

# **OLENTANGY SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION**

## **AUGUST 13, 2020 MEETING RECAP**

### **Update on Security and Safety at Olentangy**

Joe Suozzi, Director of Safety, Security and Preparedness, shared that the security vestibules, funded by the Levy that passed this spring, will be installed on an aggressive schedule next summer. Olentangy Schools continues to work on tabletop drills, and all students will participate in school drills every month in the Hybrid Attendance Model.

### **Board President's Report**

Olentangy School's Board of Education President, Mindy Patrick, began her address by reinstating that the leadership's goal is to have students back in the classroom, 5 days a week. The key to achieving this optimum attendance is beginning with extreme caution, social distancing, and adherence to all guidelines; which will in turn avoid district-wide virtual learning. Beginning the year in hybrid attendance is the key to assimilating both students and staff back into the physical classroom.

Board member David King attended the facilities meeting last week, and spoke to how experts from Ohio State University inspected Olentangy buildings, noting the impressive HVAC system that exchanges optimal outside air while keeping humidity in the building to a minimum.

The Board was pleased with the PPE update, that schools will now have clear dividers for shared tables.

### **Superintendent's Report**

A lot has developed since our last Board of Education meeting. I want to begin by stating that Olentangy Schools aligns with the CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendations, which advocate for districts to prioritize students being present in school. Therefore, we will begin this school year in the in-person Hybrid attendance model, which allows students to be physically present in school.

Many have asked why we are beginning in hybrid attendance over allowing students to be physically in school every day. In reading the CDC's ambiguous guidelines for returning to school, maintaining maximum physical distance in crowded classrooms and hallways gives me concern. We are moving forward with a plan that mitigates risk, and balances student learning with the health and safety of our community.

The governor's color-coded emergency level system is one data point in determining our attendance model. It will inform us, but our attendance models are not directly tied to these levels. While Delaware County COVID-19 numbers are currently stable, we believe it is prudent to move slowly as we come back together this fall.

We will not only start the school year in hybrid attendance, but anticipate remaining in this model for a few weeks at a minimum, regardless of the county-color level. We will continue to collect information, monitor the situation, and follow the direction of the Delaware General

Health District as we deal with cases of COVID-19. Olentangy sports and extra-curricular activities are currently underway, and we are already navigating the protocols on how to handle positive COVID-19 cases.

We look forward to welcoming teachers and staff back to school buildings on August 17<sup>th</sup> for essential training in this unique school year, and we will be eager and ready to have students return to schools beginning August 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Committed Distance Learning Staffing Update**

There are currently over 5,200 students enrolled in the Committed Distance Learning program, with 200 teachers ready to teach in this online alternative. Todd Meyer, Chief Operations Officer, shared the challenges of staffing an entire new Committed Distance Learning “district” within the Olentangy School district. Elementary, middle and high school teachers have all been placed, and we are now completing the puzzle of shifting teachers amongst our schools to fill open pockets in the buildings.

Students are currently being assigned to classes in cohorts according to their Olentangy school, preferably with an Olentangy teacher from that school, to ensure a smooth transition back into the physical classroom.

### **Committed Distance Learning Curriculum and Training**

All Committed Distance Learning grades and courses have been matched with licensed, experienced Olentangy teachers in these courses. This eliminates the need for digital curriculums, like APEX and Edgenuity, whose only purpose was to allow Olentangy teachers to oversee a class they are not licensed or experienced in teaching. This also saves the district approximately \$3 million in anticipated expenses for these programs.

Dr. Jack Fette, Chief Academic Officer, spoke to a misconception that learning will be not formalized in this model. Olentangy teachers will be communicating with CDL families on what to expect in their classroom, and will be tailoring instruction to meet their unique needs. By using Olentangy teachers in this model, we are able to provide a robust curriculum that goes beyond the APEX and Edgenuity programs, allowing course offerings such as world language and additional AP classes.

We are preparing for students to transition back to buildings at semester, but believe Committed Distance Learning students will love their new school taught by Olentangy teachers.

In addressing special education students, Dr. Fette reported that all special education students will have an Intervention Specialist and receive services mapped out in their individualized plan.

At home learning days in the hybrid model will be self-paced, with students preparing, practicing and doing independent work at home. Professional development for teachers in the upcoming weeks will be around this blended learning model.

Treasurer Emily Hatfield shared that Olentangy Schools has received a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 19<sup>th</sup> consecutive year in a row.

In conclusion, it is up to all of us to lift the morale of our students and support the One Olentangy: Back Together 2020 plan. I appreciate hearing feedback and opinions, but now it's time for everyone to move forward, show kindness, and come together in support of your Olentangy School district.