

CHAUFFEURS, TEAMSTERS AND HELPERS

LOCAL UNION NO. 633 OF MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Affiliated with the
International Brotherhood of Teamsters

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TO: Dr. John Goldhardt and Board of School Committee

BUSINESS AGENT/
ORGANIZER
RICHARD J. LAUGHTON, JR.

FROM: Association of Manchester Principals

DATE: September 10, 2020

BUSINESS AGENTS
KEITH JUDGE
WILLIAM R. CAHILL, JR., ESQUIRE

*Please find the correspondence below submitted by
William R. Cahill, Jr., Esq. of Teamsters Local 633
on behalf of the Association of Manchester Principals:*

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE
JAMES PETRILLO

In our recently communications to you on August 7, 2020, and August 26, 2020, the Association of Manchester Principals (AMP) stated that we fully support the right back-to-school plan for students and staff members, and shared we are working tirelessly to ensure a safe and successful start to the year, despite the myriad of obstacles and challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has created. As a group, the AMP would like to offer our positive and constructive input. We truly hope you find it valuable and respectfully ask you to reflect upon it. Since we reached out, our administrators have continued to work diligently towards a safe, smooth opening of schools.

As administrators, we bear the critical responsibility of ensuring the safety of our students and staff. We are charged with providing the best education for all our students across the city. We are expected to produce high-level outcomes for our students and their families. However, we neither feel ready to do this nor prepared to do so safely, equitably and responsibly.

During the recent Board of School Committee meeting, many AMP members observed a positive, collaborative, and congratulatory meeting, one that demonstrated to viewers good plans were in place for the start of school and things were in good shape. While we know all at the district office are working tirelessly, we feel it is important to share that this stands in sharp contrast to what most AMP members are feeling and experiencing. With the initial concerns we expressed to you in August still intact, we feel it is important to speak to this disconnect as part of our sharing why we are still concerned. Here are some areas of concern:

1) Liability

There are many things we are still rushing to prepare. We have been busy reading the recently shared, 50+ page health manual that covers most of the scenarios related to student and staff illnesses, roles of the nurse, roles of the school, etc. We are teaching ourselves, without training in this case, in the medical field. With no training and potential risk to ourselves and our colleagues, we will be responsible for keeping students in an isolation room and monitoring them. With simple anticipation, you could predict an assistant principal overseeing this, getting sick and passing it on to fellow building administrators, leading to a school without administrators. We are also hosting

political primaries in most of our buildings, increasing our risk to exposure. There are many other things we are rushing to get up to speed on, and, with each of these topics we have yet to master, we feel our liability exposure only growing.

2) Isolation Rooms

Some of our isolation rooms are neither ready nor well- thought out. We have not yet been told who will be responsible for overseeing these critical areas, but, most likely, it will be school staff members rather than individuals trained in this field. We feel this is putting school staff in harm's way and is setting us up for failure, again exacerbated by the late and untimely planning and training.

3) Taking Temperatures

The group appreciates the upgraded automatic thermometers we have been provided. However, there are many aspects of temperature taking that have not been addressed, including when and by whom temperatures will be taken. For instance, when students get off the buses, why would we only do this randomly and not of every student? Does this not present the risk of not identifying sick students? If temperatures are being taken only randomly and when students get off the buses that they have been riding on, then why engage in this at all?

4) Substitute Teachers & Staffing

Our group is grateful for recently- shared clarifications relative to substitute processes and expectations. However, we are facing the likelihood of many teachers being out when hybrid returns. With the shortest list of substitutes in a long time, we must anticipate the challenges this is setting us up for, challenges we will struggle to meet. We are also waiting to hear about many staffing and transfer scenarios with which we will be faced in the coming days and weeks.

5) Number of students allowed in a classroom

Based on different things being told to the AMP, there is confusion in the AMP regarding the number of students we may put in a room. We are seeking clarification.

6) Alphabet Cohort System

AMP is concerned about the alphabet cohort system being used to organize our student cohorts. Because it is not as simple as just splitting the alphabet, concerns include imbalanced and inequitable groupings and lopsided classes.

7) Professional Development

In August we have experienced a pattern of waiting for information and direction and we have been rushing to ascertain, understand and implement in a manner unlike any of us has experienced. As a district, we feel like we have not really processed the incredible spring of remote learning we just experienced. The professional development series, though well- intended, did not align well with the most recent experiences of administrators or teachers; similarly, the professional development series did not align well to best prepare us for remote learning and all we will be responsible for just

days from now. Every administrator values professional development and wants more valuable professional development opportunities. However, there seemed to be a disconnect this August between what we had experienced in the spring as administrators and staff, what our most pressing needs are, and the daunting challenges the safe opening of schools presents. With so many issues still up in the air so late in the game, time is of the essence with respect to our needs and wants for valuable professional development.

8) Teaching Remotely, Technology

In general, AMP members and teachers did an excellent job of being hurtled into a pandemic and remote teaching, surviving, and even succeeding in many areas. We acknowledge, however, that there is so much from which to learn and upon which to improve. We have concerns heading into this next phase that there was neither an emphasis nor a sense of urgency placed on remote teaching. As previously communicated to you, members are concerned teachers will be unable to livestream instruction onsite because of a lack of technology resources. Several have mentioned it appears we are more advanced and well-versed in the efficacy of meal delivery to students than we are about remote teaching. Unfortunately, there has been little, much-needed guidance for teachers in self-contained, special education programs relative to how they can and will teach their students both live and remotely simultaneously.

9) Hybrid Model

Several members were asked to direct their first-time questions about the hybrid model to their network directors. The AMP always strives to handle matters at the lowest level possible. In general, many comments were made regarding hopes of being much better prepared for the hybrid model than we are for this one. We feel we should be a central part of the conversation prior to the upcoming discussion about metrics on September 28, 2020.

10) Communication Between Dr. Goldhardt's Office and Building Administrators

As major stakeholders in this district, AMP members are concerned with a lack of timely communication and structure from the district office going back many months now. Members feel we often find out matters after-the-fact or after we have spent a great deal of time planning. The poor communication and organization have exacerbated our challenges and jobs. There is a lack of communication within the district offices as well. Many feel the rules/expectations change along the way. Many observe a significant disconnect between Human Resources operations and building administrators. Finally, members are concerned by request overloads that come from various district office staffers, leaving the impression, at times, of a disconnect between what the district office is doing and what their understanding is of what it actually takes to run the school buildings.

11) Dr. Goldhardt's Interactions with Principals and Assistant Principals

AMP members not only feel disrespected by Dr. Goldhardt but also feel a lack of clarity, a lack of timely information, and a lack of support from Dr. Goldhardt. Increasingly, members feel unprotected under Dr. Goldhardt's administration, feel Dr. Goldhardt's administration does not have their backs, and feels a lack of trust in general. Therefore, AMP members would like to see increased direct communication from Dr. Goldhardt, rather than others—including his attorney--

tasked to do so. In addition, AMP members would like to have their concerns taken seriously as many feel their questions and concerns have not been taken seriously by Dr. Goldhardt.

12) In-Person Learning for Specialized Programs

The AMP would like to reiterate a concern we shared with you on August 7, 2020. Every building administrator loves all our students, and our hearts go out even more to our most vulnerable, our marginalized, our neediest. The students returning this week in our specialized programs represent students who are vulnerable in various ways. Some of our students fall into demographics of people much more negatively impacted by this virus. In August, when we expressed our concern about this, one response we received was about the compensatory damages incurred by MS: Money. The AMP's concerns for the health of these students we are putting on the front line of this yet-to-be understood and resolved virus and pandemic, remains.

The AMP has now held three emergency meetings in a month. This is unprecedented. Please know this message comes from your building administrators across the city. We are neither avoiding, resisting, nor politicizing. Administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrative assistants are experiencing concerns, anxiety and depression like never before. We are telling you, we are not ready. There is a major difference between opening our doors and truly being ready. We feel we need more time and guidance to prepare for a safe, equitable and responsible school opening.

We feel we should be having regular meetings with our superintendent about these matters. We are charged with ensuring safety and developing positive outcomes for young children. We are charged with creating and sustaining a positive and appropriate workplace for our colleagues. We are charged with delivering so many important outcomes relative to our students, and with confidence and care. In looking to execute these charges, let us again remind ourselves this pandemic is bigger than all of us and its grasp still eludes us. Let us have the humility to acknowledge we are not ready and need more time. Let us do what we can control, which is supporting the health and well-being of all students and staff members.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of these vital issues.

Respectfully,

Brendan McCafferty, Rick Chretien, Mandi Tappin, Jane Clayton, Mary Jo Bourque, Mary Ann Wood, Lori Upham, Chris MacDonald, Colleen Fields, Karen Machado, Liz MacDonald, Nancy Rothe, Tim Otis, Keith Puglisi, Shawn Baskerville, Jeff Hebert, Kelly Williams, Scott Szuksta, Nicole Doherty, Bill Krantz, Shaun St. Onge, Andrew Sims, Shelly Larochelle, Sue Matthews, Kate Josef, Michel O'Rourke, Jenny Lynch, Richard Dichard, Jessica Milligan, Kelly Espinola, Ken DiBenedetto, Deb Roukey, Mike Beaulac, Connie Stamoulis, Sara Loughlin, Bryan Watson, Rachelle Otero, Jenn Briggs, Laura Lord, John Vaccarezza, John Barry, Wil Collins, Maegan Hoberman, Laurie Cloutier, Will Collins