

School Committee Curriculum Subcommittee

Thursday, April 2, 2020

3:00 PM-5:40 PM

Remote via Webex

Curriculum Subcommittee Members Present: Barbara Scotto (Chair), Helen Charlupski, Susan Wolf Ditkoff, and Jennifer Monopoli.

Other School Committee Members Present: Julie Schreiner-Oldham, Suzanne Federspiel, Sharon Abramowitz and David Pearlman.

Staff Present: Ben Lummis, Nicole Gittens, Casey Ngo-Miller, Kalise Wornum, Mary Brown, Meg Maccini, and Robin Coyne.

Other Staff Present: Brookline High School (BHS) Head of School Anthony Meyer, BHS Assistant Head of School Hal Mason, Heath School Principal Asa Sevelius, Coolidge Corner School Principal Jen Buller, K-12 Visual Arts Curriculum Coordinator Alicia Mitchell, K-12 Coordinator of Performing Arts Kenny Kozol, K-8 English Language Arts Curriculum Coordinator Joanna Lieberman, K-8 World Language Coordinator Tanya Alvarado, K-8 Math Coordinator Kathleen Hubbard, K-8 Science Curriculum Coordinator Emily Speck, K-8 Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator Gabriel McCormick, Director of Professional Development Michelle Herman, BHS Director of Guidance and Clinical Services Maria Letasz, District-wide Math Coach Norma Borenstein-Gordon, Runkle Teacher Marian Voros, BHS Psychologist Matthew DuBois, Director of Autism and Inclusion Programming Melissa Devine, Teacher Carlyn Zaniboni Uyenoyama, and Runkle School Librarian Teresa Gallo-Toth.

1) Update on Remote Learning

The administrators present provided an overview of work that has been going on in the district, including collaboration across grades, schools, and content; communications and connections with students and families; scheduling; targeted efforts to promote social-emotional well-being and ensure that students are engaged; technology; ways in which staff support each other; and collaboration and support from town agencies. Staff discussed the phases of this work and how it will be impacted by the extension of the closure.

Dr. Gittens provided an update on remote learning (Attachment A), which included the following: What is happening now in classrooms - Principals and Coordinators; New Guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; and the Updated Remote Learning Plan. The Updated Remote Learning Plan covers the following: collaborating with colleagues to support students; providing weekly learning plans for students; providing new learning and content; providing Sample Student Daily Schedules; monitoring Student Engagement; Feedback and Grading; and Effective Practices for Remote Learning. The district recognizes this is a fluid and ever-changing situation and the need to remain flexible. Next steps will include the following: family communication on updated guidance; schedule consistent support for teachers with Curriculum Coordinators; work with Principals to develop contingency plans for teachers who are unavailable; continue to develop the work already underway to support students with disabilities; develop an FAQ page for families on Remote Learning; and work with teachers to adjust plans as needed.

Ms. Ngo-Miller provided an update on Special Education during the closure. Staff members have connected with students and families. Individualized Education Program (IEP) Teams will be working on weekly learning support plans based on specific student needs.

Public Comment on Remote Learning

The Subcommittee reviewed Public Comment on Remote Learning. Administrators responded to questions.

Comments/Questions from Members of Public
(Comments emailed from two students)

1. I have not had the best experience with remote learning. It has not been necessarily bad, but the amount of learning and instruction can be improved. I believe that the point of 8th grade should be to prepare the students for high school.

If we are losing two or more months in this awful situation, we should be able to learn and teachers should be able to provide some instruction. I am not asking for a 6 and a ½ hours of learning a day. None of my teachers has arranged a single video session for a class; none has emailed me personally. Additionally, I have not had even 3 hours of work in total from all of my classes in any week.

I can empathize. I know that many of my teachers have children at home who are dependent on them, and based on what my parents are saying, working at home is really difficult, especially with the noise and interruptions during work. My school instilled a sense of meaning into our lives including the meaning of hard work, friendships, and the knowledge that it was okay to ask for help. I know it can be difficult to get in contact with some students. But we all need to overcome some obstacles and my teachers should know that we students need to be actively engaged because we do not have the self-discipline and skill to learn in a completely independent way.

During COVID-19, we can spend our time productively learning or we can waste our time gaming. I know other students that have been waiting for teacher communication and the posting of school work. The entirety of the learning, right now, is put on the students, and even with materials, we need guidance and encouragement. I am not asking for teacher attention from 8-2:30 school day, I am asking for a reasonable compromise in the middle, helping me and my fellow classmates to learn, and to make our time worthwhile instead of playing videogames, watching television and YouTube. With more teacher support, we can meet this challenge.

2. I benefit from interaction with my peers and a structured day. However, Monday through Friday, there has been a lack of curriculum and interaction due to the recent outbreak of coronavirus. Even when school was in session, the overwhelming majority of our assignments were online. We should use that technology now.

The Baker School motto is *Work Hard, Be Kind, Help Others, Build Relationships*. This motto has been drilled into my brain since the first day of Kindergarten. I believe we should continue to follow it now during these uncertain times. Despite being out of school, we should still be learning. When we left school Thursday, March 12th, I was told that there would still be a workload and a structure to our 8:00-2:30 school day. I need this because I am incredibly stressed for high-school next year. There is a lot of change in the world happening now. I believe that we should continue with a workload similar to what was provided during the months previous to this outbreak.

In Brookline, I am under the impression that teachers get much of their teaching material from outside sources, many of which are available online. I wish for these sources to be made accessible for all students to use. Also, many students benefit from actual contact with their peers, which, due to COVID-19, is no longer possible. However, there are online tools such as Zoom and Google Meets that our educators can use. Just because school is paused does not mean our education should be forced to wait as well.

The only emails I have received from any of my teachers have been group emails to my whole class. No one has called. Our lives have been changed and many people including myself want everything to go back to the way it was. Some personal contact keeps us connected. There are pieces of this changing puzzle that are out of Brookline's control but education is not one of them. Basically, I just want to keep learning so I can get ready for high school. I know, with a little teacher guidance, we can still learn online and have some contact with my teachers and friends, whom I miss. And a little classroom instruction would give me a little structure in this seven day a week, inside the house, world we are living in. I understand that this is not a simple task. All I need is this or a similar option to be put into effect.

(Comments emailed from Parents/Guardians)

- This virus may come back in the fall. Our teachers are professionals and they should know that they do not yet have the tools to teach well remotely and they should be doing everything in their power to push the administration for technical tools and to do their own learning on how to be effective. They should be putting that learning into action now and sharing any lessons with their colleagues. The administration, as central planners, should be using this time to test various online platforms and to review and purchase training materials that they assign to teachers so they can learn how to teach in a way that they were never trained to do. Everyone on the Brookline payroll continues to get paid and are not facing the same uncertainties that 10 million newly unemployed Americans are dealing with right now. We can actually be getting better at a new set of skills right now.
- The Federal government failed on so many levels planning and reacting to this pandemic. Right now, our Schools are trying very hard to fail if COVID-19 comes back. Let's take

this current opportunity to improve ourselves and our system and learn to do something good with it.

- *Can there be more mandatory zoom or google classroom meetings for High School students so they can connect with their teachers and classmates and learn new material? I think if there was a bit more structure going forward it would be helpful.*
- *Can we get an update on the BHS project schedule? Is it still on track to finish to open in 2021?*
- *The “Waiting Room” feature of Zoom allows the hosts (i.e. teachers) to individually allow entrants into a meeting. There is no perfect app, but according to many accounts Zoom performs better than Meet because it is designed to handle such variations. Given adequate precautions are taken, classes should be able to choose what tool works best for them. If you use Meet, you will still need to train users on proper use of settings, or be subject to the same sort of issues that have been met with Zoom users.*
- *These are challenging times for teachers. Our priority should be to support and enable them, and -- to the greatest extent possible -- facilitate their work so they can concentrate on their fundamental excellence: teaching. When we issue proscriptive guidance to teachers without first having provided thorough training on alternatives, we are halting the educational process that is in place and interfering with the tentative fragile progress of establishing a new normal and new routine for our teachers and students. Teachers report being frustrated and upset with the administration approach. They are struggling to adapt their teaching to this new environment, and they need help and support. Instead of telling them what they can't do, the administration should be focusing its efforts on providing support for the tools the teachers wish to use.*
- *Our schools should be first and foremost listening to the teachers and working to support their using whatever the teachers feel works best. Secondarily we can provide guidance on new tools and practices. We should be very careful that our guidance and training is necessary and adds value.*
- *Student and class had a terrible experience with Meets this morning---with scratchy/delayed/inconsistent audio and video throughout. That was after days of pretty seamless operations with Zoom. Encourage teachers to use whatever platform they find most useful to meet their classrooms' needs, and provide security tips and support across those platforms as needed.*
- *At what point would we give up on the school year?*
- *Any chance school would be scheduled for summer?*
- *Parents who are required to actually be working from home, yet have K and 1st-grade children, are mostly having to neglect their children's education and nurturing. Unlike older children, who can read and follow a list of activities somewhat independently, and are often invited to various live sessions they can handle on their own, younger children need more direct and interactive supervision, direction, and opportunities for fun, active play. Teachers need more support. Consider the needs of this “neediest” age of children.*
- *What is the plan for classroom teachers who are going out on maternity leave prior to the buildings reopening?*
- *Consider making a different plan for the high school students regarding new learning, class specific assignments and grading, given the nuances of different classes at BHS and the need for grading for GPA and college entrance requirements, as well as less time to*

make up “lost learning.” If a teacher has 5 classes- she/he could set a flipped classroom once/week for each class. Then they could give a long term weekly assignment to be turned in online? Project based classes for some subjects could be considered. For example, a research paper for History with weekly classes on planning and writing- turned in a month from now.

(Comments submitted through Brookline Interactive Group Comment Feature)

- *There seems to be an assumption that intermittent (or lack of) student participation in video chats/online (for K - 5) is due to problems at home. What if students do not want to participate for other reasons, for example challenging classroom-wide communication dynamics due to the video-chat medium? (We adults are experiencing that!)*
- *Might I recommend that PSB explicitly state what is expected of the student(s) in terms of learning outcomes (i.e., by the end of the school year). When will we (parents/guardians) receive these learning goals so that we can best scaffold the children’s experiences at home?*
- *When can we retrieve dance shoes and instruments, etc. from school so they can practice at home?*
- *Lexington’s guidance on remote learning was a 15-page plan issued on March 23. They have since issued further bulletins and clarifications. Will you be doing anything similar?*
- *Why are assignments not being graded? Who is making this decision?*
- *Why can’t grading be optional for middle and high school? Some students may appreciate the motivation. It’s their “job” so maybe they would like to be rewarded with grades.*
- *Can we develop new schedules based on the teachers’ current availability?*
- *The slide mentioned grading plans for Term 3/4 for middle school students will be P (T3) and P/F (T4). Will BHS also be grading on a P/F scale in Terms 3 & 4? Is that still being discussed?*
- *What discussion if any has been had around April vacation?*
- *What is the guidance or messaging that has been given to teachers and specialists around 1:1 sessions?*
- *Have there been decisions made about students taking next level courses at BHS? Ex. A student took Engineering 1 for the 5 weeks until we left - will they be able to take Engineering 2 next year?*
- *Nothing has been presented about Brookline’s remote learning plan. O.F. posted an example of Lexington’s plan, which they apparently developed three weeks ago.*
- *Other districts have developed actual remote learning plans, such as Lexington. Will Brookline do the same, and when?*
- *Please share the student daily schedules with parents.*
- *Assigning work and providing feedback to students doesn’t address the issues of social connection and peer dynamics*

- *Flipped classrooms were trialed at Baker School. It's a great idea and would allow teachers flexibility too.*
- *Do we need a task force?*

Mr. Lummis informed the Subcommittee that by Sunday, he intends to send staff updated Public Schools of Brookline Remote Learning Guidance, with clear suggestions and examples for teacher collaboration, supporting students and families, communicating with families, introducing new learning, providing feedback, and effective practices for remote learning. The Remote Learning Guidance is designed to be used by all educators and staff. The district will continue to work with the Brookline Educators Union to ensure that educators have the information and guidance needed to support student engagement and learning over this extended period of remote learning. Mr. Lummis will also be sending an update to families with a summary of the Remote Learning Plan.

Subcommittee members requested more information from the administration regarding the Remote Learning Plan, the plan to support at risk students, communication with families, the School Calendar, acceptable technology platforms, learning expectations, expectations for student engagement, and the provision of Special Education services. Subcommittee members suggested scheduling an additional meeting to hear how some of the issues raised above will be dealt with. The Subcommittee agreed to schedule a meeting on Tuesday, April 7, 2020, 3:00 PM-5:00 PM.

2) New Business

Ms. Monopoli, speaking on behalf of the Policy Review Subcommittee, requested that the Curriculum Subcommittee schedule a discussion of School Site Councils.

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 PM.

PSB Long Term Remote Learning Plan

— Curriculum Subcommittee —
April 2, 2020

Three-Part Update for Curriculum Subcommittee

1. What is happening now in our classrooms - Principals and Coordinators
2. New Guidance from the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education
3. Updated Remote Learning Plan

1. What is Happening Now

- Asa Sevelius - Principal, Heath School
- Torrance Lewis - Principal, Baker School
- Anthony Meyer and Hal Mason - Brookline High School
- Gabe McCormick, K-8 Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator
- Kathleen Hubbard, K-8 Math Curriculum Coordinator

2. Updates from State and DESE since Last Week

- Governor announced school closure would extend until at least May 4
- Massachusetts Education Commissioner Jeff Riley released guidance and recommendations on Remote Learning
- DESE's recommendations supported by Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Massachusetts Teachers Associations, and the American Federation of Teachers - Massachusetts.

2. DESE Recommendations to all Schools & Districts

1. The safety and well-being of students, families, and staff has been and must continue to be the top priority.
2. Maintaining connections between school staff and students is paramount, particularly for the most vulnerable members of our school communities.
3. Nothing can replace the in-person schooling experience, and we should not expect that remote learning can replicate the traditional school day.
4. With school closures now extended, districts, schools, and communities have an obligation to engage students in meaningful and productive learning opportunities
5. Equity needs to be a top consideration in local planning efforts as this crisis disproportionately affects our most vulnerable students in terms of their physical and mental health and also academically.

2. DESE Recommendations on Remote Learning (continued)

6. Remote learning is not synonymous with online learning. Remote learning can take place in a multitude of ways
7. Remote learning should take place via a combination of educator directed learning and student self-directed learning.
8. Districts and schools support students to engage in meaningful and productive learning for approximately half the length of a regular school day.
9. Strongly recommend that districts and schools focus on reinforcing skills already taught this school year and applying and deepening these skills.
10. Schools provide opportunity to connect with one or more educators multiple times per week; access to multiple hours of work per day; time for physical activity, the arts, and enrichment activities based on recommendations from educators
11. Teachers provide feedback on student work completed at home to the extent practicable

3. Updated Remote Learning Guidance

- A. Collaborating with colleagues to support students
- B. Providing weekly learning plans for students
- C. Providing new learning and content
- D. Providing Sample Student Daily Schedules
- E. Monitoring Student Engagement
- F. Feedback and Grading
- G. Effective Practices for Remote Learning

A. Team Work

- ★ A team structure ensures learning even if a teacher becomes unavailable due to personal illness or family needs
- ★ A team structure allows for the team to distribute the workload and leverage the strength of its members
- ★ A team structure supports access to similar content within each grade level at each school.

A. Team Work: Examples from PSB

- ★ An elementary grade level team identifies what they want students to work on for the week in the various subject areas. The members of the team divide up the subject areas to identify work, resources, or other materials students can work on. The team creates a common “weekly learning student plan” for the week and shares the same plan with all students.
- ★ Music teachers at a school work together to identify activities, cull resources, and develop content in grade level spans (K-2 and 3-5) for students to do three times during the week. The music teachers share these activities and resources with all K-2 and 3-5 teachers who share them with their students.

B. Student Weekly Learning Plans

Providing students and families with a weekly learning plan for students helps them understand the week's expectations and plan accordingly.

- ★ [A Week in Kindergarten](#)
- ★ [A Week in Grade 3](#)
- ★ [A Week in Grade 7](#)

C. Introducing New Learning or Content

With the understanding that our schools are closed for 7 weeks (and possibly more), it will become necessary to introduce new content.

- ★ New content must be shared in a way that all students can access material and information
- ★ Teachers should continue to differentiate so all students can engage with new material or information
- ★ Teachers should continue to accommodate and support students with learning needs (SWD, EL)
- ★ Teach new content through previously taught skills
- ★ Confer with grade level team members and/or curriculum coordinators to introduce new content so students have access to the same content/skills
- ★ Students are not held accountable for new content and skills
- ★ Teachers should expect to reintroduce new content when school opens

D. Introducing Sample Student Scheduling

- ★ The Public Schools of Brookline recognizes that families have different scheduling needs and technology access; therefore, the amount of time any student spends on learning is ultimately determined by families and/or students.
- ★ Guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education calls for approximately half a school day (three hours) of student learning (*a combination of teacher directed and student directed/independent learning*)

D. Student Weekly Schedule for K - 5 (~3 hours/day)

Suggested Time Allotment Includes Teacher directed and Student independent/ directed work	Practice/Content	Examples
20 minutes (K-2) 30 minutes (K-5)	Daily Routine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Independent Reading<input type="checkbox"/> Independent Writing or<input type="checkbox"/> Response to Reading: Teacher identifies the specifics of this student directed learning
10 minutes	Morning Message	Respond to a message from your Teacher or grade level <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Teachers can connect via Google Meet, send a video message, a recorded message via Google Meet/hangout, screencastify, google classroom or email.

D. Student Weekly Schedule for K - 5 (~3 hours/day)

Suggested Time Allotment Includes Teacher directed and Student independent/ directed work	Practice/Content	Examples
2 hours (30 minutes each)	Integrated or Stand-Alone: ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies	This is a combination of teacher directed work and student directed work based on resources, materials, and assignments provided by the teacher (or team). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a short video with accompanying prompt <input type="checkbox"/> a recorded message which explains a Practice/Content <input type="checkbox"/> offer an online curriculum experience <input type="checkbox"/> assign a long term project or menu of activities
30 minutes	World Language, Art or Music	Specialists share the learning for the week with the grade level team. Suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> a short video with accompanying prompt <input type="checkbox"/> offer an online curriculum experience <input type="checkbox"/> assign a long term project or menu of activities

D. Student Weekly Schedule for K - 5 (~3 hours/day)

Suggested Time Allotment Includes Teacher directed and Student independent/ directed work	Practice/Content	Examples
20 minutes (3x/week)	Physical Education/Wellness	Movement activity provided by the PE teachers (Three times per week, minimum). Teachers may provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> a short video with accompanying prompt<input type="checkbox"/> a recorded message which explains a Practice/Content<input type="checkbox"/> offer an online curriculum experience<input type="checkbox"/> assign a long term project or menu of activities

D. Student Weekly Schedule for 6 - 8 (~3 hours)

Suggested Time Allotment Includes Teacher directed and Student independent/ directed work	Practice/Content	Examples
60 - 90 minutes	Daily Routine Independent Writing or Reading Physical Education/Movement World Language Practice Math POW	Student directed work that is done daily on their own based on resources, materials, and assignments provided by the teacher (or team). Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Independent Writing or Response to Reading: Teacher can identify the specifics of this student directed learning <input type="checkbox"/> Independent Reading (30 minutes) <input type="checkbox"/> World Language Practice (15 minutes daily) <input type="checkbox"/> PE/Movement (20 minutes daily-minimum) <input type="checkbox"/> POW: Math Problem of the Week

D. Student Weekly Schedule for 6 - 8 (~3 hours)

Suggested Time Allotment Includes Teacher directed and Student independent/ directed work	Practice/Content	Examples
2 hours (30 minutes each)	Integrated or Stand-Alone: ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies, World Language	<p>This is a combination of teacher directed work and student directed work based on resources, materials, and assignments provided by the teacher (or team).</p> <p>Teachers are providing a wide variety of approaches such as Google Meets, weekly learning plans, self made videos with prompts, assigning work on digital apps, work practice via google docs, screencastify presentations, long term projects, a menu of activities, etc.</p>

D. Student Weekly Schedule for 6 - 8 (~3 hours)

Suggested Time Allotment Includes Teacher directed and Student independent/directed work	Practice/Content	Examples
30 minutes	Art or Music	<p>This is a combination of teacher directed work and student directed work based on resources, materials, and assignments provided by the teacher (or team).</p> <p>Art OR Music Teachers may provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> a short video with accompanying assignment<input type="checkbox"/> a recorded message which explains a Practice/Content<input type="checkbox"/> offer an online curriculum experience<input type="checkbox"/> assign a long term project or menu of activities

E. Monitoring Student Engagement

Brookline teachers care deeply for their students, and routinely monitor student safety and engagement. Many of the same monitoring practices teachers use at school can also be applied to remote learning. While teachers want students to be academically engaged, the primary purpose for checking in with students is to make sure they are feeling connected and safe.

- ★ Consider direct outreach to student or family
- ★ Ask teachers who also teach the student if they are experiencing similar behavior
- ★ Consider using office hours to work directly with student
- ★ Reach out to a guidance counselor or administrator to share concerns who may connect with outside agencies or partners as needed

F. Grading and Feedback for Students

Learning experiences and opportunities provided by teachers should be taken seriously, though they will not be graded at this time. To facilitate engagement and student growth, teachers are encouraged to provide feedback on selected assignments.

Assignments:

- ★ Students will not be graded on assignments
- ★ Teachers will select assignments on which to provide feedback

Report Cards:

- ★ Middle School Students will receive "Pass" for Term 3
- ★ Middle School Students will receive "Pass/Fail" for Term 4
- ★ K - 5 Students *Cycle 2 Progress Report* decision to come

G. Effective Practices

- ★ **Frequent asynchronous learning:** Teachers create learning experiences for students to work at their own pace so they can take time to absorb content
- ★ **Some synchronous learning:** Teachers and students meet online in real time through videoconferencing or live chatting
- ★ **Give explicit instructions:** Outline deliberate instructions and specify the expected length of time to complete the session of learning.
- ★ **Specify expectations:** Specify Practice/Content requirements and length clearly (e.g. 2 minute audio recording with a specific follow up activity)
- ★ **Communicate consistently:** Teachers identify the format and platform that they will use for communication. **ALL** instructions and assignments from a teacher or a team **SHOULD** be communicated using the same format/platform
- ★ **Be specific about availability for students and families:** Set expectations with students and families about availability. This could be set as a standing google meet time or when families can expect to get a response to emails.

Next Steps

We recognize this is a fluid and ever-changing situation and we need to remain flexible and continue to develop next steps:

- ★ Family Communication on updated guidance
- ★ Schedule consistent support for teachers with Curriculum Coordinators
- ★ Work with principals to develop contingency plans for teachers who are unavailable
- ★ Continue to develop the work already underway to support students with disabilities
- ★ Develop an FAQ page for families on Remote Learning
- ★ Work with teachers to adjust plans as needed