



Board of Directors, Special Meeting/Workshop, Thursday, October 1, 2020
RICHLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 400
BENTON COUNTY, RICHLAND, WASHINGTON

The Board of Directors of Richland School District No. 400 met for a special meeting/workshop Thursday, October 1, 2020, at 6:30 P.M. via Zoom, Richland, Washington. School Board President Rick Jansons presided. Board members present: Heather Cleary, Kari Williams and Jill Oldson.

The Board meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M.

1.0 TOPIC:

Stage 3 – Return to School

Mr. Jansons stated the purpose of this workshop is to hear the draft plan for Stage 3 Reopening. We will hear about the number of cases in the area, hear details of the reopening plan, then ask Board members for questions or comments. He explained the document is in draft form and input is requested. Dr. Redinger reported the District has been watching COVID numbers daily and stated Mike Hansen, Deputy Superintendent, will report on health department information.

Mr. Hansen shared information from the Benton Franklin Health District (BFHD). He prepared a graph with a 14-day running tally for rate of infection which he updates daily. 75 cases or less per 100,000 population was originally thought to be the desired number for reopening. A higher number is now being mentioned.

Stage 3 Return to School Draft:

Ty Beaver, Communications Director, shared the draft document which includes schedule options for both elementary and secondary, information on transportation, technology, meals, special education, athletics, safety and cleaning protocols.

Brian Moore, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education, shared two models for elementary students: Model #1) AM/PM half day, every day instruction with a block of time between student groups for teacher prep/lunch/professional learning community (PLC) work/family connections. This would also allow time for cleaning protocols. Model #2) AB/AB full day schedule with Fridays as asynchronous instruction provided. He explained an AA/BB schedule was discussed, but staff members felt that would extend the number of days students were without teacher contact. Mr. Moore stated in Model 2, the day for asynchronous instruction could be any day of the week. Transportation has been planned to accommodate both options.

Todd Baddley, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education, explained schedules were built considering students' High School and Beyond Plans (HSBP). Staff members worked all summer to ensure courses could be split into A and B groups. This also provides families with more than one child the same days of instruction. Richland Virtual School (RVS) students have their core classes online with RVS teachers. Other courses are still through their home school teachers.

Model #1: AB/AB Schedule (2 days per student group alternating in-person, one day all students engaged in remote learning). Model #2: AA/BB Schedule (2 days consecutive in person per student group, one day all students engaged in remote learning). Model #3: AB/AB Schedule with alternating third day schedule (2 days per student group alternating in-person with either group getting a third day every other week.) With this model, students lose the remote learning day and staff would need additional planning time.

Mr. Baddley shared neighboring districts are using the AA/BB model. This was considered earlier but staff members felt that students were out of the classroom more days in a row than in the AB/AB model. He also shared the asynchronous learning day could be Wednesday, rather than Friday, although Friday was preferred by the community and staff when surveyed earlier in the summer.

Early Learning Center (ELC). Mr. Moore stated because of program requirements, the ELC will have to run an AM/PM schedule.

Dr. Tracy Blankenship, Executive Director of Special Education, stated in Stage 3, elementary magnet programs would move to a five-day schedule and bring all students back. Students may also receive in-person support to ensure access to the general education curriculum. Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams can meet to address student needs.

Mr. Moore advised, with the AM/PM schedule just recently developed, logistics with transportation and custodial protocols seem to work well. We are still weighing the pros and cons of having specialist instruction online so the in-person learning can focus on core subjects. Guidance just received from OSPI states music is limited to percussion and strings with required face coverings and six foot distancing-no band or choir.

Ricard Krasner, Executive Director of Operations, stated the bussing requirements have changed recently from masks and social distancing to masks and fresh air requirements. He advised AM/PM is a viable option for elementary students.

Mike Leseberg, Executive Director of Information Technology (IT), stated there will not be much impact to IT when the District shifts to hybrid learning. He reported many issues with Chromebooks are not just local. The last of the updates should be completed today.

Mr. Krasner reported Nutrition Services continue to have a successful program handing out packages containing five days of meals (breakfast and lunch) and will be moving to seven days' worth of meals soon.

Mr. Baddley shared local high school Athletic Directors from the Mid-Columbia Conference have met and recommended that athletics should wait until students come back in the hybrid model.

Mr. Leseberg advised the District is partnering through the local Educational Service District (ESD) and the State to use Qualtrics for the online attestation process. We are currently in the testing process with hopes to roll out the system shortly.

Mr. Krasner reported trying to stay ahead of the personal protection equipment (PPE) requirements as they continue to change. All students and staff will be required to wear face masks with exemptions only being those approved by waiver through DOH. The District has well established cleaning and disinfecting protocols for classrooms and schools. He is confident support services staff can adhere to these protocols to keep buildings safe for students and staff. Mr. Krasner advised all facility HVAC systems meet or exceed air quality requirements.

Mr. Baddley stated District nurses have provided COVID-19 response procedures and will follow the DOH protocols. Mr. Hansen stated several updates will be coming soon. He explained they are leaving the decision to close schools up to districts with no clear pathway.

Mr. Jansons thanked all for their work on the draft plan. He would like to see a metrics of data showing how/when to implement the plan and stages for reopening. Board discussion followed including:

- Plan for those students and high-risk staff members who don't want to come back
- On/off ramps for Richland Virtual School (RVS)
- Break between AM/PM schedule for teacher prep/family connection/professional development-
 - this limits the safety concerns of recess and lunch and provides adequate time for cleaning protocols/transportation
- AM/PM not possible for secondary due to transportation issues
- Issues with Delta High School and Tri Tech students if we chose Monday or Friday as asynchronous instruction day for secondary students
- Possibly have special education students meet with specialists in person (small group of students)
- Encourage more walkers and bikers-check with cities to ensure safety
- Issues with the start of athletics/could we start earlier-Athletic Directors are working on recent information. Todd will provide latest information to the board.
- Attestations-what if a parent doesn't complete these? Need a user-friendly way to notify parents-need to have Qualtrics in place before hybrid begins
- Can we have additional PPE available for students and staff requesting it?
- Assure HVAC is evaluated in all classrooms
- Allow more teacher access to classrooms with clear rules?

Ms. Oldson stated she prefers Model #1 but questioned what is better academically for secondary. Ms. Cleary also prefers Model #1 since it keeps families on the same schedule. Mr. Jansons prefers Model 2 with Wednesday off to match local districts. Ms. Williams likes the Wednesdays off option. She also stated Dr. Person gave the green light and she feels we should move ahead with athletics. Heather is more cautious and feels the highest priority is getting kids back in school first. Rick would like to get more information and see if the guidance from BFHD, the State DOH and WIAA match.

Mr. Jansons thanked all for their work on the draft of the Stage 3 Return to School Plan. He stated Board members have received hundreds of emails with many questions and he does not have all the answers. Mr. Jansons assured all that the Board members are reading all emails being sent and appreciated parent, staff, and student input. He advised our community is very divided as to how and when to reopen schools.

Mr. Jansons listened to Dr. Person, Benton County Health District (BFHD), at the Kennewick School Board meeting last night. He wants to rely on public health officials but shared her information is not consistent. In her letter from September 14 she stated 75 cases per 100,000 sustained for 14 days was recommended, then recently changed to over 100 cases per 100,000 as adequate. He likes the phased in approach starting with K-2 or 3 students returning first, then upper grades of elementary, then secondary. Parents have expressed this interest as well. He shared information from another county in Phase 2 where they are requiring COVID levels be in the moderate range consistently for three weeks before reopening. Benton County is still in Phase 1.5. He thinks a similar approach might be safer as we could see how this affects the community. Public health officials locally and statewide are sharing conflicting information which is frustrating. Mr. Jansons would like more consistent information from public health officials. He would like to set metrics, not dates, for reopening and does not support moving forward at this time. He shared the BFHD offices are closed to the public, so their recommendation to open schools seems conflicted.

Ms. Williams also listened to Dr. Person and liked hearing how they came up with their October 1, 2020 date. Dr. Person stated she was looking at other information besides the number of cases per 100,000 population and referred to numbers increasing due to “events” rather than community spread. Ms. Williams shared domestic abuse is up while child abuse reports are down and feels that some students may be in bad situations. With appropriate mitigation measures, the health department is wanting schools to open before flu season. She is for following the science of local health officials and keeping our staff and students safe.

Ms. Oldson said she appreciates the points made but doesn't feel that information will be consistent soon. She listened to Dr. Person who said she encouraged schools to start before flu seasons since she doesn't foresee case numbers decreasing and doesn't want schools to have to close again. She agreed with the child abuse information shared and would like to have K-5 students return as soon as possible. She shared more childhood deaths were reported with H1N1 in 2009 than now, although no number is good. She feels that the long-term ramifications of social emotional distress for children are scarier than the risks. With the results from the survey saying only 10% of parents do not want their children to attend in-person classes, she feels it is in the best interest to bring students back as soon as possible with protocols in place. She would like a metrics, without setting a date. We do need options for those who don't want to come back, but BFHD is giving us the green light to reopen.

Ms. Cleary supports using a metrics without setting a date, and bringing students back in phases slowly, possibly with three weeks between bringing in additional students. She does look at other counties and districts since this situation is so unique. She would also like some consistency from BFHD since their information has been all over the place. Ms. Cleary would rather wait for moderate case numbers (75/100,000 or lower) to error on the side of caution.

Mr. Jansons stated there is tentative consensus on bringing back a metric for return to in person instruction and a matrix for protocols for closing a classroom or school for Board review. He would also like to bring Dr. Person to the next meeting as well as a representative from the State Department of Health. Dr. Redinger will make those contacts. There was a request for

pediatricians as well. Mr. Jansons stated we have heard local pediatricians on both sides and would prefer to hear from both local and state health departments, since both seem radically different. Ms. Williams stated having secondary students return at the quarter mark makes sense but doesn't want to delay action on the elementary return. If there are parents and staff that don't feel safe in returning, we need to respect those wishes. She wants teachers to have time but doesn't want to delay the decision.

Ms. Olson stated we can ask for more information, but BFHD has given us the ok to reopen for elementary. Do we need to wait for the same information from the state? Ultimately it is our local department we should take direction from. Board discussion followed.

Ms. Williams asked to move forward with a decision. Mr. Jansons stated he would vote against reopening at this time and wants to hear from Dr. Person and the State Department of Health. He asked Ms. Oldson and Ms. Cleary if they wanted to vote at this time. Ms. Oldson said she is ok with gathering more information but is very comfortable allowing K-5 to reopen and would like to make the decision in the next week. Ms. Cleary would like to see the numbers drop and would like more consistency from the DOH. Mr. Jansons asked staff to provide the two documents including a timeline.

Ms. Williams also stated she feels WIAA has good guidelines and urged Board members to allow athletics to begin to help with the mental health of secondary students.

Mr. Jansons stated he appreciated the staff members' work on the draft document.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:43 P.M.

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SECRETARY, BOARD OF DIRECTORS