

Press from:

The New Providence School District
356 Elkwood Avenue
New Providence, NJ 07974
Phone: (908) 464-9050
Date: **April 6, 2020**



For Release: UPON RECEIPT

Subject: New Providence Board of Education holds Special Meeting to discuss school matters related to COVID-19

On Thursday, April 2nd, 2020, the New Providence Board of Education held a special meeting to discuss school matters related to COVID-19. To comply with all social distancing measures, only one Board of Education member was present at the High School Media Center, and other board members joined the meeting telephonically. Members of the public were also invited to join the meeting telephonically.

Bernadette Cuccaro, Board President, opened the meeting by stating “Holding a virtual Board of Education meeting is certainly a first for New Providence, but I for one am looking forward to getting back to our normal way of doing business as soon as it is safe to do so. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our amazing teachers, administrators, support staff, parents and of course our students for making the transition to distance learning so quickly. I’m not sure any of us could have imagined how different things would look in three weeks, but our community, like we so often do, rose to the occasion and has made this work. While we all are missing some aspect of being together as a school community, I am confident that together we will come out of this stronger than ever.”

Dr. David Miceli, Superintendent of Schools, reviewed five major topics: Attendance, Enrollment, School Calendar, Online Learning, and End of Year Events. The district was concluding it’s third full week of distance learning. As of Thursday, there were minimal absences recorded for students or teachers, and the school community is generally healthy. The district wishes everyone continued good health. There are currently 49 students enrolled for kindergarten at AWR and 48 at Salt Brook for the 2020/2021 school year. For that same period, there are 27 new first grade students enrolled at AWR and 14 at Salt Brook, plus 2 students pending enrollment.

A school calendar survey was distributed to both parents and staff on March 26th, asking their opinion on a reduced spring break, and thus concluding the school year on June 12th, 2020. Eighth Grade Promotion would be held on June 11th and High School Graduation would be held on June 12th. An overwhelming majority of both parents and staff were in favor of this change to the school calendar. The parent survey had 1,188 responses with 80.1% in favor of the proposed calendar change. The staff survey had 237 staff members respond with 90.3% in favor of the change. The revised school calendar was subsequently approved by the Board of

Education later in the meeting and is now posted on the district website here - <https://www.npsd.k12.nj.us/Domain/45>.

Dr. Miceli commended the students, parents, teachers, staff and administrators for their continuous efforts to make distance learning a positive and academically fulfilling experience. The district is very appreciative of all the resources that the community has provided over the years which helped to create a smoother transition to distance learning. The four district principals, MS/HS Principal Mrs. Lauren Zirpoli, Allen W. Roberts Elementary Principal Mrs. Gina Hansen, and Salt Brook Elementary Principal Mrs. Jean Drexinger, were recognized for their tireless work over the past month to facilitate this transition for teachers and students. In addition, the technology team has provided tremendous support and guidance to all the staff and students.

The district is continually looking for ways to enhance the online learning experience. This week, the district added the option of using the video conference application Zoom for all students. Teachers were trained on the new technology and are able to use it safely and effectively for interactive learning. Additionally, the district is purchasing individual iPads for all third and fourth grade students. The iPads will be shipped directly to the home and should arrive the week of April 6th. Now, all district students in grades 3-12 have access to a district issued iPad.

All elementary teachers for grades K-6 will also receive an updated iPad. The elementary staff iPads were an older model that were not able to interface well with the updated student iPads. Both student and staff iPads were purchased with a two-year lease to purchase model, where payment is spread out over two years. The purchase cost of updated staff iPads was already allotted in the 2020/2021 budget under technology. The remaining costs were able to be absorbed into the current budget because other typical purchases have not occurred over the past month.

Dr. Miceli, as well as the Board and the administration, recognize that the End of Year events are very special to the students and their families. The district remains optimistic that traditional learning will resume prior to the end of the school year. However, if distance learning is extended through the end of the year, the administrative team has been collaborating with teachers, staff and students to discuss alternative options to support the end of year events and traditions, particularly high school graduation. Certainly, there is an option of holding a graduation ceremony just as soon as it is safe to do so, even if the date is pushed to July. Mrs. Zirpoli had a scheduled Zoom call with the senior class to hear their thoughts, opinions and ideas about how they would like to celebrate their journey and successes.

Sadie Miller and Kylie Burton, seniors at NPHS and the student representatives for the Board of Education, gave a report on distance learning from a student perspective. They reiterated appreciation for everything that the administration and teachers are doing to make this a positive experience for the students. The new Green and Gold Schedules at the high school are well liked.

The 2020/2021 school budget was approved by the county and would expect to be approved at the April 29th Board of Education meeting.

New Providence Board of Education meeting schedules, agenda and minutes can be found on the district website here - <https://www.npsd.k12.nj.us/domain/3>