

**Education & Youth Committee Meeting
July 20, 2020**

Agenda:

- The Mayor and Chancellor announced a preliminary school re-opening plan for the upcoming 2020-2021 school year, <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-year-20-21/return-to-school-2020>. We'd like to hear from the community and inform the Department of Education on re-opening.
- Members of the public are encouraged to attend. If you wish to provide written feedback on re-opening, please email bk07@cb.nyc.gov

Minutes

1. Committee Chair Julio opened the meeting by thanking community members for their attendance and participation.
 - a. Acknowledging that everyone has concerns regarding school re-opening
 - b. A lot of unanswered questions, scheduling concerns, remote learning, childcare placement, etc...
2. Went over the process and structure of meeting via Zoom, using raised hands feature, chat function, and can submit questions via email.
3. Questions, comments and feedback on school re-opening (see attached letter) will be compiled and submitted to DOE (which was done a few days after committee meeting)
4. Meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm

Minutes prepared by Julio Peña III

To Whom It May Concern:

The Education and Youth Committee of Brooklyn Community Board 7 held a meeting on Monday July 20, 2020 to discuss the Department of Education's 2020-2021 School Re-Opening Plan and to hear from the community their feedback and concerns. Below is a list of questions and comments that were generated from the discussion as well as questions that were submitted in advance to the board by those who were not able to attend in person. It is broken out into two sections; questions which we would appreciate responses to and comments and feedback regarding re-opening.

Questions:

1. What is the plan for sanitizing the school before opening? What is the plan for sanitizing throughout the day?
2. Is there a plan for staff sensitivity to cleaning supplies and chemicals?
3. Will mask wearing be required? Will exemptions be allowed? What are the temperature check requirements and who will monitor this?
4. Can the DOE get masks that are accessible so children can see their teachers' faces, smiles, and lip-read?
5. Schools are planning to open for 2-3 days a week with remote learning on the alternating days – as working parents, we would like more information around what day care options will be available for families that need to work and cannot be home with their children including –
 - a. Will REC-style sites be open?
 - b. Will after schools be open and fully funded?
 - c. What PPE will be provided for those daycare and after school programs?
6. What are the protocols for when a teacher or student in a classroom gets sick?
 - a. Are parents to be notified?
 - b. Will teachers be required to get tested regularly or have access to testing?
 - c. If they test positive, is their sick leave covered?
 - d. If that teacher has 5 classes a day with 30 students each, do all 150 of those students need to then stay home and quarantine for 14 days?
 - e. Do all 150 of those students (exposed to a COVID positive teacher) now have to get tested?
 - f. Who pays for those tests?
 - g. Are they happening at school?
 - h. How are the parents being notified? Does everyone in each of those kids' families need to get tested?
 - i. Who pays for that?
7. What if someone who lives in the same house as a teacher tests positive? Does that teacher now need to take 14 days off of work to quarantine? Is that time off covered? Paid?
8. What role will substitute teachers play in this back to school model?
9. What kind of communication push is there for families to opt-in for remote learning?
10. How comfortable are staff in returning to work? Will staff have an opportunity to work remotely if they're considered vulnerable population?

11. Is there a rush to come back on September 10 or can the start date be pushed back?
12. What options are there for alternate and outdoor spaces for learning that looks at least amount of disruption for students but maintaining consistency?
13. How can families react/respond to the opening plan? Where can they direct questions and comments?
14. What guidance is there for after school programs for the upcoming school year?
15. What conversation is there around bussing for students who require transportation to/from school? What is the cleaning plan?
16. Are schools using their PTAs as a resource?
17. Is there any idea on the role of school aides or how they will be working once schools reopen?
18. How are D75 teachers going to work with multiple students that require services?

Comments & Feedback on Re-Opening:

1. Nonprofit organizations have been reaching out to community members about re-opening of summer camp programming – many parents have concerns about sending their kids to day care centers and summer camp programs – this is possibly indicative of a larger concern of schools potentially opening in the fall. There is significant concern around the environment they are entering in September.
2. While Internet connection and devices are essential, there are other gaps exacerbated by virtual learning that the DOE hasn't taken seriously. Special education students are significantly disadvantaged in remote learning environments, especially if they have language or social skills disabilities. In addition, families without childcare, with single parents and with two working parents are also disadvantaged when it comes to virtual learning. In my experience, remote learning is really just parent-facilitated learning. Kids may not have adults or siblings with the time, ability or English skills to help them, which creates a different kind of achievement gap. Remote learning needs to be GREATLY improved if it is going to be our de facto way of schooling. What we had in the spring was not at all effective.
3. I attended the chancellor's Q&A for parents and have followed the mayor's communications as well. The lack of creativity and energy from this administration when it comes to reopening schools has been extremely disappointing. Without safe, in person school, the economy can't fully reopen. Long-term school closure is a city-wide emergency but hasn't been treated as such. Let's think differently! For example, studies, and examples from other countries, show that outdoor spaces are much safer than indoors, but there has been no move to think about school spaces differently. This administration's 'plans' are not really solutions for our students and families. If camps and essential daycares can re-open safely in-person, then schools should be able to as well.

4. Parents are more comfortable with masks on a school bus with windows open than having kids sit in a classroom.
5. One parent noted they want their child to be with kids, in person, in small groups. They are fine with her going to school part time, whether that means half days or 2-3 days a week. They would prefer not to do remote instruction on her days off and are fine supervising little homework assignments. They do not like the one week on/one week off model as it does not provide consistency but would accept that if it is deemed medically safest route. As much classroom/in-person time as possible should be spent outdoors. Social workers and school psychologists should help parents/PTAs form playdate pods for off days.
6. One parent noted, unless there is ongoing COVID testing for teachers, students and school staff, the risk of transmission is high, placing everyone in danger. The DOE needs to ensure all students have the tools and electronic resources they need by September.
7. A CBO provider stated they felt it was too early for DYCD to be doing summer programming and did not accept the offer to run an indoor summer program, though they realize most are operating remotely and will probably end up doing so for the remainder of the summer. In looking at the various models of the schools they work with, they don't fully see how these Hybrid models with alternate days and weeks of in-person teaching will ease the issues of getting more people back to work. As frustrating as it must be for so many people now, they believe delaying the start of school re-opening makes the most sense for now. There seems to be still so much fear and anxiety felt by many people, whether warranted or not, that delaying is a wise option.

Sincerely,

Julio Pena III
Chair, Youth & Education Committee