that's fair. He's hoping that with this plan, you can figure out a way to make the virtual work, thank you.

RECOGNITION OF GUESTS

Ms. Tracy Ettinger said she understands that this is a huge undertaking and there is great number of considerations that need to be made for the safety of all, both students and staff. Again, she has reiterated this many times, she is concerned as well as a bunch of the staff members at Peters and all around the district with the number of social distancing spacing. Again, she's just curious, what number is going to be acceptable as far as safety is concerned. She appreciates to hear that you are considering the addition of staffing. But, again, with the two week timeline, she's not quite sure what the process is for interviewing and hiring and getting the necessary staff in place to do this. She just hopes that as you plan this, you take into consideration the spacing and safety for all involved.

Mr. Fedorcha thanked all for their patience tonight. It has been a long meeting. It's difficult for all of us. He thanked all for sitting in, listening, and coming up with a resolution that will make our school district function in a well-mannered way, and he trusts Mr. Link and our administration to do that.

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Kulp made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Martineau, that the special meeting of the Northern Lehigh School District Board of School Directors adjourned at 10:16 p.m.

Roll Call.

YEA: Mrs. Heckman, Mrs. Husack, Mr. Keegan, Mr. Kern, Mrs. Kulp, Mrs. Martineau, Mr. Distler, Mr. Green, and Mr. Fedorcha (9)

NAY: None.

Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Gale N. Husack
Secretary

ATTEST: _____ President
Gary S. Fedorcha