



**BOARD OF
EDUCATION**

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Virtual Board Meeting**

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PRESIDENT

TIMOTHY O. ESTHEIMER

DATE: August 3, 2020 7:00 p.m.

VICE PRESIDENT

ANDREW A. GREEN

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Craig, Estheimer, Freitas, Green, Lamos, Pomponio
Sage-joined at 8:30 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

SECRETARY

DR. DARLENE L. POMPONIO

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Pastor, Baker-Herring, Wilson

TREASURER

RICK LAMOS

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. Estheimer read the District Mission and Vision Statements.

TRUSTEES

JASON CRAIG
NEIL J. FREITAS
SHAWN SAGE

REVISIONS/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

2020/21-8 It was moved by Mr. Craig to revise the agenda to replace F1 with a discussion by the school board members to identify the best options for starting school. Move F1 to F2 and add F3 which is provide direction to administration on what the board expects for the start of school, supported by Dr. Pomponio.

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Craig stated the whole purpose of this meeting was to have a discussion with the board about what we feel are our best options for starting school and be able to provide that direction to the superintendent. He is not sure why it wasn't on the agenda but he would like to add it.

SUPERINTENDENT

JILL M. PASTOR

Mr. Estheimer apologized, thought we could handle that within F1. He is glad Mr. Craig identified those exact points.

BUSINESS AND FINANCE

DIRECTOR

BARBARA WILSON, CFO

YES: Craig, Estheimer, Freitas, Green, Lamos, Pomponio

NO:

CURRICULUM/FEDERAL

PROGRAMS DIRECTOR

DR. MICHELLE BAKER-
HERRING

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Adriana Carpenter was called upon but was not present to give her comments.

Jennifer Pipta addressed the board with her concerns about sending kids back to school when even board meetings are not in person. She feels trapped with the decision she has to make. She feels Atlas is not reliable and doesn't support AP classes. Online learning in the spring was lacking. There needs to be a plan in place for the middle and high schools if there is a positive case. She doesn't see how we can safely get the kids into a classroom.

Elizabeth Altizer thanked all those that put countless hours into researching what best practices are for our students; conducting parent surveys, reaching out to

parents through zoom and other forums. She appreciates everyone and the hard work they have done. She would love to have the option of remote learning with Southgate teachers and Southgate curriculum as one of our choices. It is important to her, part of the reason the school district is loved is the teachers. They are the ones that can best teach her child and have a connection with him. She doesn't feel AP classes are supported through Atlas. Her son has performing arts classes like band that cannot be supported through Atlas. She is scared to send him to school but does not know what other choice she has. She would be in favor of starting remote and then re-assessing to see if face to face is safe for all.

Lindsay Silcott was called upon but not present to give her comments.

Brandy Nusser was called upon but not present to give her comments.

Ms. Pastor called upon Ms. Carpenter again, she was not present. Ms. Pastor read her comment; she asked if latchkey will be open and available for parents that need it. Ms. Pastor confirmed, we do know that we can have latchkey.

Ms. Pastor read Ms. Silcott's comment; she is concerned about the opening of school and worries there are more chances of contacting COVID 19 and exposure to not only kids and families but also teachers and staff and their families. She asked that the board please consider possibly postponing face to face for the start of the school year.

Ms. Pastor read Ms. Nusser's comment; she would like to know if this district is considering starting 100% remote for the beginning of the year. There are more and more districts going this route. This option would allow us to start the year and stay consistent no matter what phase our region starts or ends September 1. It would allow teachers and students to be more comfortable than they would be in hot classrooms not fans and wearing masks. This would allow all of our student to have an equal education with Southgate Community Schools' teachers. She thanked the board, administration and committees for what they are putting into this effort.

A parent with three students in the district addressed the board about the kids with severe asthma or allergies or health problems, what will the situation be in the school for these kids. How will she make sure if the schools are open, her kids are safe.

PRESENTATIONS

Update on the SCSD Preparedness from COLT Leadership:

1. Board Comments-Mr. Craig thinks it is important to go around the room and hear from all the board members, everyone gets a turn to say what they feel about the start of school, what they think is the best option. Then we can have a discussion afterwards.

Mr. Estheimer has not made a decision one way or another. He really wanted to hear from other board members. He has been on the fence, but over the last several days has heard from many parents and teachers. As a father, he shares their concerns. As a board member one of the main functions or purpose, is to provide safety and security for all students and staff. He is fully aware of the impact of the board's decision and just wants to respect the other board members and get their perspective. With the escalation of the COVID cases in Michigan he is more cautious when it comes to opening schools.

Mr. Green's comments: This has been the hardest professional opinion that I have had to make. On Monday, July 27, 2020, in a work session, I believed at that time, seeing a parent survey, that was a little over 50/50, to give parents a choice to have their student(s) return to school or go online. Furthermore, I asked why an option was not given for Southgate teachers to teach online instead of Atlas. After vetting other district and their plans for having district teachers teach online, this was not feasible with the resources we have available. Additionally, safety for students and staff would be compromised due to the ability to not be able to meet the recommendations for social distancing in our school and having our teacher teach remotely online. Finally, to be transparent, I informed the board that my daughters' mother and I, (who rarely agree) would be placing her online due to health issues of family members.

In the past 6 days, stress levels have been high; sleep low; emails and phone calls plenty. On both sides, with concerns. I heard that Face-to-Face is the best option and parent's must work-I heard socialization and sports (I am a coach) is needed, but caution the rules set forth will make this hard in many situations. Schools in September will look different than schools of pre-March 13th. I heard young kids are not high risk and some parents are comfortable with their child's immune systems. Also, a pure online Atlas program is not an option. On the other hand, I heard concerns for safety, face masks for the younger children being hard, lack of a virtual teacher, and not given an option for Southgate teachers to teach remotely/virtually on the parent survey. I also had many parents mention that they would have chosen a remote/virtual option if a Southgate teacher was instructing them. On both sides, I had people cite studies from their point of view. As we know, for every study that says one thing in this situation, there is another that will cite the opposite.

Professionally, I heard from teachers, other school board members, and even two superintendents, who are friends. I hear the Detroit superintendent state he is afraid of losing federal and/or state funding if they go remote. Therefore, some district are going remote to see where the state stands.

Please understand that our COLT Team has developed plans for remote, Face-to-Face, and online instruction that are due by next Tuesday to be approved this board. Also realize that the state supersedes any of our decisions and can give us direction at any time, which may go against any of our plans.

So where does that leave me? As stated, 6 days ago, I was still in the parental choice mode. In the last 6 days, I have observed 600-700 new COVID cases daily; an outbreak at a youth camp in Georgia; 2 Indiana schools had to close due to COVID positive cases; In Florida, a 14 and a 17 year old have died-I am not sure if they were in school, but it is still disturbing; Michigan State Legislation is closing for a week due to a senator testing positive; and our governor limiting 10 people to an indoor gathering-the last I looked, there were more than 10 students in a small classroom.

I also spoke to parents and people that I know in the medical field on this issue. I am well aware that it is unpopular to some but feel that beginning remotely with our Southgate teachers is the BEST option. I feel the question is not if an outbreak occurs but when. How is that continuity for student learning? For those districts that are choosing Face-to-Face, whether I be us or others, I certainly hope that there is not an outbreak in the schools. I pray that I am 100% wrong on the perspective.

I also think it is a risk if we lost Face-to-Face to other districts. It hurts us financially to the point of probably layoffs when we return to normal times. If other districts take our students for Face-to-Face and put more student in their classrooms, I really do not know what to say. Something that resonated with me was a parent in the medical field, "that he sees the devastation of this virus and it isn't selective of who gets the bad version." In my opinion our job is to teach students and keep them, and our staff, safe in the best possible way. I do not have all the answers and I know that this will be a struggle for many families, but unless I see drastic changes in the next 8 days, I would not be in favor

of returning to Face-to-Face until the situation improves and/or more direction is given from the state government.

Dr. Darlene Pomponios comments: First I would like to say that the decision on the direction on how students will be educated at the start of the new school year is not an easy one in fact it has many components that make it a difficult one.

If we were making this decision at a time where there are no more cases of COVID 19 and we are just being precautionary to open the buildings, then some of the ideas and options would make sense. Considering all of the inconveniences as well as optimum learning for all of the students.

But we are not there. In fact, we are in an uncertain and unstable place as the virus has not been eradicated and has spiked up in many places including Wayne County.

Here are some concerns that I have:

- Students wearing masks all day. (Who has asthma, or other breathing difficulties, or even students with anxiety who will monitor each and every student?)
- Social distancing. (We have had too many students in each classroom before the virus, how would it be safe to social distance in each building.)
- Sanitizing-How are we going to fully sanitize the entire building before, during and after the students are in place? There was problem keeping soap in the bathrooms prior to the virus.
- If face-to-face, are we going to take the temperature of each student every morning? What about the students who enter the buildings late? Who will be responsible for taking their temperature and logging it down?
- Students touch their faces, noses, eyes, and other objects. Unless we are watching their every move, germs will be spread.
- The stores and restaurants are limiting their customer to 10 in the buildings, we will have over 10,000 student in the district.
- What about the asymptomatic individual who carry the virus with no symptom and pass it to another student who take it home to their parents or grandparents who have secondary health issues.
- What do we do for those students who have anxiety about the virus and have panic attacks or fear getting sick while learning? Is there a plan in place for this situation?
- What is our plan if one student reports that they are positive for COVID 19 or their family member is positive? Do we shut down the district? The reality is that any of the thousands of students and teachers along with custodians and staff, who can pass the virus to any one of these individuals, poses a risk that would turn the plan upside down and we would switch to the online classes.
- I am adamantly opposed to sending any one of our students or staff into an unforeseen and risky situation. I do not want them to be the test subjects for what may or may not happen while we are still in an active PANDEMIC.

I want our student to have the best education and social and emotional interaction with their peers along with the next person. Unfortunately, while we are not cleared from the virus or its path for the fall or winter weather, it is irresponsible to put our children and staff into a situation we have no clear end or direction to the virus or its repercussions.

We have approximately 3400 hundred students in each building. Think about that and what we have been told by the CDC and medical authorities regarding a limit on any type of gathering.

There are currently proposals in the senate regarding liability protection for K12 schools for the duration of pandemic, which we are still in, but that is NOT legislation at this time. We as a district would be liable for decisions we make from day 1.

Two studies from different parts of the world concluded that young children not only transmit COVID 19 efficiently but may be major drivers of the pandemic as well. An article in Forbes magazine from July 31, 2020 entitled New Evidence Suggests Young Children Spread COVID 19 More Efficiently than Adults. Quote: If children from ages 5 to 17 are as or possibly even more contagious than adults, then opening schools in areas where daily rates of infection remain moderate to high is extremely risky and unwise.

My position is to continue to monitor the increase in COVID 19 cases and proceed with the option to have students learn online through the online class platform Schoology and NOT the resource depository Atlas. Atlas was not intended for a district wide student load for classroom learning, Schoology is. It is not what was presented to the students last semester. It is an online classroom format. This option provides a 100% safe and healthy measure for all of our 15,000 students.

Resources:

While this is in place, there is a new grant funding option from the U.S. Department of Education for 11 states to Rethink the K12 models to create new and innovative approaches in creating virtual learning systems which will further enhance the online learning platforms.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/willamhaseltine/2020/07/31/new-evidence-suggest-young-children-spread-covid-19-more-efficiently-than-adults/#417db95519f>

My option is to keep 100% of our students and staff safe. I support 100% online learning for the fall start until January. I refuse to risk 1 person on my watch. Thank you for your time.

Mr. Green clarified—we do not have money in our budget to hire additional teachers in order to keep class sizes down and give virtual with Southgate teachers.

Mr. Lamos' comments: There are many things I have heard that I agree with and that I disagree with. We have all read the articles, we've seen the news and the new conferences. I am going to keep this apolitical that is not my interest whatsoever and it won't go that way. For every reason I see not go I see reasons to go back. The journal of pediatrics and other medical opinions about child development.

I'm sure every teacher and every professional on this call and in our district knows the same. I see an uncomfortable decision. Obviously this is the toughest decision that I have ever had to even come close to. My family is being safe and prudent, we are active but we are prudent. This has nothing to do with me and everything to do with our teachers and our kids. There's risk to being in the schools, there's risk in being outside of the schools. I want to talk about something that no one has brought up and that is a couple facts about Southgate. I will read them off and you will see the common theme; 29% of our families are female households which mean single adult with children. 24.7% of our families receive food stamps. 15.4% are below the poverty level. 22% of our families don't have broadband.

So we have a challenge to take care of some of our disadvantaged folks in our community. If they are not going to be face-to-face and don't have the resources to be able to be online whether it's Atlas or Schoology or whatever it happens to be, we have a community in our city that's very real that are going to have a hard time learning anything and being taken care of at all. I agree with all the congratulatory comments from everyone about how hard our COLT Team has worked to try and put together a workable plan. I trust that Ms. Pastor, our COLT Team and the rest of the staff will be able to operationalize whether we are remote, combination of remote and onsite. I trust their ability to teach and do it well. I haven't made a decision to be between onsite or hybrid or remote only. I'm going to leave the discussion, I will listen to the rest of the comments and maybe we'll have a little more specific response from the administration about how we will handle some of the situation you folks have also described. For the time being I want everyone to think about that part of our community because we

have to serve them as well, and they aren't going to be served by any mobile or remote learning.

Mr. Craig's comments: I recognize everybody's work that's gone into where we have gotten so far. The whole purpose for having this meeting was because I feel that we didn't really get an opportunity to talk to each other about how we feel about starting. Do we think we want to be in classrooms, of course we do, we all want to be in classrooms, but do we feel that is safe right now. I want to thank everybody for trying to foster this conversation about what we think is the best thing to do. I would love to be face-to-face but I don't think that is the best option right now, it is not a safe option for our teachers or our kids. There will be challenges to what I think is the best thing to do, which is to put Southgate teachers in front of Southgate kids on a computer. I think that is the best choice and the best option that we can offer. I would love to see this team's efforts going towards working something like that. What resources would you need, who would we need to address, what problems would we need to overcome. From what I know we have not put any time into that plan. I think that is the plan I would be supporting and that is what I want to see. We re-evaluate it at every opportunity we can whether it is in a month or six weeks or whatever we re-evaluate. When it's prudent to go to a different plan that's when we make that choice. We have this discussion or we do what we can to make it best. I believe the best way we can do this is with Southgate teachers, online, teaching our kids remotely. I think that is the safest and the best path for everybody involved right now.

Mr. Lamos added a comment: There is a lot of confusion between all the experts. Every day you read something different even from the same person for goodness sakes. One thing that is common, the one that that I don't think has ever been disputed, is that this stuff is not going away. It's not going to be three months it's not going to be six. We've got a longer term problem here with this, so I think as we decide this we have to keep that in mind. If we are going to test a certain method no matter which one it is, we have to keep in mind that things are going to continue to change. We better start thinking about the long term as well because this stuff isn't going away. We have to figure that out too.

Dr. Pomponio commented: As I mentioned the U.S. Department of Education is doing a grant with 11 states and they are looking at different models because I am sure them, along with everyone else is thinking the same thing. Mr. Lamos is saying that it's a short-term so it may continue for months and months. They are currently funding a grant to re-think innovative approaches to creative virtual learning systems. That is taking place at those 11 states at this time.

Mr. Freitas' comments: Having two daughters that are in the school system or will be in the school system and one who just graduated, being a teacher myself, I know that face-to-face works best. Back in March when this whole thing started, everybody didn't know exactly what was going to come down the pike. We were kind of stuck in this thinking we're going to go back in a couple of weeks. The governor pretty much forced our hand into how we could do the learning. If we start remotely, we're going to have more plans we are going to have to take an attendance daily which Mr. Green said, better lessons online, attendance daily. I think we will be better prepared for it if we go back. First and foremost children's safety is our concern. When I send my children to school in the morning, I expect to see them at night. That's our number one concern. Learning is second, but safety is first. Right now if Major League Baseball with billions of dollars, they are having teams get COVID and not being able to play, that's alarming. That's professionals that are supposed to social distance. That is professionals that are getting paid for, they know their paychecks are tied to that. If we do go back to face-to-face it's not going to be exactly like 30 kids in a classroom, lunchroom, kids going crazy. It's going to be a lot different. I think the best option right now might be to have our Southgate teachers, which I know will be up for the challenge, they will provide engaging lessons, it will be vastly different than in the springtime to end out the year because nobody knew what was coming down. With enough preparation, the teachers will rise to the occasion and we are going to have some great lessons. The children will have a rigorous curriculum, I am confident in the teachers to prepare that. Right now with all the statistics that are coming out, whatever plan we have today, is probably going to change in a week, it's

going to change in two or three weeks. As new data comes out and as a teacher, whenever you get new data, you make adjustments to your lessons and I know teachers will be able to do that. We have to have a plan in place by August 6th and right now I am leaning toward remote learning. Unless something else comes down between now and then to change my mind, that's how I am leaning right now.

Mr. Estheimer asked for clarification on the date the plan needs to be in place.

Ms. Pastor said the plan needs to be finished on August 6th to be put in board packets for a final decision to be made on August 11th.

Mr. Sage's comments were read by Mr. Green: Hello all, unfortunately I have an obligation on Monday during the meeting. If my obligation gets rained out I will be able to attend the meeting. As I may not be there I will share my thoughts regarding the upcoming school year. I am typing this from my phone so if it is not fluid I apologize. I will do my best to attend, but in the event I am not able to I wanted to share these thoughts. Tim feel free to read these comments to the public on Monday if necessary.

As we are all aware there are a million unknowns for everyone, businesses, churches, school etc. are all dealing with these unanswered questions. We all want the safest educational options for our children, but as we should, all be aware there is no bulletproof plan. Obviously online schooling would be the safest way to return to school but is it the best? Students also need the social, emotional aspect of in-school learning. Secondly, what about the children that may not have a stable home, it would be impossible to keep tabs on them and keep them safe. Lastly, this may be our best chance time wise to get students back in front of teachers. With a second spike possible in November and December with the flu, this may be the only time it would be feasible to get our kids back in front of teachers. Taking into account that roughly 60% of the survey wants to go in-school learning, it sounds as if, and I could be wrong, the teachers are not 100% confident with teaching online.

Here are my thoughts; If the 60% attended in-school learning on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday like the new normal, they would then do online learning on Wednesday with the same teacher they're with on those days. At 60% they would be socially distanced to some extent and the Wednesday's would allow the teachers to test the waters each week if we had to go fully remote. This would pose an issue for some working parents but there is no perfect solution, it is just a thought. Going off the survey results the other 40% would choose the online option. If we choose to do full online learning or full in-school learning without a hybrid for parents to choose from there's a chance we could lose some Southgate students to other districts. Another thought is that if now my first grader is told to wear a mask for the entire day as opposed to just in common areas; that would completely change my view on sending him to school as hot as it is in some of the rooms. With a mask on I would hate to see one these little ones pass out from heat exhaustion as they are not aware of the signs. I completely agree with Mr. Green that if this is a possible change there must be another survey that goes out to parents.

We want/need to be completely transparent. We will do everything we can to keep the children as safe as we possibly can while providing an excellent education as well as a social and emotional engagement.

Mr. Estheimer opened up discussion for board members.

Mr. Lamos asked administration about the efficacy of the remote learning styles that we could effectively implement, Atlas versus Schoology or any others. Would there be a recommendation as to which would be most appropriate or if there are choices?

Ms. Pastor asked if that could be saved for the question & answer after Item 2, and it was agreed to.

Dr. Pomponio asked about the work the COLT team has been working on; we recently approved the Schoology platform, has that been integrated into their discussions for online learning, has it been looked at or talked about in the plans, Schoology options versus Atlas?

This question was moved to Item 2 as well.

2. Questions and Answers regarding the SCSO Preparedness Plan-COLT Leadership Team-

Ms. Pastor explained that the plan is aligned to the My Safe Schools Michigan 2020-2021 Return to School Road Map and has been worked on for weeks. Ms. Pastor does not want the board to misunderstand that neither herself, the COLT Leadership or the COLT Team believe that face-to-face instruction is 100% safe. The team followed the road map. She reviewed the phases and the scenarios for each. We must have a plan that matches this roadmap. There are a lot of unanswered questions about starting remote, that we and other districts are faced with and how it may affect our funding if we start remote.

Families could leave, seeking districts offering face-to-face or as it is also referred to; mask-to-mask. The family and staff surveys are split, questioning if it is unsafe to gather indoors with no more than 10, why aren't schools included in this list. The roadmap has some big challenges; desks need to be wiped down with EPA approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution after every class period and staff must wear gloves, surgical masks and face shields when performing all cleaning activities. How will staff mask up, and wipe all student desks in 5 to 6 minutes while helping to remind students to socially distance and wear their masks properly? How do we make the 60% who want face-to-face instruction happy? Do these families understand that school will look and feel very differently? Since last Tuesday, the major change to our plan includes that young fives to fifth grade will wear masks all day except while eating. We believe this is safer for students and staff

Ms. Pastor said she spoke to two beautiful Anderson students on Saturday, a freshman who actually wants to come back face-to-face because she believes she learns that way best, and a junior who would prefer to go back online. This is a difficult decision, there is no way to make everyone happy. We are looking for direction so that we can inform our families and staff.

Discussion took place about; the most recent family survey results, choices for remote learning, what that might look like and what options parents have. The Schoology and training that staff is currently receiving. Questions were asked about our readiness to begin school remotely in Sept. The choices for parents who will not be comfortable at all sending kids back to school when we return have Atlas as an option. Teachers cannot be expected to teach all day face-to-face and also teach remote class at the same time.

Mr. Sage joined at 8:30 p.m.

Mr. Sage asked for clarification on K-5 having to wear masks all day. Which he believes will change a lot of parents' decision to send their kids back. He also asked about the checks and balances for staff if we go remote. How will students be contacted if they are not checking in?

Ms. Pastor stated that if it is the directive from the board to go remote, there will be no other survey to parents as that will be the direction the district goes. If the state forces our hand and we have to go face-to-face, there may be children that are not able to attend due to immune compromised or other reasons.

Dr. Baker-Herring commented that the board had the link shared with them for the plan. The plan has in place curriculum instruction assessment expectations where assessment is addressed, grading is addressed, mastery learning is addressed and the schedule for when the different grade level students will be contacted for the live synchronous lesson and office hours for teachers. Part of the plan requires us to have regular checkpoints with administration, so they are also having regular checkpoints with their staff.

Ms. Pastor added that it is required to provide a device and a hotspot in order for remote learning.

Mr. Furkas surveyed the teaching staff, approximately 200 people with 160 responding. Their choice was to be in a remote learning situation. They feel it is safer for them to do their jobs.

Further discussion took place about the number of chrome books and if all students will be receiving one, the social and emotional impact on the students with remote learning and what the risk to funding is if we are not back face-to-face. Sports and MHSAA rules and how they would apply were discussed.

Ms. Pastor spoke about Food Service that is needed by our families.

Mr. Sage wanted all the parents to know that it weighs on every single one of us, the safety of the children. From the heart he has four kids, and knows a million people in this district and every board member that's on here, Jill Pastor we speak volumes of you and we are looking out for the best interests of the kids. Whether it's the best decision, we know what's the safest, what's the best I don't know the answer to that, but I can tell you every single board member has invested a ton of time. Jill Pastor, Michelle Baker-Herring and all the staff been all over this, the COLT Team. No one is sitting on their hands with this, unfortunately there is no bulletproof plan. This is the same for every business and every church. Mr. Sage thanked everyone for being on this call, everybody on here cares about kids and is doing everything they can. Some may not like it including him, but everybody on here has the best interest of the kids at heart.

3. To Provide Direction to Administration on what the Board expects for the start of school:

Mr. Estheimer called upon Mr. Craig for clarification as to how Item #3 would be handled.

Mr. Craig stated this would be an action item and anybody could offer up a motion. The motion would be discussed and then be voted on.

Mr. Lamos asked Ms. Pastor, if the board gives direction to prepare for remote, since we have a short period of time to be able to have a plan and then vote on the plan, is there enough time to do that without too much uncertainty?

Ms. Pastor stated, essentially we already have the remote plan because of phases I, II and III. We have to have a plan in case of ever coming back face-to-face so we'll have to make some tweaks to our plan. We are fully prepared. The COLT Leadership Team has a meeting tomorrow morning to react to what your direction is this evening and then we are meeting as a COLT Team on Wednesday to put the final touches on it to bring it to the board. There are over 140+ people on this call. She thinks teachers and administrators may be sleeping better tonight having a direction that they believe is the safest. It is not everyone's favorite, but we know it's the safest.

Mr. Estheimer commented that he started off on the fence and wanted to hear from everybody before he made a decision. After reading the chats and going through dozens of emails that he had prior to this but after solidifying it by listening to the staff results and hearing from fellow board members and questions and comments that were asked early in the meeting he is in favor of virtual as well starting. As everyone has said it is a very difficult decision.

2020/21-9 It was moved by Mr. Craig that the board directs the administration to prepare the district for online only with our teachers conducting classes remotely, supported by Dr. Pomponio.

Ms. Pastor's concern is for the students already enrolled in Atlas. The action item may eliminate that availability for those students who are using it for credit recovery and other things.

Mr. Craig clarified; he is talking about the remote option to be in place of face-to-face school. Of course somebody could have done Atlas two years ago, they could have done that last year. If they want to do Atlas this year that's fine he just doesn't want that to be there only option for remote learning. This is not to eliminate Atlas an option if that is what somebody wants to do. My goal of the motion is to eliminate the face-to-face portion.

Mr. Green agrees with Mr. Craig. For some people the Atlas program works. If that's the option that they want they can still do that now, but now I believe the motion is basically that we're going to start remote and not have face-to-face instruction and re-evaluate the situation. Of course if the government tells us we have to do something we have to. The Atlas option is a motion. He reiterated what a lot of us have said and there's employee chance to talk later and maybe they are maybe they aren't. This is extremely difficult, this is the hardest thing that he has ever done, for him and for all of the board. He stated they have been on the phone with community members, teachers, surveys, superintendent, HR director, Curriculum Director, talking to each other 6 a.m. to midnight, it has been exhausting. Everyone in this chat cares about your children and the direction of what you want for your children or you wouldn't be on this chat spending two hours on a computer call. It is not the most optimal regular school situation and we understand that. At this point it is a tough decision that we are trying to make on all the back and forth with each other and talking to people and seeing what we can come up with. The COLT team that is going to lay some of these plans out, they are phenomenal. Some of the stuff they went through and the hours they have spent on it, you have Southgate teachers working a lot harder than other districts, to put these plans together.

Mr. Sage agrees 100% with Mr. Green. He has one question, would there be any time to re-survey the parents to get their ideas of where they were, this survey where we are at now, is nowhere where we were. Is there not enough time to do another survey?

Mr. Estheimer stated there is not enough time to do a survey with the motion on the table right now.

Mr. Sage asked if it was correct the motion will dictate what we do.

Mr. Estheimer replied that is correct and if the motion carries tonight then that supports the direction of virtual learning so essentially the decisions have been made and he doesn't think we have time for a survey for parent input, that is his point.

Mr. Green commented we technically have until next Tuesday, we could vote no right now, but the point is to give direction for where we are heading and the more time if the decision is made tonight, it gives teachers another eight days to start moving

forward to know exactly what they are dealing with. If we say no tonight, it leaves us in limbo. We have to have an answer by next Tuesday.

Mr. Craig wanted to clarify, this is not a decision on what we are doing, this is providing direction to staff on what we expect the plan to look like when we see that to make a decision next week. He is not discounting the Atlas program because we could have a student bouncing back and forth between Atlas classes and classes taught remotely by a teacher. He could very easily see that where you have a kid spending two classes in at Atlas program and then four classes in front of a teacher on the computer. This is not in any way to discount or replace the Atlas program or replace it. It is meant to work with it.

Mr. Estheimer asked Ms. Pastor if it was possible to have a survey and the results to the board members by the next meeting.

Ms. Pastor questioned the need for the survey, if the school board's direction is to have a plan to start remote. She believes it is more important that we get the information to parents, to allow them to make arrangements to be in that situation, than it is to ask them if the school board's direction is for us to start remote.

Dr. Baker-Herring wanted to clarify that the plan they need to submit for the Board's approval is a remote learning plan and a face-to-face plan. If the board is giving direction to have a remote learning plan, we do have that. With direction it will help in moving forward with planning for staff and families. So to say your giving us direction or plan to have a remote learning plan, that's required. You will have a remote learning plan to vote on but we also have to have a face-to-face plan.

Mr. Green commented that Phase III required a remote learning plan. We just need to let our teachers know to prepare as soon as possible and we need to let our parents know so they can make adjustments with many of them working how it is going to look for them and give them as much time to do what they need to do. If the state tells us we can't do it, we know that it's fluid and we're going to have to move back. We don't need to give direction, at this point they need something a little bit more solidified, the parents and teachers in the school district. We need to vote and the motion's going to be that we have made a decision tonight to go remote.

Ms. Pastor asked for clarification of when we might re-evaluate or re-look at this situation so parents know and we are not guessing when that is going to happen.

Mr. Craig said this is direction to that group that needs to bring all of that back to us next week. This is the framework. He needs them to fill out the frame now; what does that mean, how does that work. He wants to make it clear that his motion does make it clear he is not interested in the face-to-face option. He doesn't know how he can afford to do that. He doesn't know how he can afford to have 12 kids in a classroom and do teachers online learning and do the Atlas. That's why you have this direction. This is framework that is why he phrased this as direction to administration. That is the framework he expects to be filled out, coming into the next meeting.

Mr. Green feels we need to be more specific tonight, we are spinning our wheels. Let's make a decision. Make a motion that we are going to be remote for the first card marking, which would be 8 to 10 weeks and then re-evaluate from that point.

If the state makes a decision and forces our hand one way or the other, then we have to do what they have to say anyway. He does not see the harm in letting the teachers and parents know that we are choosing tonight to go remotely for the first quarter and move on from there.

Dr. Pomponio commented that if we are going to set direction, we need enough to look at where this virus is going because that is the first and foremost thing we are discussing here is safety. So she would suggest or recommend until January. So we can get all of these things under our belt, we can look at what's happening, the direction and the flu and cold season.

Mr. Craig made a point of order that there is a motion on the table that's been supported, that is what we are discussing. He would love to make a declaration and make an opinion tonight, stronger than what he has done but, he thinks everyone has relayed that with their comments and messages. He is not prepared to move a plan because he doesn't have the plan with the framework in front of him. That is what he wants to get in a week. He thinks the message has been pretty clear. Everyone was pretty vocal in how they felt about where we should be going. If there is any question about what we are going to be supporting next week, he would ask somebody to go back and re-watch the beginning of the meeting.

Mr. Lamos wanted to clarify with Dr. Baker-Herring, that we have a plan for either eventuality, either of the stages including remote including on-site. Does one of our remote plans include something other than Atlas?

Dr. Baker-Herring commented there are so many different terms that we use, it is hard to know when we are talking about remote, we're talking about synchronous/asynchronous. Atlas is 100% asynchronous which means a student can access the content for that learning management system any time day or night. While that does work for some, we know that for most face-to-face, live synchronous instruction with teachers that are in our district is better. It just depends what the needs are. If we know we are going remote tonight, the teachers will breathe a sigh of relief. They will then be able to switch their mindset from what if-what if we are face-to-face, how much time do I invest. If we can relieve those anxieties about the unknown it will really set plans in motion and they will be ready to rock on September 1st. Every day and each meeting, which is two to three times a week, the team was struggling today with the unknown. She understands the difficulty in the decision. We do have a remote learning plan, we have a face-to-face plan but we still don't really have direction for for teachers, to say-this is how you need to start investing your time-on your summer vacation-how to invest your time in planning for the fall.

Mr. Lamos asked for Mr. Craig to reiterate the motion so that all are on the same page.

Mr. Craig restated the motion :

2020/21-9 It was moved by Mr. Craig that the board directs the administration to prepare the district for online only with our teachers conducting classes remotely (*clarified that Atlas will still continue as an option this is not meant to replace Atlas*) supported by Dr. Pomponio.

YES: Craig, Estheimer, Freitas, Green, Lamos, Pomponio
NO: Sage

Mr. Lamos stated it has been a tough night and thanked everybody, he hears Mr. Sage, this just tears his heart out in doing this, but he thinks we have a decision-thanks to everybody; Ms. Pastor, all members of COLT, all the parents, Ms. Grzechowski and the rest of the board.

Mr. Sage commented, though his decision was not the same as the majority that does not mean he does not support the majority's decision by any way, shape or form. The board works as a fluid team. Even though opinions may differ, that's why there is a board; that is why we'll work together and bounce things off. Just because he said no does not mean he is not fully in support of what the process is, but we move forward as a team. Whatever decisions made as a team we said that from the beginning. It makes it tough. He appreciates all the COLT members, the parents on this call. We are doing this for the kids, that's why we are here.

Mr. Estheimer thanked the parents, staff, administrators, the superintendent, the COLT Team and his fellow board members. It has been reiterated several times that this was a very difficult decision and it was. He hesitated when voting as he has thinking of more of a Mr. Green model with a more specific date, but this is how we voted and hopes that our staff, our teachers and administrators have a better and more clear direction so they can plan better moving forward. He looks forward to hearing the final plan next Tuesday.

Mr. Estheimer asked for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Green asked if there would be employee comments, he did not see it on the agenda.

Discussion took place about the Employee Comment item on the agenda, why it was not there and the appropriateness and/or legality of allowing employees to speak even though that item was not on the agenda. Board members agreed to allow the employees wanting to speak to address the board.

Mr. Green moved to allow employees to speak.

Yes: Craig, Estheimer, Freitas, Green, Lamos, Pomponio, Sage

No:

Employee Representatives

Mr. Ryan Furkas thanked the board and COLT Team for their decision to keep kids and staff safe.

Ms. Jackie McKay asked if the amounts of time for remote learning could be addressed.

Ms. Melissa Kochanoski thanked the board for their decision and having extra weeks to plan.

Mr. Lamos left the meeting at 9:25 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

2020/21-10 It was moved by Mr. Craig supported by Mr. Sage the board adjourn the meeting at 9:28 p.m.

YES: Craig, Estheimer, Freitas, Green, Pomponio, Sage

NO:

Respectfully submitted by: Theresa Grzechowski

Dr. Darlene Pomponio-Secretary
Board of Education

For detailed conversation, Board meetings may be viewed in their entirety on our website: www.southgateschools.com

